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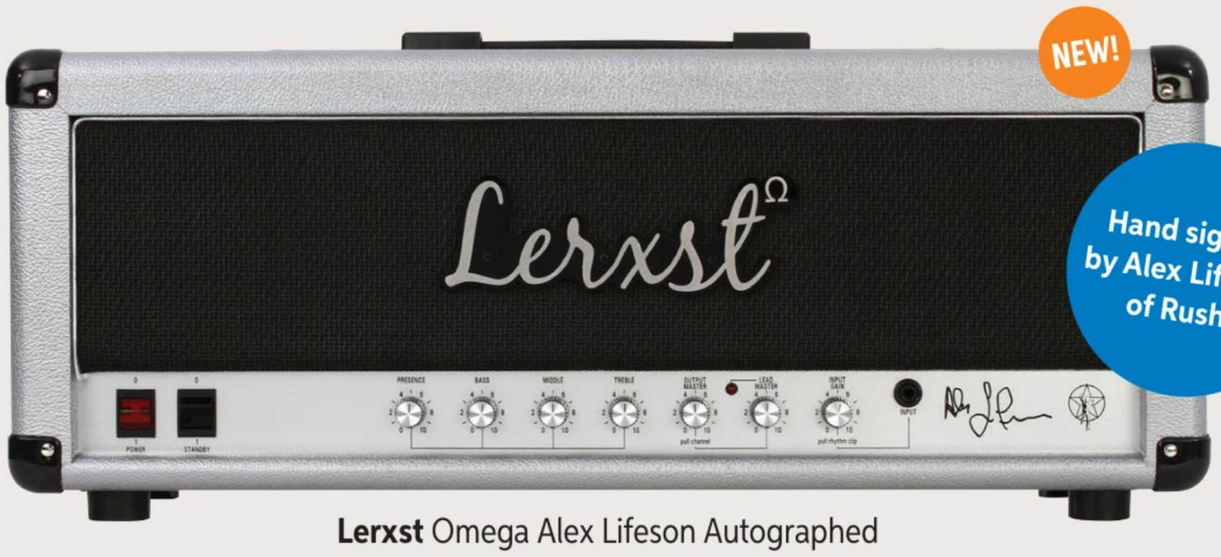
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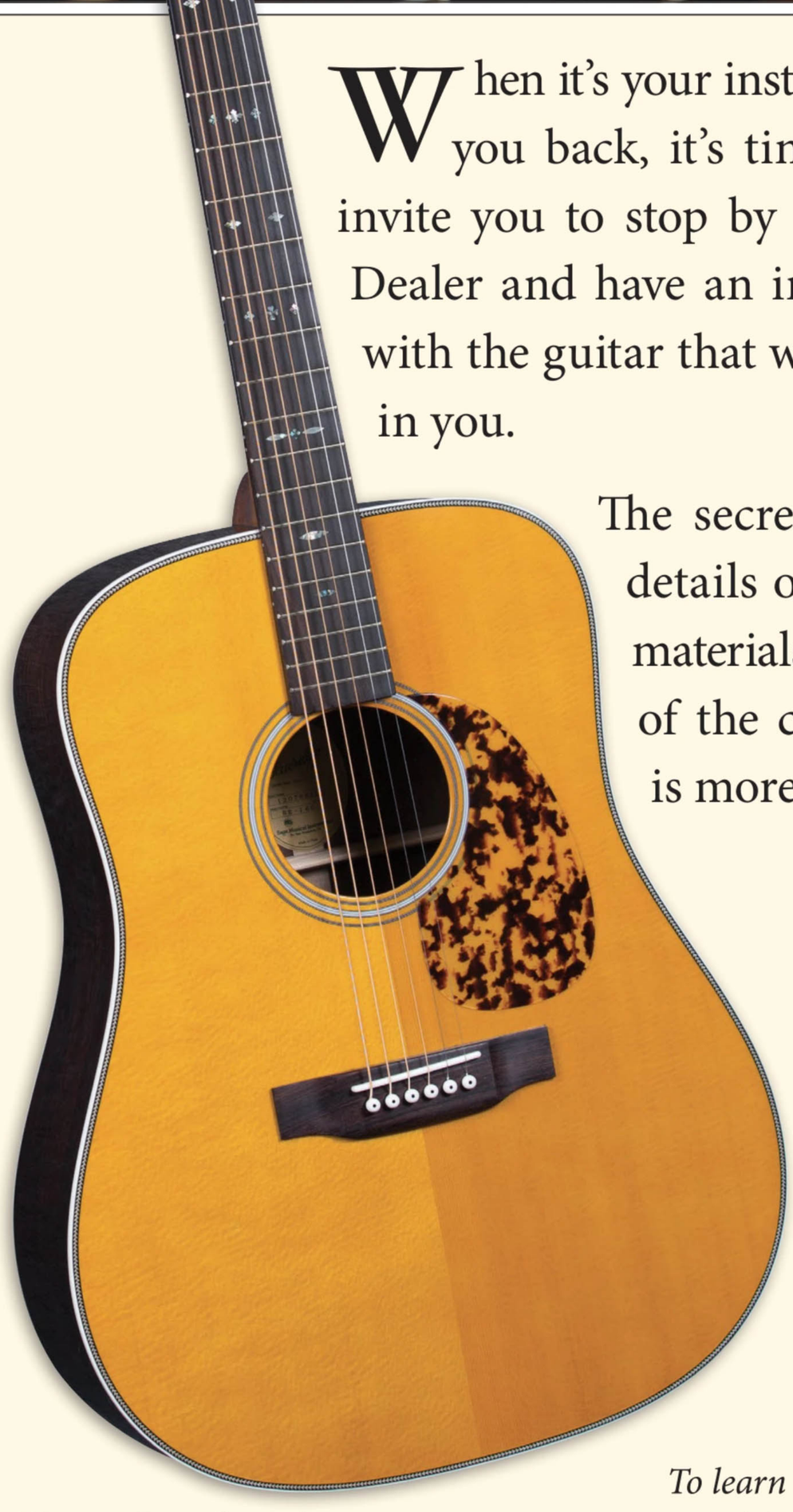
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CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2020 VOL. 34 NO. 04

FIRST FRET

18 **News and Notes**
Party for Peter; Fish Hosts Cigar-Box Festival

20 **Tom Keifer**
All Rise!

22 **In Memoriam**

24 **Greg Diamond**
Latin Class

26 **Nick Perri**
A Player's Journey

28 **Steuart Smith**
No More Tens, Twos, and Sixes

30 **Suzi Quatro**
No Control Rock 'N Roll

31 **Scott Henderson**
People Mover

32 **John Lodge**
Beyond The Moody Blues

34 **Alberto Lombardi**
Acoustic Maestro

35 **Joel Paterson**
Bring On The Beatles

DEPARTMENTS

44 **Pickup Spotlight**

48 ***Vintage Guitar* Price Guide**

64 **The *VG* Readers' Choice Giveaway**
Vote for a chance to win a Reverend Guitars prize package worth $3,000!

86 **Upcoming Events**

98 **Classifieds**

106 **Showcase**

112 **Readers Gallery**

COLUMNS

52 **Pop 'N Hiss**
Megadeth *Peace Sells... But Who's Buying*? | By Greg Prato

54 **Fretprints**
Billy Rogers | By Wolf Marshall

60 **Shop of Hard Knocks**
Gig Smarter: Tips for the Aging Guitarist | By Will Kelly

REVIEWS

90 **The *VG* Hit List**
Toronzo Cannon, Junior Watson, Joe Bonamassa, Black Star Riders, Mavis Staples, Pixies, Mike Stern/Jeff Lorber, Sturgill Simpson, more!

91 **Check This Action**
Steve Goodman Treasure Trove | By Dan Forte

100 ***VG* Approved Gear**
PureSalem Tom Cat, TWA MiniMorph, Walrus Audio Kangra Filter Fuzz, Collings 290 Custom, Fat Jimmy Amps Fat Jimmy Jr., Suhr Scott Henderson Signature, Boss SY-1 Synthesizer, Yamaha FG5 Red Label

101 **Gearin' Up!**
The latest cool new stuff!



26
Tom Keifer

36 **BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS**
The Premier E-723
Every guitar designer hopes at least one of their creations will become the next big thing. History, though, is littered with instruments that, while being excellent and well-made, did not. This is one of them.
| ***By Michael Wright***

40 **SOLID SENDER**
The Gallien-Krueger 200GT
Solid-state guitar amplifiers were supposed to take over the world in the '60s. Though at first they failed, one with potential arrived in time to propel Carlos Santana during his performance at Woodstock. Here is one descendant result. | ***By Dave Hunter***

66 **MAX BENNETT**
A Legacy of Virtuosity
One of most important and gifted musicians of his era, this bassist's career spanned seven decades of work backing A-list performers like Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, the Temptations, Frank Sinatra, and many others. | ***By Jim Carlton***

72 **STEVE VAI**
Perfecting the Past
Relentlessly creative and forward-looking, two recent projects are journeys back in time – and prime opportunities to take advantage of technology.
| ***By Bret Adams***

80 **A "CUSTOM" TOUCH**
Gibson's Les Paul Spotlight Special
Amidst the chaos and uncertainty that was Gibson at the end of its "Norlin era," an idea was born for a limited run of Les Pauls. Given fancy figured tops and top-shelf appointments, today they enjoy singular appreciation among collectors. | ***By Michael Slubowski***

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PHOTOS: COVER: Les Paul Spotlight Specials: Michael Slubowski and Tom George. Steve Vai: Christophe Pauly. Tom Keifer: Nadine Joy. THIS PAGE Tom Keifer: Tammy Vega.

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Vintage Guitar, Inc., PO Box 7301, Bismarck, ND 58507,
phone (701) 255-1197, fax (701) 255-0250
www.VintageGuitar.com

Founder/Publisher
Alan Greenwood
Alan@VintageGuitar.com

Creative Director
Doug Yellow Bird
Doug@VintageGuitar.com

Advertising
James Jiskra (Director)
James@VintageGuitar.com
Johnny Zapp
Johnny@VintageGuitar.com
Mike Naughton
Mike@VintageGuitar.com

Brand Manager
Joan Trygg
JoanT@VintageGuitar.com

Online Coordinator
Rachel Handeland
Rachel@VintageGuitar.com

Accounting
Dawn Flanagin
Dawn@VintageGuitar.com

Price Guide Editor
Wanda Huether
Library@VintageGuitar.com

Product Order Manager
Martina Day
VGuitar@VintageGuitar.com

Online Consultant
Joe Greenwood
Joe@VintageGuitar.com

Online Community Assistant
Jack Greenwood

Retail Magazine Sales
Joan Trygg
JoanT@VintageGuitar.com

Creative Intern
Benjamin Braunagel

Editor
Ward Meeker
Ward@VintageGuitar.com

Editor-At-Large
Dan Forte

Music Editor
Pete Prown
Greenscene@earthlink.net

Gear Editor
Dennis Pernu
Gear@VintageGuitar.com

Editorial Assistant
Eden Greenwood

Editorial Consultants
George Gruhn, Seymour Duncan, Walter Carter, Dan Erlewine

Regular Contributors
Willie Moseley, John Heidt, George Gruhn, Dan Erlewine, Michael Wright, Peter Kohman, Michael Dregni, Lisa Sharken, R.E. Bruné, Steven Stone, Wolf Marshall, Gil Hembree, Pete Prown, Dave Hunter, Phil Feser, Zac Childs, Bob Dragich, Chip Wilson, Will Kelly, Rich Kienzle, Jim Carlton, Oscar Jordan, Dennis Pernu, Rich Maloof, Tom Guerra, Ray Wuolo, Greg Prato, Leah Greenwood, Sean Thorenson.

Online Contributors
Greg Martin, Tom Feldmann, Ray Cummins, Andrew Hendryx, James Patrick Regan, Tyler Morris

Subscriptions
1-800-844-1197
VGuitar@VintageGuitar.com

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FIRST FRET



Peter Kohman onstage for "A Night With Peter Stuart."

PARTY FOR PETER

A packed Treehouse At 2A, in Manhattan, on November 10 helped celebrate the 60th birthday of *VG* contributor Peter Stuart Kohman.

Backed by the reunited Wirebirds, the party, dubbed "A Night With Peter Stuart," spanned their '90s repertoire as well as that of Stuart's '80s bands, the Tryfles (venerable practitioners of the neo-psychedelic "paisley underground" movement) and NYC retro-Invasion supergroup the Headless Horsemen, who were also on hand.

A guitarist/singer/songwriter and vintage-department manager at RetroFret, in Brooklyn, Kohman is well-known as a bass expert and collector. He estimates more than 200 four-strings have passed through his stash over the years, "...nearly all 1967 or earlier," he points out. For the show, he employed a '55 contour-body Precision, '57 Gretsch 6120, '55 Silver Jet, '64 Burns Double Six, and '65 Burns Marvin – all through dual Echoplexes into two '61 brown Fender Deluxes.

As go-to sideman, he appeared on the Standells' Ban This! Live From Cavestomp, was a bandmate with Television's Richard Lloyd, is a member of the Blues Magoos, and has gigged with the Beau Brummels, the Flamin' Groovies' Roy Loney, the Animals' Hilton Valentine, and the Ventures' Nokie Edwards.

"It was truly a lovely experience," he reflected. "And it was amazing to see people still grooving to true vintage sounds I've always held dear." ***– Dan Forte***

FISH HOSTS CIGAR BOX GUITAR FESTIVAL

Guitarist/record-label head Samantha Fish (*VG*, March '18) will host Cigar Box Guitar Festival 2020, January 15-18 in New Orleans.

First staged in 2016, the Festival focuses on the music and cultural history of the cigar-box guitar and other homemade instruments. Slated performers include John Mooney, Big Chief Monk Boudreaux, Waylon Thibodeaux, and Jimbo Mathus. Fish and guests will close each night.

A portion of proceeds benefit the New Orleans Blues Society. For more, visit www.SamanthaFish-CigarBoxGuitarFestival.com.



Tom Keifer: Nadine Joy. Peter Stuart Kohman: Josh Gelman.

TOM KEIFER

All Rise!

"What I've always found with writing is that if you're starting with a great idea, the song writes itself," says Tom Keifer. "If you don't have the songs, you don't have anything."

The veteran rocker should know. His second solo album, *Rise*, is the first credited to the Tom Keifer Band following *The Way Life Goes* from 2013.

"There's a heaviness and an angst to

Rise," he said. "It usually comes from the lyrical content. That's the place I write from first, and the lyric or that emotion that pops into my head dictates what the music is going to feel like. Much of the lyrical content on this record speaks to overcoming challenges and frustration. There's a *lot* of topics."



Keifer, of course, rocketed to fame in the '80s as lead vocalist, guitarist, and songwriter for Cinderella over the course of four albums noted for songwriting that set it apart in the heyday of hair metal.

"I've always approached it as 'lyrics first,' even going back to the early Cinderella stuff. When you write that way, you can write anywhere. It's a bit of a blessing and a curse because you're constantly analyzing your thoughts all day. Something goes through your head and your immediate thought is, 'Is that a song?' A lot of times you go, 'No, that's not a song.' But a certain line or some thoughts stick with you and you start to hear a melody with them in your head. The ones that stick with you that are memorable or feel meaningful are the ones where you gravitate to an instrument and finish it."

Keifer and his wife, Savannah, live in Nashville, where she once had artist development and songwriting deals; they were writing songs together while also each going dealing with an assortment of challenges. Among Keifer's was a well-publicized struggle with his vocal cords.

"*The Way Life Goes* was made piecemeal, off and on, over the course of nine years," he recalled. "We used session musicians and there was a lot of overdubbing. Most of the time, the players weren't even in the room together.

"This one is very different. It wasn't the intention when we started [writing], but we woke up one day and realized we had a record. We got a label deal very quickly for it and they said, 'You need to tour.' We're like, 'Oh, crap. We need a band!'"

The seven-piece Tom Keifer Band includes guitarist Tony Higbee and bassist Billy Mercer. They met in Nashville.

"We went from six years of touring with this new band straight into the studio, playing together in the room. The iron was hot and we had a ton of songs ready to go," said Keifer. "I debated whether I should do demos. I said to Savannah, 'Let's just go in and work these things up. They'll be fresh as hell,' and that's what we did."

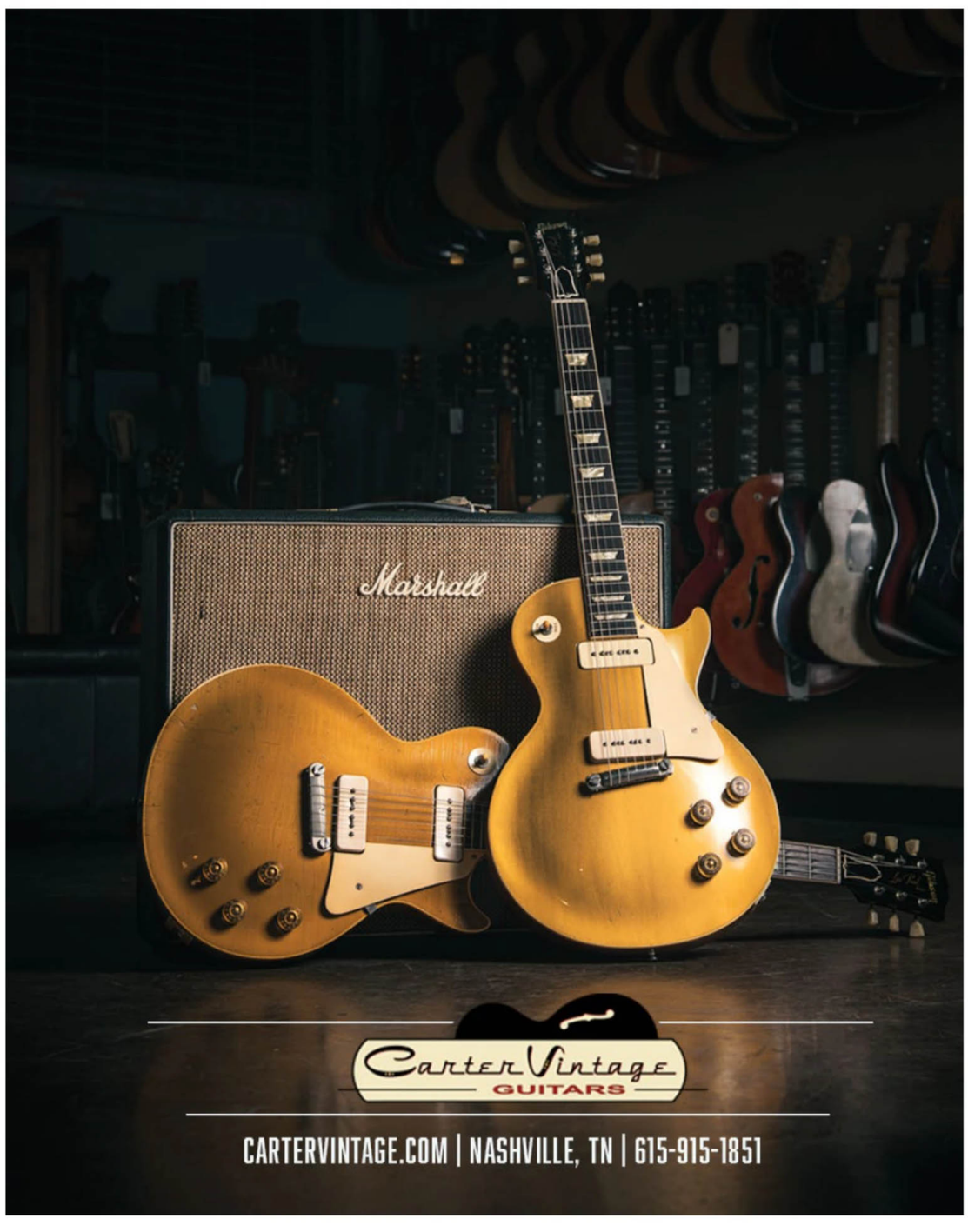
The songs include heavy fare like the single, "The Death of Me," bluesy ("Waiting on the Demons"), industrial-tinged ("Hype"), experimental ("Untitled"), blowout rockers ("All Amped Up"), and the ballad "You Believe in Me," Keifer's tribute to Savannah.

Keifer played several guitars on *Rise*, including his longtime workhorse '59 Les Paul Standard as well as a Custom Shop reissue that's nearly identical. He also used a Gibson Lzzy Hale Explorer, Fender Nocaster, '50s Gibson Southern Jumbo, and a '30s Gibson lap steel.

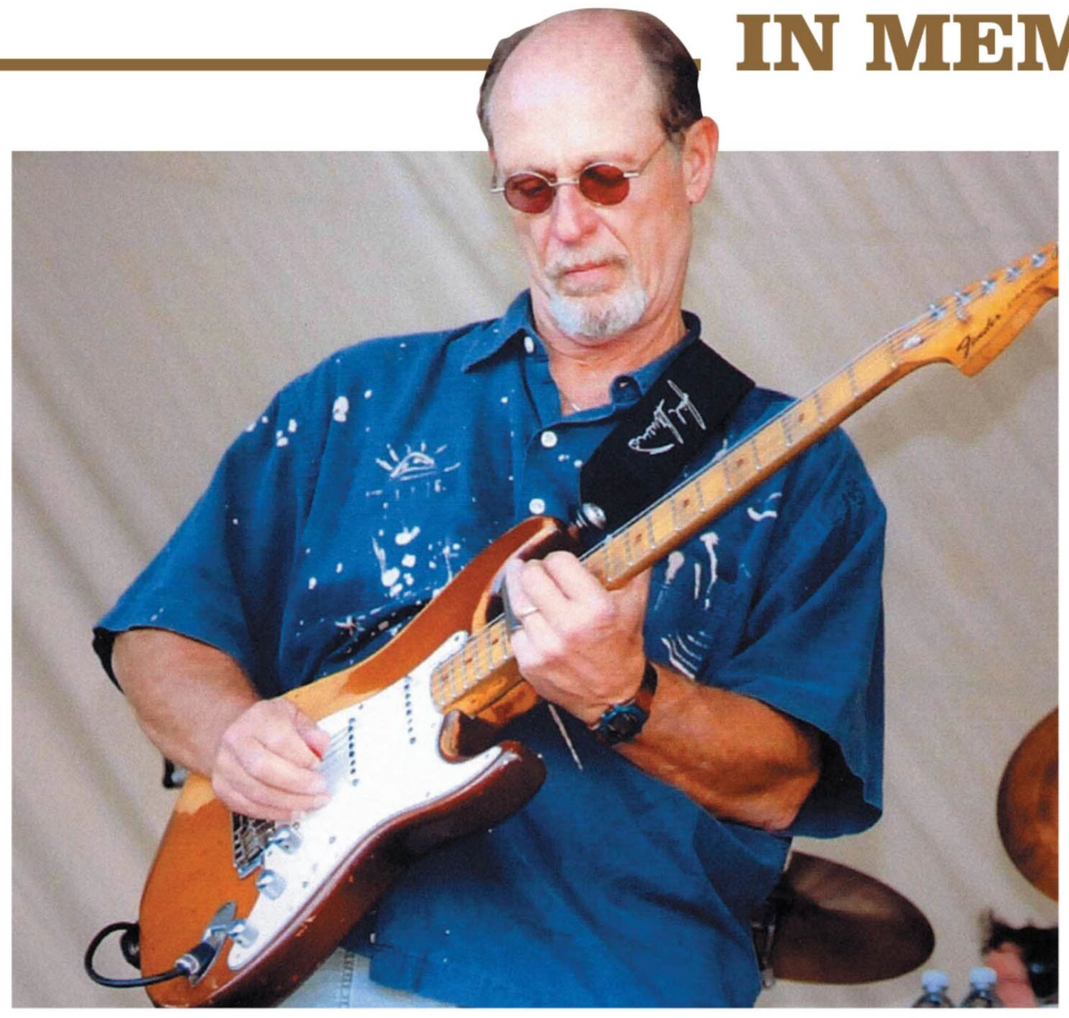
"I also used a '55 Gretsch Sparkle Jet that sounds amazing plugged into an old Marshall – it has such a rude growl on those low, de-tuned notes and just felt like the right sound, with that bite and twang, but it's got that big, fat ballsy sound, too," he said. "A tip of the hat to (AC/DC's) Malcolm Young, because that Gretsch-into-a-Marshall is something I learned from him!

"I usually play from the same amps – those old, early Marshall Super Leads with no Master Volume. They reproduce what the guitar sounds like. They add the grit, the distortion, and the sustain, but they also allow the *character* of the guitar to ring through. I mainly stick with those, but when I want a tone change, it's usually not about pulling out a pedal or trying a different amp. It's a different guitar. I like the guitar and the amp, and I like it raw. I like to be able to hear the strings." ***– Bret Adams***





IN MEMORIAM



PAUL BARRERE

Guitarist/songwriter/singer Paul Barrere, a mainstay of the iconic band Little Feat, died in Los Angeles on October 26. He was 71 and battled liver cancer since being diagnosed in 2015.

Barrere joined Little Feat in 1972 as a second guitarist just after the release of *Sailin' Shoes*.

Barrere and founding guitarist Lowell George earned acclaim for their interplay, with both often playing slide using Sears Craftsman sockets – George an 11/16", Barrere a 5/8".

"I used glass first, but kept breaking them on mic stands," Barrere told *Vintage Guitar* in the mid '90s.

The band broke up in '79, following George's passing at age 34. Barrere made solo albums and recorded with numerous artists including Nicolette Larson, T. Lavitz, and others.

Little Feat regrouped in '87, and in the ensuing decades, its vocalists included Craig Lee Fuller and Shaun Murphy.

Little Feat's sound was oft-cited as influential with the advent of the Americana and roots music genres. It was compared to the Band and respected by musical peers in the '70s and beyond.

"To me, that's an honor," Barrere said. "We didn't want to play one type of music or be part of the pop culture. I think the simplest way to put it is that we play 'American music'; anything that has its roots in America, whether it's country, jazz, rock and roll, blues, R&B."

His more-recent side projects included the Blues Busters and an acoustic duo with fellow Little Feat member Fred Tackett.

Barrere's appreciation for classic guitars began at an early age. He was 14 when his parents bought a '57 Gibson ES-175 for him. Throughout his career, he primarily relied on two Fender Stratocasters (from '69 and '72) and appeared onstage with a first-generation Music Man StingRay. His preferred stage acoustics were made by Gibson.

Barrere is survived by his wife, Pam, and three children. – ***Willie G. Moseley***



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GREG DIAMOND

Latin Class

Greg Diamond's new album, *Musings & Origins*, offers virtuoso acoustic fingerstyle with a strong Latin-jazz vibe. Beautifully recorded on a Collings steel-string, the disc captures his subtlety and taste in staggering detail. We spoke with him about how he conjured such impressive flat-top magic.

What is the source of the Latin influence on *Musings and Origins*?

I'm Colombian on my mother's side and I grew up hearing all kinds of Latin music. My father, who was a classically-trained pianist and vocalist, often played bolero music as well as Chopin, Bach, and Rachmaninov. Latin music is definitely something that has always resonated with me – the syncopation, groove, energy, soulfulness, and so much more. I feel it's very much a part of who I am as an artist, but there are other elements in the mix.

Seems like a lot of acoustic players today started as electric rock players. Tell us about your journey.

Like so many kids my age at the time, I started on electric, listening to Cream, Led Zeppelin, Santana, and Jimi Hendrix. When I began to study guitar formally in Colombia, I started on classical then eventually came back to electric, albeit in a jazz context. I only got back into playing acoustic flat-top early in 2017, when I embarked on a cross-promotional initiative with Collings Guitars. That eventually took a life of its own and morphed into this recording project.

Which acoustic players have influenced you over the years?

I would say my inspiration in the realm of solo acoustic guitar comes from a broad spectrum of players. A few that come to mind are Bill Frisell, Julian Lage, Raphael Rabello, John Williams, Silvio Rodríguez, Pat Metheny, Stephen Stills, Jimmy Page, Andrés Segovia, Yamandu Costa, and Derek Gripper.

"Caprichosa" has wickedly complex rhythms. Have you specifically worked on that part of your playing?

So glad that you asked this! Yes, absolutely! As a guitarist and composer, I've always been into Afro-Cuban rhythms and love writing and playing in odd-meter. "Caprichosa" is based on a son-montuno pattern – essentially, African rhythms mixed with Spanish music. But it has a bit of a twist, which is that it's written primarily in $^{7}/_{4}$, with a bridge in $^{4}/_{4}$. So the challenge was in making an arrangement for solo guitar that integrates a bass line with montunos in odd-meter, complex chord changes, and melody – and then try to make it all sound organic and groove.

Collings guitars are hip right now. What do you like most about them?

I've been playing Collings for almost five years. I love their guitars and have a great rapport with them – it's like being a part of a big family. What I love most about my OM2H T is the balance, tone, and playability – warm and sparkling highs, a full and present low midrange, and great responsiveness for fingerpicking, strumming, or flatpicking. I play chord melodies where I run difficult lines anywhere on the neck, lay down bass lines, and strum lush open chords or percussive muted chords depending on the situation. It really has it all, and aesthetically, I just find it to be an absolutely gorgeous instrument.



Do you have a favorite combination of tonewoods for acoustic?

I've always been partial to spruce top, rosewood back and sides, and ebony fretboard, even prior to having my OM. I like the versatility, responsiveness, and broad dynamic range of spruce on any flat-top, and rosewood generally produces a dark, warm sound with great resonance. I like ebony fretboards for their crisp and responsive attack.

What about strings, nail care, and thumbpicks?

I'm currently a fan of D'Addario Nickel Bronze strings, which are .012 to .053. They have a beautiful, crisp, fat tone and last a long time. My picking style switches between flatpicking and fingerstyle – a lot of times I'll do this in different areas of the same piece. "Laia" is a perfect example. I used D'Andrea Pro Plec teardrop picks for many years, but recently switched to Dunlop Jazztones, which I really like. I do grow my nails out a bit but I don't like them to get crazy-long to the point they start to feel cumbersome or clunky.

What's next for you?

There are so many projects I've been envisaging lately, but time and resources are scarce, particularly now that I'm in my final year of the jazz doctoral program at the University of Miami. Touring with this solo project is definitely on the agenda in the near future, and I'm overdue to make another record with my band, Amalgama. Making records is expensive and daunting, but we all need to keep putting our music out there and keep moving forward, creatively. ***– Pete Prown***

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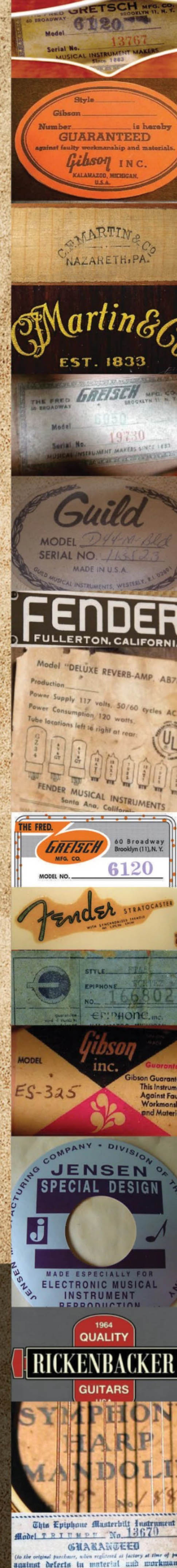
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NICK PERRI

A Player's Journey

Nick Perri has risen from the aftermath of the band Silvertide to create his latest group, Underground Thieves. A devoted Angus Young disciple, Perri is not only a gifted songwriter and guitarist, he's a designer of custom guitars, *and* a film director (check out the videos for "Whole Lotta Money" and "White Noise"). Perri is a natural auteur with a solid visual style and the music to back it up.

Is it no longer enough to be "just" a good guitar player?

We live in an era where you have to wear many hats to get things done. I learned a lot of things, mainly out of necessity. There *are* skills I picked up along the way because I needed to, but it's a fun process and I really enjoy it. I'm a huge movie buff and a Quentin Tarantino fan. When I watch movies, I'm like, "Look at that cool camera angle!" Some things came naturally, but editing a music video is straight-up skill – you have to *learn* it. You have to sit and put in the time.

Your big break came with Silvertide as a teenager.

We had deals on the table while I was still in high school. And that band wasn't forced or put together or manufactured. It was five kids who did what was authentic and natural to them. We were young, playing the music that we loved. We were inspired by the great music of the '60s and '70s. We connected to people, and there was a novelty to it because of our ages. But it happened quickly; one day I'm in high school, the next day we're on tour with Van Halen in Japan.

I don't think there's a way for a human being to prepare for that type of experience. By the time I was done, I was 22 with absolutely no skills other than music. I was like, "What am I going to do with the rest of my life?" Reality set in. I was an adult and I needed to figure out my way in this world.

What influenced you to start Underground Thieves?

Pink Floyd is my favorite band of all time. It's in my DNA. I'm not trying to sound like Pink Floyd, but I want to give listeners moments of a similar feeling. The Eagles are big for me in the way that they tell stories and have harmonies. I really love The War On Drugs. They're a huge inspiration. I'm also a big Cream fan.

You're a songwriter who isn't afraid to play a long guitar solo while walking into an audience.



Songwriting and guitar playing are totally different things. There are weeks where I'm focused on writing, then I'll spend two weeks playing with guitar pedals (laughs). I went through a six-month phase where all I listened to was Cream. I was obsessed with getting that live tone – the "Grail Tone." All roads lead to a Les Paul, a Marshall, and turning up to 10.

My rig right now is very similar to what I used in Silvertide. A simple setup pulls more out of you. If you need a different sound, sometimes it's about *the way* you're playing as opposed to *what* you're playing. My main guitar is a Les Paul Black Beauty I bought new in 2002. It's just beaten, but in a loving way (laughs). It's been around the world 50 times and played 2000 shows. I also play Mondell Custom Guitars – I have two that are just killin'. A year ago, I simplified everything. I use a JTM45 head and a 4x12 cab with Greenbacks. My clean tone is on my Volume knob.

What are some of your favorite stomp-boxes?

There's a cat named Dustin Francis who builds Fuzz Faces for a company called Ivor. They're the most unbelievable recreations – completely old-school. I have the BC183, and it's the tone you hear on "Whole Lotta Money."

I've also released a signature pedal – a tube-driven preamp boost overdrive called The Sphinx. I collaborated with Adam Grim, of Satellite Amplifiers. We took the EQ of a Klon and married it with his Eradicator pedal. It's like a tube-driven Klon. I'm also working with Dustin Sears of Shin-ei, who makes great Univibe copies.

What's the status of the new record?

We narrowed down the list from 31 songs to 15 and demoed the entire record, front to back, to find out if it's what we really want to say. We wanted to hear how the songs worked together. We'll bring in our team and hopefully cut the record at Sunset Sound. I feel like it's the record I've waited my whole life to make.

– Oscar Jordan

Nick Perri: Austin Nelson.

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STEUART SMITH

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Steuart Smith's position as one of the consummate sidemen of his generation is validated by the weighty contributions he has made to numerous platinum-selling albums across genres, and by the acclaim he has received as a producer. These credentials led to his position as a touring and studio collaborator with the Eagles, held for the last 18-years. With them, he's just as comfortable going toe-to-toe with Joe Walsh onstage as he was co-producing *The Long Road Out of Eden*.

We spoke with him about gear and his career... so far.

Your work with Rodney Crowell spans more than 30 years.

I met him in 1986, and from the beginning he encouraged my participation not just as a guitar player, but as arranger and co-producer, as well. Through him, I began working with producer Tony Brown, who, in addition to using me for session work, wanted to groom me as a producer. I was reluctant because, as with my guitar playing, I didn't identify as a country musician. In fact, I'm pretty sure the reason Nashville producers kept flying me in for sessions was that my playing was atypical in that genre.

How did you connect with Shawn Colvin?

I met Shawn when she sat in on a Rosanne Cash show in New York. Shortly after, she invited me to L.A. to play on tracks on her second record, *Fat City*. To promote it, we began touring in different configurations; the trio of her, Larry Klein, and me was by far the most fun and musically satisfying live ensemble I've ever worked in.

How did you catch the ear of Don Henley?

Through Shawn. We met briefly backstage, then I got a call to work on *Inside Job*. Almost nothing we worked on made the final cut, but it led to an invitation to tour, which I couldn't accept at the time. But as things worked out, I got another call to take the guitar chair next to Joe (Walsh) in the Eagles.

And Vince Gill is now also touring with the Eagles...

Just before his career exploded, he opened for Rodney. When he and Tony Brown got together, his career took off and the two of them invited me to play on a bunch of Vince's records. It's heartwarming to be working with him again.

Are you playing the low-tuned guitar on Vince's 1994 hit "What The Cowgirls Do"?



Yes, that's a '56 Fender Esquire sold to me by Sam Bush, with pickups from Jerry Reed's '55 Tele, courtesy of Joe Glaser. It's tuned in standard guitar intervals, but down two whole steps – C to C. That's also my little guitar melody on the intro to "I Still Believe in You."

With your successes in Nashville, were you tempted to move there?

No, it was never a consideration. I was also working in New York and L.A. and didn't mind the commute. Nashville taught me a number of things, though, one of which was I didn't really want to be a full-time session player. I'm generally happier getting my hands deep into arranging and production. I *do* still love doing sessions, just not the endless tens, twos, and sixes.

What's in your Eagles rig?

My main guitars are a '66 Strat with EMG pickups in it, an Ernie Ball Music Man Silhouette that functions as a Les Paul, and an EBMM Axis Sport that functions as a Tele. The other guitars are an SG Junior, SG Special (both mid-'60s), 2002 Gibson 335, Collings I-35, '67 Esquire and the EBMM doubleneck for "Hotel California."

The amp is a Peavey Classic 50 4x10" and a handful of Boss pedals including a CH-1 chorus, TR-2 tremolo, CS-3 chorus, and DD-3 and DD-5 delays. There's also Menatone Red Snapper, a Rat, Cry Baby wah, and an Ernie Ball volume pedal.

Is it difficult to adhere to original guitar parts in that band?

When Don first asked, I had to think long and hard. Not only would I have to learn guitar parts note for note for the first time in 30 years, but it would be the first time in my life that I'd have not only one boss, but four. As it turned out, learning guitar parts was actually a good re-education. It was also a revelation to see, from the inside, how well-written and beautifully arranged those songs are.

Of your own work, what are you most proud of?

The albums I'd cite would be Rodney Crowell's *The Houston Kid* and *Tarpaper Sky*. In terms of cherry-picked tracks, Beth Nielsen Chapman's "Sand and Water," Shawn Colvin's "Round of Blues," "How Do You Stop?" by Joni Mitchell, The Eagles' "Waiting In The Weeds," Rosanne Cash's "The Wheel" and "Sleeping in Paris," and Wynonna Judd's "No One Else on Earth" and "Tell Me Why." ***– Zac Childs***

Steuart Smith: Steven Charley Cohen.



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SUZI QUATRO

No Control Rock 'N Roll

Suzi Quatro is a rock-and-roll trailblazer. There were female singers and musicians before her, but few rocked as hard or handled both lead vocal and bass.

Quatro scored a string of hits in the U.K. but is best-known in the U.S. for her role as Leather Tuscadero on "Happy Days," and the '70s soft-rock hit, "Stumblin' In."

She has inspired female and male rockers, and continues to rock, as evidenced by her latest album, *No Control*.

Tell us about *No Control*.

This is a return home for me. I've gone around the block and back, and unpacked my bag. It's something I did with my son [Richard Tuckey], which was completely different; I never wrote with him before. And I produced it myself.

When you write, is it on bass, or another instrument?

I write quite a bit on piano, because I'm a pianist. I also use the guitar – I'm not very good on it, but know enough, which is funny because "Easy Pickings" is my riff. *Some*times, I start on a bass; "Strings" was a bass riff, so was "Love Isn't Fair." A lot of the riffs came from my son, who's a riff guy – that's what he does! "Easy Picking" was a guitar riff, and the rest we mostly did together.

Did you start on piano?

I started on drums – bongos. Then I took years of piano lessons and played percussion in the school band. I picked up bass at the age of 14 and taught myself. In my first band, everyone chose an instrument and I didn't speak up quick enough. So, I was given the bass. I asked my dad for one, and he gave me a '57 Precision. I put it on, and I had come home. It was an absolutely perfect instrument for me.

Who were your bass influences?

For sure, early-'60s Motown. So, James Jamerson, who was wonderful. I used to listen to Canned Heat a lot [with bassist Larry Taylor]. And Donald "Duck" Dunn.

Was it difficult, being a female rocker in the '70s?

No, because I don't do gender. What I put out there is "I'm a *musician*," done and dusted. What you put out is what you get back. I've always been very sure of myself that way. I've always just been very strong-minded, and I don't remember having problems with anybody.

What was it like working with songwriters Mike Chapman and Nicky Chinn on your biggest hits?

We had an arrangement that suited me at that time, because I'm a really prolific writer, myself. They saw the original band I put together, and it was all original stuff – *all* my own songs. Very boogie-based. Then, they wrote "Can the Can," and it worked, so we kept it that way. There were a lot of songs of mine that could have been singles, but that wasn't the arrangement. But I wrote most of the albums, and it didn't bother me.

You were an obvious influence on musicians such as Joan Jett and Chrissie Hynde.

I'm very proud to have been an inspiration to people. Joan was my biggest fan for many years. Whenever I'd play Los Angeles, she was there in the hotel lobby, waiting – with my haircut, my jacket, and a stack of things to sign, bless her. When she finally started her own band, I was really pleased because I thought, "Anybody who is that big of a fan needs to go do it themselves." And that's what she did.

I've known Chrissie since she was a journalist. Just about every girl in the business has thanked me, and that makes me feel damn proud.

You appeared on "Happy Days" as Leather Tuscadero. Were Ron Howard and Henry Winkler rockers at heart?

Ronnie, when I did one of the shows, had to pretend to play "Johnny B. Goode." He took the time to learn how to fake the guitar part. So yeah, he might be a rocker. I think Henry is, too. We're all still good friends.

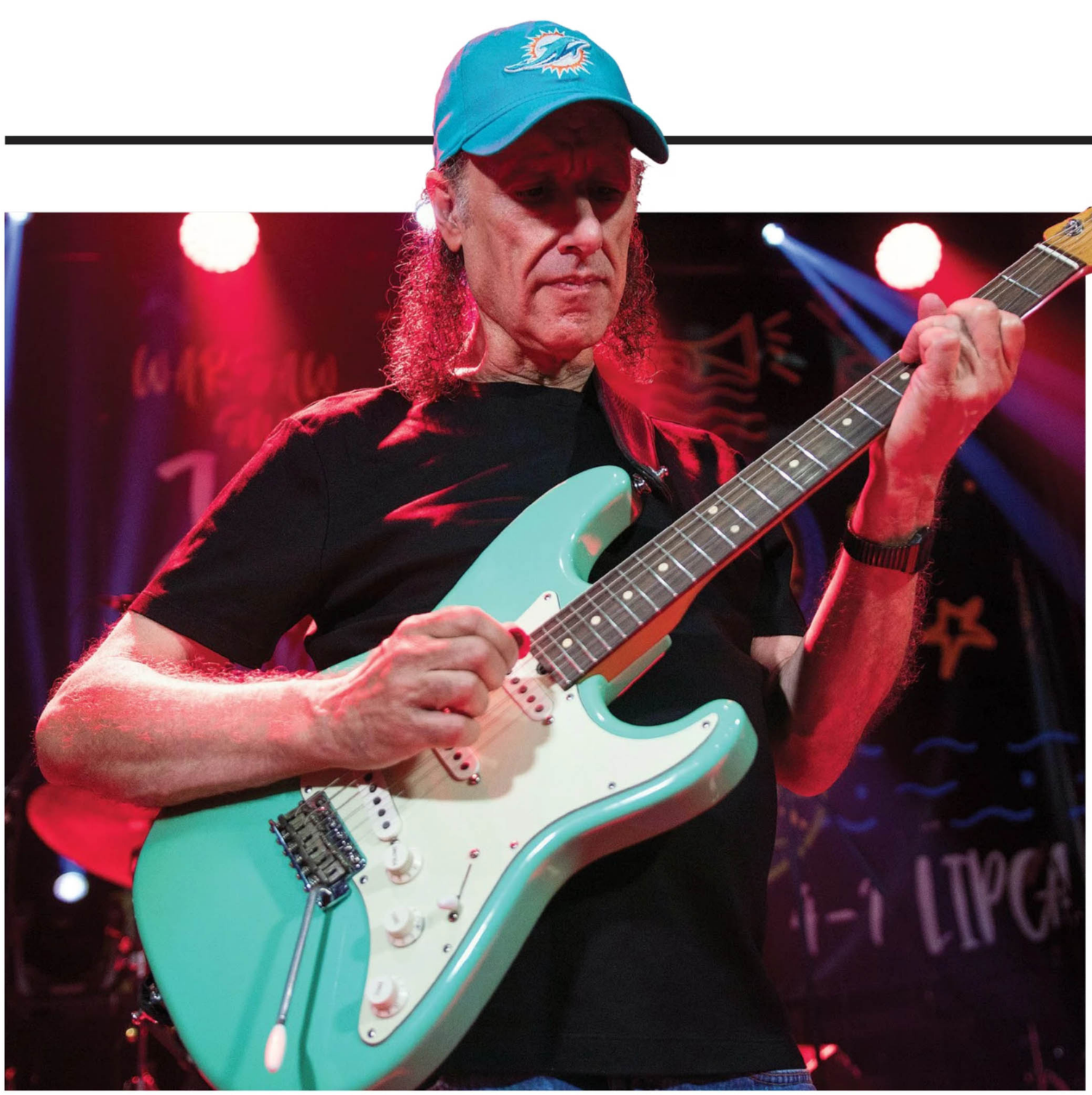
Which basses and amps did you use in the '70s and afterward?

My first bass was that '57 Precision and a Bassman amp. I had a violin bass for about three seconds, but didn't like it, then I went to the Les Paul Professional, which weighs more than I do. That's the bass I came to England with. Then, I went to an EB-O, a Ripper, a Status, then I was sponsored by BC Rich. Eventually, I came home to my Fender.

What are your preferred pieces now?

I use a Fender Jazz onstage because it has a slimmer neck and I have small hands, so when I do my solo, it's a bit easier. In the studio, I prefer a reissue Precision, and I use Orange amps. If I can't get Orange, I'll go to Ampeg. – ***Greg Prato***

Suzi Quatro: Anita Corbin.



SCOTT HENDERSON

People Mover

Scott Henderson doesn't make music for purists. From his days with Chick Corea's Elektric Band, The Zawinul Syndicate, and Tribal Tech, he has continually forged an adventurous musical path. Smashing free of the confines of jazz and rock, Henderson's latest album, *People Mover*, positions the voice of his guitar front and center.

Your band toured just before recording *People Mover*. Did it make a difference in the chemistry on the album?

That was the point – to write and tour so the tunes could grow and be as organic as possible, then go into the studio like it's another gig. I thought we did pretty good. The studio's completely different from playing in front of an audience – it can tend to feel cold. We did three or four takes of each tune and chose the most-vibrant takes with the most interplay. I thought it went well. I'm real happy with the result.

Are you comfortable within your niche, or do you still wrestle with criticism from jazz purists?

I don't expect to be able to please everybody. There are some jazz listeners who think my music is too rock-and-roll. It's all good. I just hope to open some minds up.

I grew up playing rock and roll; I was a Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, and Hendrix fan. I was lucky enough to get a gig with an all-black group playing James Brown and Kool & The Gang songs. I was with them for three or four years, and learned that you can have the same emotional attachment to different styles of music. That gig made me who I am now.

Do you compose with traditional song structures in mind?

I never know what's going to happen until it does. I'm not much of a music-theory writer – I write by ear and by experimentation. I often have no idea what I'm doing. I'm just trying to make something good happen. I'm not totally *un*traditional when it comes to song forms; I've had a pop side where there's a melody and it's repeated later in the song. It doesn't have to A-A-B-A, but in some song forms, like with Weather Report, nothing is ever repeated. The songs just go until the end because Joe Zawinul was improvising. If he didn't feel like going back to a particular section, he didn't. My writing is a little more traditional than that. I'm somewhere in the middle.

Do the compositions go hand in hand with your guitar techniques?

I've always been a guy who tries to play for the song. I'm a big fan of Mike Landau, who tailors his songs to the tone he has under his fingers. If he has a certain kind of tone, he plays in a certain way. I've always thought of him as the Zawinul of the guitar. I'm trying to accomplish that, as well – have the tone influence what I play. I'm playing slow lines in "Blood Moon," as opposed to "Satellite," where I'm beboping out. Those sounds would be completely out of context if they were reversed.

Which overdrive are you using on "Happy Fun-Sing?"

That's my signature Xotic RC Booster, which is my go-to, but I switch to a Trombetta Rotobone. I step on it during the middle of the solo. It's all-out fuzz. It's the same pedal I used on "The Covered Head" on *Vibe Station*. If you pick softer, it sounds like a great overdrive. When you pick hard, it goes into that thing it does. It has lots of overtones. On the low strings it can sound like a trombone. It's fun. The other pedal I used was a Partspipe Klon clone that sounds better than the original.

How about amps we hear on the album?

I used my '71 Marshall plexi along with my Fender Bandmaster. They're both really different sounding so they're great for layering.

Which guitars did you play?

My Suhr signature model. It has a shorter and thicker vibrato arm and a Gibson-style neck. The radius is not flat, but it's not as round as a Fender radius. It also has big Dunlop 6100 frets, so it's much easier to play and doesn't fret out. I also used a D'Angelico hollowbody on "Satellite." It came to life with the RC Booster.

What's next for you?

More touring (laughs). I'm sure people think it's exciting. They think I'm sightseeing, but it's actually a gig every night and flying in economy class every day. When I get home, I feel like somebody beat the s**t out of me (laughs). But it's fun. I'm just lucky to play every night. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Scott Henderson: A. Ikaniewicz.



JOHN LODGE

Beyond the Moody Blues

For more than 50 years, bassist/vocalist John Lodge has been a key member of one of rock's greatest institutions, the Moody Blues. In 2018, he and the band were inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and he wrote some of its best songs including "Ride My See-Saw," "I'm Just a Singer (In a Rock and Roll Band)," "House of Four Doors," and "Isn't Life Strange."

With the Moodys on hiatus, Lodge has recently stepped out on his own, touring and releasing the live album, *B Yond*. We caught up with him on a U.S. tour with Yes, Asia, and Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy.

What initially inspired you to pick up the bass?

Back in the '50s, it was those left-hand boogie piano parts that started me off. To me, they were the heart and driving force of rock and roll. The first band I saw with an actual bass was the Treniers, in the 1956 movie, *The Girl Can't Help It*. In Birmingham, where I was born, there were no bass guitars. In fact, I didn't know they existed before seeing that film.

Who were your early influences?

I suppose most English guitarists started with Bert Weedon and his *Play In a Day* books. But my influences came from the boogie-woogie piano of Fats Domino, Little Richard, and Jerry Lee Lewis. I self taught myself every boogie pattern I heard on their records. Later, Jamie Jamerson and Carol Kaye were driving the bass into rock-and-roll history.

Your style is so melodic. What's the role of bass in a pop song?

In a song, the bass has to stand on its own *and* be the foundation for the melody. When you play the bass part alone, you should be able to recognize the song. For instance if you listen to just the bass in "Tuesday Afternoon," "I'm Just a Singer," "Legend of a Mind," and "Nights in White Satin," you'll know the song.

Your minor-9th chords in "Evening: Time to Get Away" inspired many guitarists, notably Greg Lake, who used that chord in "The Court of the Crimson King" and "The Sage." Where did you learn non-rock chords like that?

I spent many hours exploring on six-string before I became a bassist, because in '50s Birmingham there was no one to teach you rock and roll. So, I experimented with how to tune a guitar and understand what note went with what to make interesting chords. When you found something really interesting, it was like a eureka moment. When I discovered that minor-9th chord, I had no idea what its name was.

Tell us about your 1960 Fender Precision.

I first saw my Precision in the window of a music store in Birmingham called Jack Woodroff's. Every Saturday morning, all the young musicians would be in the store; on one of those mornings there was a sign in the window that read "Direct from the USA." And there it was, my Fender... I think it was the first Fender bass in Birmingham. I went home and asked my father to come to the store. Soon after, I was the proud owner of what's become a friend for life. I recorded all of the classic Moody Blues songs with that very bass, as well as every cut on my new album.

Do you still use a Fender Jazz onstage?

Yes. Live, I use an active Fender Jazz which was built for me by the Custom Shop. It's actually a replica of a '63 Jazz.

You have an interesting doubleneck, too.

In the '70s, I played a Rickenbacker doubleneck bass/six-string guitar. But, in 1980, Fender built me one based on the Telecaster.

How about amplifiers and effects?

Onstage, I use Ampeg SVT valve amplifiers powering my 10" and 15" speaker cabinets. I also have a rack with Shure wireless transmitters, a Korg tuner, and a Toft DC-2 compressor.

On the new album, who plays the hot guitar solos on "I'm Just a Singer" and "Ride My See-Saw"?

The lead parts are the wonderful English guitarist Tim Maple. He was also part of my *10,000 Light Years Ago* tour.

Have you played with any notable musicians outside of the Moody Blues?

Oh, yes! Over the years, I have performed with Jerry Lee Lewis, Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, Brian Wilson, the Beach Boys, Kenney Jones, Don Felder, and many more. My musical motto is "Have bass, will travel."

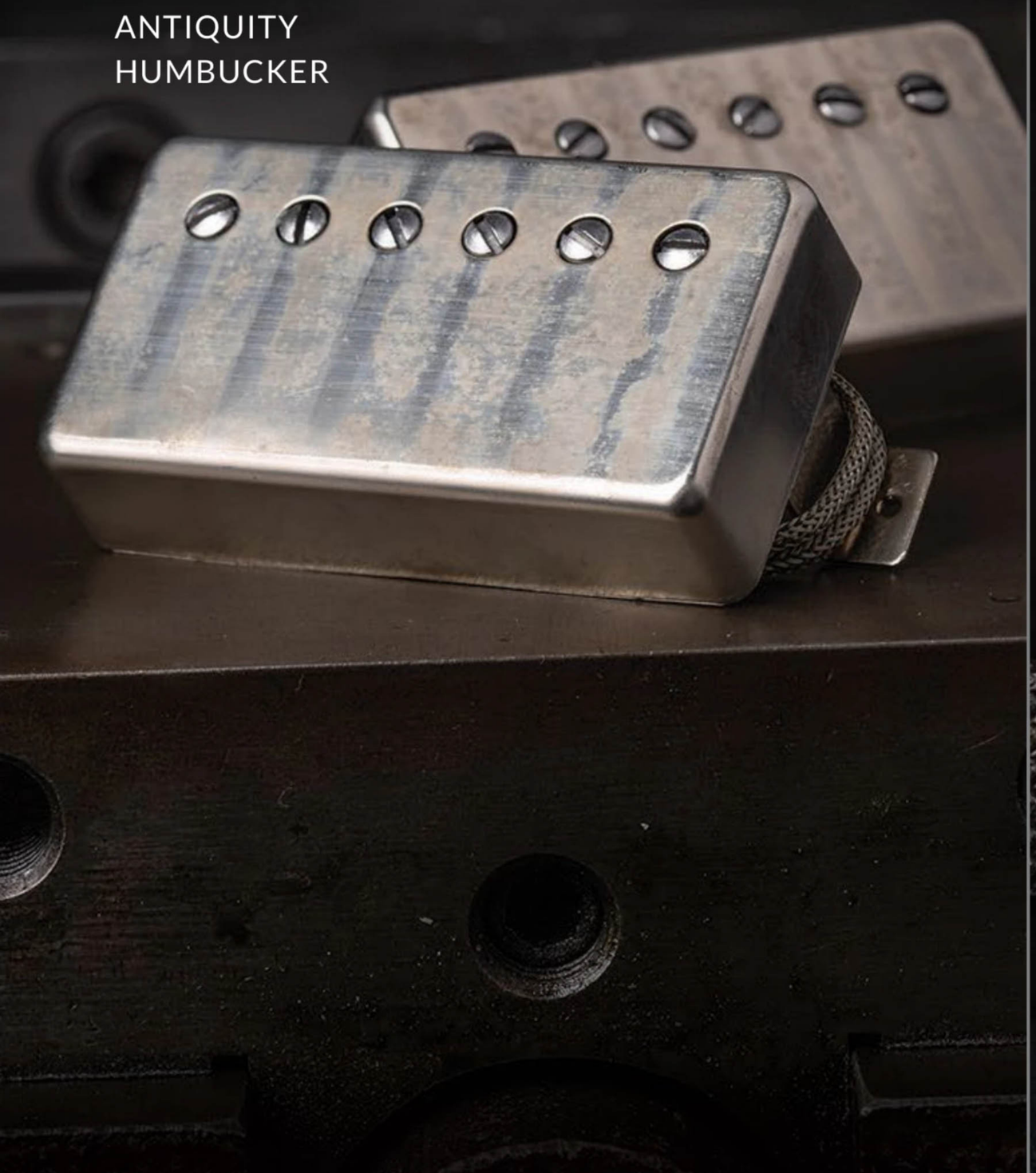
What's next for you?

Next year, I'm on the Rock & Romance cruise in February, then off on a solo tour in the U.S. – ***Pete Prown***

John Lodge: M. Salt.

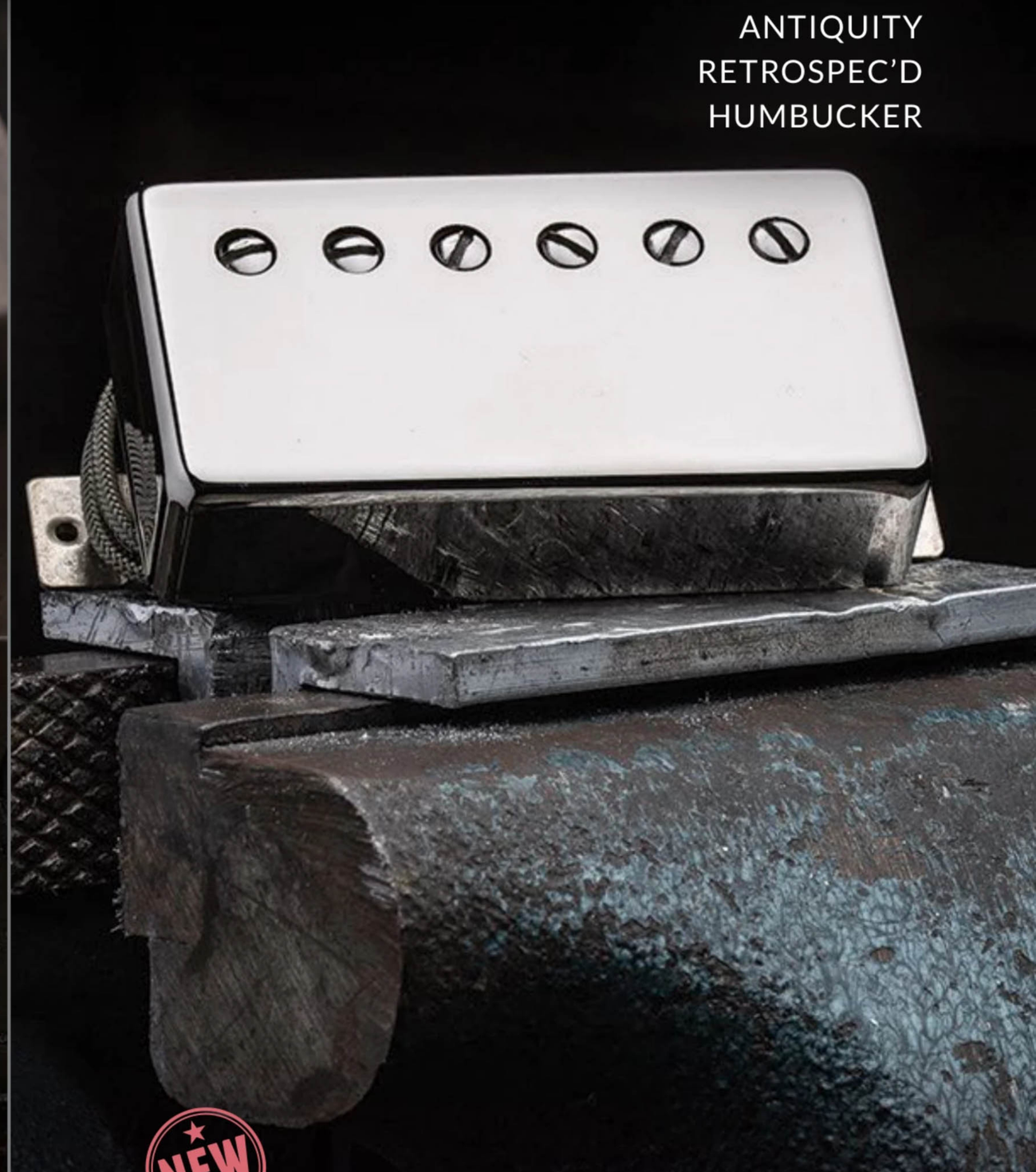
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ALBERTO LOMBARDI

Acoustic Maestro

Cue up "Spaghetti Ennio" from Alberto Lombardi's new album, *The Fermi Paradox*, and prepare for thrilling acoustic work. Lombardi's combination of fingerpicking and hybrid-picking chops are dazzling, yet he never loses sight of the melody within. The Italian ace deploys his immense technique to serve the song, not the reverse.

"Spaghetti Ennio" is a real performance showcase, highlighting fast fingerpicking and swift flatpicking.

I come from an electric-guitar background and have been a session guitarist for two decades, so I've always used a flatpick. I was never a very fast picker like, say, Al Di Meola; I tend to use a combination of legatos and hybrid picking, but I've worked on it to some extent. Transitioning the alternate picking from flat to thumbpick can be hard, though, as they have different shapes and react differently to touching the strings. I want to be able to incorporate all of my tools into arrangements, and quick alternate picking is one of them.

Then again, you can play melodically on James Taylor's "How Sweet It Is."

I love to use complex tools in simple music, which comes from my studio work; I produce pop records and often arrange for strings and horns. When you do that, you don't think only chords – you think of what each instrument is contributing to harmony and how it moves as a single melody. I try to incorporate all of that into guitar arranging.

On the album, you cover everything from "O Sole Mio" to the Beatles' "Penny Lane." What's your goal as a song interpreter?

That's a deep question. I want to be moved by the blend between the original intention of the composer and *my* take on it. At the same time, I want to be entertained, make it fun and interesting. Guitar has so many voices – harmonics, picking, legatos, alternate bass, and percussion possibilities, so you can do so much to a song. On the other hand, I have a few Beatles arrangements on this record that are very close to the harmonies and feel of the originals.

Who were some of your main guitar influences?

I've always been mostly a rock-guitar player, so Steve Vai, David Gilmour, and the Eagles. But I never listened specifically to guitar players; I more love what guitarists do in a band. Tommy Emmanuel was my gateway to the acoustic, and I started to learn "Classical Gas" before I even understood what fingerstyle guitar was. Then I got a chance to play it with Tommy and started to learn songs like "Borsalino," making my own arrangements. Later, I discovered Chet Atkins and Jerry Reed, and toured with Peter Finger and Tim Sparks; I admire both of them deeply. I like some of the younger guitarists too, but I'm not too much into tapping and percussive styles.

On the album, you use Taylor acoustics.

Yes, and I bought my first Taylor in '96, in L.A. – a Jumbo 515 model they don't make anymore. I really love the tone of that guitar because it's focused and bright enough, but has a lot of clear bottom-end. I don't like too much low-midrange on guitars, and Taylors are usually easy on that part. Plus, they have good high-end response. I also have a 612 and a 412 that I mainly use for live work.

What other gear do you use?

Microphones help get me good guitar tone, and I'm a fan of old German tube mics like the Telefunken KM54 and U47. On live amplification, I like a good piezo, and I'm experimenting with a Barbera, a custom-made pickup from New York City. I also love AER amps – I have an Alpha Plus. I enjoy the clear high-end and light compression it adds to the sound.

Which strings and thumbpicks do you use?

I'm in love with Fred Kelly picks, and I'm one of their artists. I also tend to use Elixirs 80/20 Bronze strings (.012-.053), though classic Martin strings sound great.

Steve Morse once told me that when an artist creates a guitar instrumental, they have to work twice as hard to keep the listener's attention, since there are no vocals. Do you agree?

Absolutely. It's hard, but I try to do it with surprise elements. I try not to repeat parts, instead inserting a different lick or some variations. One trick is to alternate sparse moments with very dense ones, or to play the same section with a different technique, like harmonics or moving bass parts. A fast run can help here and there, as well as a stop. Perhaps even percussion breaks.

It's lots of work to make music without vocals. So, yes, Steve is right. It's what makes instrumental guitar so much fun. ***–Pete Prown***

Alberto Lombardi: Simone Cecchetti.



JOEL PATERSON

Bring On The Beatles

Beatles covers outnumber the stars in the sky. Some are revelatory interpretations, but many are snoozers. Chicago-based guitarist Joel Paterson has added to the short list of high-quality Fab Four renditions with his instrumental album, *Let It Be Guitar! Joel Paterson Plays the Beatles.*

"I've been a fan since I was a kid," he said. "I listened to all of my mom's Beatles records. They're great because you go back to them at certain points in your life and discover things that are new.

"For *Let It Be Guitar!*, I changed all the music, but stayed very true to the harmonies, chords, and melodies as much as I could. I also played them all in the same key the Beatles did.

"This record is something I've always wanted to do," he added. "I thought it would be a great chance to explore a bunch of different guitar styles and pay tribute to all my favorite guitar players, so I snuck in a lot of references to people like Les Paul, Chet Atkins, Jorgen Ingmann, Buddy Emmons, Buddy Merrill, and Ernest Ranglin. My heroes are the Nashville A-Team and those kind of guitar players. The record is like if you heard the Nashville A-Team recording Beatles songs in many kinds of musical styles."

Paterson plays guitar, pedal steel, and lap steel on the album. Accompanying him are bassist Beau Sample (on upright), drummer Alex Hall, and organist Chris Foreman (on Hammond B-3).

The album's 16 songs are an intriguing blend of huge hits ("From Me to You," "Can't Buy Me Love," "Something"), relative obscurities ("This Boy," "Things We Said Today"), and some with no obvious guitar connection ("Honey Pie").

"It took a long time to figure out which songs I wanted to do, because there's *hundreds* of great Beatles songs," he added. "I wanted to work on arrangements and do something unique with all of them. And there were a lot of ideas I *didn't* use because they just didn't really work, to my mind, as a guitar instrumental. I picked songs with melodies I thought would work very well as a guitar thing.



"Also, I picked songs I thought would be good to play in my style. They also had to be songs that I liked. I was also thinking I do want people to recognize most of these songs. I was kind of surprised to find that a lot of young people these days don't know every Beatles song. I feel like back in my day everybody knew every single Beatles song."

Though he's a *huge* Beatles fan, Paterson didn't know how to play the songs. Like a mere mortal, he had to learn them.

"I make my living playing jazz, blues, and rockabilly, so those are more the songs I know. I've always listened to Beatles songs, but never really played them – didn't have a reason to. So, I didn't know them at all. I totally started from scratch," he said.

Using vintage guitars and equipment was important to him, but he never considered "Beatles gear" like Rickenbacker, Gretsch, Höfner, Vox, etc.

"I had no concern with having Beatles-like guitar tones," he said. "I *love* the Beatles' guitar sounds and their overdubs, but there's no point in making it sound like a Beatles record, because you're never going to outdo them. But, if you do it in *your own* style, then you have a reason to do the record."

He played a '56 Gibson ES-295 (with a Bigsby), a '63 Fender Jazzmaster, '52 ES-350, '60 ES-345 (with mid-'60s pickups), '82 Telecaster and Stratocaster, a Fender Stringmaster steel, '70 Emmons pedal-steel, '63 J-50, and an early-'40s Gibson archtop. Amps and equipment included a Gibson GA-20T, '63 Fender Reverb Tank, '66 Vibrolux Reverb, a Universal Audio preamp, and an early-'70s Echoplex.

Paterson hopes people enjoy his takes on these songs, but knows instrumental music has an image problem.

"I think there's still a place for it," he said. "Back in the day, there were tons of instrumental records. You could buy any kind. Now, for some reason, people think nobody buys them. My favorite guitar players from the '50s would now be called easy-listening. That's where you'd find a Les Paul record. But, to me, that's some of the most badass guitar playing ever." **– *Bret Adams* VG**

Joel Paterson: Paula Borman/Paul Vriend.





Premiers solidbody line from circa '63, likely with Italian bodies.

BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS

The Premier E-723

BY MICHAEL WRIGHT
THE DIFFERENT STRUMMER

Every guitar designer hopes at least one of their creations will become a rage among players and see sales through the roof. Guitar history, though, is *littered* with instruments that did neither. Like this Premier E-723.

Premier guitars were the brainchild of NYC-based instrument distributor Sorkin Music. Its origins were in the Sorkin Music House, which by 1919 (or earlier) was selling instruments and records on N. 8th Street, in Philadelphia. Louis Sorkin's family ran various butcher and dry-goods stores in South Philly for years prior, and by '24, brothers John and Myers Sorkin (likely relatives) owned record shops on Ridge and West Girard Avenues. By '26, Louis was distributing instruments as far away as the "Western states" and by '27 was importing German student violins. In '32, Louis' cousin, 17-year-old Joseph Saltzman (who was born in Texas but mostly raised in Philadelphia) started working as a stock clerk in the store.

What happened next is a little murky, but in '35, Peter Sorkin – a son, brother, or another cousin – either moved the company or opened a branch called Sorkin Music Company, at 251 4th Avenue, New York. Which instruments Sorkin distributed in those early years are unknown.

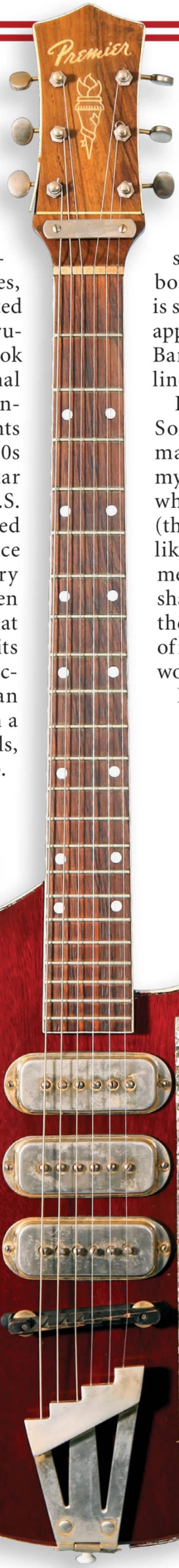
It's also not known if the Premier brand name existed prior to World War II, but in '46, Sorkin used it while entering the electric-guitar game.

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Shortly before he passed, Joseph Saltzman (in an interview for *Guitar Stories, Vol. 1*) said all early Premier guitars were sourced from United Guitars, in Jersey City. United advertised itself as "Manufacturers of Guitars, Mandolins, Tiples, etc., for wholesale use only." United was the successor to Fretted Instruments Manufacturers, which took over Oscar Schmidt International circa 1935. Oscar Schmidt's involvement in musical instruments dates to 1883, and by the early 1900s they were the largest OEM guitar and banjo manufacturer in the U.S.

In '46, Sorkin also established the Multivox company to produce Premier amplifiers in a factory located on 6th Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets in NYC. That December, Sorkin advertised its "New Premier [Model 27] Electric Spanish Guitar Outfit," an auditorium-sized acoustic with a pickup and top-mounted controls, coupled with a Premier 50 amp.

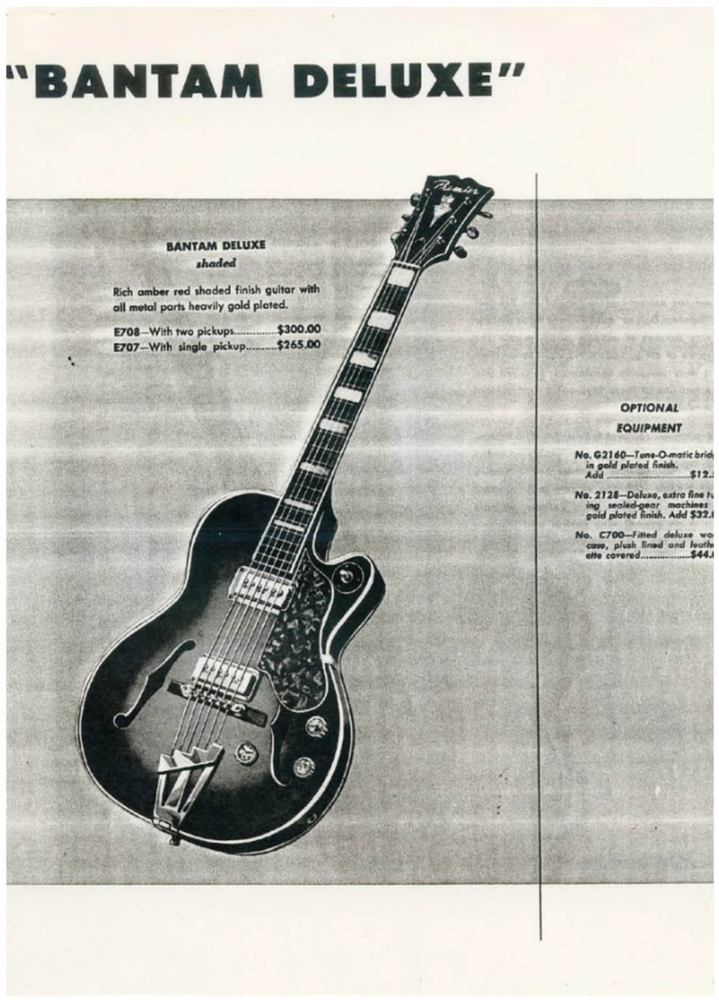
Evolving quickly, by May of '47, Sorkin was advertising a Premier guitar (endorsed by Philadelphia guitarist Howard Herbert) with a floating pickup *and* an upper-shoulder scroll, presaging later Premier solidbodies. Information from the early '50s is sparse, but full-sized archtop electrics appeared early on, followed by the thinline Bantom electrics shortly thereafter, the line well-developed by '56.

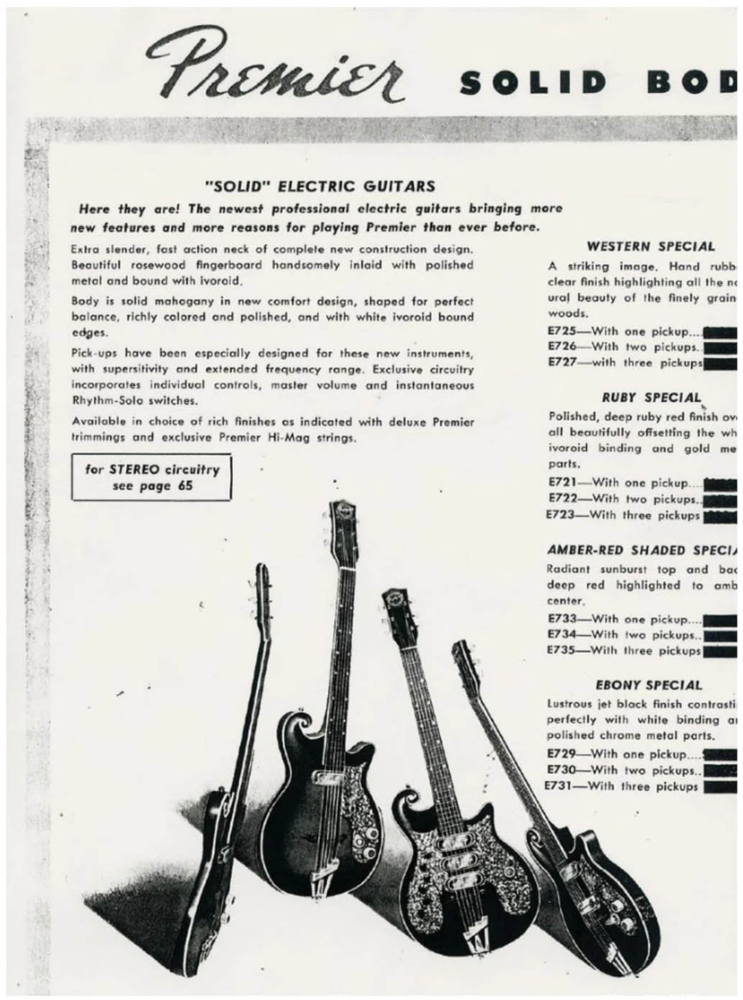
In the mid '50s (probably after '56), Sorkin purchased the Strad-O-Lin mandolin company operated by the mysterious Hominick Brothers, about whom almost nothing is yet known (though census records indicate they were likely Italian). The Strad-O-Lin equipment, including body molds and neck shapers, and wood shop were moved to the Multivox factory, where production of mandolins continued. This equipment would soon produce the guitar seen here.

Premier announced its electric solidbodies at the beginning of '59. Built at the Multivox factory using Strad-O-Lin tooling, the line included guitars and a bass with the famous "scroll" body. Guitars had solid-mahogany bodies and were available with one, two, or three single-coil pickups made by the Fransch Electric Company, in Brooklyn. Finish choices included Ruby Red, Ebony, Sunburst, and Western Natural; the styling, suggests these were aimed at country/western players. Those crushed-plastic pickguards would sure look good on the Grand Ole Opry stage! Prices ranged from $139.50 for one-pickup models to $215 for three. Other options included a tune-o-matic-style bridge ($13.50), sealed machine heads ($15), a Bigsby vibrato ($55), and a hard case ($32.50). Each color and pickup combination had its own model number; e.g., a Sunburst one-pickup was an E-733, while the Ebony two-pickup was E-734, etc.

'This 62 E-723 "scroll" was made at the Multivox plant in New York City.









The '59 Premier Bantam Deluxe (left), scroll-bodies in the 1960 Premier catalog, and the final iteration of the scrolls, circa '65.

Featured here is the Ruby Red E-723 with an original pot dated the 40th week of 1962. When you hold this guitar, you know it's a serious, professional-grade instrument. It has a unique feel and character unlike any other high-end guitar of the time. Part of that might be due to having a solid rosewood neck! It's not known whether all Premiers of this period had rosewood necks or if they only appeared on this particular model or year. The little knobs are individual Volume and Tone for each pickup. The large sparkle knob is a master Volume.

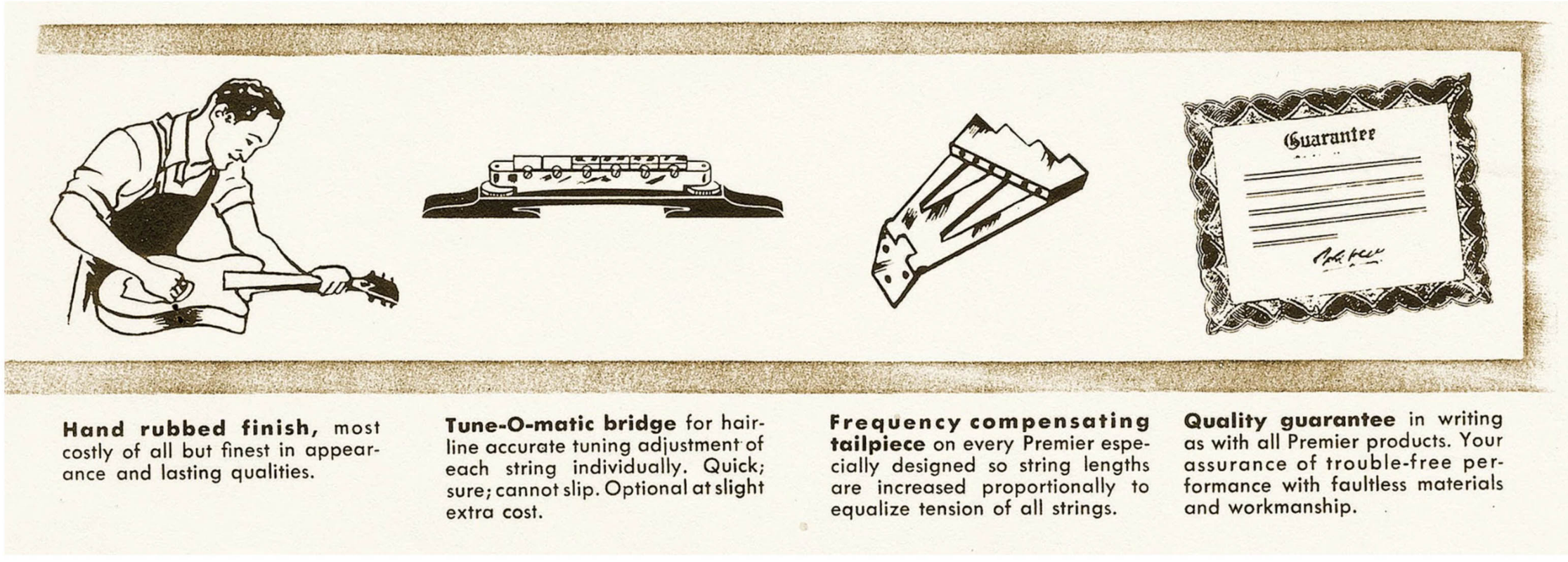
Most Premiers have a traditional trapeze tail, though this stair-step unit (stamped "Made in Japan") appears to be original. Perhaps a harbinger. Some examples have twin pickguards on either side of the strings (plus three on/off mini-toggles). Other styles of pickguard are also found, all probably clues to dating, but there currently isn't enough reference material to solve this puzzle.

In '63, possibly in response to the success of Italian-made EKO guitars, the Premier scrolls changed to plastic-covered bodies. There's good reason to suspect they might have been sourced in Europe and mated to American parts. By '65, Premier solidbodies were clearly assembled from a mix of European and Japanese parts. The hybrid Premier scrolls were still catalogued in 1970, but it's unlikely many were sold by then.

There's no way of knowing how plentiful these first-gen Premier scroll guitars were. They had the misfortune of debuting just in time to see a folk revival create huge demand for acoustics. They're probably scarce, yet you won't have trouble finding one – as long as you have a very thick wallet, since sellers are asking in the mid four figures.

While American-made Premiers never became the next big thing, they are excellent, well-made guitars, mementos of what might have been, but wasn't. **VG**

This late-'50s catalog illustration helped extol some of the brand's virtues.

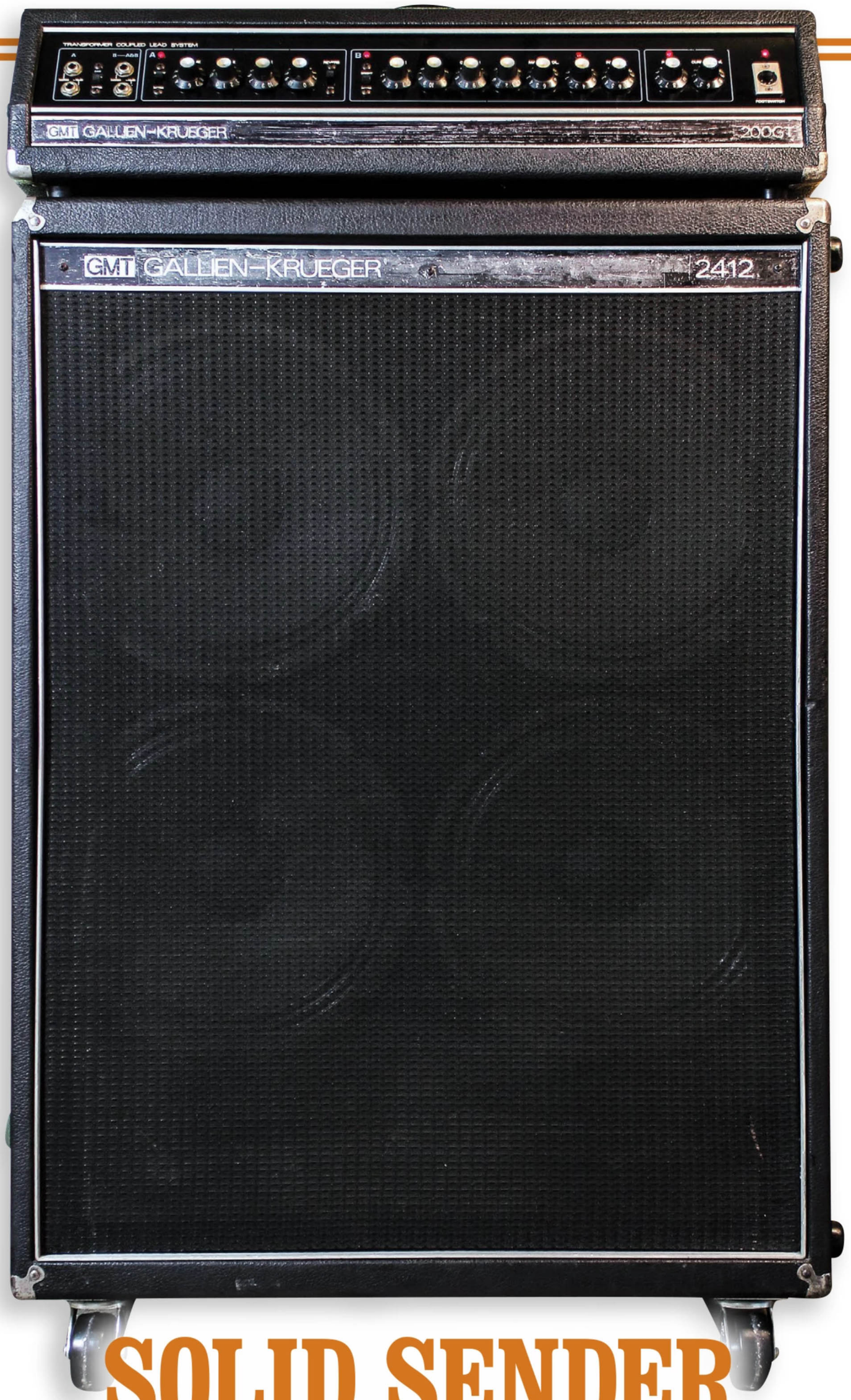


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SOLID SENDER

The Gallien-Krueger 200GT

BY DAVE HUNTER

Following the initial wave of solid-state guitar amplifiers that were supposed to take over the world in the mid '60s (and failed abysmally), the first with real potential arrived just in time to propel Carlos Santana during his legendary performance at the most legendary rock festival in history.

The G-K 2412 speaker cab is loaded with four 4-ohm Eminence drivers with square ceramic magnets.

An early iteration from designer Bob Gallien, Santana's amp preceded the Teutonic-sounding (but American-made) Gallien-Krueger brand, which took solid-state designs to another level.

Given the success of non-tube amps today – modeling or profiling units from Fractal or Kemper, solid-state designs from Quilter, Boss, ZT, et al – plenty of guitarists have accepted that there are indeed viable alternative paths to sonic nirvana. One of the first to credibly hint at a bright new tubeless world, though, was with us a full 50 years ago.

The rig featured here, a mighty 1975 Gallien-Krueger 200GT (and its 2412 4x12" speaker cabinet) hails from the heyday of the company's threat to upend the status quo, yet also represents the spark that never quite flared to full-scale conflagration.

Gallien-Krueger *did* eventually roar to success as a manufacturer of bass amps, and remains princely in that realm to this day. But, of interest here is the fact that the company's founder and chief designer, a guitarist himself, first shot to the big stage on the back of one of his guitar amps.

Gallien earned an engineering degree at the University of California-Berkley in '66, and was working on his Master's at Stanford in '67 when he designed and built a 226-watt solid-state guitar amp for one of his classes. Some time later, thinking it might have potential (or at least earn him a few bucks), he consigned it across the street at Draper Music. The next day, it was purchased by a young local guitarist named Carlos Santana, who used it on his first two albums and his launch party at Woodstock in the summer of '69.

According to a 2007 interview with Cliff Engel, at the Institute of Bass, Gallien made 25 more guitar amps in his basement while finishing his degree and working at Hewlett-Packard, selling them through music stores in the Bay Area.

1975 GALLIEN-KRUEGER 200GT

- Solid-state preamp and output stage
- Power: 200 watts
- Controls: ChA: Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Bright switch, Reverb switch; ChB: Volume, Treble, Contour, Bass, Master Volume, (tremolo) Speed & Intensity; shared Reverb and Current Limiter.
- Speakers: Four 12" Eminence ceramic
- Output: approximately 200 watts RMS

Amp and photos courtesy of Grec Pokorski.

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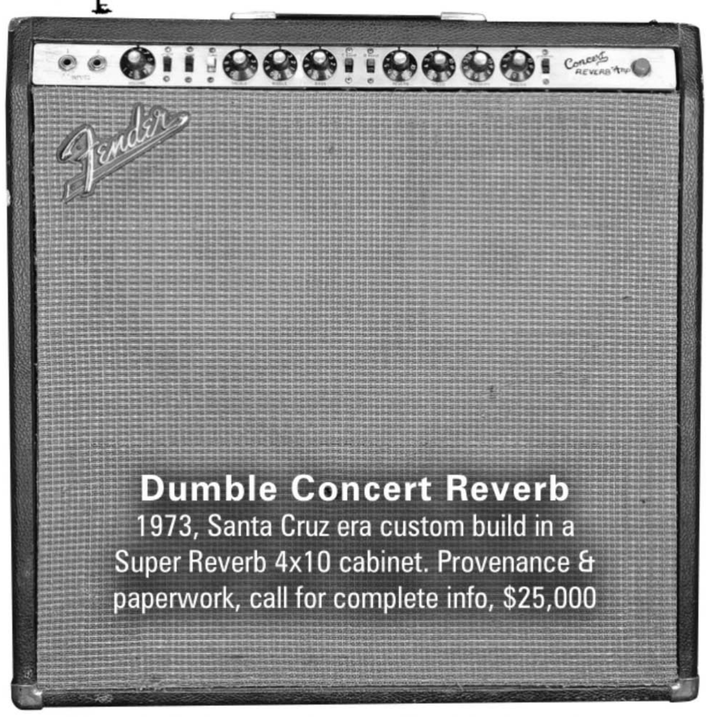
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00-18 '45, neck reset, refret, exc cond, $5750
0-18 '40, Shade Top, refin top, reset/refret, a sweetie! $4500
D-18 '57, scalloped braces by Leo Posch, vgd cond, $6250
N-20 '83, RW back & sides, 26.44" scale, vgd cond, $1950
000-28K Authentic 1921, '14, Figured Koa, exc cond, $3950

ELECTRICS - VINTAGE/USED

Gibson Les Paul Std, 1961, T-tops, Bigsby, no breaks, $6500
Collings 290 DC-S w/Bigsby, '11, TV Yellow, exc cond, $2395
Suhr Modern Set-neck 2010 NAMM LTD, near mint, $3995
Suhr Custom Classic, '10, White w/ matching headstock $2150
Ibanez Artist Model 2630 '78, Sbst, vgd+ cond, $1500
Baldwin Virginian, '65/66, exc cond, way wacky cool! $1350
Fender Mustang Bass, '70, Lake Placid Blue, vgd cond, $1995

ACOUSTICS - VINTAGE/USED

Ray Kraut OM 2011 NOS, Redwood/BrazilRW, amazing! $13,500
Breedlove J25/MP 12 string, '01, custom woods, exc cond, $2250
Gurian Jumbo-Rosewood '74, exceptional cond, $2500
National El Trovador '09, Mike Dowling Model, exc+, $2350

ARCHTOPS - VINTAGE/USED

L-5 Premiere '47, Sunburst, exc cond, $12,500
Super 400CESN '63, Bigsby, Varitone, PAF's, near mint $18.5k
Stromberg G-3 '32, Sunburst, exc cond, $7500
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The 200GT's independent channels are footswitchable, which made it a first in the guitar-amp world.

"The following year, I built about 125 of them," Gallien told Engel. "Initially, I was making guitar amps because I was a guitar player, but Jim Webb, owner of Webb's Music, needed a powerful bass amp to drive speaker cabinets he was building… It turned out bass players liked my bass amps more than guitarists liked the guitar amps, so I saw a market."

Long before the cessation of Gallien's efforts in the guitar-amp realm, though, and after H-P colleague Richard Krueger added his name to the company, this impressive 200GT exemplified the innovation for which G-K would become known. As indicated right there atop the control panel, this was, in fact, much more than a mere guitar amplifier; it was a "Transformer Coupled Lead System." Its predecessor, the 200G of 1974, was the first production guitar amp with actual channel switching. Yes, we know what you're thinking, but any other early amp with a so-called footswitchable "lead channel" was really just engaging another overdrive stage rather than switching between two entirely independent channels. Such was the approach of Mesa/Boogie, Dumble, and others, and the former didn't even introduce footswitching until the Boogie Mark II of late '78 (despite the frequent claim that it was the world's first guitar amp with a footswitchable lead channel).

That "first" aside, the 200GT is an impressively full-featured amp in so many other ways, with its two entirely independent channels, a master Volume control on Channel B to allow driving its higher-gain preamp into said "lead system" distortion, plus Contour to shift the midrange response, along with both reverb and tremolo (with blinking LED for speed indication), an enigmatic Current Limiter control, and 200 watts of solid-state power. A four-button footswitch offers channel selection and on/off for the two effects, and there's a preamp send/return on TRS (a.k.a. stereo) jack on the back panel to tap an effects loop.



How's that for innovation? A four-button footswitch in 1975.

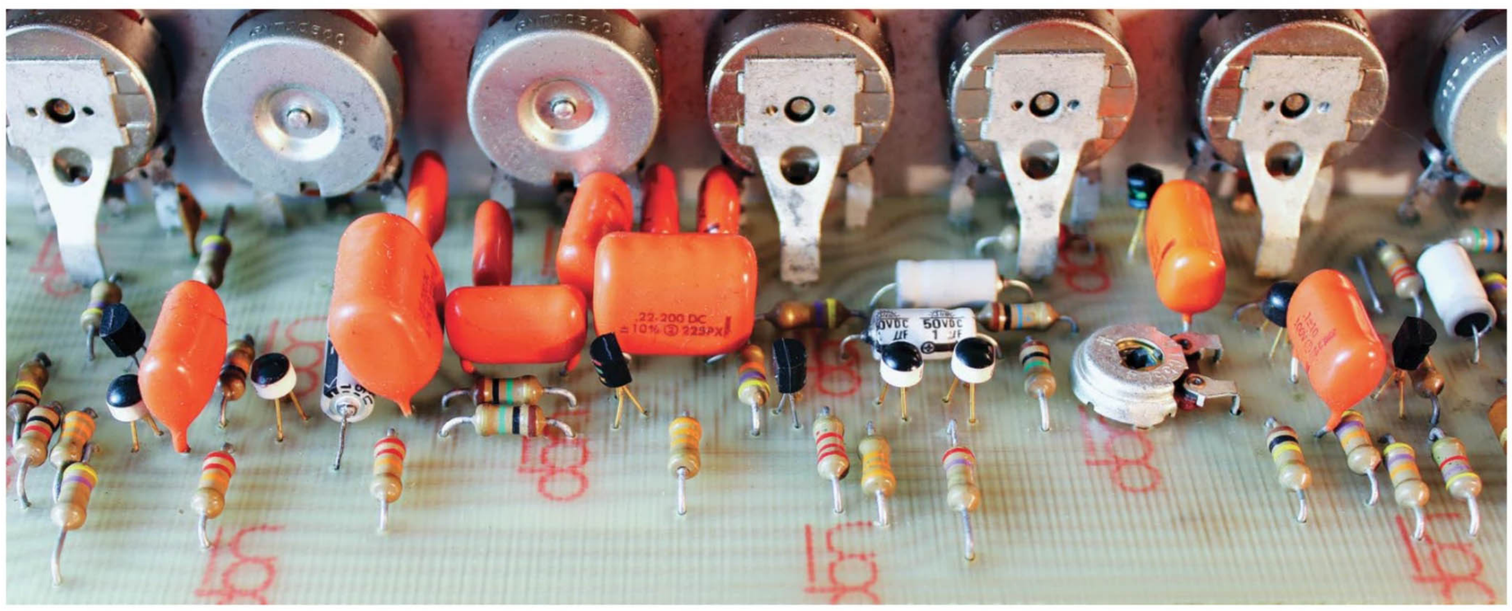
This entire rig, owned for most of its existence by Grec Pokorski, is in remarkably clean condition other than some flaking paint on the logo strips.

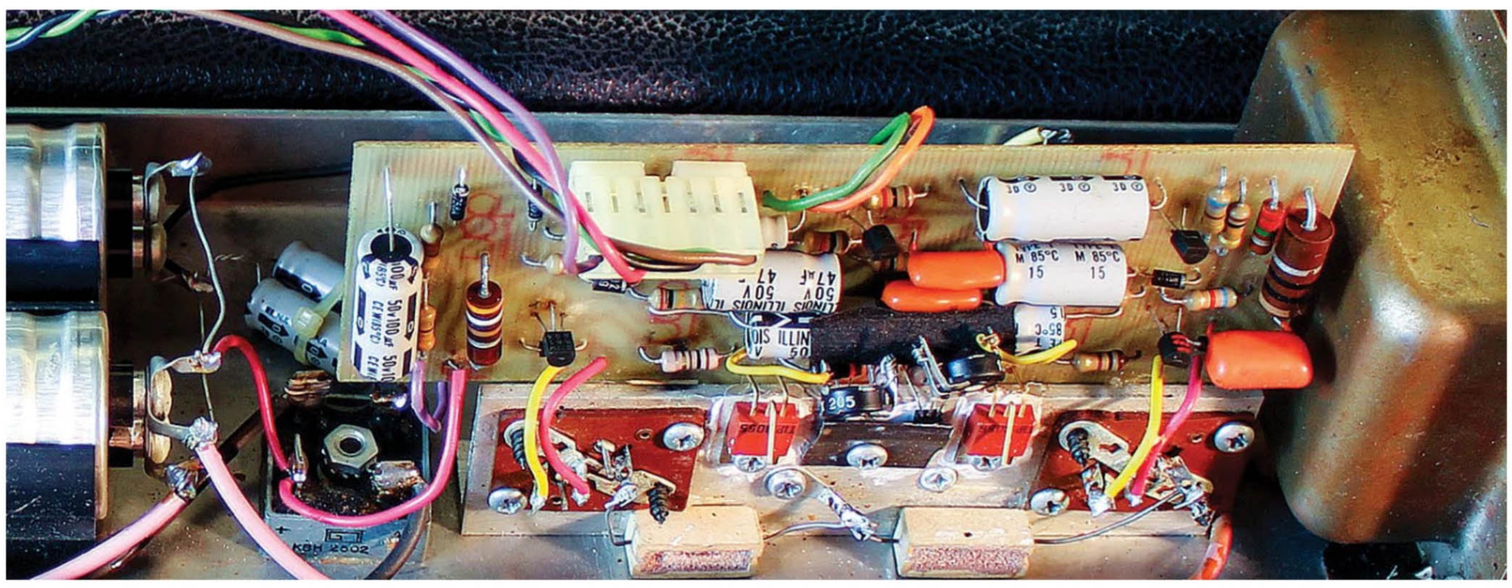
"I bought this monster in 1978, when I was 15," Pokorski tells us. "It was the biggest in the store. Didn't matter if there was a *better* amp, it was the '70s and big amps were the law. I purchased it used from a music store in Ft. Lauderdale for $300, and tiled a room in my dad's house to pay for it."

In addition to Gallien's thoughtful engineering, one of the things that stands out, especially when compared to common solid-state creations of today, is the use of discrete components in a layout that doesn't appear dramatically different from that of the average large-manufacturer tube amp, other than in the substitution of transistors for tubes. The guts of the 200GT reveal a wealth of large carbon-film resistors and orange-drop signal capacitors populating a sturdy printed circuit board, along with tidy and robust construction through and through. The speaker cab itself is an oversized beast, measuring 26½" x 39" x 14½" and loaded with four 4-ohm, 12" Eminence drivers with square ceramic magnets.

"When I acquired the amp, I took it to a friend's house at the foot of one of the Appalachian mountains in Pennsylvania,"

The amp's printed circuit board (top) is loaded with discrete components, including the same orange drop signal capacitors and carbon-film resistors you'd find in many tube amps of the day. The circuit layout (bottom) looks much like that of a tube amp, with tidy connections.

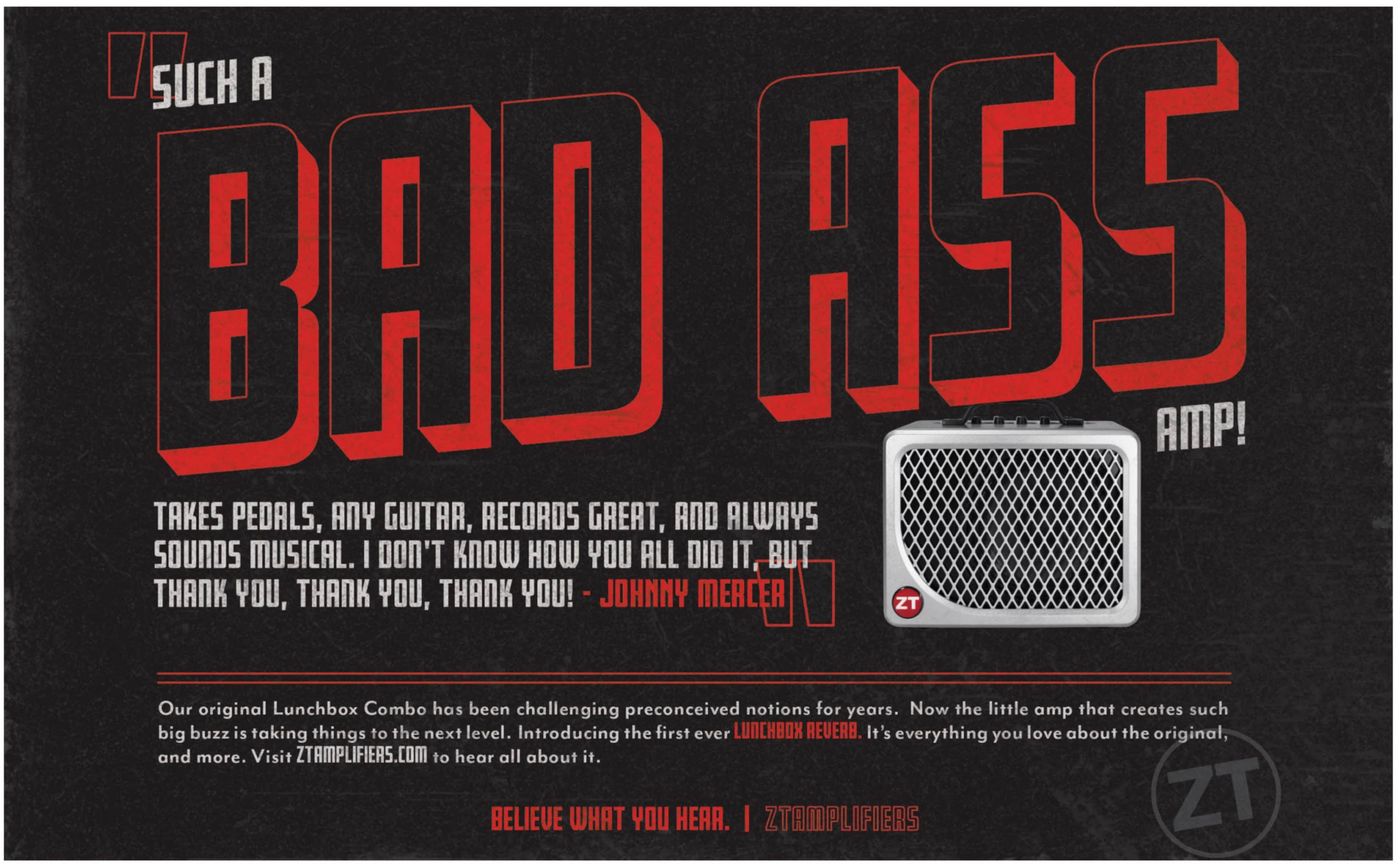




Pokorski recalled. "Being crazy teens, we pointed the speakers at the mountain to see how loud it could get. The echoes were surreal!

"Recently, I plugged a guitar into it for the first time in years, and is it *loud*! It has that solid-state immediacy and gets painful with the Master Volume past 5. The Current Limiter is some type of attenuator; the more you crank it, the more power you can feel from the massive cab. I don't think I've used it past 6. You'll literally feel sick when it gets louder. I have a tolerance to loud tube amps, but this thing slices right through you."

Just right, in other words, for a massive outdoor festival stage (and a once-every-half-century cultural happening). By the time we got to Woodstock… it was louder than hell. **VG**



SONIC-SWAP OPTIONS

The *VG* Guide to Pickups 2020

In guitardom, certain truths are evident, including the dramatic effect a player can get from a simple pickup swap. Apart from the flesh on their fingertips, few things have as much impact, and odds are good that at least one of your axes could use an upgrade. Here are some great choices.



RAILHAMMER ALNICO GRANDE PICKUP

The Railhammer Alnico Grande pickup is modern vintage! It has a warm, lightly compressed attack due to the alnico 5 magnet, but wound hotter than a PAF-style pickup for a thick, round sound and excellent sustain. All Railhammer Pickups have rails under the wound strings and poles under the plain strings for tighter lows, fatter highs, and perfect tonal balance. **www.railhammer.com**.



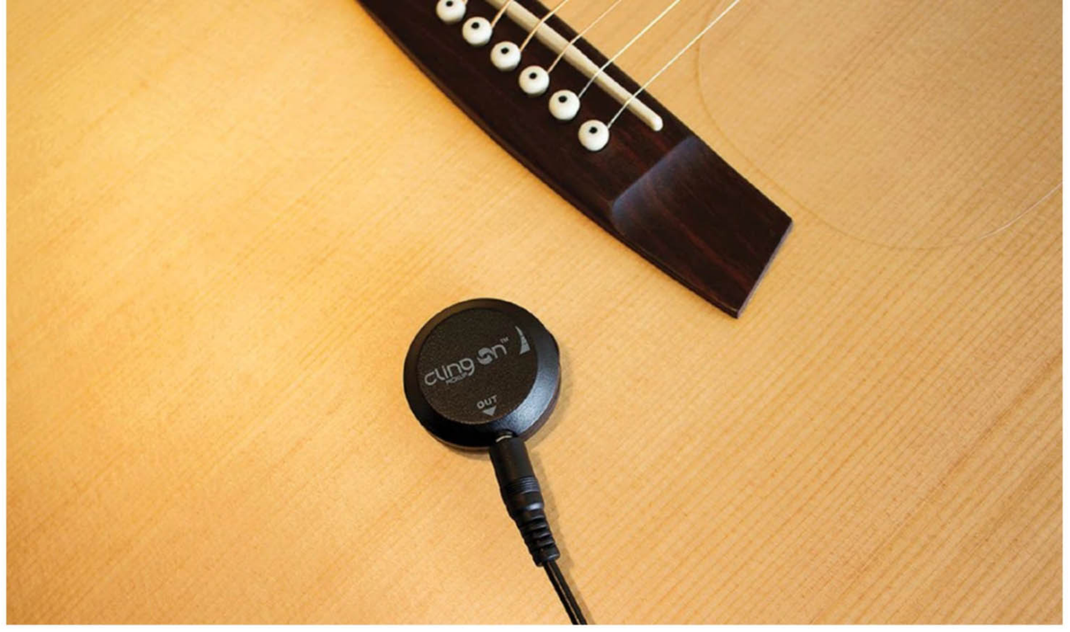
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Malinoski handwound Type13SC silver foils are a fresh design based on the best gold foils from the past; authentic rubber magnets and correct wire gauge but with a wider aperture, consistent modern output and hum-cancelling matched sets. They also fit standard sizes – HB, p90 and mini-hum. And they sizzle...oh, yes they do. **www.malinoskiguitar.com**.



MIGHTY MITE PICKUPS

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Got a vintage instrument you wish you could amplify, but would never modify? The Cling On Pickup is an award-winning acoustic pickup with patented ULTRA-QUICK magnetic attachment. "Plug-and-Play" ready, it is very simple to use and requires absolutely NO instrument modification. Designed primarily for guitar, it works equally well on mandolin, ukulele, banjo and many other acoustic instruments. **www.clingon.co**.



GF'TRON GUITAR PICKUPS

GFS Pickups introduces GF'Tron electric guitar pickups. The GF'Trons utilize the same form factor as vintage Rockabilly pickups, and mount in the existing opening on guitars from the 1950s through today. The GF'Trons are available in three different winds, "Vintage" with Alnico II magnets, "Hard" with Alnico V magnets and "Lead" with Alnico V magnets. Available in Chrome, Gold and Black shells. $39.99ea. **www.guitarfetish.com**.



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New from Cardinal - the Goldbird. This high-powered ferrite magnet and steel base plate equipped single coil adds something special to a classic design. Plenty of power, clarity, complexity, and just enough grind when you need it. Scatter wound by hand, and made one at a time. Fits that single coil rout that we love so much with little to no modification. $95. **www.cardinalinstruments.com**.



ANGELTONE PICKUPS

Angeltone has been making handcrafted single coil pickups one at a time since 2004. Over thirty models are available, including the 5S7 and the 50R/50B "T" style set both shown here. Left handed pickups are available at no extra cost, and modifications are available in our Custom Shop. Call (920) 651-9892 or findyourtone@angeltone.com. Soundclips are available at **angeltone.com**.



SEYMOUR DUNCAN PICKUPS

At Seymour Duncan, we have a 40 year archive of data on pickup design, detailing every nuance, down to the smallest detail. This knowledge is what gives our legendary Antiquity pickups their authentic tone. Introducing the Retrospec'd series. All of our legendary Antiquity designs, with a new appearance. **www.seymourduncan.com**.



LOLLAR PICKUPS BLADEMASTER

The Blademaster is a direct replacement for most Jazzmaster style pickups, featuring alnico bar magnets and a long, nickel-plated steel blade pole piece for more balanced string coverage. Compared to a standard Jazzmaster, Blademaster pickups have higher output; smoother, fuller bottom end with increased fundamental frequency response; retaining clarity, articulation and detail of the bass strings. Various color options available. **www.lollarpickups.com**.
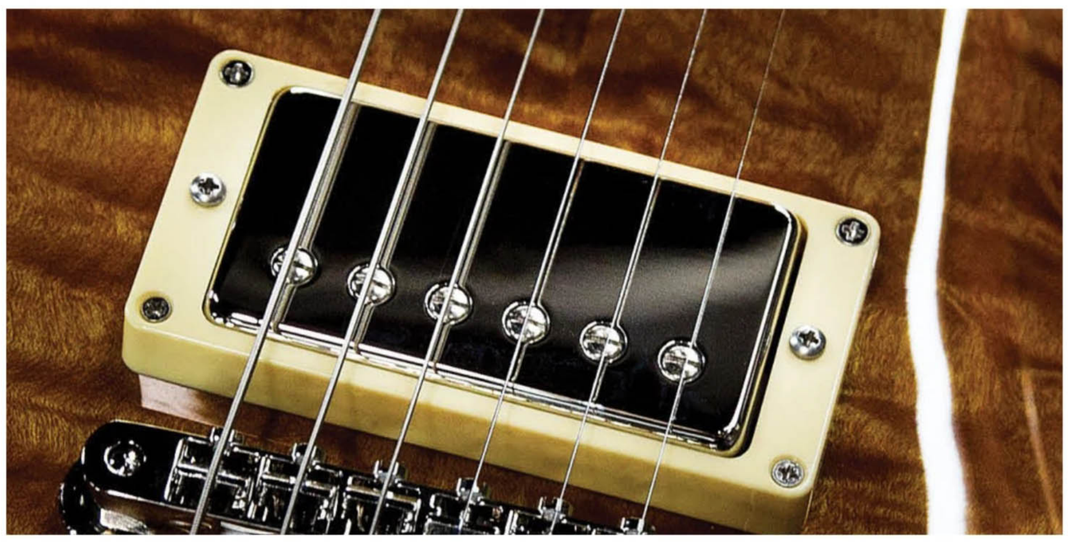


EMG PICKUPS

The EMG Lars Frederiksen DMF Passive Pickup Set delivers high output vintage rock 'n roll tone with a modern look. This set was designed to take the best of the original Dirty Finger pickup, and give it more clarity, power and grit. Featuring an Alnico 5 neck and ceramic bridge. **www.emgpickups.com.**



GOTOH PICKUPS

Gotoh has been supplying high quality pickups to guitar manufacturers across the globe for more than 30 years and are instrumental in getting great sound for many guitars. Gotoh Pickups utilize vintage-style materials and winding standards and are all fashioned with Alnico magnets. Careful technique is used to wax pot these pickups to ensure stability at all levels of amplification. **www.amplifiedparts.com.**



SUHR PICKUPS

Designed in collaboration between Pete Thorn and John Suhr, Thornbucker pickups have all the best attributes of the coveted '50s "patent applied for" style pickup – with none of the downsides. Clarity, balance, definition, and nuanced dynamics, in a low output design. If you are searching for the feel of a great vintage tone, Thornbuckers are the perfect pickups for you. **www.suhr.com.**



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TYSON TONE PICKUPS

Tyson Tone humbuckers are researched from and tested against exceptional sounding vintage PAFs. They are wound on a vintage coil winding machine, utilize sand-cast and individually charged Alnico magnets, vintage correct alloys and 42 AWG plain enamel wire. The Deacon set is shown in aged nickel, offering vintage PAF tone and feel – clear, lively, dynamic, with touch-sensitive responsiveness. **www.tysontone.com.** VG













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Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Gil Hembree



1958 Gibson ES-335 sunburst with Bigsby.

NEW & UPDATED LISTINGS

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1977	Acoustic 115 Amp	50 watts, 1x12	$200	$250
1980	Acoustic 230 Amp Head	125/160 watts	$200	$250
1965	Alamo Bass Tube Amp		$325	$450
1966	Alamo Twin Speaker Tube Amp	All tube, various speakers	$400	$550
1965	Alden Alden H45 Stratotone		$425	$550
1984	Alembic Distillate 4 Bass		$2,200	$2,900
1967	Ampeg AUB-1 Bass		$3,400	$4,400
1968	Ampeg B-15 N Portaflex Amp	1x15	$1,400	$1,850
2000	Ampeg B-3 Amp	150 watts, 1x15, ss	$375	$500
1957	Ampeg Dolphin II Amp		$525	$675
1935	Bacon & Day Flat Top (various levels)	Plain features	$1,750	$2,300
1982	BC Rich Eagle Bass (USA)	Painted wood	$1,600	$2,100
2010	Carr Raleigh Amp	3 watts, 1x10	$1,000	$1,300
1948	D'Angelico New Yorker Special	Natural	$28,000	$36,000
1949	D'Angelico Special (Cutaway)	Sunburst, cutaway	$9,500	$12,300
1937	D'Angelico Style A	Sunburst	$10,000	$13,000
1993	D'Aquisto Centura	Sunburst	$85,000	$110,000
1981	Dean ML Bass	USA	$1,325	$1,750
1963	Epiphone B-5 Artist Model Acou. Bass Viol	Highly figured maple	$2,700	$3,500
1933	Epiphone Blackstone	Masterbilt	$850	$1,100
1955	Epiphone De Luxe Cutaway	Sunburst, NY-made	$4,700	$6,100
1940	Epiphone Emperor (Acoustic Archtop)	Natural	$5,500	$7,200
1993	Epiphone Riveria (USA)		$975	$1,275
1901	Fairbanks Whyte Laydie #7 Banjo		$7,000	$9,000
1957	Fender Bandmaster Amp	Tweed, 3x10	$6,500	$8,500
1953	Fender Champ Amp	Wide panel, 1x6	$1,300	$1,700
1982	Fender Harvard (Solidstate) Amp	20 watts, 1x10	$125	$160
1974	Fender Jazz Bass	Natural, 4-bolt	$2,300	$3,100
1974	Fender Jazz Bass	Natural, 3-bolt	$2,250	$2,950
1989	Fender American Standard Jazz Bass		$750	$975
1994	Fender '60s Jazz Bass (Custom Shop)		$2,075	$2,700
1958	Fender Jazzmaster	Sunburst	$7,300	$9,600
1964	Fender Mandolin (Electric)	Sunburst	$1,825	$2,425
1969	Fender Precision Bass	Sunburst	$4,200	$5,400
1979	Fender Precision Bass	Antigua	$1,650	$2,150
2009	Fender Road Worn '50s Precison Bass		$475	$625
1993	Fender Prodigy	Made in USA	$675	$875
1956	Fender Stratocaster	Blond, nickel hw.	$32,000	$42,000
1965	Fender Stratocaster	Sunburst, green 'guard	$12,500	$16,000
1978	Fender Stratocaster	Black, Blond, White, Wine	$1,650	$2,150
1991	Fender 35th Anniversary Stratocaster (CS)		$1,775	$2,300
1990	Fender Super 60 Amp	60 watts, 1x12 combo	$275	$375
1952	Fender Telecaster	Blond black 'guard	$35,000	$45,000
1961	Fender Telecaster	Blond, slab	$13,000	$17,000

FEATURED SURVEY PARTICIPANT

John Majdalani with a 1955 Gibson Les Paul Model and his wife Olga with a 1996 Rickenbacker 325V63.



YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1979	Fender Telecaster	Black	$1,800	$2,400
1968	Fender Twin Reverb Amp	Silverface, no master vol.	$975	$1,250
2013	Fishman Loudbox			
	Performer Pro-LBX-700	180 watts	$375	$525
1994	G & L L-5500 Bass	5-string	$700	$900
2003	G & L Legacy Deluxe	Figured maple top	$775	$1,025
1922	Gibson A-4 Mandolin	Loar era	$4,800	$6,300
1969	Gibson EB-0 Bass	Slotted head	$975	$1,275
1958	Gibson ES-335TD	Sunburst, Bigsby	$24,000	$31,000
1959	Gibson ES-345 TD	Cherry, Bigsby	$17,000	$22,000
1963	Gibson F-25 Folk Singer	12-fret	$850	$1,100
2000	Gibson Firebird V (Reissue)	Sunburst, White, Black	$1,100	$1,450
1958	Gibson Flying V		$275,000	$350,000
1959	Gibson GA-18 Explorer Amp	Tweed, 1x10	$775	$1,000
1956	Gibson GA-5 Les Paul Jr. Amp	4.5 watts, 1x8	$525	$675
1962	Gibson GA-6 Lancer Amp	Tweed, 1x12, P12R	$700	$925
1974	Gibson Grabber Bass	1 pickup	$850	$1,100
1944	Gibson J-45	Banner, Adirondack top	$7,300	$9,500
1937	Gibson L-0	Black, spruce	$4,300	$5,600
1937	Gibson L-00	Sunburst, spruce	$4,300	$5,600
1975	Gibson L-5 S	Natural or Sunburst, humbuckers	$3,700	$4,800
1939	Gibson L-5PN Premier	Natural	$12,500	$16,000
1953	Gibson Les Paul Model	1/2" knobs, trapeze tp, early '53	$12,200	$15,800
1953	Gibson Les Paul Model	1/2" knobs, late '53 stud tailpiece	$24,000	$31,000
1993	Gibson '59 Les Paul Flametop/Reissue	CS decal, early '93	$5,500	$7,200
1993	Gibson '59 Les Paul Flametop/Reissue	Historic decal, late '93	$4,500	$5,900
2006	Gibson '60 Les Paul Plaintop (VOS)		$2,300	$3,000
1973	Gibson Les Paul Signature Bass	Sunburst	$2,900	$3,775
1964	Gibson SG Standard	Cherry, sm guard, Deluxe Vibr. or Bigsby	$9,600	$12,600
1928	Gibson TB-3 Tenor Banjo		$2,300	$3,000
1923	Gibson TB-4 Tenor Banjo	Trap door	$650	$850
1963	Gretsch Chet Atkins			
	Tennessean (6119)	2 Hi-Lo	$2,250	$2,950
1956	Gretsch Country Club	Cadillac Green	$4,000	$5,100
1956	Gretsch Duo-Jet (6128)	Black, humptop	$5,500	$7,100
1962	Gretsch Model 6154 Super-Bass Amp	70 watts, 2x12, tubes	$750	$975
1972	Guild Aragon F-30	Mahogany	$1,525	$1,975
1986	Guild Ashbory Bass		$375	$425
1964	Guild Cordoba A-50		$950	$1,225
1974	Guild Custom F-412 12-String	Maple	$1,525	$1,975

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Brian Goff
Bizarre Guitars

Les Haynie
Blue Moon Music

Garrett Tung
Boingosaurus Music

Dave Belzer
Burst Brothers

Walter Carter
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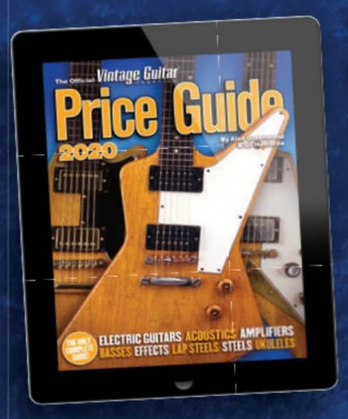
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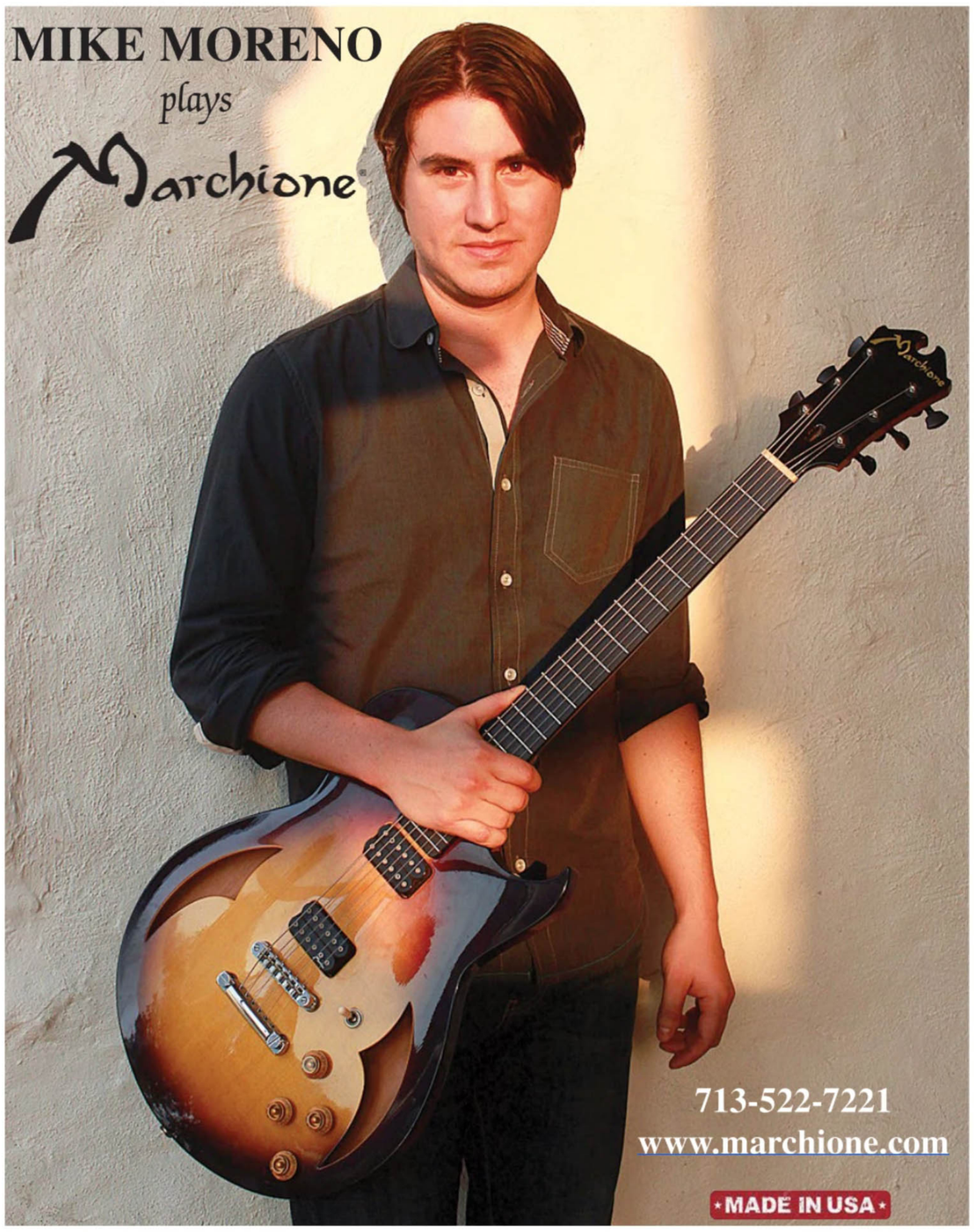
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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1974	Guild M-85 II BluesBird			
	(Solidbody) Bass		$1,450	$1,900
1968	Hagstrom Concord II Deluxe Bass		$1,275	$1,675
1992	Hamer Chaparral 5-String Bass		$1,000	$1,300
2007	Hofner Model 500/1			
	Contemporary Bass		$450	$600
1974	Ibanez Model 2459B Destroyer Bass		$1,600	$2,100
1974	Ibanez Rocket Roll Bass		$1,600	$2,100
1955	Kay K-160 Electronic Bass		$1,000	$1,300
1965	Kay Kay 706 Amp	1x15	$125	$175
1967	Kingston Cougar			
	PB-5 Bass Combo Amp		$55	$90
1974	Kustom Hustler Combo Amp	Color option, 4x10	$300	$400
1957	Magnatone Model 213			
	Troubadour Amp	10 watts, 1x12, v	$950	$1,250
1988	Marshall JCM 800			
	Model 4010 Combo Amp	50 watts, 1x12, reverb	$1,050	$1,400
1989	Marshall JCM 800			
	Model 4104 Combo Amp	50 watts, 2x12, black	$1,150	$1,550
1959	Martin D-18E	301 made	$4,400	$5,700
1966	Martin D-21	Brazilian	$4,700	$6,300
1937	Martin D-28	14-fret, 148 made	$95,000	$125,000
1951	Martin D-28	476 made	$8,900	$11,600
1959	Martin D-28E	176 made	$5,200	$6,800
1992	Mesa-Boogie			
	.50 Caliber+ Amp Head		$525	$700
1999	Mesa-Boogie Buster			
	Bass Amp Head	200 watts, 6x6L6	$550	$725
1999	Mesa-Boogie Cabinet	1x12	$350	$500
1989	Mesa-Boogie Mark III Amp Head		$850	$1,125
1972	Microfrets Husky Bass		$750	$975
1998	Mid-Missouri M-0 Mandolin	M-0	$275	$375
1955	Montgomery Ward			
	1x12 Combo Amp	Low & high power models	$400	$600
1965	Mosrite Ventures Bass	2 pickups, various colors	$1,650	$2,150
1974	Music Man 112 Sixty Five Amp	65 watts, 1x12, Reverb	$425	$550
1957	National Tremo-Tone Model 1224	2 x Rolla	$900	$1,200
1958	Noble Model 381/Custom 381 Amp	2x12 2x5	$1,025	$1,350
1962	PANaramic			
	Model 260/262-Style Amp		$1,400	$1,800
1983	Peavey Bandit Amp	60 watts, 1x12	$105	$130
2001	Peavey Cirrus 5 Bass		$650	$850
1960	Rickenbacker M-15 Amp	35 watts, 1x15	$700	$900
1990	Rickenbacker			
	Model 2050 El Dorado		$975	$1,275
1958	Rickenbacker Model 325	John Lennon, 8 made	$31,000	$40,000
1968	Rickenbacker Model 330 F	F style, thin version	$3,400	$4,400
1979	Roland Cube 40 Amp	1x10	$225	$290
1962	Selmer Thunderbird Twin 30 Amp	30 watts, 2x12	$4,000	$5,200
1961	Selmer Truevoice Amp	30 watts, 1x15 combo	$2,000	$2,600
1968	Sound City Concord Combo Amp	80 watts, 2x12	$1,050	$1,375
1966	Standel A-60 B Artist 60 Bass Amp	ss, 160 watts, 4x15	$375	$500
1988	Stiver F-5 Mandolin		$3,100	$4,000
1965	Supro Thunderbolt			
	S6420 (B) Bass Amp	Jimmy Page, 1x15	$1,350	$1,800
1970	Univox Hi Flyer Bass	Ventures bass	$500	$675
1960	Vega Vegavox IV Banjo	Plectrum or Tenor	$2,500	$3,300
1933	Vivi-Tone Electric Mandocello		$4,800	$6,300
1922	Wurlitzer Model 2090 (Martin 0-28)		$4,900	$6,600


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David Ellefson (left) and Dave Mustaine in the '80s.

SPEED 'N SWAGGER

Megadeth's *Peace Sells... But Who's Buying?*

By Greg Prato

In 1986 and '87, nearly every month saw the release of a new thrash-metal album that would later earn the "classic" label; Metallica's *Master of Puppets*, Slayer's *Reign in Blood*, Anthrax's *Among the Living*, and of course there was Megadeth's *Peace Sells...But Who's Buying?*

Issued September 19, 1986, via Capitol Records, *Peace Sells* established Megadeth (singer/guitarist Dave Mustaine, guitarist Chris Poland, bassist David Ellefson, and drummer Gar Samuelson) as not only one of thrash's top bands, but one of the top dogs in *all* of heavy metal.

When the band began plotting the follow-up to its 1985 debut, *Killing Is My Business... and Business Is Good!*, they didn't scramble for material.

"The songs on *Killing Is My Business* and *Peace Sells* were written around the same time," said Ellefson. "Our very *first* song was one Dave [Mustaine] wrote, called 'Megadeath' – d-e-a-t-h – which didn't make it onto an album until [1988's] *So Far, So Good...So What!*, when it was retitled 'Set the World Afire.' One of the first songs I remember Dave playing was 'Devil's Island,' and the riff actually had more notes in it, but we pulled some out, and the tempo got faster.

"One thing that played a *big* part in the swing and the swagger of the *Peace Sells* songs is they were written at a much slower tempo. You play different when you write a song at a slower tempo. And then we sped them all up. In particular, 'The Conjuring' has this very, dare I say, almost 'Motown swing' to it when you slow it down. And that's indicative of a lot of the material on that record; it has a swagger and a swing at a slow tempo, yet it has a ferocious bite at a fast tempo."

The best of the bunch was undoubtedly the album's title track.

"That song, I always say, fell onto the rehearsal room floor one night. Back in the day, we had one vehicle between me and Dave – it was a van



that my dad let me have when I moved to L.A. from Minnesota. So, I'd drive and Dave would ride shotgun, and we'd sometimes talk about songs. One day, out of nowhere, Dave says, 'What do you think of 'Peace sells, but who's buying?' And I said, 'Awesome! Sounds cool.' I remember he very quickly wrote the lyrics – they just fell right out. We went to rehearsal that night and I remember... I had this BC Rich Eagle – I'd ripped all the frets out of it and it was repainted. Dave picked up that bass and started playing that intro."

Ellefson also recalls how the recording sessions with producer Randy Burns went smoothly at several studios around L.A. between February 15 and March 20 of '86.

"It was pretty good. We had just done a three-week tour in January and February, and we were going to record for Combat (their label at the time). Our recording budget had escalated to $25,000. That three-week tour was essentially our pre-production, and we played pretty much every song we had. *Every* night, when we started that kick drum and that bass intro to 'Peace Sells,' we just *knew* we had a hit with that song."

Ellefson recalled the instruments that he, Mustaine, and Poland used for the sessions.

"I recorded with two BC Rich Mockingbirds – one was red with DiMarzio pickups and the standard BC Rich electronics of the day. I also used the one in the 'Peace Sells' video, which I call the Fighter Jet (*Ed. Note: it now resides in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame*). I put Alembic pickups and an Alembic preamp in it. Dave, I believe, played his BC Rich Perfect 10 that he played as a six-string. He played that in Metallica – natural finish that he painted black.

"Chris had various guitars – a new BC Rich ST, with a superstrat body."

Peace Sells eventually earned platinum certification in the U.S., and helped Megadeth become the first thrash band to be supported

Megadeth: Media Punch Inc./Alamy.

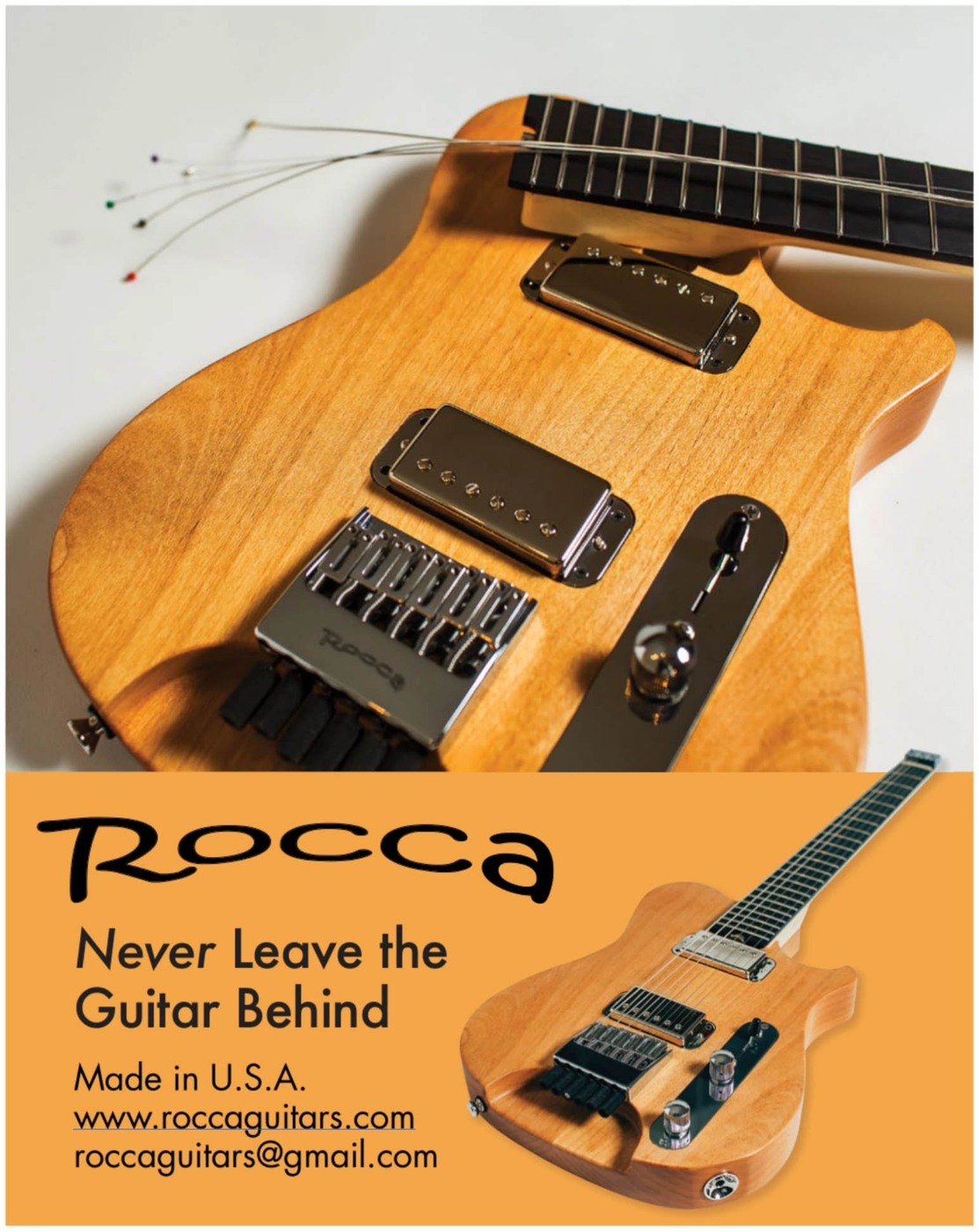
by MTV (videos for the title track and "Wake Up Dead" saw their share of turns on the heavy-metal shows), while opening shows for the likes of Alice Cooper and Motörhead helped spread the word.

Unfortunately, *Peace Sells* would be the last album to feature the band' classic lineup, as Poland and Samuelson were given the old heave-ho after the subsequent tour, as drug use amongst *all* members spiraled out of control. Samuelson passed away in 1999, at age 41.

"One thing that set Megadeth apart in those days with Gar and Chris, was certainly the writing, for sure," Ellefson said. "Gar's drumming style was very light and came from a jazz background – like a prog-rock/jazz-fusion approach. That gave a sort of 'whiskness' to Megadeth. Whereas a lot of the other bands had cannon-sounding drums, ours were much quicker. And Chris helped set the stage with this dichotomy of guitar playing – Dave is this gutsy, ferocious type of player, and Chris has this very fluid, melodic approach. In Chris' case, it's very reminiscent of Allan Holdsworth, John McLaughlin. That really brought a whole next level musical side to Megadeth."

Why does Ellefson feel the era gave us some of the best thrash-metal recordings ever?

"The genre was up-and-coming," he said. "It was just the time and the place – this moment where it was how fast you played being your badge of honor. And on *Peace Sells*, 'Black Friday' is that song for us, as well as 'My Last Words,' where the front half had this power-chord approach, with the bass ripping this descending pentatonic lick through the verse. As brash and heavy and ferocious as our songs were, there was a real 'educated' feel to it. It didn't just feel like it was another bunch of dumb kids out there trying to play as fast and as hard as they could." **VG**



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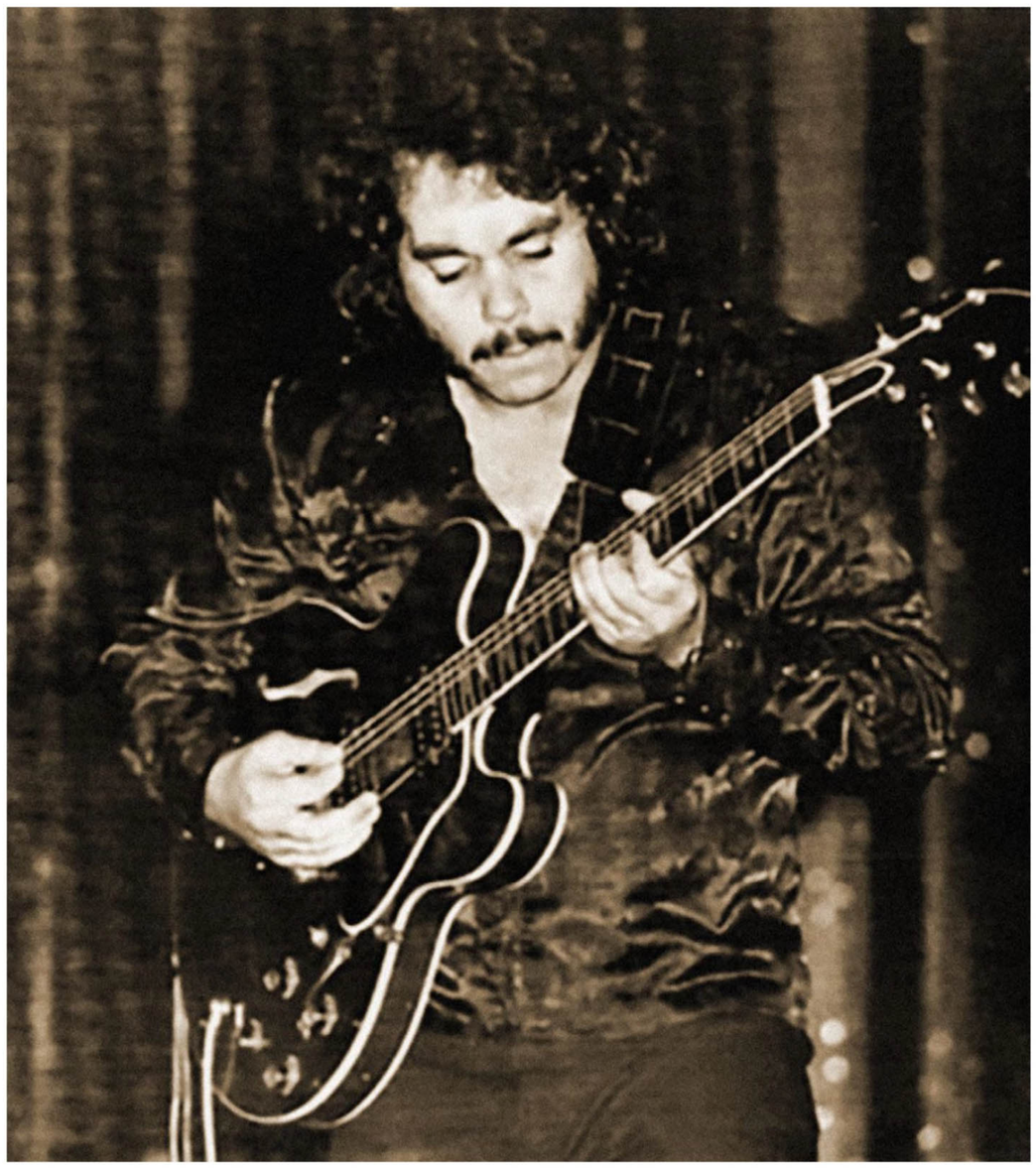
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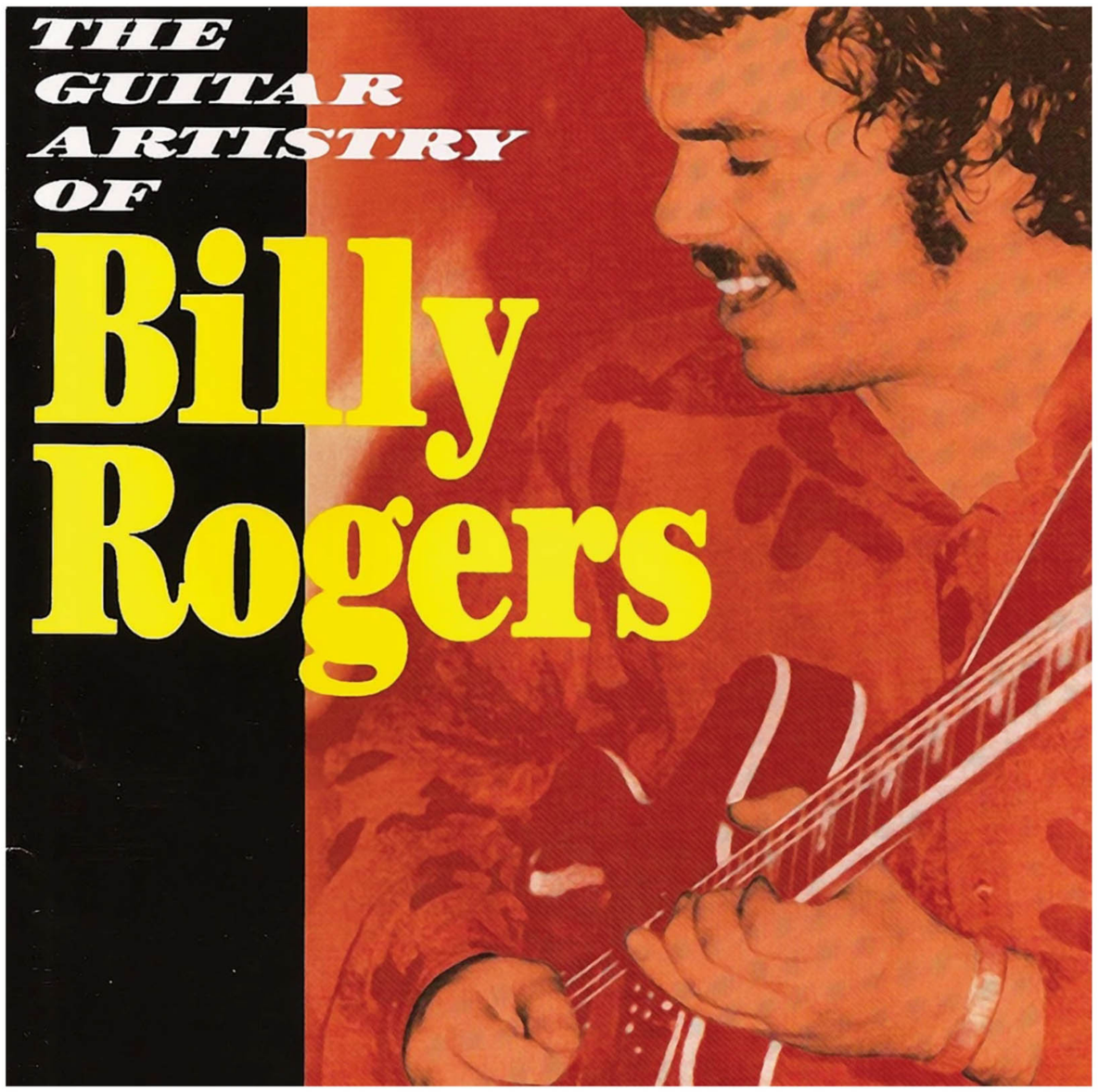
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BILLY ROGERS

Requiem for a Legend

By Wolf Marshall

There are guitar heroes. There are guitar legends. And there are those transcendent mythical figures in the lore who take on a "phantom" persona – players who shine like a diamond but then are snatched from us all too soon. Billy Rogers is just that sort of player.

Rogers' formidable technique, modern concepts, expressiveness, and soulful delivery are the stuff of legend, though his legacy rests on only a handful of dates as sideman and a single unofficial album released five years after his death. His passing left a swath of "if only" speculators who wondered what he might have created. Admirers include Pat Metheny, John Scofield, George Benson, George Shearing, and every prominent musician who knew or heard him.

Every guitarist in Los Angeles remembers it well. When Billy breezed into town in 1977, he captured the imagination of local players as he purveyed his musicianship with various organ trios.

Rogers was born in Omaha on January 2, 1950. His parents were jazz enthusiasts who encouraged his musical interests. After starting on piano, he picked up the guitar at 12, taught himself by ear (often practicing more than eight hours a day), and by 14 was performing with a local rock band while assimilating the blues-guitar language of B.B. King and Albert King. The blues influence remained a fixture throughout his life, lending soulful contrast to his high-velocity, technically proficient licks in countless solos. At 16, he turned to jazz, enthralled by the groove-based format of organ trios that featured George Benson, Kenny Burrell, and Grant Green. He taught himself challenging bebop/soul-jazz by listening closely to Benson's *It's Uptown*, and later was quoted saying, "Everything you need to know about on guitar is on that record."

During one of Green's appearances in the area, Rogers summoned the courage to sit in with the master, though he admitted he didn't know anything about playing. That would come a couple of years later, when he fully connected with the instrument and his music. While teaching himself and honing his chops as a teen, Rogers worked in nightclubs around Omaha with Don E. Beck, Ron E. Beck, and John Maller, where he'd regularly tear it up. To gain entrance, he had to be chaperoned by his mother or an aunt.

In the late '60s, he began exploring the national jazz scene. In '67, he joined Frank Edwards' organ trio and toured the midwest, impressing regional luminaries in Minneapolis, Chicago, Indianapolis, Kansas City, and Detroit. In '71, he began working with keyboardist Bobby Lyle, who described Billy as the embodiment of his art, "Not just *playing* the guitar, but *becoming* the guitar. Fingers, mind, and instrument fusing together to create a continuous stream of articulate ideas in any format."

That association led to stints with Ronnie Foster and Jack McDuff, master of the soul-jazz B3 who had previously employed Grant Green, Burrell, Martino, and Benson.

"Whatever I had in the book, he played the hell out of it – better than anyone," McDuff wrote in the liner notes for *The Guitar Artistry of Billy Rogers*, an album crafted from demos discovered after his death and released in November of '92 by Rogers' longtime friend and guitar comrade, Dave Stryker. "It seemed like he had conquered that field and was ready to move on to his own thing."

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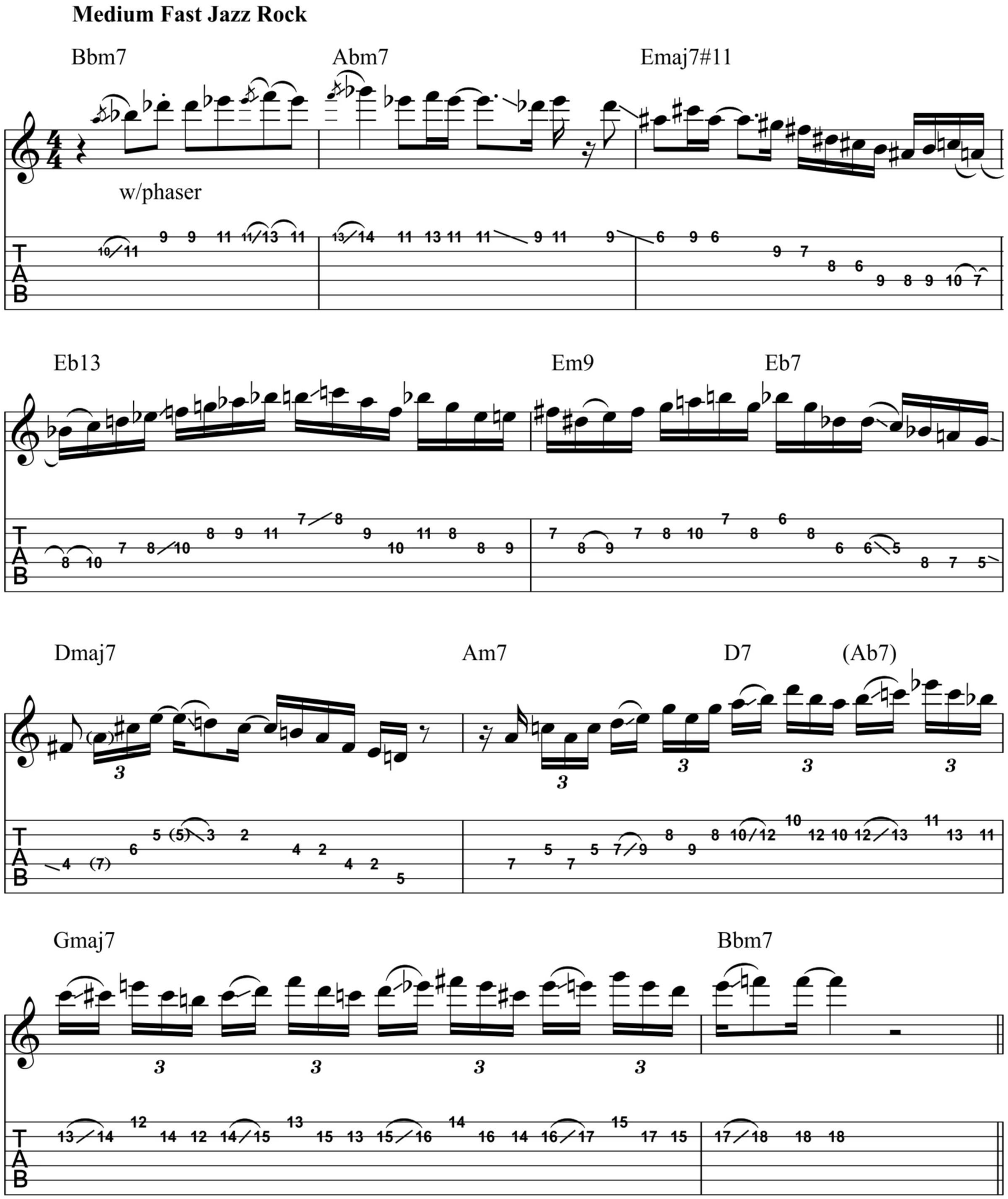
Rogers then upped his jazz credentials with Dr. Lonnie Smith and George Shearing. Smith, a modern exponent of the B3 school, had played on Benson's *It's Uptown*.

"He was an extraordinary guitarist," Smith wrote for the *Guitar Artistry* liner. "No matter what tempo, he could cut it. He had a beautiful concept, good touch and feel, big ears, and was very quick and very natural. He would have been one of the great forerunners on his instrument."
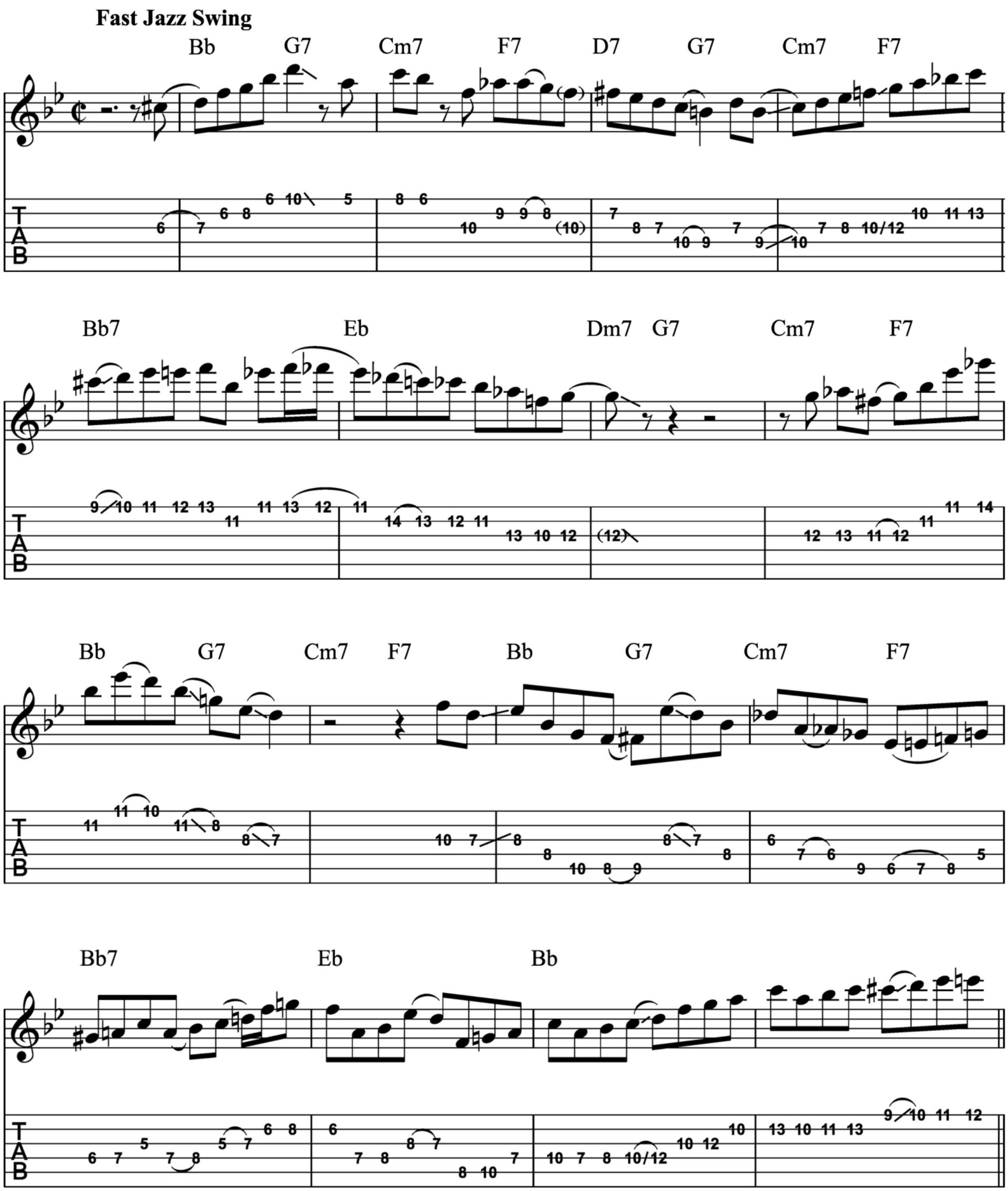
In '75, Rogers joined a group led by acclaimed pianist/composer George Shearing. Shearing had been a jazz star since the '40s and hired a number of important guitarists including Chuck Wayne and Toots Thielemans. Rogers stayed with his band for nearly two years before moving to Los Angeles in 1977.

In L.A., Rogers was soon playing with saxophonist Ronnie Laws, a pioneer of the smooth-jazz movement. At this point, Billy was reshaping his jazz and R&B conception to reflect the changing genre, and refining his rhythm-guitar approach to address the demands of funk/fusion comping. His first recorded work, a prescient funk/jazz outing, happened that year with Bobby Lyle, on *The Genie*; the guitar solo on "Pisces" remains a telling track in Rogers' discography.

Rogers was an obscure, albeit pivotal, figure in the early development of smooth jazz. Fusion had expanded past standard jazz-rock and was embracing funk vamps, pop elements, and R&B grooves while undergoing a transition to a new manifestation that appeared in the commercial circles, personified by Tom Scott's L.A. Express and the Yellow Jackets, studio guitarists Larry Carlton, then with The Crusaders, Lee Ritenour, Robben Ford, and Carlos Rios, and informed equally



After losing guitarist Larry Carlton, The Crusaders rebounded in the late '70s with Billy Rogers onboard. His work on *Images* represents some of the most-inventive and well-recorded samples of his playing. This excerpt contains several trademarks. Note the use of a phaser to color the tone, and the rhythmic pentatonic and R&B intent in his opening phrase. Here, the emphasis is on punctuation, simplicity, and groove. In measure 3, he gathers momentum with a series of more-complex bop lines adapted to the fusion setting, prepping the stage for the stream of 16th notes that follow. Check out his use of modal and bop elements as he weaves melodies through the changes. He plays B major hexatonic for a Lydian effect over Emaj7$^{\#}$11 and uses Cm and Fm as extensions over E$^{\flat}$13. The quicker progression in 5-6, Em9-E$^{\flat}$7-Dmaj7, finds him following the changes with his personal reinterpretation of a ii-V-I lick. The climactic closing line in 7-8 exploits a fast-triplet motif and begins in a minor-pentatonic mode over Am7. By beat 4, Billy subjects the motif to a chromatic treatment for a strong rising sequence resolving to B$^{\flat}$m7 in the final bar.



Rogers' style was deeply rooted in bebop and modern jazz. No track on *Guitar Artistry* demonstrates this as well as "Billy's Bop," a masterful retelling of "Rhythm Changes," the same chord progression that united Lester Young with Charlie Parker and George Benson with Wes Montgomery. Like his forebears, Billy plays it at a fast cut-time clip and lets the music relate the story of his incredible chops; his approach to the language splitting the difference between venerable bebop and exploratory modern jazz. This example illustrates his fluent horn-like improvisations over the first half of the A-A-B-A form. Note the use of idiomatic B♭ hexatonic and altered-chord melodies over F7 in the opening phrase. He weaves a variety of sounds throughout – a D7 substitution in 3, chromatic major-blues passage in 5, and borrowed arpeggio from the E♭ diminished scale over F7 in 8 (one of his staples) answered by a slurred Bensonesque Cm9 arpeggio in 9. Billy plays intervallic lines in 11 and 14, uses the altered scale over Cm7-F7 in 12, and combines hexatonic and chromatic melodies in 15-16.

by jazz-rock fusion, post-bop modernism, black dance music and post-Steely-Dan slickness. When Carlton left The Crusaders to pursue his solo career, Billy was tagged from a legion of aspiring guitarists to replace him.

The music Billy made with The Crusaders in '77-'78 sounds like the freshest and most-sophisticated version of what came to prominence two decades later. No guitarist in the genre could match him for technique, feel, and ideas, or the manner in which he reconciled advanced bebop and modern-jazz improvisation with funk, fusion, and commercial pop/jazz formats. He had replaced his earlier hollowbody Gibson ES-175 with the proven tools of the trade – a thinline ES-335 and a Fender Strat – but still played (and occasionally overdrove) Fender tube amps.

At the pinnacle of The Crusaders' commercial success, Billy's playing graced *Images* and *Street Life*, a Top 20 album on three *Billboard* charts. His presence on the latter is minimal and largely woven into a heavy funk tapestry dominated by rhythm guitarists Roland Bautista and Paul Jackson, Jr. However, the ensemble playing and improvisations on *Images* are notable examples of his fusion approach applied to the incipient funky jazz movement. Rogers' solos on "Marcella's Dream," "Merry-Go-Round," and "Snowflake" are striking cases in point, but are relatively restrained compared to his dynamic live performances.

"Billy is to be included among the guitar giants," said Crusader saxophonist Wilton Felder. "He was a passionate man who spoke through his guitar. Playing with him was as much a thrill as being on the same bandstand with Wes Montgomery."

Plas Johnson, soul-jazz/

hard-bop saxophonist and veteran studio musician (known for his tenure in The Wrecking Crew and playing the "Pink Panther" theme) said Rogers was, "Always inspired, never ordinary... He was the guitar player of his generation. When Billy was in the band, everyone's playing went up a notch."
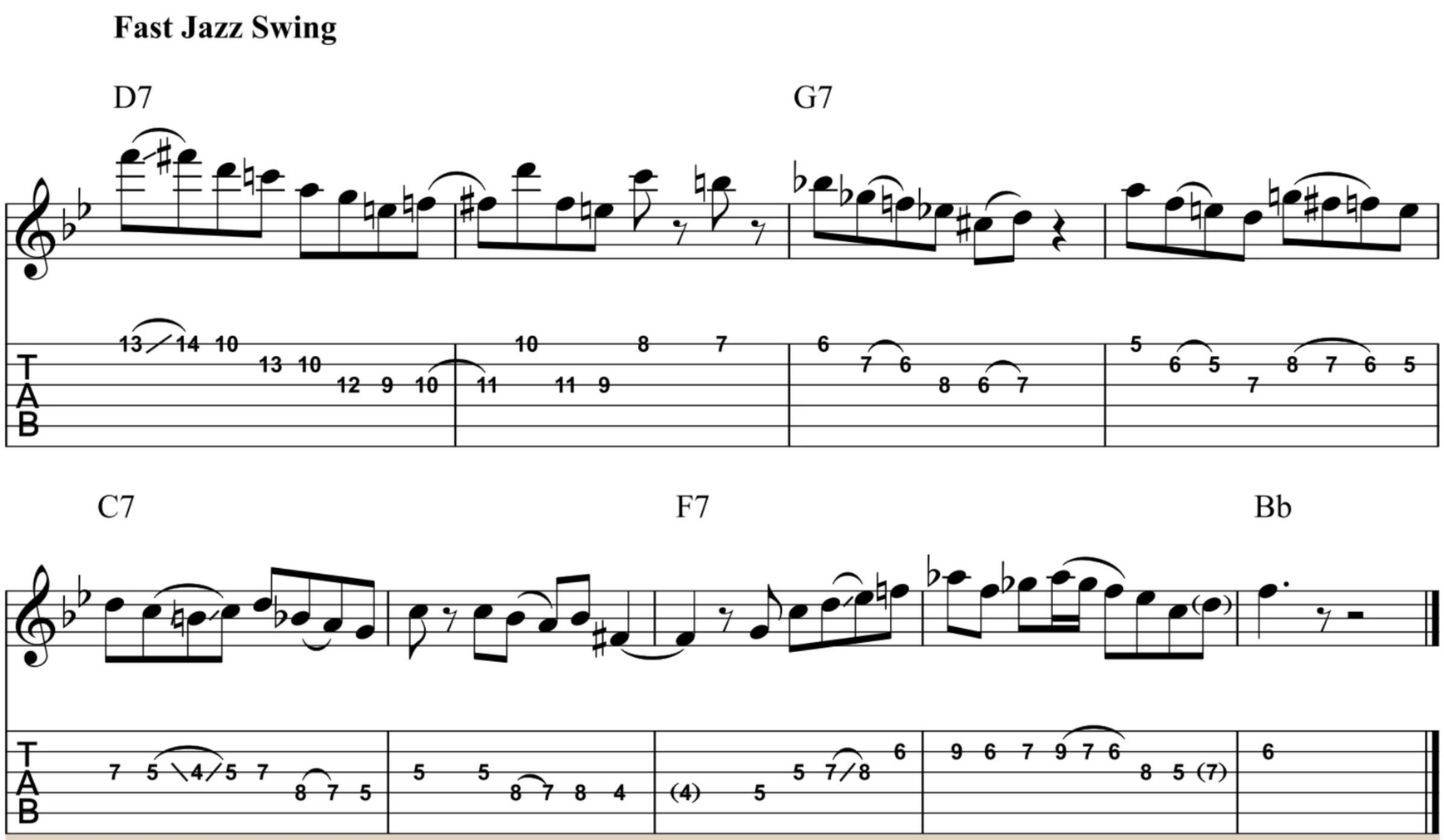
A sample of their chemistry can be heard on the 1984 album *Plas Johnson with the Grease Patrol: L.A. '55.*

In '84, Rogers moved to San Francisco and worked on the local jazz circuit with Jules Broussard and others. He became interested in the playing of Allan Holdsworth, which was a natural outgrowth of and progression from his blues, rock, and straight-ahead jazz roots, as well as the post-bop language of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and McCoy Tyner.

On February 11, 1987, Rogers was found dead in his apartment. Plagued by addiction for a decade, he overdosed at just 37. Rogers' career never received the boost that might've given him the recognition he deserved. Rather, he remained an underground legend during and after his lifetime, his name spoken with reverence and admiration by cognoscenti, fans, and the world's top players.

Stryker's November '92 release of *The Guitar Artistry of Billy Rogers* provided an overdue celebration of Rogers' music that rightfully rekindled an interest in the jazz community. The sole album of his efforts as a leader, it was assembled from Billy's playing over work-in-progress guide tracks on his four-track recorder, it's the basis for a legacy-defining opus. Stryker painstakingly added an overdubbed rhythm section to accompany the skeletal isolated tracks – himself on rhythm guitar on four tunes, with bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Jeff Hirshfield on nine of 10 pieces. "Good Morning Heartache" features Billy with singer Linda Cunningham Giambalvo, keyboardist Steve Solomon, bassist Craig Faltin, drummer Charlie Bulla, and Plas Johnson on tenor sax. The tribute remains a piece of essential jazz-guitar listening with a varied program that includes standards like "My Funny Valentine" and "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," along with modern compositions such as Wayne Shorter's "ESP" and "Fee Fi Fo Fum," and Herbie Hancock's "Tell Me a Bedtime Story." "Body and Soul" and the bossa-nova classic "How Insensitive" are rendered as rubato solo guitar pieces decorated with spellbinding virtuoso flourishes. Two of his originals, "Billy's Bop" and "Egocentric Ions," round out the playlist. The former is an "I Got Rhythm" contrafact that personifies his transformation of traditional hard bop, while the latter is a moody, ambient work revealing the effect of fusion and jazz-rock on his evolving style; it comes off like a happy collision of George Benson at his most animated and Allan Holdsworth's intricate modern passage work. Allegedly performed while experimenting with a Modulus graphite-neck solidbody, it embodies what jazz historian Leonard Feather wrote of Billy in his heyday; "He seemed constantly to be searching for new and challenging avenues of expression."

A fitting eulogy for a musician who never sat still during his brief time on Earth.



"Billy's Bop" offers a telling look at Rogers' handling of cycle-of-fourths progression – D7-G7-C7-F7 – found in the B sections of "Rhythm Changes." A number of intriguing signature moves are evident. His line over D7 splits the difference between major blues and intervallic playing. In measure 3, he extends an E♭m motif into G7 for a characteristic "delayed resolution" effect, moves the motif down a half-step to Dm, an example of post-bop "side slipping," and fuses it with a G "bebop scale" line in 4. Billy applies extended G minor sounds to C7 and adds a dissonant F♯ tone to cleverly unite C7 and F7, functioning as both the flatted fifth of C7 and the flatted ninth of F7. He concludes with a time-honored bebop melody beginning in C minor in 7 and a substitute diminished line in 8 over F7.

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



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Epiphone Cortez, 1959, sunburst, Gibson era, vgc+.....$2250

Other Flat Tops & Classicals

Alvarez-Yairi DY-73, 1982, Dread, Solid Spruce top, Mahogany b&s, Abalone trim, signed, K&K pickup, exc, hsc..$1095
Burgeois DBJC, 2008, cutaway 16" jumbo flat top with Redwood top, R'wood b&s, 1 3/4" at nut, exc, ohsc $3500
Collings OM-1, 2017, Torrified top, Mahog b&s, mint, ohsc.....$2995
Collings CJ-41, Lefty, SB, German top w/Abalon, RW b&s . .$3950
DYER Harp Guitar, Style 4, ca 1920, a nice one!, hsc.....$4500
Goodall RGC, 2000, 15" jumbo, Englemann top, 1 13/16".....$3500
Kovacik D-40, 2003, Braz Dreadnought, exc, hsc $5500
Lowden 0-32, c 1995, Jumbo, Spruce top, R'wood b&s, pearl rosette, pu, invisible pghd repair, ohsc, exc .$2950
Manzer PIKASSO Guitar, 1 of 2, pearl trimmed $95,000
McPherson MG 5.0XP, Bear claw, RW b&s 5" depth exc.....$6500
SCGC H/AE, 2000, Black cutaway, abalone trimmed $3500
Taylor 710 Brazilian, 1996, Engleman top, exc, ohsc.....$2750
Taylor 612, '89, choco Spruce top, maple b&s, exc, ohsc.....$1695
Taylor 355CE, 2002, LEFTY 12-string, Cutaway, pu..... $995
Veilette Avante, NEW, high strung 12 str, Black, pickup, $1195
VOX Country Western Dreadnought, '70s, Italy, vgc..... .....$500
Velazquez El Classico, 1961, Braz b&s, exc-, ossc.....$2850
Kenny Hill Perf. Classical, 2012, lattice, rosewood b&s.....$3500
Kohno Mod.15, 1978, Spruce top, RW b&s, 660 mm, exc.....$2500

Resonator, Steel & Slide Guitars

National Aragon, 1939, sb, Wood, Loudest & Rarest, exc... $12,500
National Tri-Cone, 1932, Style 1 1/2,Square Neck, exc-.....$3250
National Style 0, New, Lightning Bolt, nickel over brass..... $2890
National Style 0 Mandolin, 1930, exc, ohsc.....$2500
Dobro, 1935, Model 37 Sq neck, walnut top, exc, hsc.....$1850
Gibson Consolette Double 8 Steel ca 1956, Korina, exc..... $1500
MANY other Lap Steels and Resonator guitars

Mandolins & Banjos

Monteleone Grande Artist, sb, from the master's hand $21,000
Gilchrist Model 5, F-5 Loar style, '03, exc, Calton case..$17,500
Gibson Florentine Mandolin, 1969, sb, 1 P-90, exc,ohsc.....$2400
GIBSON K-1 Mandocello, 1913, blonde, exc, ossc. $3750
Gibson A-2-Z, 1924, Snakehead, blonde, exc, ohsc.....$4500
GIBSON F-9 2009, pickup in bridge, exc, ohsc...$2200
Gibson A-50, 1939, sb, spruce top, maple b&s vgc+ hsc..... $1350
WEBER Hyalite Octave Mando 2006, 20" scale, exc $2250
S.S. Stewart 5-Str Banjeaurine, ca 1899, 10"x21".....$895
Bacon Professional *ff* Concert Special 5-Str. 1917, hsc $3750
Vega Professional Tenor, c 1930, vgc, hsc $800

Amps

BOGNER Shiva Combo 2006, 1x12 EL-34s, reverb,exc+ 1650
Carol-Ann OD-50 MH Head, exclusively here $3400
DUMBLE Overdrive Special, 1979, 50 W combo, suede.$97,000
Fender Deluxe Reverb, 1967, Black Panel, exc.....$2500
Fender Dual Showman Reverb, TFL-5000D, '69, exc.....$850
Fender Princeton 1961, Brown, 10" Eminence vgc+. ..$2200
Fender Twin '55, Low Power 5E8 Narrow panel, retweed....$5500
Twin Reverb, 1968-69, drip edge , 2x12" EVs, vgc+..... $1000
Fender Vibrolux, 1961, Tweed, killer sound, P-10R, vgc.....
....Gibson GA-40, 1953, Tweed, 12" Celestion, worn, vg..... $1450
Magnatone Troubador 213, 1964, 1 Jensen C12R 12" $1495
Magnatone Custom 460 ,1961, 2 12" Oxfords, Trem, exc ... $2195
Mesa Boogie Mark II, ca 1985, White, vgc+... ..... .$1295
SANO 1x12" combo, '60s, spatter grill, Reverb,Trem $495
Silvertone 1484 Piggyback amp, 1965, 2-12" Jensen exc.....$795
Tyler 20-20 Tweed, used, like a tweed Deluxe, exc.....$895
VoxAC-30, c 1964, new Vox grill cloth, grey top, orig spkrs$3250

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GIG SMARTER

Tips for the Aging Guitarist

By Will Kelly

Time waits for no musician... except Keith Richards.

I've noticed that as I age, what used to be relatively unimportant things like guitar straps and picks make a big difference in my personal comfort level.

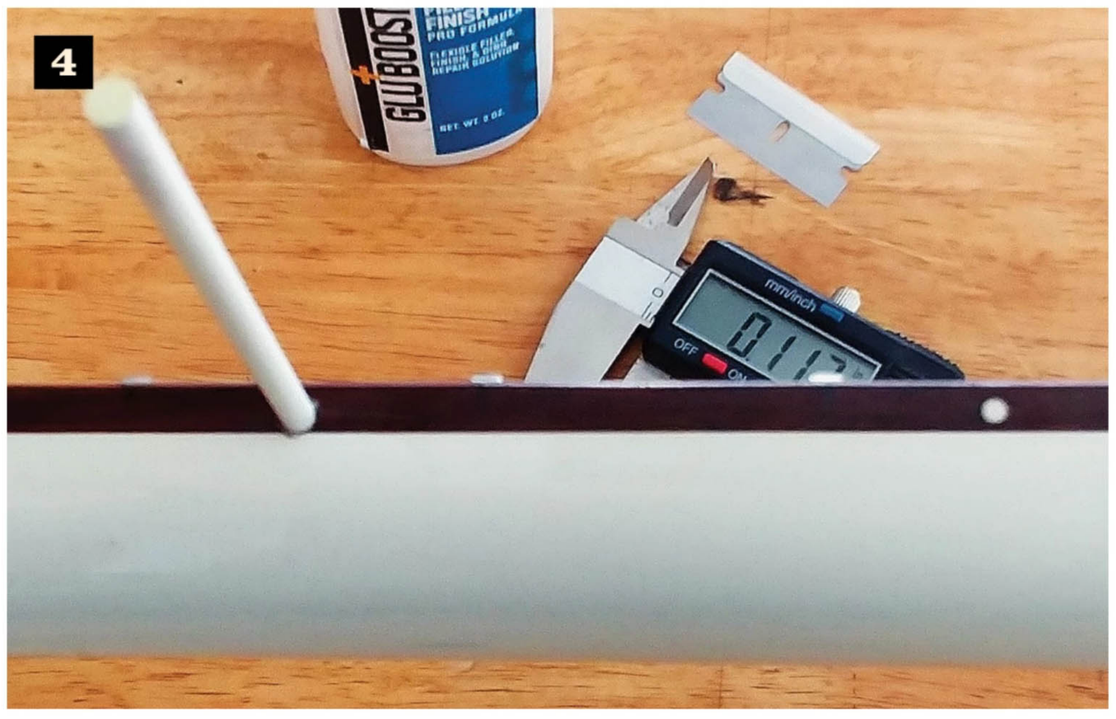
Lighter amplifiers, effects boards, and guitars are also part and parcel of the changes musicians make when adapting to the challenges of aging. In case you're in that boat, here are some tricks to ease the strain on your eyes, back, knees, and ears!

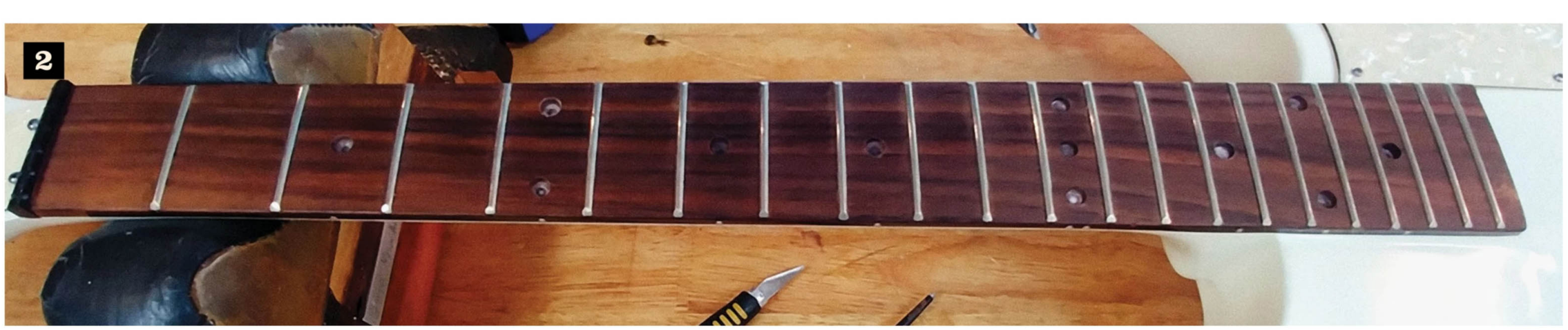
1) Everyone's eyesight worsens as they age, and position markers on a fretboard become harder to see on darkened stages. One good solution is Luminlay, a highly luminescent material used to substitute stock dot markers. They're sized to directly replace the 1/4" top and 1/8" side dots, charge with exposure to sunlight or ultraviolet lamps, and retain their brightness for hours.

2) To install Luminlay, I started by marking the center of each existing dot and, with a Forstner bit, I drilled a 3/16" hole through the inlay. Taking care to not drill too fast or too heavy (to avoid widening or deepening the hole), they broke loose once the bit had gone through. I then turned the bit around and inserted the blank end, rolling it until I heard remaining pieces break loose. Using a razor-blade knife, I then removed fragments of inlay and glue before using a bit of naphtha on a cotton swab to remove grease or other contaminants.

3) I carefully tested the fit of each new inlay, making sure they were flush with the fretboard (any that aren't should require just a few rotations of the bit at the bottom of the hole). Using super-thin cyanoacrylate (CA) glue, I wicked the adhesive along the edge of each inlay. After the glue dries, burnishing the inlay and surrounding fingerboard will provide a smooth, seamless appearance. I was careful when cleaning the fretboard – a flannel cloth









with some lemon oil is all that's needed to finish each dot.

4) The side dots were much easier to replace. After carefully marking the center of each with an awl, I used a .125" bit and drilled each location to a uniform depth (approximately 1/8"). Luminlay is packaged in a rod, and cut by the user to fit each hole. For the sides, it's important to keep the bit parallel to the plane of the fingerboard, *not* at a right-angle to the side of the neck – you don't want to drill through the top of your fretboard! After drilling I inserted the Luminlay.

5) I used a single-edge razor blade to carefully trim material flush with the surrounding surface. After trimming, I used fine-grit sandpapers (the same used for the fretboard inlays) to level and polish the dots.

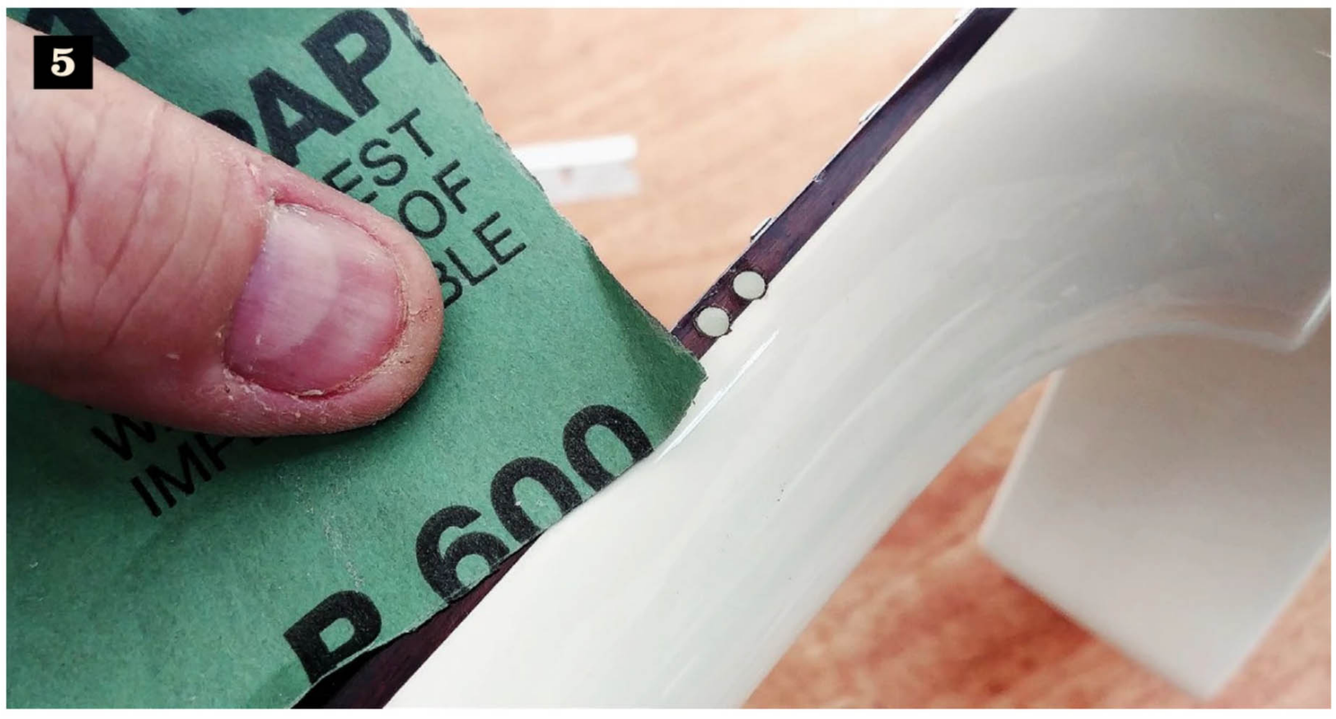
6) If you have problems maintaining grip on your picks, you might try my method for making them "drop-proof." Get some that are slightly thicker than you typically use (if you play an .80 mm, try a 1.00 mm) then drill a few 3/16" holes in the center/middle of one. This allows skin to protrude through the holes and connect with the opposing fingertips. To fine-tune grip and flex, experiment with placement, size, and number of holes; adding holes increases flexibility (hence the slightly heavier pick).

7) Try a high-quality set of in-ear monitors. The "monitor by the mic stand" era is over. Most musicians today prefer a personal stage mix, including volume level. It's also much less damaging to your ears – and back, since you're not lugging those heavy three-way monitor boxes.

8) Since the inception of the modern loudspeaker in the 1920s, manufacturers have employed various rare-earth metals in their magnets. Alnico was the standard until the '60s, when ceramic composites stole their thunder. Now, we have neodymium magnets, and the typical assembly for a 12"/100-watt neodymium speaker is approximately half that of Alnico. Plus, neodymium is twice as strong, magnetically, as Alnico or ferrite. So, a neodymium magnet can be half the size (and thus, half as heavy). This is especially helpful in a multi-speaker cabinet or combo. Note the size difference between the two!

Getting older doesn't mean playing less, it just means playing smarter, and smart mods are just part of smart musicianship.

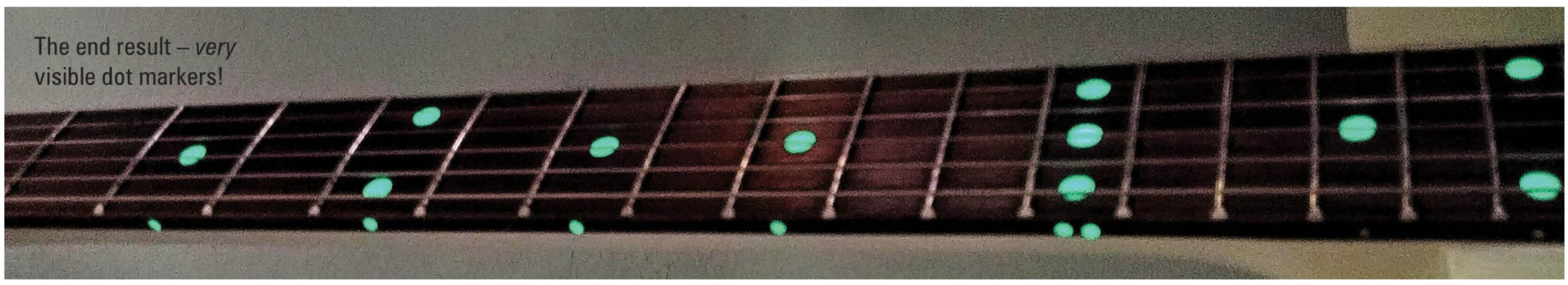
Will Kelly is a guitarist, repairman, and the author of *How to Build Electric Guitars*. He operates Hard Knocks Guitars in Apex, North Carolina, where he has played host to countless artists, instruments and amplifiers. You can contact him at WillKelly@nc.rr.com.










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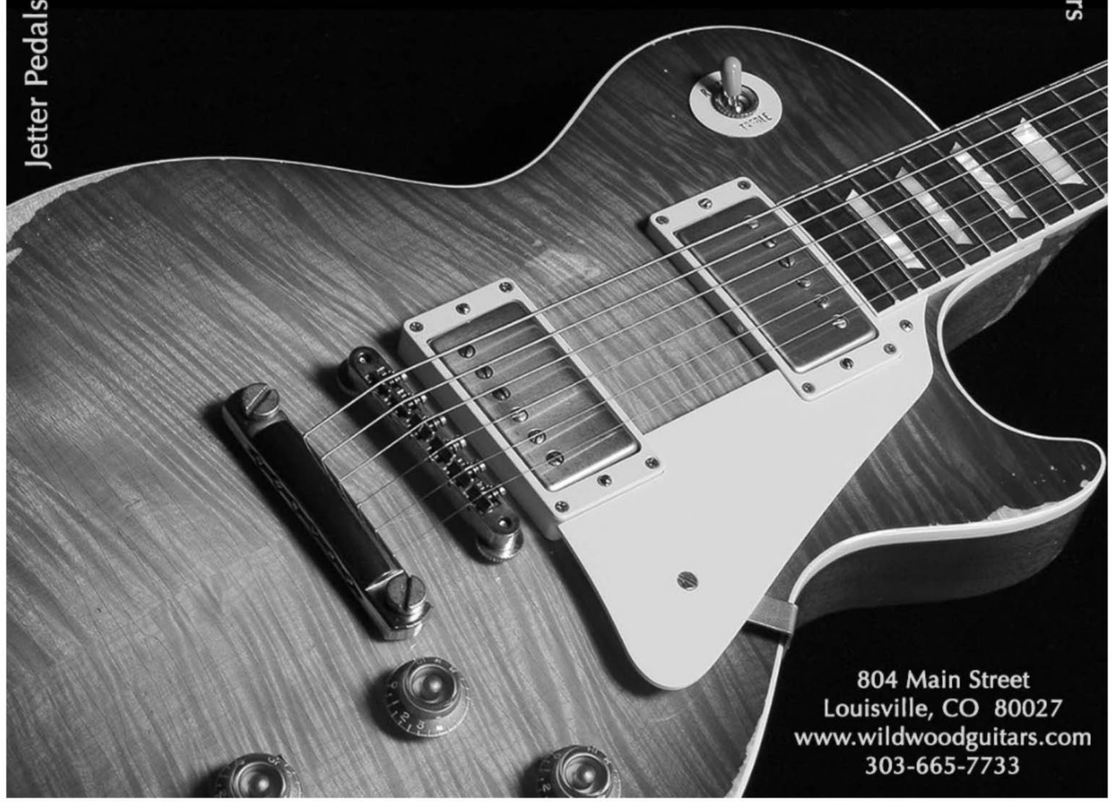

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Check out some of our latest cool finds!



1963 Fender Vibroverb



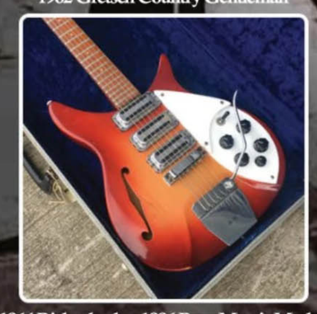
1962 Gretsch Country Gentleman



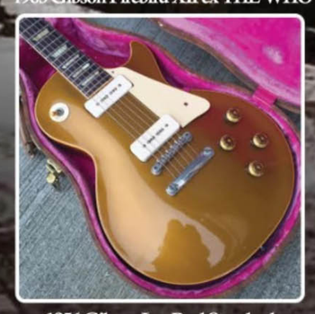
1965 Gibson Firebird XII ex THE WHO



1958 Gibson Les Paul Custom



1964 Rickenbacker 1996 Rose Morris Model



1956 Gibson Les Paul Standard

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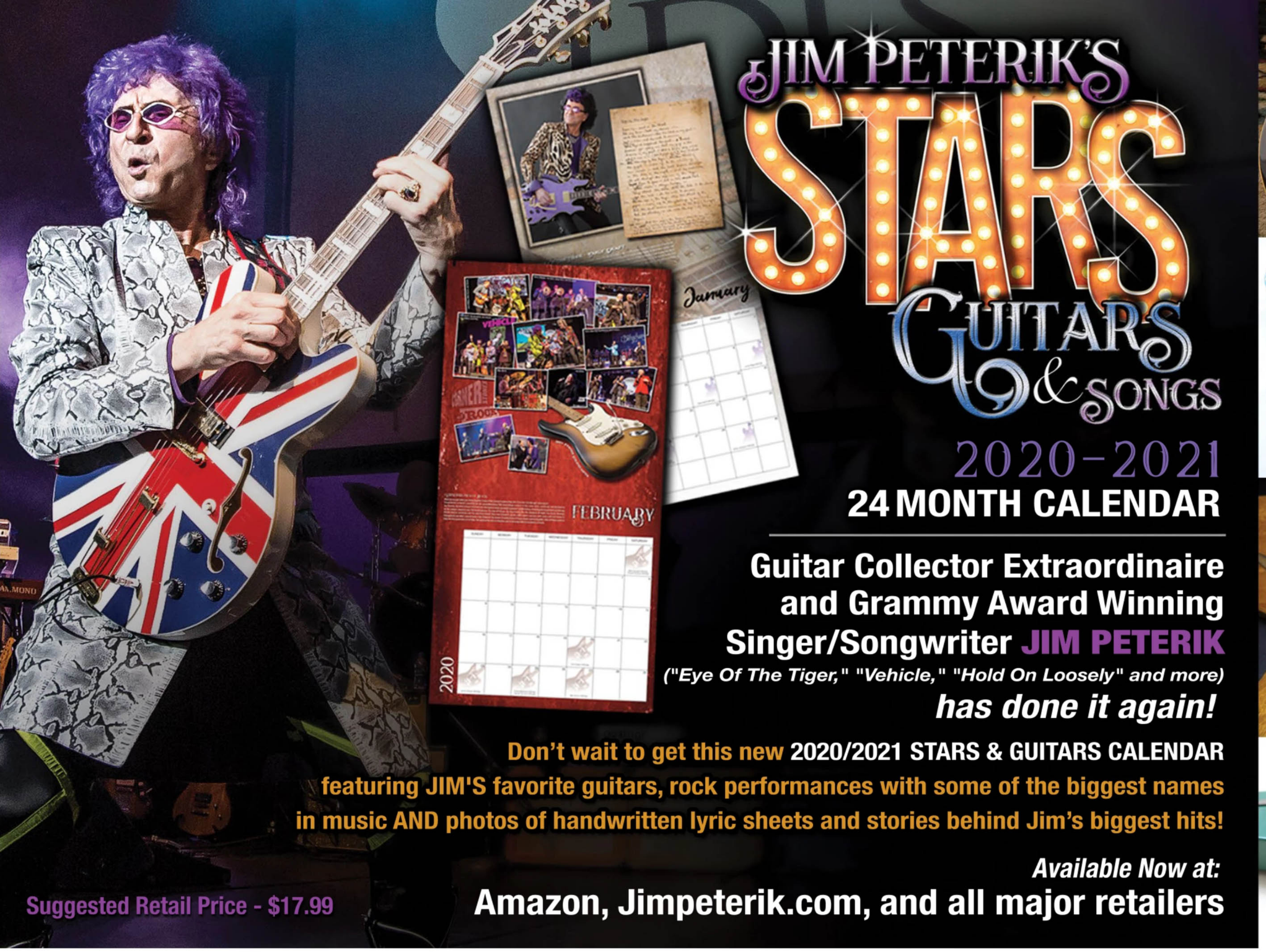


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Bennett onstage with Ella Fitzgerald.

Bennett/Fitzgerald image courtesy of Gus Johnson. Max Bennett: Teri Bennett.

MAX BENNETT

A LEGACY OF VIRTUOSITY

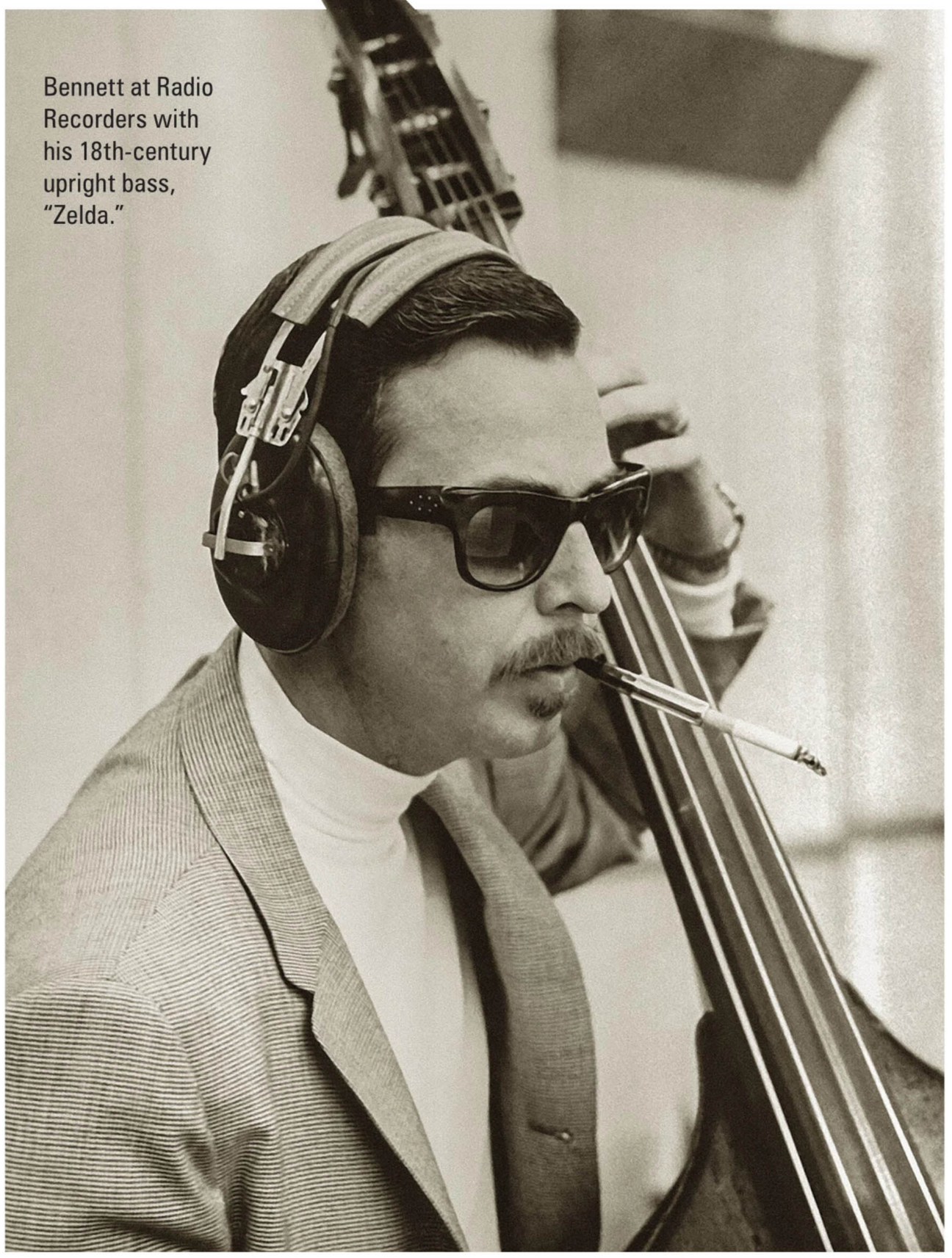
BY JIM CARLTON

In the hearts and minds of his peers, bassist Max Bennett was one of most important and gifted musicians of his era. Through seven decades, he worked with Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, Howard Roberts, Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin, Peggy Lee, Quincy Jones, Frank Zappa, Marvin Gaye, the Temptations, Dizzy Gillespie, Frank Sinatra, and many others.



Bennett's inherent artistic vision and uncanny hipness earned him near-legendary status. He turned Peggy Lee on to the song "Fever," and happened to be onstage at Madison Square Garden that night in 1962 when Marilyn Monroe famously sang to president John F. Kennedy. Later, he co-founded Joni Mitchell's road and recording band, the L.A. Express.

Bennett's career existed in two parts – the jazz years and the studio years. After decades of touring and recording with giants including Stan Kenton, Coleman Hawkins, Benny Goodman, Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Stan Getz and Miles Davis, he settled into great success as a Wrecking Crew stalwart in Hollywood, where he played on dozens of gold, platinum, and Grammy-winning albums, countless television shows, concert appearances, and film scores including *The Exorcist*, *Grease*, *Lady Sings the Blues*, *Dirty Harry*, *Bullitt*, and *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*. Bennett was 90 years old when he passed away on September 14, 2018.



Bennett at Radio Recorders with his 18th-century upright bass, "Zelda."

EARLY YEARS

Born in 1928, Bennett grew up during the Great Depression. In a personal memoir scheduled to be his published autobiography, he wrote that his family, like many others at the time, struggled to make ends meet. In '32, the Bennett family settled in Oskaloosa, Iowa, where, he says, "My dad earned just five dollars for working a six-day week in the coal mines." As a youngster, Bennett contracted a non-contagious form of tuberculosis from inhaling coal fumes.

His penchant for music came from his mother.

"She'd sing the songs of the day and I'd join in on the harmony," he said. "Later, a gentleman who was giving guitar lessons came to our little town and my mother signed me up. Each lesson was a $1.10, and at the end of the tenth lesson, I was supposed to be able to play a song on the guitar. But after about five lessons the teacher disappeared and I was left with the guitar."

He played around with the guitar, but in high school became enamored of the trombone, then later, upright bass. It was then he began collecting records by Duke Ellington, Nat Cole, and Stan Kenton, all of whom would later call Bennett a peer.

After graduating from high school in 1946, Bennett took a playing job at the Club Chesterfield, in Des Moines. The club hired well-known acts from all over the country, which provided Bennett his first opportunity to interact and jam with professionals; it proved a very valuable experience, and it was there he first encountered pianist Art Tatum and bassist Ray Brown, who would later become his close friend.

Following a couple of years studying contrabass at the University of Iowa, he briefly took a gig in Mississippi then went to Chicago, where a hundred or more after-hours jam sessions helped develop his style and craft. For a time, he was broke and sleeping in his car before a quid pro quo living arrangement presented itself; in exchange for room and board, he provided late-night transportation for a couple of the city's working girls. Fortunately, in 1949, he hooked up with jazz saxophonist Herbie Fields' band, which toured most major cities. Just a few months later, though, Bennett received his draft notice.

"The North Korean communists were invading South Korea and they needed me to help teach them a lesson," he said.

Smart enough to request a transfer to a music division, his trombone training proved invaluable and, after a two-year hitch, the young bassist found his way to East St. Louis, where he first met Miles Davis. That friendship eventually led to Bennett's touring California with Davis' band.

FEVER

In the late '50s, Bennett toured with the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra and Stan Kenton's band before he began looking to settle in L.A., where he was asked to join Peggy Lee's group. He developed a close friendship with the singer and considered their association to be as much family as professional. He was even largely responsible for her biggest hit.

"One night in L.A., I was at an after-hours jam when a young man asked to sing with the band," he recalled. "It was a relaxed situation and he wanted to sing something called 'Fever.' I'd never heard it, but it only had two chords and we gave it a shot. I immediately knew it was the type of song Peggy was looking for. It became



Bennett was a longtime fan of Michael Tobias/MTD basses and later in his career preferred this Kingston Z6 along with a 635-24 fretless. "My main reason was to play low D and E^{b} – two notes that do not sound very low on a four-string. I went without for many years, and the high C makes a big difference in how I voice the chords."

not just one of the biggest hits of 1958, but a jazz and pop standard, as well."

By this time, Bennett was becoming well-situated in the L.A. studio scene and realized he could enjoy working sessions *and* tour when he felt the urge. It was the best of both worlds, and a typical day would find him at Universal Studios, Sony, Warner Brothers, or Fox, doing dates for TV shows, commercials, film scores, and backing sessions. He'd also worked in-town concert dates and live TV. In short, he was booked solid, playing with everyone from Percy Faith to Henry Mancini to Phil Spector.

"One week I had 26 calls and had to turn down another 25," he said. "Besides film work, commercials, and record dates, I was working 'The Red Skelton Show,' 'The Judy Garland Show,' 'The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour,' 'The Danny Kaye Show,' 'The Carol Burnett Show,' and 'Tony Orlando and Dawn'."

One night in '58, after a gig with Ella Fitzgerald at the Crescendo nightclub, he was asked to join her for a tour of Europe and the British Isles. Ella's band was a veritable who's who of jazz greats that included trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Roy Eldridge as well as saxophonists Stan Getz, Coleman Hawkins, and Sonny Stitt. Bennett jumped at the chance to become a peer among his heroes.

In '69, Bennett got a call from percussionist John Guerin, who was prepping sessions for Frank Zappa, who'd disbanded the Mothers of Invention and was going in a different direction; Bennett contributed to much of *Hot Rats* and *Chunga's Revenge* (listen to "Little Umbrellas" and "Twenty Small Cigars").

JONI AND THE L.A. EXPRESS

In 1972, Bennett received a call from saxophonist Tom Scott to sub for his regular bassist, Chuck Domanico, at a gig in Hermosa Beach. On a whim, he took along one of his original compositions, "TCB in E." Scott was impressed, asked him back, and suggested he bring more. Before long, the two formed The L.A. Express, and they soon became one of the town's hottest groups, gigging regularly at Donte's, the Baked Potato, and the Lighthouse. In addition to Scott and Bennett, the group featured drummer John Guerin along with former Crusaders Joe Sample (keyboards) and Larry Carlton. Soon after, Joni Mitchell got wind of the group's popularity and asked them to accompany her on a worldwide tour. In addition, she availed herself of the group's studio prowess. To this day, many believe it was one of the most synergistic associations ever in the music business.

Because of Bennett's rapidly skyrocketing reputation, he was frequently tapped by any number of major artists for both domestic and European tours. So, in addition to touring with Ella Fitzgerald and Joni Mitchell, he backed Rickie Lee Jones, Miles Davis, Billie Holiday, and several others.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

"The very best time I had playing on live TV was when I did a skit with Jack Benny on his show," Bennett recalled. "It called for a string bass and clarinet to accompany him while he played the violin. I was given an address in Beverly Hills, on Rodeo Drive. When I walked in the door, Benny said, 'You look just like my friend Maury,' and we were off and running. He was a warm and funny person, and we had the bit nailed in a half an hour. Never in my wildest dreams did I expect to do a skit with the great Jack Benny."

Another appearance Bennett remembered fondly was for Peggy Lee's NBC special on which she mentioned his finding the song "Fever" for her and joked about his bass (which he called Zelda) keeping her figure after so many years, considering that she was made in the 1700s. "I still like watching that bit on my computer," he said.

Another special moment was being called for an afternoon session at A&M studios.

"When I arrived, I found out it was





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for just Elvis' drummer, Ronnie Tutt, me on electric bass, and Cat Stevens. We recorded only one song and had it finished in two hours. That song was the now famous 'Peace Train.' What fun that was.

"Also, I was so thrilled to work with Billie Holiday. I hadn't been in L.A. very long when I was asked to play a short tour with her. She wasn't in the best shape, but just the thought of working with such a legend was enough for me. And I'll never forget working an NBC special that was produced by Quincy Jones on which I was privileged to play bass for the great Count Basie. His bass player wasn't up to speed on his reading, so I got the call from Q."

Another brief encounter at Fox allowed him to create a bass line for "Troubled Man," by the great Marvin Gaye.

"That was my only musical experience with him, but it was indeed memorable," he said.

"I've been very fortunate to often be in the right place at the right time to witness some historic moments," he added. "I was working with Ella Fitzgerald when Marilyn Monroe sang 'Happy Birthday' to John Kennedy at Madison Square Garden. It was quite a spectacle. Also, I met her when I worked sessions for *Let's Make Love*. She was most impressive, but that's an understatement."

While he often accompanied Frank Sinatra, Bennett never went on the road with him.

"He was good about supporting charitable causes, so I was happy to play some TV specials with him. However, he had an ornery side, and I suppose I can tell this story now...

"I was playing a special dinner for his birthday, arranged by the super-agent Swifty Lazar. It was in a small, private room at a posh restaurant on Rodeo Drive, and there were only 10 or 15 guests. As the evening progressed, Frank went on a tirade about a certain actor who wasn't there. But the actor's wife was and she finally got up and left in tears. Then, Frank began arguing with Lauren Bacall and things deteriorated so quickly that guests began to leave. Soon, everyone was gone. He ruined the whole evening. Well, the parking lot was empty except for Frank's car, a Facel Vega – beautiful French sports car. So I let the air out of his tires." Bennett mused, "I figured it was the least I could do. He deserved it."

In 1977, Bennett disbanded the L.A. Express to concentrate on the life of a first-call studio musician. He played record dates, TV shows, club dates, and routinely worked with A-list arrangers such as Nelson Riddle, Lalo Schifrin, Quincy Jones, Billy Vaughn, Percy Faith, and others.



Bennett in session at Radio Recorders, 1965.

Max Bennett in '65: Don Lewis.

And of course, Bennett's story isn't complete without mentioning his bout with alcohol. His memoir discusses the malady with courage and candor, in hopes his story might help someone else.

"The more I worked in the studios, the busier I became," he said. "I was never home. My schedule and alcohol consumption took their toll on my marriage. One day at Warner Brothers, the music contractor called my attention to a number of my mistakes. I realized I could not go another day with a problem that was ruining my life. Fortunately, my sister got me into rehab and AA. I followed the program and have never taken another drink of alcohol. I've been lucky. Now I can go out for the evening and actually remember if I had a good time."

In 1980, he emerged healthy and centered – and he could see the writing on the studio wall.

"Work in the studios was already waning as synthesizers were taking over," he said. "It was time to move on."

With new wife, Teri, Bennett moved to San Clemente, where he purchased a 36-foot sloop. Life was good.

"I was still getting studio calls, but soon, I was working jazz jobs and having fun at jam sessions. Because most of the work was for electric bass, I sold Zelda to a bassist in the Phoenix Symphony."

In the mid '80s, Bennett formed Private Reserve, a contemporary-jazz group for which he produced five CDs. He enjoyed the rewards of a career few musicians experience, and perhaps summed it up with a quote from Plato: "Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and gaiety and life to everything." VG

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STEVE VAI

PERFECTING THE PAST

Though he is relentlessly creative and forward-looking, two of Steve Vai's recent projects are journeys back in time. The first is the Blu-ray debut of his 2015 concert/documentary DVD, *Stillness in Motion*. The second is the 30th anniversary reissue campaign honoring Whitesnake's *Slip of the Tongue* – the 1989 album that was his sole studio effort with the hard-rock legends.

BY BRET ADAMS

As you might expect, revisiting material requires specific motivation for Vai, and with these releases it was the opportunity to improve on packaging/sound, and take advantage of technology.

"For instance, with *Stillness in Motion*, the concept of the project and DVD was all in place, and when I went to execute it, I was signed with Sony," Vai said. "Creating a Blu-ray can be a very expensive proposition, and balancing that out in the economics it doesn't make much sense for whoever is releasing it unless you're a pop artist. DVDs, in general, are not very common. So, when Sony did decide to release it, they didn't do the Blu-ray component."

Vai owns *Stillness in Motion*, and financed the filming of a 2012 concert during the tour promoting *The Story of Light*. It consisted of 253 shows (including concerts, master classes, and orchestra performances) in 52 countries. Their show at Club Nokia, in Los Angeles, was shot in high-definition for initial broadcast on AXS TV, and then he licensed it to Sony. The new package includes a behind-the-scenes documentary of the tour, *The Space Between the Notes*, shot by Vai, his family, band, and crew. Since the DVD has been out of print and the licensing agreement had expired, Vai decided to realize his dream of releasing it on Blu-ray. The first disc is the concert, the second is the documentary. The concert is also included on two CDs.

"I really like packing projects to the brim," he said. "When CDs came out and I could stuff 80 minutes on one, I stuffed 80 minutes on it.

Vai live: Christophe Pauly.

It's the same thing with *Stillness in Motion*. The concept was to put the entire show on there; I pack as much as I can in and they can exceed three hours and encroach on four hours sometimes. I'm just completely overindulgent, and I love it! It tastes so good! Plus, I had this idea to do *The Space Between the Notes* which, for me, is one of the favorite projects I *ever* did. *Ever*. I feel like it's one of my greatest accomplishments. I had so much fun going through all the footage and editing it. It's infused with my quirky sense of humor and has great entertainment value for people who are interested in what it's like to tour.

"It ended up being three hours and 45 minutes," he added. "Cramming that on one DVD really compromised the quality of it, and that stuck with me for years. I always felt, 'One day I'm going to release this on Blu-ray. I don't care how much money I lose.' Fans who were very disappointed when it didn't come out on Blu-ray have been asking for it. Even besides that, *I* wanted it. The economics may not balance out entirely, but there are some things in life that we do that are more labors of love than make practical business sense."

Vai included video footage or still photos from every stop on the tour. If he, his family, band, or crew hadn't shot it, he went online and found it. That approach, he said, was more relaxing than having a film crew following everybody around. And, they initially discussed having the documentary shot in high-def in Istanbul, Turkey, but it was too expensive.

After decades as a professional musician, he's finally found a way to enjoy life on the road.

"I love touring, especially with this band and the way we tour. It's taken a lot of time for me to really sink into the touring world and find the great pleasure in it. I've *been* enjoying touring now for many years. It's so much fun to be out there, traveling around from country to country, seeing the world, meeting different people, tasting the different foods, embracing the culture, seeing fans, and being with the band. We're like family. It feels like home when I'm with those guys – the whole crew and the band. It's a very uplifting and fun environment. I've been on many tours where there was a lot of drama and all that miserable s**t, and I just don't do that anymore, because it's not worth it.

"The idea to do this was *very* fulfilling – just even the *idea*," he added. "Once an idea gathers enough steam, it becomes an intention, and once it becomes an intention, I wait for all the potential projects I could do to emerge, to see which one emerges with the loudest voice. This one was not just tapping me on the shoulder. It was hitting me in the ass with a baseball bat! 'You're gonna do me now!' I hunkered down for many months of 18-hour, undisturbed days."

Vai's Ibanez signature Jem, Evo (left), has been on every record and tour with him for nearly 30 years. He used this '77 Strat through high school, Berklee College of Music, with Frank Zappa, and Alcatrazz. Its mods inspired elements of various signature Jem models.

Was the documentary portion of *Stillness in Motion* intended to humanize Vai and tamp down his guitar-god mystique?

"That's a very good observation on a very powerful topic," he said. "There is a perspective that people create for you in their own mind. It's an *identity* that they create for you. What happened to me for a part of my career, especially when I was becoming known and more accessible due to *Crossroads*, David Lee Roth, Whitesnake, and Frank Zappa, was this huge focus on me. Of course, it's a little world – the instrumental-guitar world, or even rock music. Within the guitar community in that world, at one point, I was a pretty big focus. So people create this identity – especially after seeing something like *Crossroads*, or my quirkiness from *Flex-Able*, or the way I performed and 'rock star'ed' out, so to speak, in the David Lee Roth days. This is not uncommon, I think, for an artist, but you develop a personality for yourself in your own mind based on those things. And then you start to walk the walk of this pseudo-personality that you've made because you want to make sure you fulfill the idea that other people have *of* you.

"That doesn't work very long, because it goes against your nature. It always leads to unhappiness

Vai Jem Evo and '77 Strat: Neil Zlozower/VG Archive.



Whitesnake in 1989 – Adrian Vandenberg (left), Tommy Aldridge, Vai, Rudy Sarzo, David Coverdale.

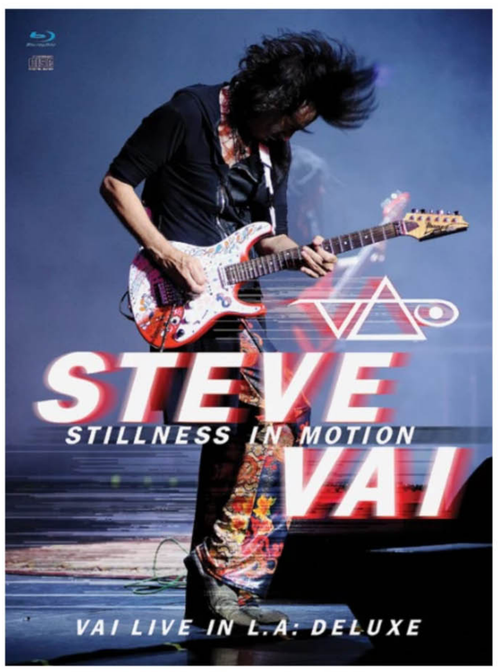
and frustration, because you're always on-guard. You're trying to defend yourself in the press. You're trying to create a facade, and you always feel like there's a secret about you, and if [somebody finds out], it's the end of you.

"Quite some time ago, I started to realize it's much easier to just try to be yourself. Being yourself isn't something you can *try* to do, it's just something you can *allow*. You have to allow yourself to be whoever it is that you are. So, in this video, you see me just really being me."

For Vai, that meant consciously pushing aside the mythical, larger-than-life image.

"I think a lot of that comes with age," he said. "Also, I realized that what I want is a simple life. I want peace. The only thing that ever disrupts anybody's peace is the quality of the thoughts in their mind that they have about themselves or the world."

Some perceptions of Vai originated with Whitesnake's *Slip of the Tongue*, one of the last hurrahs of a decade dominated by hard rock on radio and MTV. The album's hits were a re-recording of "Fool for Your Loving" (from 1980's *Ready an' Willing*), "The Deeper the Love," and "Now You're Gone," while album cuts like "Kittens Got Claws," "Judgment Day," and "Sailing Ships" garnered attention from devoted guitarheads.





The Blu-ray edition of Vai's *Stillness in Motion* is, he says, much-improved. Whitesnake's *Slip Of The Tongue* has been remastered to mark its 30th anniversary.

For the album's 30th anniversary, Rhino Records issued remastered configurations including a six-CD/one-DVD boxed set with unreleased B-sides, remixes, demos, the band's 1990 headlining set at Castle Donington, promotional videos, and more.

"David Coverdale sent me a link not long ago to check it all out. I was shocked. I had no idea they could find all of that stuff – or that it even existed. I don't remember doing any of it, and when I listen to it, I'm like, 'Oh, yes!' David and Rhino must have dove into this with forensic-audio tweezers to find all of that material that surrounded the whole *Slip of the Tongue* extravaganza."

At the time, Vai had just enjoyed a successful run with Roth for two albums, *Eat 'Em and Smile* and *Skyscraper*, when the opportunity came to join Whitesnake after Adrian Vandenberg suffered a hand injury that left him unable to play.

"I had just left Dave's band, and in the eyes of the public, I was 'available,' so to speak. When Whitesnake was looking for a guitarist, I wasn't necessarily surprised when I got the call, but I *was* delighted. I liked Whitesnake a lot. The *Whitesnake* record with 'Still of the Night' was *huge*. At the time, it was very well-respected – the quality of the songs, the sound, and David's voice just has this authority and authenticity in it. The band had been around for many years, and David knew the quality of records he wanted to make. So, when the call came, it was perfect, in a sense, because I was just about to release *Passion and Warfare* and there was an opportunity to tour on that record, but I couldn't really wrap my brain around that – it was only one record, and it was instrumental. I didn't know if I was comfortable fronting a band – I liked being on the side and having a lead singer."

Coverdale and Vandenberg had written the material for *Slip of the Tongue*, and the recording was complete, except for guitars.

"I didn't write any of the music," Vai noted. "All the tracks were done. There was a guide guitar Adrian put on. While listening to what they had, I started to hear what I'd do on the guitar; I wanted something a little different than conventional Whitesnake. And I *loved* doing it. There was a framework, and all I needed to do was decorate the tracks.

"I love arranging. I love orchestrating. I feel I'm very good at it. So if you listen to that record, you're going to hear some very well-orchestrated guitar parts."

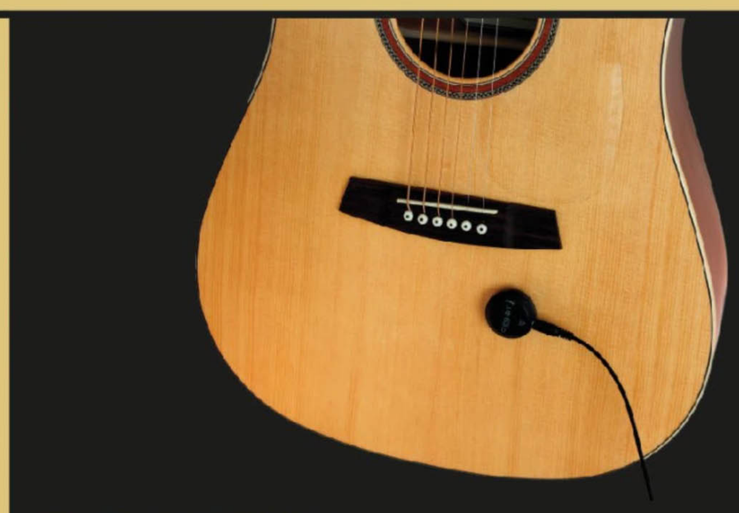
Vandenberg eventually recuperated and

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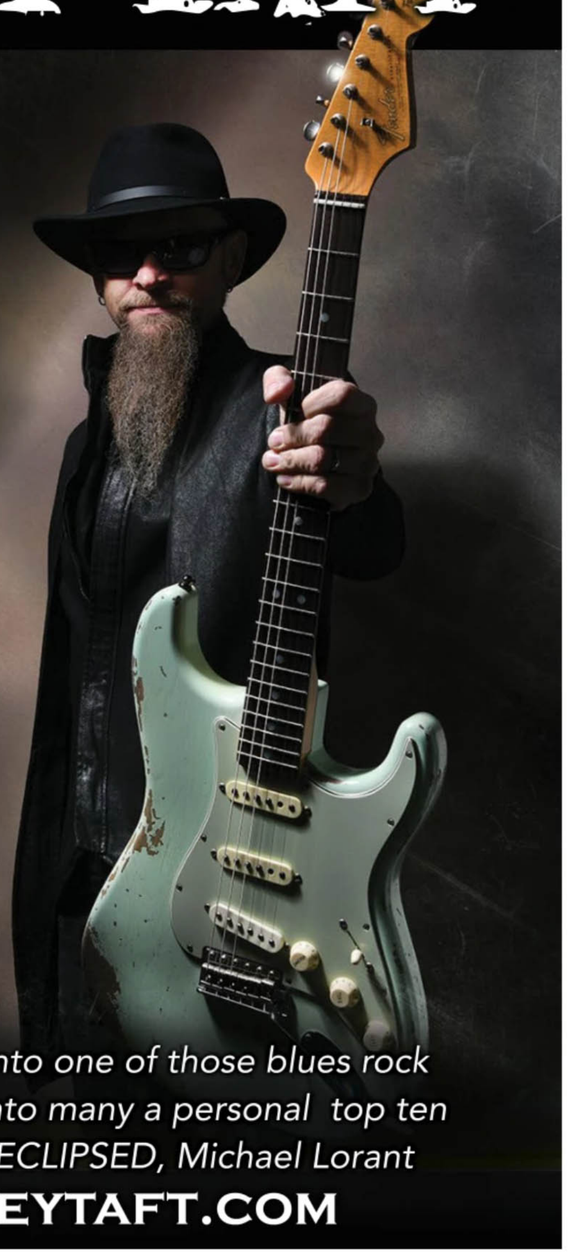
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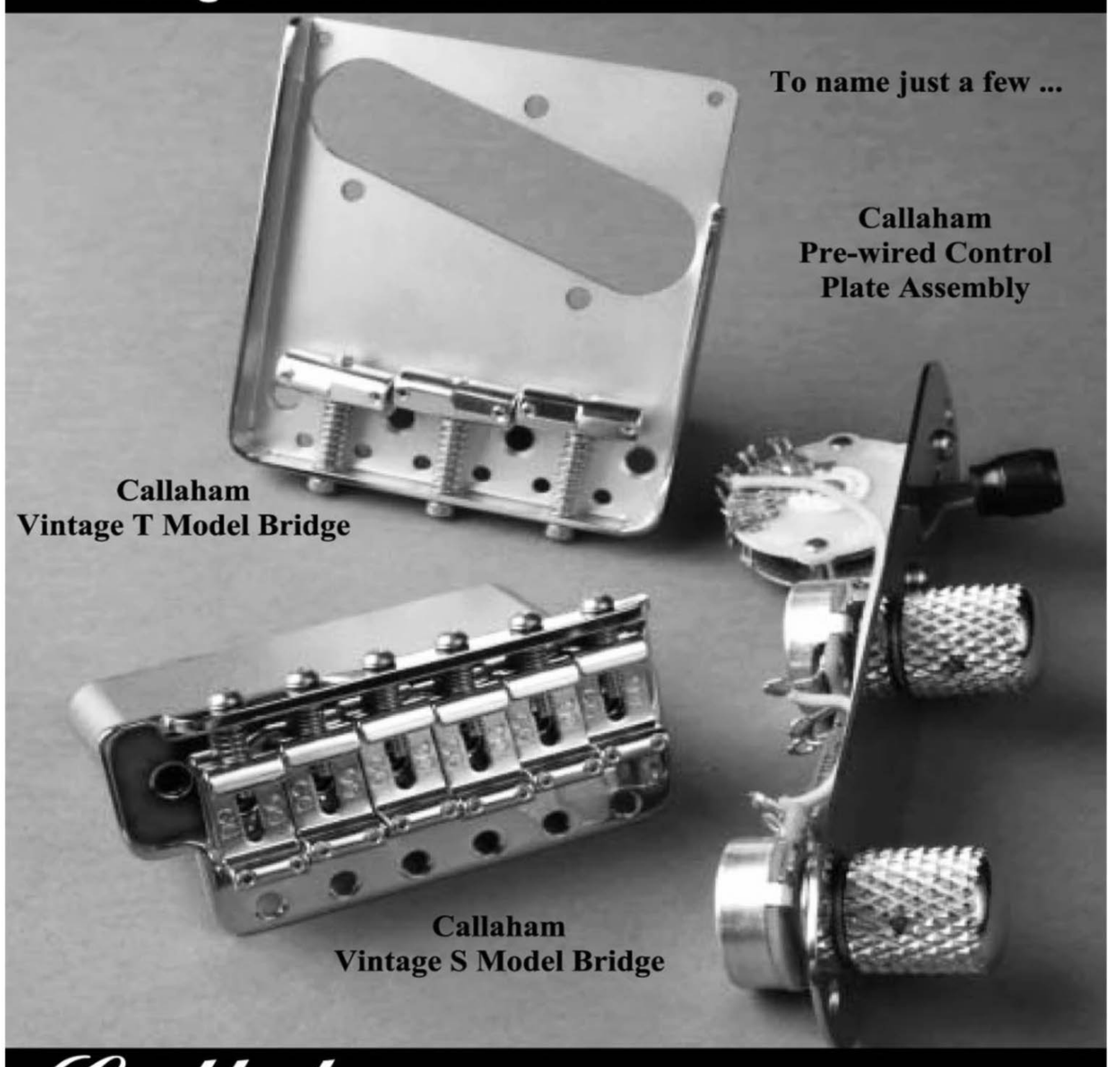
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was able to tour, forming a lethal guitar duo with Vai.

"I knew that when we played live, we'd be a two-guitar band. I didn't want to do something on the album that was going to step on the other part. Everything I constructed had to work with what Adrian was planning on playing. We worked out a lot of cool, interesting things for a dual-guitar band. You take something like 'Kittens Got Claws.' I did not receive a demo with those cat sounds in the beginning! All of those are me on guitar, and not long ago, when I heard it for the first time in 20 years, I couldn't believe it. It was so cool – very visceral, and there's a lot more going on than just chords.

"One thing that happened with that song when we played live is Adrian played that guitar part with me. It was fantastic. He was so patient and a real soldier to sit with me and work that out. We were laughing a lot of the time because some of the riffs were so ridiculous. For instance, there's one line where David sings, 'With her G-string tuned to A,' and right at that point, you hear me take my G string and tune it up to A! Adrian got a kick out of that. There's tons of stuff like that going on, but it just flies over most peoples' heads.

"Adrian playing in pain was something that followed him around for years and years. Throughout that tour, he would constantly have to soak his wrist. Adrian and I have remained good friends through the years. I saw him not too long ago and they recently discovered the problem was actually in his neck. He still kind of suffers from it."

Somehow, Vai juggled his brief, hectic time with Whitesnake and his burgeoning solo career.

"The way it panned out was actually perfect for me because I was completely slammed with trying to finish *Passion and Warfare* on time, *and* do the Whitesnake record. I have a photo of me leaving my studio, holding the master tapes to *Passion and Warfare*, on my way to Bernie Grundman's to master the record. And right from the mastering lab, I was going to the airport to fly to Lake Tahoe to kick off the rehearsals and tour for Whitesnake. I worked through the night to get to Bernie's by 10 a.m. If I would've missed that mastering session, the record wouldn't have come out for a year and a half after it did.

"I enjoy looking back at my Whitesnake life. It was extraordinary to be in that band with those guys. They were great guys and we toured the world, sold millions of records, and played incredible concerts. I got to act like a rock star on a giant stage with people screaming. That's fun stuff, man! I look back and go, 'Yeah, that was great.' So many of my life experiences have been like that."



Steve Vai: Larry DiMarzio.

"Being yourself isn't something you can *try* to do, it's just something you can allow. You have to *allow* yourself to be whoever it is that you are."

What lies ahead for Vai in 2020? When *Vintage Guitar* spoke with him, he was pondering options including a stripped-down album similar to *Alien Love Secrets*, another *Sound Theories* orchestral album, or capping the trilogy that started with *Real Illusions: Reflections* and *The Story of Light*. No matter which form of inspiration strikes, he's excited to present it.

"I'll go on a pretty robust tour for whatever comes out," he said. VG

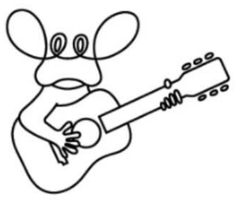
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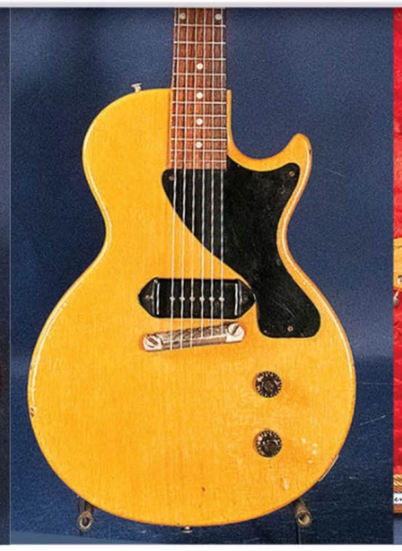


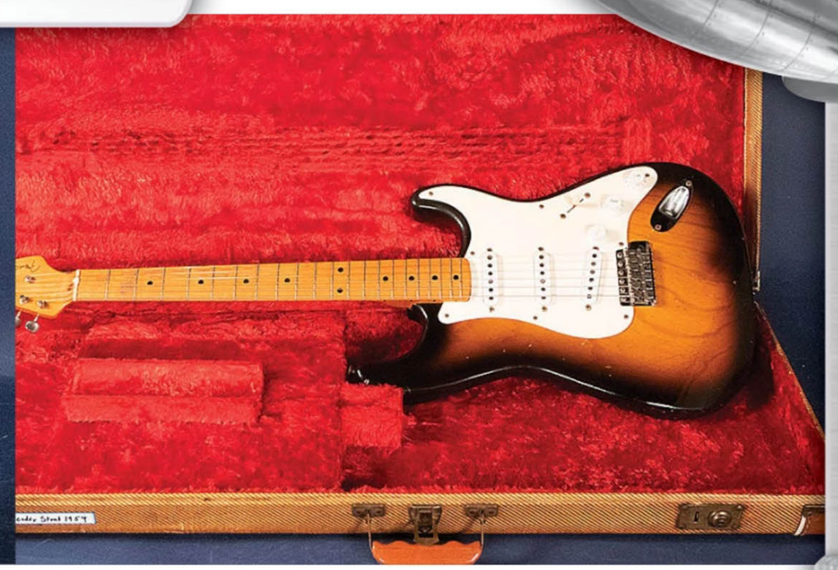
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1904 Martin 1-45
From Martin historian Mike Longworth's personal collection. Mike believed this specific guitar was the first 45-level Martin, ever. It's also one of only five 1-45 Martins made...ever. Willie tells us this was the year Einstein was getting ready to publish the theory of relativity. And...in the spacetime curvature with the absence of gravity this guitar would still be the center of the universe for any Martin collection. Quite clean, original case too! Tone until the universe curves back, again. $29,500

1956 Gibson Les Paul TV Model
Repaired headstock. A featherweight tone monster. This is '1950s industrial design at its finest. Forget the Brazilian board and dry, airy-sounding Honduran mahogany. Forget there were only 511 made. Admire the simple lines accented by its unique color, black headstock overlay, black guard, black pickup. all telling others what your soul sounds like through an amp. $7,900

1954 Fender Stratocaster
Quite clean, quite original. "Hey Leo, we need a new guitar model, can we just add a third pickup to the Tele?" "No, Bill Carson and the band are swinging through town, let's get some input from him." And so it started in 1953 and into 1954. This is a killer example of one of the most historically significant industrial designs of all time. As important to any collection as a Broadcaster. This one has body and neck matching dates, October of 1954. All-stock, center-pocket case. Blue-chip guitars are back... very tidy example. $78k

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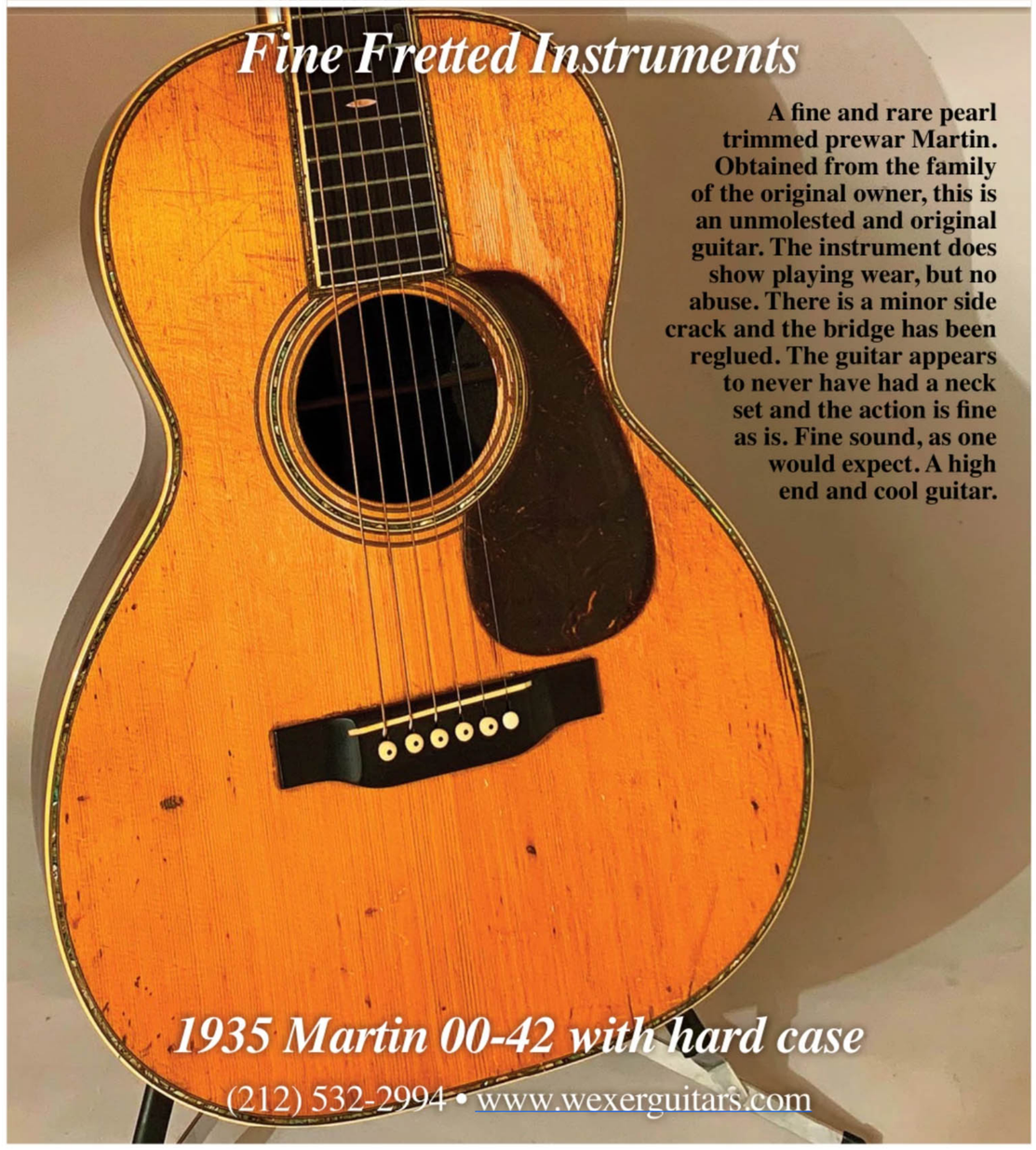
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1911 Martin 00-42—Excellent, all orig. Ivory bridge, steel strings, sounds amazing! $19.5k
1919 Martin 0-45—A true work of art. Couple cracks, & possible refin or overspray. $17.5K
1919 Martin 00-45—Fabulous, restored by us - couple cracks, neck reset etc. $34.5K
1924 Martin 000-18—Featherlight, excellent cond. and gigantic sound. $12500
1926 Martin 000-18—Featherlight, excellent cond. and gigantic sound. $15,650
1928 Bacon Peerless Guitar Banjo—The higher grade with tone ring, exc cond. $2850
1928 Gibson F-5—Fern, much played, redone board, great loud sound. $39850
1928 Gibson L-5—Excellent original, and best tone of all we've had. $31,400
1928 Gibson L-5—Exc condition, replaced board, otherwise original. Loud and full. $21,450
1930-31 Gibson L-2—Cremona sunburst, 13 frets, floating pickguard, super light. $7325
1930 Maurer Model 593—Larson's top model, 00 size, Tree-of-Life inlay. $17K
1930 Martin OM-28—First class refin and set-up, super fine player. $22,350
1931 Martin OM-18—Old and fine refin, all orig. braces, great set-up. $11.9k
1939 Gibson J-35—Natural, 3 tone bars, much played but great cond. Tone monster! $11.5K
1940 Gibson F-7—Beautiful condition, same as played by Monroe pre-Loar. $12.5K
1941 Gibson F-5—Excellent+ and original, incredible maple back. $25K
1941 Gibson L-0—Black, firestripe pg, exc & orig cond, reset, refret, loud & full tone. $5295
1944 Martin 000-28—Scalloped braces, fabulous condition, could use reset. $31,495
1945 Martin 000-21—Super clean and 100% original. *in transit*
1945 Martin 000-28—Super clean, untouched, light weight and gorgeous. $24,999
1945 Martin D-28—Stunningly clean, a powerhouse. !00% orig w/orig price tag. $38.5K
1944 Martin 00-18—Scalloped, ebony truss rod, fully original; wonderful guitar! $6890
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1935 Martin 00-42 with hard case

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2004 Gretsch Silver Falcon w/engraved Humps inlays

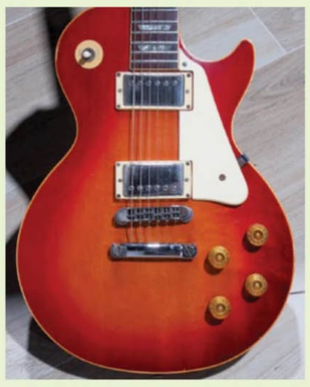

1960 Fender Jazz Bass Stack Knob 10/60 dead original


1963 Mosrite Ventures Bass rare bound body w/side jack


1955 Gibson Les Paul Std. all Gold w/pics of original owner


1969 Gibson Les Paul Custom rare 1 piece neck & body


1982 Gibson Les Paul Deluxe Gold Top & really clean!


1983 Gibson Les Paul Std. beat sweet w/Tim Shaw pickups


1985 Gibson Les Paul Custom PAF's & a Factory Kahler


2009 Gibson Les Paul Std. 50th Anniversary Reissue!!!


2014 Gibson Les Paul Std. 120th Ann. RS Guitarworks Relic


2018 Gibson Les Paul Std. '59 w/Brazilian Rosewood F'board


1962 Fender Jaguar Olympic White w/matching headstock

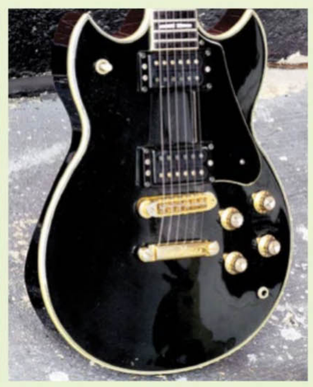

1983 Fender Strat "Bowling Ball" 1 of 107 ever MINT


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1994 Fender Tele Danny Gatton B-Bender Master Built


2013 James Trussart Steelcaster Foam Green Amazing!


1983 Yamaha SG-2000 Black, Carlos Santana model


1999 Washburn PS-2000 Paul Stanley "Cracked Mirror" 13/100

A "CUSTOM" TOUCH

GIBSON'S LES PAUL SPOTLIGHT SPECIAL

In 1983, Gibson was in the midst of dark days. Its corporate overlords at Norlin Industries had incurred huge debt, sales were down 30 percent from the year before, and the once-vaunted Gibson brand name was up for sale. By the summer, all large production runs had been moved to a new factory in Nashville, and the manager in Kalamazoo was told the plant would close.

BY MICHAEL SLUBOWSKI

Michael Slubowski's 83 050 (Left) is representive of the non-bookmatched ANT and has optional knob pointers as well as "top hat" knobs with a different shape than later reissues. Tom George's ASB 94 001 has a nicely bookmatched top with dark sunburst and single-ply binding. Michael Slubowski's ASB 83 098 sports a lighter, more-even sunburst and non-bookmatched top.

Amidst the chaos and uncertainty, an idea was born for a limited run of Les Pauls dubbed the Spotlight Special.

There's little reliable history surrounding the "Spotlight," but the 1993 release *The Gibson Les Paul Book* (by Tony Bacon and Paul Day) piqued interest among certain collectors, and those who set out to find one quickly discovered not only that production truly was limited, but also the challenge in finding accurate specifications.

Instantly identifiable by the contrasting strip of walnut down their center with curly/quilted maple on both sides, Spotlights were differentiated by their finishes; Antique Sunburst (ASB) had a "figured quilted-maple top," solid cream-colored binding, ebony headstock veneer with pearl Gibson inlay, and keystone-shaped tuning-machine buttons. Among individual examples, there is substantial variation in the brown tint, ranging from dark to light (and at least one was given three-color sunburst) as well as degree of figure in the maple top. While some workers were apparently meticulous about bookmatching the tops, others, it seems, picked up whatever was available, unconcerned with figure matching, perhaps, because the two pieces were separated by the 2" strip of walnut.

Antique Natural (ANT) specs included a "highly figured curly-maple top," three-ply brown binding on the body (two-ply on the neck), a walnut headstock veneer in light stain with pearloid Gibson logo inlay, and pearloid kidney-shaped machine heads.



All guitars and photos courtesy of Tom George and Michael Slubowski.

ANT models tend to look more exotic, though there's less variation in color. But again, the grade of maple and attention to bookmatching is highly variable.

All Spotlights carried a gold Custom Shop logo on the back of the headstock and an inked serial number starting with year designation followed by a space then a three-digit production number. Other

Tom George bought ASB 84 001 (left) in a Toronto shop in 2016. "I didn't know what a Spotlight Special was and had never seen a guitar like it, it was so beautiful. I played it without plugging in and the sustain was incredible, plus the neck was beautiful, with low action. I've never played a more-versatile Les Paul – its tones in all settings are incredible." Michael Slubowski's ANT 83 195 varies from standard spec with a mahogany (not walnut) center stripe, while his ASB 83 098 has a nicely figured top with lighter sunburst, and his ASB 83 174 strays from spec with its dark binding and light headstock, more like an ANT.

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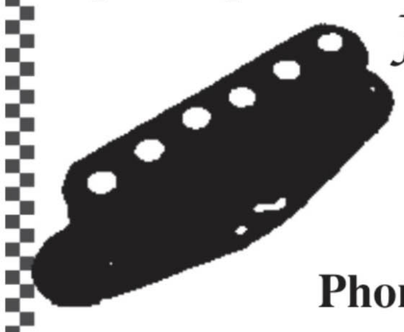


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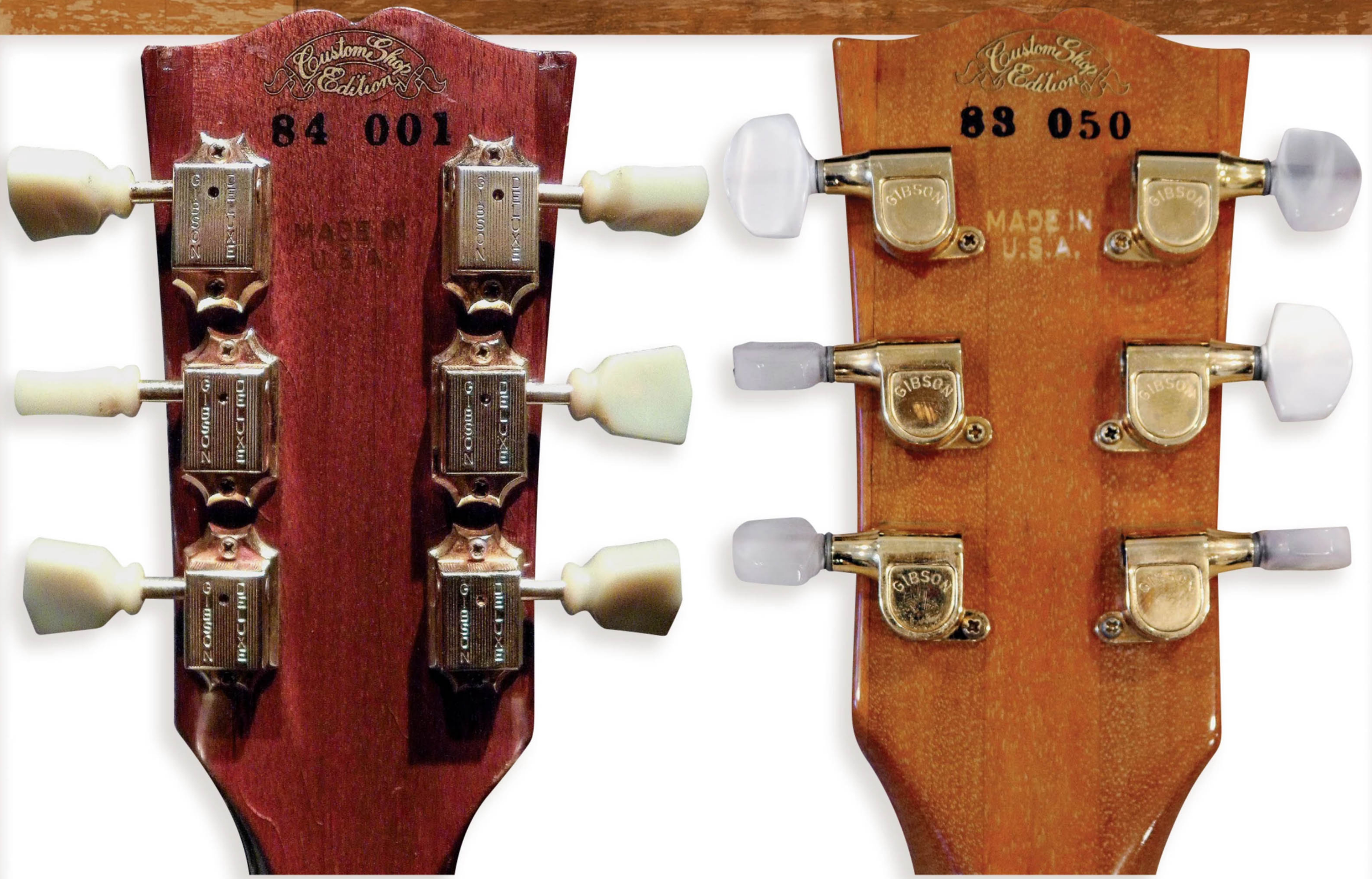
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Spotlight variants were set apart not only by finish color and the maple on their tops, but also by tuning gears and buttons; the ASB (left) used Gibson-stamped Kluson tuners while the ANT was given stamped Grovers with pearloid buttons. All carry the Custom Shop logo despite having been made on the standard production line, and most players appreciate their lack of volute.

common specs include solid mahogany body, "Nashville" Tune-O-Matic bridge, stop-bar tailpiece, two PAF humbuckers, one-piece mahogany neck with SP-1 peghead (with 17-degree pitch), black truss-rod cover, bound rosewood fretboard with deluxe inlays, and side dots. Both had a suggested retail price of $1,299 (with Protector II case).

Some oft-referenced sources provide conflicting information in describing the headstock veneer as rosewood, hardware as chrome, the center strip as mahogany.

Another source of debate centers on production dates. It was long held they were made only in 1983, and logs from that year list serial numbers 001 to 211. But, one all-original/untouched example surfaced for sale with serial number 84 001, pickups with ink-stamp date codes from September and October of '83, and pot codes from late '83. One dealer claims to have seen a Spotlight with serial number 84 009. And one (stamped "sec" under the serial number) shown online has a serial number starting with 85.

Gibson also introduced its first "Les Paul Reissue" in 1983, and Spotlight Specials exhibit certain features of a reissue – binding on the cutaway is styled after the '50s models (consistent width, follows the contour of the body, exposing some of the maple top below the binding, compared to the deeper strip of binding with a straight edge following the maple/mahogany join on other models). Most Spotlights weigh in at about nine pounds, and do *not* have the infamous volute on the back of the neck. They're basic in terms of electronics and hardware – no coil taps or TP-6 tailpieces. With the exception of their looks (and tuners on the ANT), they have the feel of a '59 reissue, with excellent weight, tone, and vibe. Neck thickness falls between Les Pauls from '59 and '60. And, in contrast to the perception of poor quality in the '70s and '80s, Spotlights are well-made, including fit and finish (for example, a metal cover shields the pots). If there's a criticism beyond poor bookmatching on some, it's that stain or pore filler on the light-mahogany backs of some ANT models wasn't evenly colored/shaded. And though specs do not call for a pickguard, the abundance of examples with cream-colored guards would indicate some were factory installed.

Specs also call for a one-piece mahogany neck, but at least one has a three-piece laminated mahogany neck that is fatter than most other Spotlights. Some were also made with knob pointers, and the "top hat" control knobs are a different shape than reissue knobs. It all hints at Gibson perhaps using up spare parts.

The Spotlight Special has enjoyed lasting appreciation with collectors and is a particularly strong draw among those just getting into collectible Les Pauls, in part because their figured tops are so appealing. Their low production numbers create a communal pride with owners, and when they hit the market, asking prices commonly reach upward of $5,000.

Michael Slubowski is a collector with a passion for Les Pauls. A version of this feature appeared in the May, 2000, issue of *Vintage Guitar*.

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A Roger Sadowsky archtop and guitars by Nate Lopez, on display at the Archtop Guitar Show, Denver.

***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.



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JANUARY

Winter Ohio Guitar Show, January 5, 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. **(See Advertisement on page 86.)**

Amigo Bay Area Guitar Show, January 11-12, Marin Civic Exhibit Hall, San Rafael, CA. For more info Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com. **(See Advertisement on page 87.)**

Amigo SoCal Guitar Show, January 18-19, OC Fair & Event Center, Costa Mesa, CA. For more Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com. **(See Advertisement on page 87.)**

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, January 31 – February 2, at the Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL. Hours Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4. For more info contact Morty Beckman at (850) 962-4434, guitarexpo22@yahoo.com or visit www.guitarexpo.net. **(See Advertisement on page 89.)**

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

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.

Amigo Nashville Guitar Show, March 28-29, Williamson County Ag Expo Park, Franklin,

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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 Umass Dartmouth, Darmouth, MA. For more info Gary at (508) 353-2150 or visit www.sixstringmusiccompany.com.

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

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.

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.

MAY

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.

Dallas Guitar Show, May 1-3, at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX, For more info visit www.guitarshow.com.

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.

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.

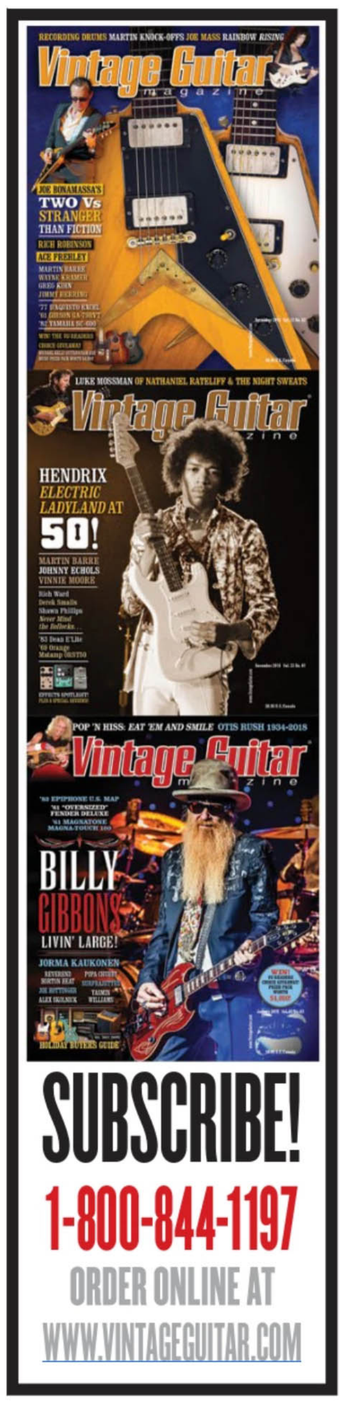
OCTOBER

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.

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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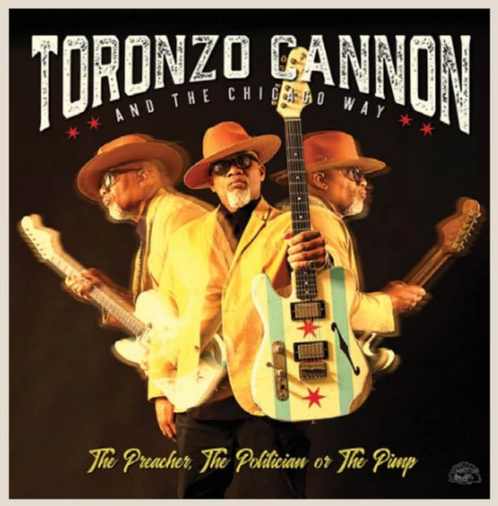
HIT LIST REVIEWS



CHICAGO SOUL, SUPERB TONES

Chicago Transit Authority bus driver Toronzo Cannon combines social commentary, a rugged band, and fuel-injected guitar solos. *The Preacher, The Politician or The Pimp* presents contemporary Chicago blues with tales of adversity, humor, triumph, and high-level musicianship. A continuation of 2016's *The Chicago Way*, Cannon here fuses Chicago's bluesy past with slice-of-life reality.

Produced by Bruce Iglauer, Cannon leads a talented backing band of music veterans. Guests include Billy Branch on harmonica and Joanna Connor on slide guitar. The title track is pure vintage Chicago soul with Stax-style wah work. Social commentary speaks of opportunism and predators in all levels of society. Cannon's guitar style is a blend of economy and virtuosity that goes down smooth like a sip of Courvoisier. On the mid-tempo "She Loved Me (Again)," Cannon channels the West Side legends with superb tones and ballsy authority.



Toronzo Cannon & the Chicago Way
The Preacher, The Politician or The Pimp

Cannon displays jazzier licks on "Ordinary Woman," acoustic blues on "The First 24," and full frontal fuzz on "I'm Not Scared." *The Preacher, The Politician or The Pimp* is that rare contemporary blues record that comprises relatable songs, relevant observations, and guitar playing that communicates. **– *Oscar Jordan***



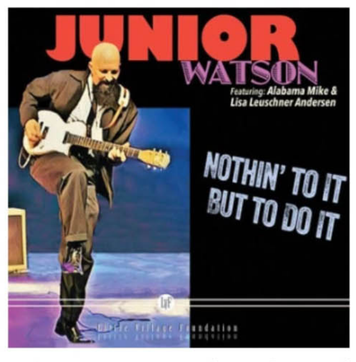
Pixies
Beneath The Eyrie

Of the 13 '80s-reared indie bands canonized in Michael Azerrad's seminal book, *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, precious few remain going concerns. One exception is the most conspicuous absence from Azerrad's opus – the Pixies.

Formed in 1986, Pixies broke up in '93, but returned with fits and starts beginning in 2003 before settling into a pattern of touring and recording that has resulted in three albums since '14.

The 12-song *Beneath The Eyrie* offers plenty of the sonic signifiers that have earned Pixies legions of admirers (most famously Kurt Cobain). In addition to the band's mastery of quiet-loud-quiet dynamics, *Eyrie* offers the fuzzy chime and twin-guitar twang of frontman Black Francis and Joey Santiago, the lumbering of drummer Dave Lovering, and the dissonance created betwixt the pop hooks and dark lyrics. Santiago has referred to the result as "surfer music for grown-ups" (see especially "St. Nazaire").

The "new kid" is bassist Paz Lenchantin (ex-Queens Of The Stone Age), who replaced cofounder Kim Deal in '16. Here, she contributes ethereal harmonies and two tracks – the grunge/Echo & the Bunnymen mix that is "Long Rider" and the echo-drenched "Los Surfers Muertos," which harkens to the band's previous twisted takes on surf – and sounds just as gnarly. **– *Dennis Pernu***



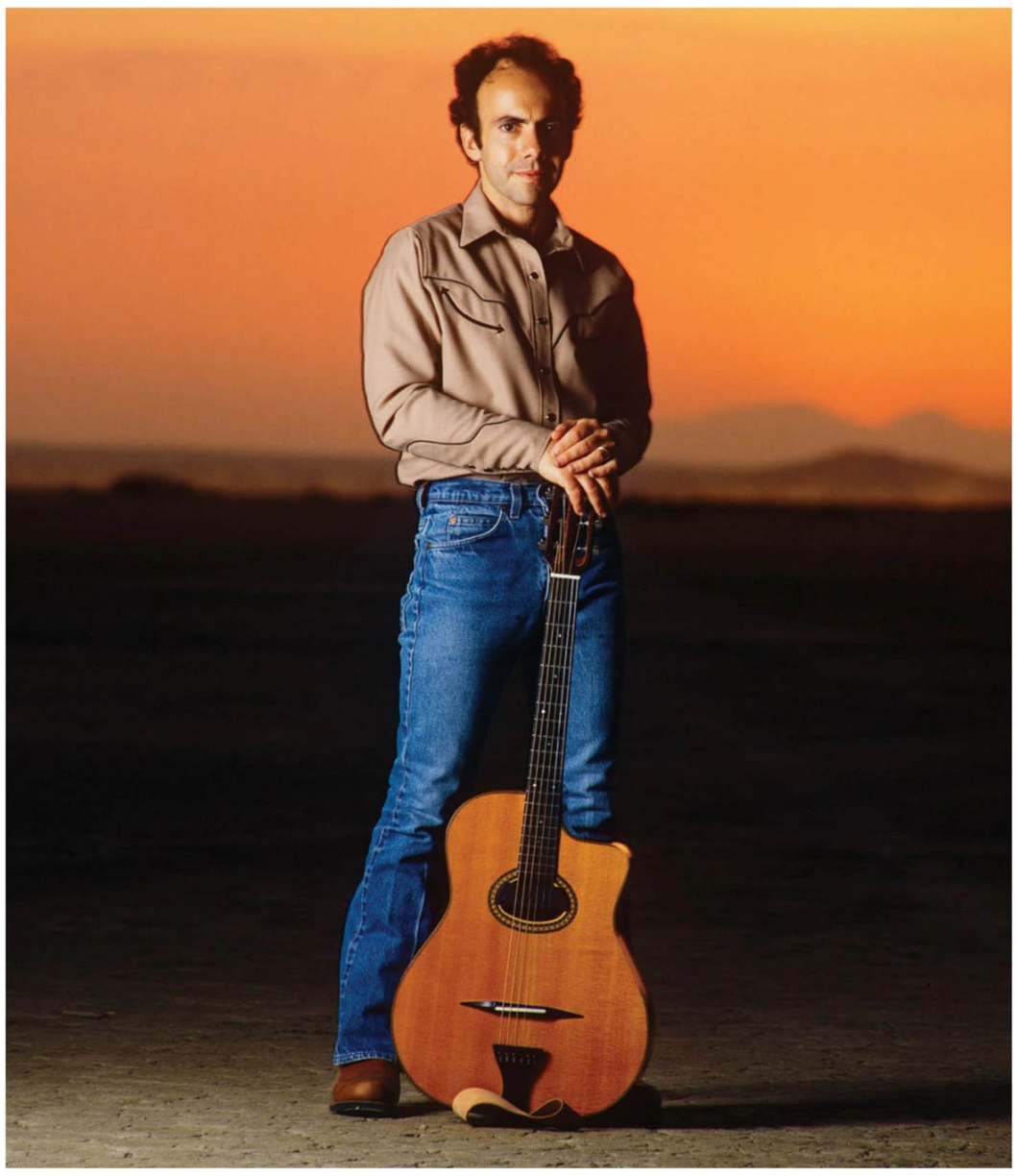
Junior Watson
Nothin' To It But To Do It

Rarely does a single disc come along with so much tasty guitar – but then Junior Watson has long been renowned for his fret work. He plays the blues with a jazz feel, jumps some jazz tunes with a blues touch, then mixes in some R&B shots and even a ska take on Duke Ellington's "Caravan." He has certainly done it all here.

Watson is a legendary West Coast guitar man, a founder of the Flying Saucer Band that grew into Rod Piazza & the Mighty Flyers, as well as stints with Kim Wilson, Al Blake, Lynwood Slim, William Clarke,

Toronzo Cannon: Mike White.

CHECK THIS ACTION



Steve Goodman: Jim Shea.

STEVE GOODMAN TREASURE TROVE

By Dan Forte

This month's entry has been the hardest column to squeeze out (a week behind deadline) in years. Not because I don't have anything to say about the subject; just the opposite. I have much more to say about **Steve Goodman** than can fit into a single page.

So, normally, I'd have words flying off my fingers about expanded reissues of Goodman's last four studio albums: "Great stuff! Buy 'em all! Tell your friends!" But listening to the 79 tracks sent me into a Goodman black hole – finding interviews with or about him online, watching numerous live clips on YouTube, even buying *Steve Goodman: Facing The Music*, the exhaustive, 750-page biography by Clay Eals.

Goodman died in 1984 at the age of 36. I only saw him live once (a bang-up solo set at the Boarding House in San Francisco in the mid '70s), and met him briefly around that time when he visited *Guitar Player*'s headquarters. I stepped out of my office, and this little guy (5'2") was marveling at the autographed 8x10s of Advisory Board members that lined the hallway. "Wow," he said, "George Van Eps!"

Little did I know, as it wasn't made public until much later, that he'd been diagnosed with leukemia when he was 19. So he had the disease, with periods of remission, his entire recording career.

He was championed by Kris Kristofferson, Arlo Guthrie, and Paul Anka, and in turn he mentored John Prine. If lay people know anything about Goodman, it's that he penned "City Of New Orleans." Guthrie's hit recording of the song in '72 allowed Goodman to pursue music full-time. Baseball fans might know the Chicagoan as the composer of the Cubs' Bo-Diddley-esque theme song, "Go Cubs Go."

There's so much more, amply illustrated on *Artistic Hair*, *Affordable Art*, *Santa Ana Winds*, and *Unfinished Business* – all from '83 and '84, on his own Red Pajamas label.

Onstage, Goodman's guitar skills came as a surprise to many who'd only heard his records. He was a fine fingerpicker but usually used a flatpick, and could *chunk-chunk* rhythm interspersed with Django-tinged lines, play jazzy chord-melody, and arpeggiate all over the neck, all while singing. He played acoustic almost all of the time, favoring Gibson and Martins dreadnought and O models, though he delivers a mean electric slide solo (credited as "Rick N. Backer") on "How Much Tequila (Did I Drink Last Night)" from *Affordable Art*.

His road manager, Maple Byrne (*VG*, August '18) notes, "That was probably a brass slide. He used to retune to the 6th chord mid-song and play a slide version of the Dick Clark 'American Bandstand' theme."

Byrne isn't sure what brand-name the Japanese Selmer copy pictured here bears, but says, "He used a Sunrise (soundhole pickup) in combination with ECM-50 Shure lavalier mics in several guitars. There was also a mandola with octave pairs C and G and an octave mando, both by Flatiron."

Goodman could write heartbreakers like "Yellow Coat," the touching love ballad "Would You Like To Learn To Dance," hysterical songs like "A Dying Cubs Fan's Last Request," and the ultimate country-cliche tune, "You Never Even Called Me By My Name." He also breathed new life into standards from jazz ("It's A Sin To Tell A Lie"), folk ("The Water Is Wide"), and country ("The Auctioneer"). His rocking "Queen Of The Road" even gives Chuck Berry a run for his money.

One great aspect of the expanded CDs is that the bonus cuts, mostly live, offer more-mature versions than their major-label predecessors, with pared-down instrumentation that often included multi-instrumentalist David Amram or mandolin great Jethro Burns of Homer & Jethro.

Often called a troubadour, typically performing solo with an acoustic guitar, "folk" comes closest to a genre Goodman fit into. But his energetic onstage attitude was just as much rock. The combination of his songs, his picking, and his sense of humor – able to hold an audience in the palm of his hand – made him a stellar entertainer.

Pedal-steeler Steve Fishell, who played on *Santa Ana Winds*, declares, "He was a pint-sized ball of fire, and he taughwwwt me a *lot*. Especially about how the people in the seats paid a lot to be there – including dinner, parking, babysitter, etc. – so you better bring your 'A game' to every concert stage."

Whenever there are awards, particularly for music, there will be disagreements. But there's this thing called the Americana Music Association that's been giving out awards since 2002. In Lifetime Achievement categories for performance, songwriting, instrumentalists, "trailblazer," and others, more than 100 have been handed out, and Goodman is inexplicably nowhere to be found. That's just wrong. You can't get more Americana than Steve Goodman.

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and more. He hasn't overwhelmed the world with solo discs, making this new album all the more welcome.

Watson wows throughout, from the stellar jam of "Space Flight" to the slow blues of "A Shot In The Dark." His tone, his phrasing, his quotes, his inventiveness – there are lessons here to last for years.

"The Pee Wee Classic" is a standout; a tribute to Pee Wee Crayton, the guitar – and whole band – swing with effortless style and grace. If you were concerned that the blues are on their last legs, fear no more. – ***Michael Dregni***



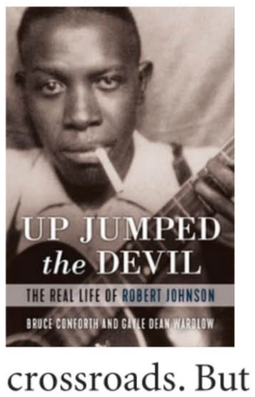
Joel Paterson
Let It Be Guitar!

The 16 selections here not only illustrate how enduring and adaptable the Beatles' catalog is, but are also testament to the generation of guitarists, all hovering around 50, who seem capable of mastering just about any roots style – Deke Dickerson, Dave Biller, Matt Munisteri, and Chicago's Paterson among them.

"And I Love Her" gets a dose of rapid tremolo and haunting steel swells. The steel takes the lead role for "This Boy," but the little background touches Paterson adds bring Les Paul and Buddy Merrill to mind. And "Honey Pie," complete with "scratchy vinyl" imitation, dives even deeper into Paul/Merrill territory. For "Things We Said Today," Paterson used Jorgen Ingmann's version of "Apache" as inspiration, with uncanny results – right down to the high, staccato section.

Paterson mines a high percentage of the Fab Four's ballads, but twangs a Bakersfield-inspired take on "I Don't Want To Spoil The Party" that would do Buckaroo Don Rich proud. "All My Loving," on the other hand, tips its hat to Chet Atkins, while "No Reply" gets a ska makeover and "Can't Buy Me Love" swings a jazzy organ-trio groove.

Heavyweights from Wes Montgomery to Jeff Beck have interpreted the Beatles' songs. With *Let It Be Guitar!*, Joel Paterson takes his place alongside them. – ***Dan Forte***



Bruce Conforth & Gayle Dean Wardlow
Up Jumped the Devil: The Real Life of Robert Johnson

Spoiler alert: Johnson didn't actually sell his soul to Satan down at the crossroads. But then again, that's not really revealing any secrets; we all knew that. The story was always part superstition, part metaphor – and probably part tall-tale tailored to the big-city folklorists who wanted to hear just such a story.

Over the decades, many people have strived to trace the details of Robert Johnson's life, often adding to the misinformation or hyperbole. Wardlow began his search in the early '60s, Conforth followed in the '70s. The authors are both pioneers, finding Robert's death certificate and census records and interviewing relations, which have helped dispel inaccuracies and right wrongs along the way.

The sum of their research helps to clarify our image of Johnson, but it also clears away the mystery. That's as it should be, supposedly, but it's tough to argue that the myth did not enhance the music.

The narrative storytelling here is mostly factual, which is too bad. If you want color and context, turn to Robert Palmer's masterwork, *Deep Blues*, or Peter Guralnick's focused *Searching for Robert Johnson*. Or listen to the music yet again – those haunting sides from 1936 and '37 remain true masterpieces. – ***MD***



Sturgill Simpson
Sound & Fury

Headline: Sturgill Simpson picks up a Les Paul!

On his past three albums, Simpson played Martins and Teles and the first two discs of bluegrass-fueled outlaw country won him a large fan base. He followed with a horn-driven, R&B-influenced album, leaving country fans scratching their heads. This time out, he's all about the rock and roll.

In hindsight, the world should have seen this coming. Simpson hinted at his other "interests" in his first albums, whether it was in the lyrics, the high-octane Hendrix-inspired guitar solos in the midst of a country romper, or the Theremin-and-electronica space jams during concerts. He's now proved he's far beyond a mere country-music outlaw. Color him a rebel.

But what about the music here? Simply put, it rocks. The album's been called country rock and also compared to ZZ Top, even Black Sabbath. But it's more than all that – and unique. Simpson's soaring guitar and keyboards introduce "Ronin," which segues into a driving "Remember To Breathe," set-

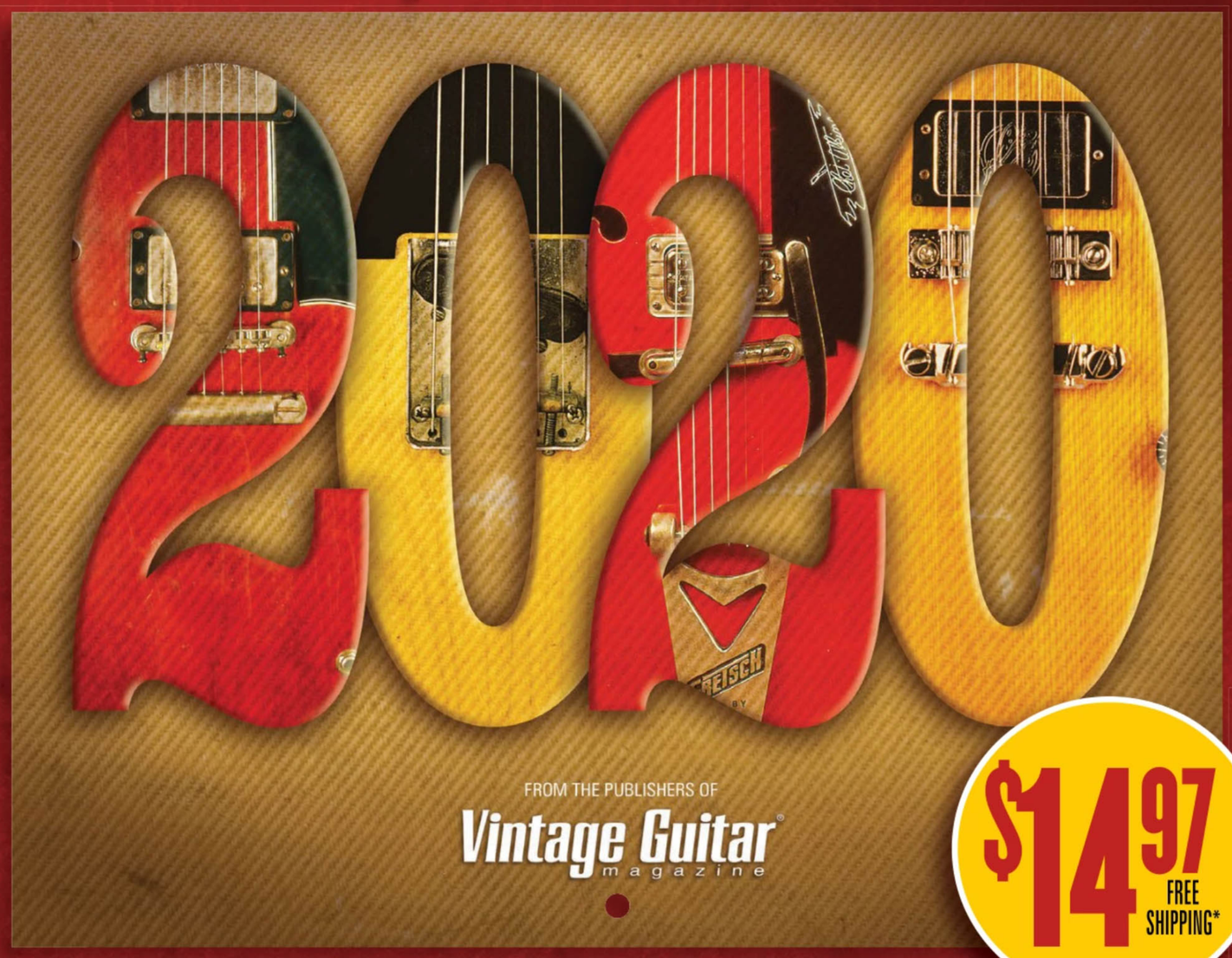
Joel Paterson Beatles: Ted Beranis.

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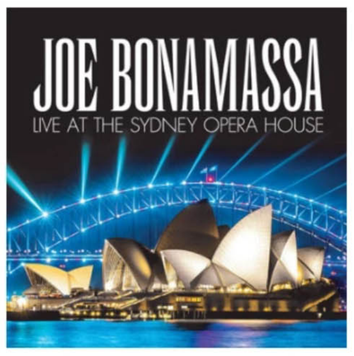
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ting the stage for what's to come. This is hard rock, and sometimes electronic music, and it's all very personal, therapeutic, cathartic, and still intimate.

Suffice it to say, *Sound & Fury* may not have been deemed a good career move by Simpson's label. But he obviously cares not. He's here to make his own sound–and proves he can play a Les Paul! ***– MD***



Joe Bonamassa
Live at the Sydney Opera House

The guitar virtuoso's latest is a blues-rock extravaganza recorded in 2016 at the iconic Australian venue. Onstage, Bonamassa tells the crowd it was the last concert hall on his bucket list of places where he wanted to perform.

Backed by a killer band featuring SRV keyboardist Reese Wynans, bassist Michael Rhodes, and veteran drummer Anton Fig, Bonamassa cuts loose on lengthy jams. The rollicking "This Train" lights up with a freewheeling guitar solo. "Mountain Climbing" slithers on a relaxed, funky groove with a fluid solo with vibrato and a shimmering bottleneck segment. The hazy minor blues of "Drive" floats on flowing guitar lines over rolling tom-toms.

"How Deep This River Runs" is a slow burner, building to an uncorked solo before settling back into a calmer tempo. The boisterous "Mainline Florida" bounces along on a sunny, pop-flavored melody with the guitar runs and horns complementing each other. Mournful, gospel-tinged blues oozes throughout "The Valley Runs Low," including the slide solo. "Blues of Desperation" creeps along, with exotic guitar riffs and distorted slide peeking mysteriously from the shadows.

Even "down under," this live set reminds us why Joe has become one of the guitar's best global ambassadors. ***– Bret Adams***



Joe Bonamassa



Laura Cox
Burning Bright

On her second full-length album, French/English guitarist Laura Cox presents ass-kicking rock with a bluesy edge. With her videos in excess of 90 million views, Cox's steamrolling riffs, ballsy guitar solos, and edgy voice are resonating around the world. Firmly embedded within the throes of a retro classic-rock renaissance, *Burning Bright* is flawlessly produced and arranged to showcase Cox's ear-friendly strengths.

Heavy Les Paul tones, solid riffs, and catchy songs permeate an album with wah and Octavia for dessert. It's mostly a power trio affair as Cox leads off with the heavy bass and guitar unison lines of "Fire." Cox solos with authority and maturity, lacking self-indulgence. She leans toward taste and intensity and knows her way around a lyric and a melody. "Just Another Game" and "Here's To War" offer range with understated acoustic playing within a modern country style ballad and a rock power ballad.

On "Freaking Out Loud," Cox gets '90s with a nod to Rage Against The Machine, smothered in bluesy aggression. Her guitar solo is tasty and enviable, then goes full-on Brit-rock majestic on "As I Am." Cox is a songwriter and guitarist to keep an eye on. ***– Oscar Jordan***



Mike Stern & Jeff Lorber Fusion
Eleven

Pairing the NYC-based guitarist Stern, famous for his pioneering work with Miles Davis and long solo career, and smooth L.A. fusion keyboardist Jeff Lorber might seem odd to anyone familiar with contemporary jazz. Yellowjackets bassist Jimmy Haslip (who worked with both in the past) saw the potential for collaboration and became a unifier, producing the album and, along with drummer Dave Weckl, served as the rhythm section on most tracks. The album title came from Nigel Tufnel's immortal Spinal Tap line about his amp's Volume knob.

The chemistry is apparent from the start. On "Righteous," Lorber pursues an upbeat commercial groove until Stern alters the direction. Revisiting his bluesy 1997 recording of "Jones Street," Stern raises the tempo a bit. For Lorber's swirling "Motor City," he and Stern tear loose amid Dave Mann's horn arrangements.

Reviving the dark, blues-drenched "Slow Change," Stern unleashes ferocious solos, Lorber responding with solid organ and piano interludes. Stern is heartfelt on his '90s ballad "Tell Me," as Lorber's stately soloing deepens and enhances the reflective mood. Both feed off one another on Stern's aggressive, the funk-influenced "Ha Ha Hotel," and on Lorber's "Runner."

Their backgrounds differ, yet Stern and Lorber reveal substantial – and highly satisfying – common ground. ***– Rich Kienzle***

Joe Bonamassa: Marty Moffatt.

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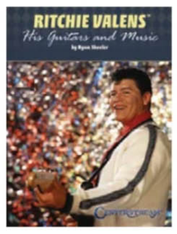
GREG DIAMOND
Musings & Origins

In a world of hyped-up pop, it's a joy to hear Greg Diamond's subtle acoustic work. His fingerstyle playing on a Collings steel-string is honest and virtuosic, with Latin roots, as in "El Pozo" and delicate ballad "Laia." On "Caprichosa," the melody and bass lines dance around each other, as if we're hearing several musicians – not just one player. Yet, it's all Diamond, a solo acoustic tour-de-force. **– *PP***



SPARKY PARKER
In The Dark

Houston guitarist/vocalist Parker alternates between blues and rock, drenching "In the Dark" in wah and adding razor-sharp lines to "This Old Thing" and Slim Harpo's "Shake Your Hips." His mastery of basic blues dominates "Games" and is even more effective on the intense "Sleepy Town." Taken as a whole, however, one suspects Parker live is far more powerful than he is here. **– *RK***



RYAN SHEELER
Ritchie Valens: His Guitars and Music

Valens' career lasted barely eight months from his meteoric rise to his untimely death in the plane crash that also took Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper. This 48-page black-and-white booklet tells the story of his all-too-short time in the spotlight, looks at his guitars and amps, and breaks down his biggest hit, "La Bamba," in musical notation and tab. **– *MD***



MAYCOWN REICHEMBACH
Way From Home

If you like searing fusion mixed with Satch/Vai-styled melodies, check this out. Reichembach is a Brazilian fretburner – listen to "Lluvia de Verano" for a soaring hook you might find on a Mike Stern record. "Limbo" starts with a blazing lick before diving into harmony explorations with eight-string bassist Igor Saavedra. Another highlight is Maycown wailing on "Gloria" with a long, soul-stretching solo. **– *PP***



LOS COAST
Samsara

Eclectic and funky, this Austin quintet features Trey Privott's vocals and John Courtney's guitar, with bassist Megan Hartman and keyboardist Natalie Wright and first-call drummer Damien Llanes (Hot Club Of Cowtown, Nick Curran, Marcia Ball). Courtney's guitar is melodic one moment, thrashing the next on this refreshing, all-original set mixing hip-hop, psychedelia, and jazz. **– *DF***



VINNIE MOORE
Soul Shifter

Pioneer shred stylist and UFO guitarist Vinnie Moore's ninth album explores the breadth of his emotions. From the Santana-inspired "Brother Carlos" to the heartfelt country-rock ballad "Soul Rider," his note selection is perfect. With textures ranging from the wistful "Mystified" to excellent slide work on "Heard You Were Gone," Moore showcases funky tunes and artistic reach. **– *OJ***



TOM KEIFER BAND
Rise

The former Cinderella mastermind's second solo release contains Rolling Stones nods ("Waiting on the Demons," "Breaking Down"), Cinderella-styled scorchers ("All Amped Up," "Life Was Here"), and modern sounds ("The Death of Me," "Hype," "Untitled"). "You Believe in Me" is a soul-baring tribute to his wife/songwriting partner/bandmate, Savannah. Keifer and Tony Higbee trigger ringing acoustic and beefy electric parts throughout. **– *BA***



HEAVY FEATHER
Débris & Rubble

Good things happen when British guitar rock, blues, and the voice of Lisa Lystam come together. Imagine Ann Wilson of Heart fronting Bad Company with a Swedish lilt. Melodic, concise, and refreshing, guitarist Matte Gustavsson uses every trick in the '70s guitar playbook. Highlights include Gustavsson's noteworthy slide solo on "Tell Me Your Tale." **– *OJ***



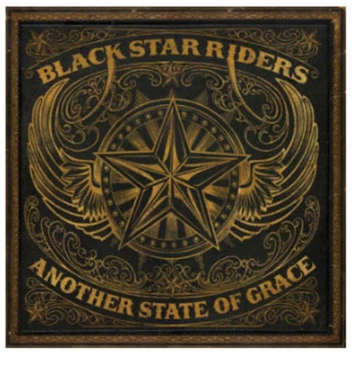
Mavis Staples
We Get By

The smartest things this gospel icon has done in recent years have been hooking up with Ry Cooder as producer for 2007's pared-down *We Never Turn Back* and keeping the three-piece road band that toured behind it – drummer Stephen Hodges, bassist Jeff Turmes, and guitarist Rick Holmstrom.

Three of her four subsequent studio albums were produced by Jeff Tweedy, who added instrumentation, including himself. When Ben Harper got the assignment for *We Get By*, he wrote all 11 songs (dueting with Mavis on the title track), and wisely let the trio who has traveled with Staples for a dozen years do what it does best – get inspiration from the songstress, and give it back.

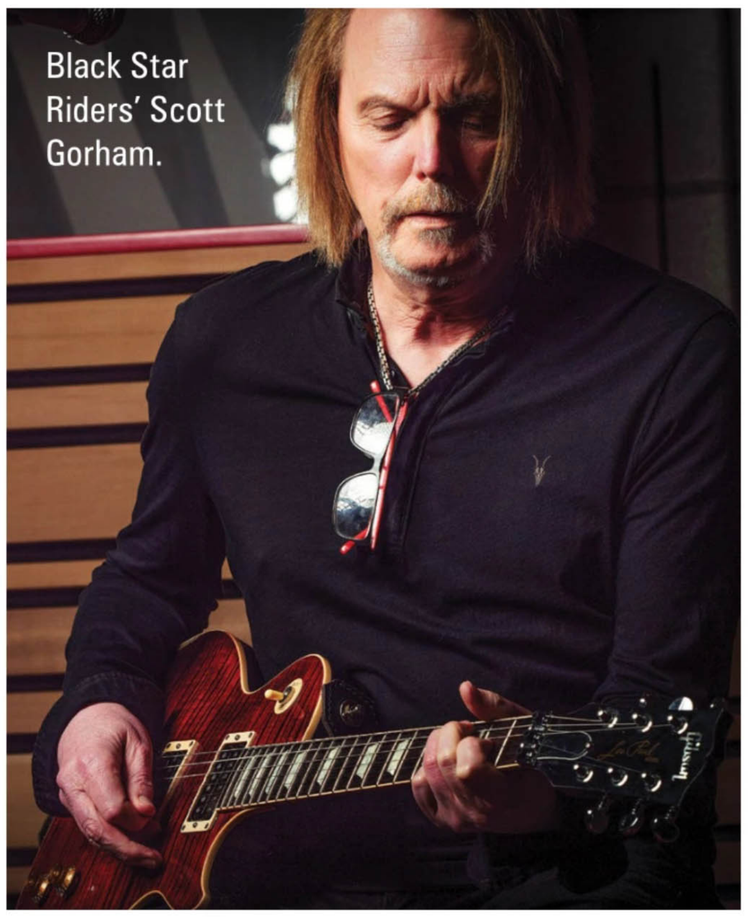
Holmstrom, who cut his teeth with Rod Piazza and William Clarke and was producing L.A. bluesman Johnny Dyer 25 years ago, is now one of the blues' finest six-stringers – with gospel also integral to his arsenal, summoning the late Roebuck "Pops" Staples when appropriate. He provides the sole backing on the moving "Heavy On My Mind," and delivers stinging solos on "Stronger" and "Chance On Me."

At 80, Staples is at the top of her game. The proof is right here. **– *DF***



Black Star Riders
Another State of Grace

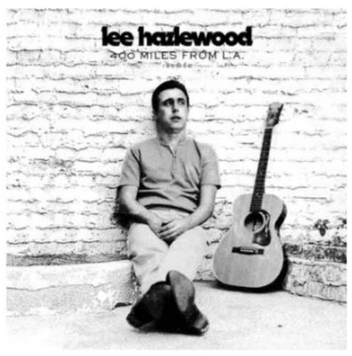
With their fourth studio album, Black Star Riders bring


Black Star Riders' Scott Gorham.

'70s hard rock deeper into the 21st century without losing that trademark *sturm und drang*. With the fiery sound of Thin Lizzy as its creative core and Scott Gorham on lead guitar, the band kicks ass on "Ain't the End of the World," sounding as if Lizzy had never broken up. Frontman Ricky Warwick channels Phil-Lynott-styled vocals throughout, while new guitarist Christian Martucci adds heavy support.

"Tonight the Moonlight" is a major-key bruiser with Lizzy's hallmark guitar harmonies, a tenor sax solo, and pummeling beat. While the title track feels like a clumsy rewrite of 1976's "Emerald," "Why Do You Love Your Guns" is more authentic Black Star Riders, wholly separate from the Thin Lizzy mythos. For big riffs, check out "In the Line of Fire" and its wah-infused solo in the style of guitar hero Brian Robertson.

If your idea of heavenly hard rock involves Les Pauls, Marshall stacks, and snarling lyrics, grab *Another State of Grace* without hesitation. Gorham and Martucci have that crunch down stone-cold, while Warwick is the perfect frontman for a band that wears its Lizzy influences on its sleeve. Thin Lizzy's overdue nomination to the 2020 Rock Hall of Fame only adds to the excitement. – ***Pete Prown***



Lee Hazlewood
400 Miles from L.A. 1955-56.

Lee Hazlewood (1929-2007) became famous for his distinctive baritone voice and songwriting. His offbeat solo albums, largely ignored in their time, are now revered as "cowboy psychedelia," a concept he first explored on his 1963 album, *Trouble Is a Lonesome Town*.

In 1955 and '56, however, he was an obscure Phoenix disc jockey and aspiring songwriter, working with young locals like singer Sanford Clark and future guitar titans Al Casey (Wrecking Crew) and Duane Eddy. Hazlewood wrote several Eddy instrumentals, among them "Forty Miles of Bad Road" and his signature tune "Rebel Rouser." In '60s Hollywood, Hazlewood wrote songs for Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin and produced several of Nancy Sinatra's mid-decade hits, including "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'" and several successful Sinatra/Hazlewood duets.

The first 14 tracks of this archival collection feature Hazlewood singing obscure folk- and country-flavored originals as he strums rudimentary chords on acoustic guitar. The final 10 tracks, however, are a newly discovered '56 draft of the *Trouble* album, recorded in Phoenix and backed by Casey and several of Eddy's sidemen as the rhythm section. Even then, one could hear Hazlewood's vocal and lyrical potential, and early examples of Casey's versatile guitar. – ***RK*** VG

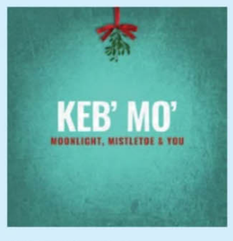


SEASONAL SELECTIONS



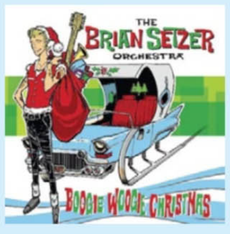
ROB HALFORD WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS
Celestial

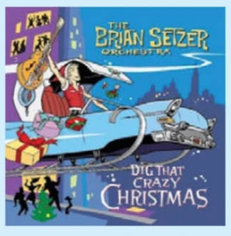
What could be more seasonal than a holiday album with a Judas Priest theme? "Donner & Blitzen" rocks as hard as classic Priest, with minor-key power riffs and solos from Robert Jones and Jon Blakey. "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" is more *Defenders of the Faith* than Dickens, while Alex Hill – son of Priest bassist Ian Hill – handles four-string thumpage. – ***PP***



KEB' MO
Moonlight, Mistletoe & You

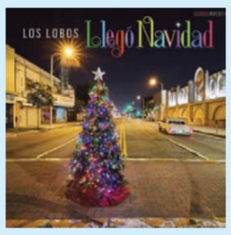
Guitarist Keb' Mo spreads comfort and joy with his unique take on Christmas classics. He blends blues, jazz, romance, and exceptional guitar playing as his voice warms like a crackling fire. Songs such as "I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm" and "Please Come Home For Christmas" will defeat the holiday blues. – ***OJ***





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LOS LOBOS
Llegó Navidad

The Grammy winners deliver a terrific collection of holiday songs, some more traditional ("La Rama"), others rockin' like "It's Christmas Time in Texas." The single "Christmas and You" has ringing guitar from Cesar Rosas and a Roy Orbison-approved vocal from David Hidalgo. They close with José Feliciano's "Feliz Navidad," cut here as joyous acoustic jam. It's perfect. – ***PP***

Elf: SeanThorenson.

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Vintage Gibson, Martin, Guild & National Resophonic instruments wanted, in good++ condition, 1920-2001. Not a dealer. Top prices paid. Also wanted: 1960's Ampeg goldenglow reverborocket amplifier. If you know tube amp... yep, that's the one! Contact Willis @ Delta Prince Music - deltaprince@cox.net. (AZ)

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VG APPROVED GEAR



CALIFORNIA LEAN

Fat Jimmy Amplifiers' Fat Jimmy Jr.

Price: $2,699
www.fatjimmyamps.com

Thanks largely to word of mouth and their ties to Bob Weir and San Francisco's Bay Area, Fat Jimmy Amplifiers is attracting a number of notable artists. Builder Mike Pascale brings a passion for vintage gear to the art of building, paying homage to greats from the '50s and '60s while advancing reliability and tone.

The Jimmy Jr. is Pascale's take on Fender's Princeton Reverb – a handsome single-channel 6V6 combo loaded with a 12" Fat Jimmy Vintage Series C1270 (made by Warehouse Guitar Speakers, a.k.a. WGS) and a power rating of 12 watts. Pascale begins with circuitry reflecting the tweeds and blackfaces of the '50s and '60s, but takes the designs to the next level. The Jimmy Jr. has tube-driven spring reverb and an intoxicating bias-modulating tremolo. Features include Hi and Low inputs, a tube-rectified 5AR4 in the power section, and a Standby switch on the front panel. Controls are Volume, Treble, Bass, Reverb, Speed, Depth, and Jimmy. A footswitch for reverb and tremolo is optional.

At 12 watts, the Jimmy Jr. is quiet enough for recording but loud enough to be played in a live/band setting. Its best features are its complex clean tones and magical textures created with the tremolo. One secret to this functionality is the Jimmy knob, which controls the degree of negative feedback (a.k.a. the amp's "breakup point"). With the knob pushed, the sound becomes richer and more vibrant, adding harmonic detail. Used in tandem with the Volume control, the Jimmy knob coaxes mellifluous crunch. It's perfect for the plug-in-and-go guitarist who likes to ride their guitar's Volume knob.

The Jimmy Jr.'s sounds are sensitive and malleable, and its reverb is fabulous. It also works well with pedals, producing a robust, dark overdrive with a vintage aftertaste. It'd be a great addition to nearly any tonal arsenal. ***– Oscar Jordan***



Price: $1,015
www.puresalemguitars.com

GRAND WITCH

The PureSalem Tom Cat

The folks at PureSalem Guitars aren't shy about their fondness for acid rock. And because they're less about riding the "retro" wave than celebrating the raw, vintage sounds of garage rock, it's no surprise their planks sound great with overdrive and pulsating tremolo or phase shifter.

Take the Tom Cat. Visually, it's a big, oblong solidbody resembling the Guild Thunderbird used by Muddy Waters on 1968's *Electric Mud*, a psychedelia cult favorite. It has a dense mahogany body and bolt-on mahogany neck with bound 22-fret rosewood fingerboard. The scale is a Gibson-approved 24.75" and it sports a *full* C-style neck profile with 12" fretboard radius. Its Bigsby B5 is perfect for fuzzed-out note wiggling.

The electronics array includes two P-90-style pickups, a three-way selector, and two Volume controls with a master Tone, though they're a bit awkward to access under the Bigsby arm.

Plugged in, the Tom Cat can handle as much fuzz and reverb as you want, conjuring reveries of Janis and The Dead at the Avalon Ballroom – if you remember those gigs, you probably weren't there. But don't be fooled – the Tom Cat can also clean up nicely for mellow jazz and funky country runs. No fancy bells and whistles, but with that classic Bigsby and P-90 combo, it covers a lot of sonic ground. Bell-bottoms and fringed jacket optional. ***– Pete Prown***

FIRST-CLASS FLAT-TOP

Yamaha's FG5 Red Label



Yamaha was one of the first Japanese acoustic-guitar builders to figure out how to make a *real* instrument instead of a mere guitar-shaped object. To celebrate 50-plus years of guitar development, the company has re-created the FG body, one of its first popular designs, with changes focused on sound and overall quality.

The FG5 employs a new scalloped bracing system that gives the solid spruce top more freedom of movement. According to Yamaha, this helps generate "a warm, powerful tone with deep lows and rich harmonics." They've also employed a new way of treating the wood; dubbed Acoustic Resonance Enhancement (A.R.E.), it's a proprietary process that uses heat, humidity, and atmospheric pressure to simulate the effect of aging. The back and sides are mahogany, while the fretboard, bridge, pins, and end pin are ebony. The saddle and nut are made of bone rather than the more-typical synthetic materials. Scale length is 25" and there are no onboard electronics or pickup system. The tuners have a retro look, but their smooth movement and higher gear ratios are thoroughly modern.

Price: $1,199
www.yamaha.com

The overall quality of the FG5 starts with its custom case, several grades above the plastic usually used for guitars in the FG5's price range. The quality continues with its evenly grained satin-finish top, which Yamaha calls a "natural matte." Its light sheen is also used on the body and neck, and it's thin enough to avoid hindering tonality while ably protecting the wood underneath.

The neck is 1.75" at the nut with a rounded, modern-taper profile instead of a vintage V or wide-neck design. Fretwork on the review instrument was smooth, with no ends protruding. Intonation was excellent. The compensated saddle ensured the B-string did not need to be tuned several cents flat to intonate properly with the E-string. The action was comfortably low; out of the box it didn't need a trip to a local luthier for setup.

The FG-5 has an even harmonic balance with good bass extension and excellent sustain characteristics. It is loud enough, when pushed, to keep up with dreadnoughts in an acoustic jam. If you want a first-class all-around modern acoustic flat-top, the FG5 is a savvy option. – ***Steven Stone***

GEARIN' UP



BERGANTINO HG312

Bergantino Audio Systems' Holographic HG312 sealed bass cab uses three 12" neodymium woofers. Its tweeter is a compression driver with constant-directivity horn, and its poplar cabinet is covered in black Bronco Tolex. Power rating is 750 watts RMS, impedance is 5.3 ohms, frequency response is 42 hertz to 15 kilohertz, and it weighs 49 pounds.



EHX 5MM

The Electro-Harmonix 5MM guitar amplifier produces 2.5 watts output with Volume control and Bright/Norm switch that adds top boost or presence. It can drive an 8- and/or 16-ohm cabinet and ships with a power supply.



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Fender's American Ultra Series Strat and Tele models have redesigned body contours, Ultra Noiseless Vintage or Double-Tap Humbucker pickups, a treble-bleed circuit and other wiring options, and new colors including Cobra Blue, Mocha Burst, Texas Tea, Arctic Pearl, Aged Natural, Plasma Red Burst, and Ultraburst.

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POSITIVELY SYNTH-FUL

The Boss SY-1

Utter the words "guitar synthesizer" around most players, and they'll default to an instinctual resistance to such technology. Leave it to Roland, a decades-long leader in guitar synths, to finally kick down that wall with its Boss SY-1 pedal.

Price: $199.99
www.boss.info

Guit-synth in a stompbox, it doesn't require a special pickup – just plug in your six-string or bass and jam on solos or full chords. Housed in the familiar Boss box, further genius with the SY-1 lies in how Boss presents its functions in a knob configuration instead of steep-learning-curve digital "menus." Two concentric knobs get double duty out of a single post; Effect/Direct balances the guitar's volume level and the chosen synth effect, while Depth/Tone/Rate tweaks tonal and speed variables depending on the synth effect. You can also plug in an expression pedal to invoke pitch rises or change tempo.

When you use the Type dial to select one of 11 synthesizer tones, the adjacent Variation knob offers 11 sound choices for each – that's *121* synth tones. Two Lead sections grant access to your Minimoog and Arp adventures, from Jan Hammer to Keith Emerson. The Type dial's Pad section provides spacey ambient sounds behind chords and notes, while Strings and Organ provide more traditional sounds. Granted, these are no match for a good keyboard synth, but for a guitar stompbox, you can't argue with the convenience – *and* there are none of those annoying tracking "glitches."

Experimenters will enjoy the Type dial's SFX section for weird, goopy eight-bit sounds, but the star of the show is Sequencer. Prepare to be *blown away* by hardcore synthesizer sounds previously unimaginable on guitar. These pulsating rhythms sound like sequencer patches; the Tone/Rate button controls the tempo, changing from slow throbs to fast EDM grooves. Want more? Step on the pedal to hold each pulsating note indefinitely (or until you change the progression). This is impressive processing power.

While the next-gen Boss Synthesizer might include preset-saving memory and stereo output, the joy of the debut SY-1 is that it's so simple to use and contains both powerful and highly useful synth tones. Forty years on, Boss has opened the door to guitar synthesis a lot wider – now everyone can *step* on in. **– *Pete Prown***





Price: $189
www.godlyke.com

ALIEN BRAIN INVASION

TWA's MiniMorph Dynamic Wave Shaper

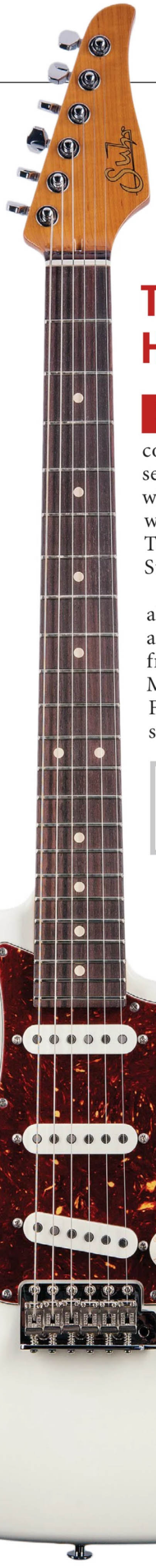
Totally Wycked Audio came to the attention of guitarists in 2017 with its DynaMorph pedal, distortion, and envelope-detection circuits that produced everything from scratchy fuzz to lush synth. Does the DynaMorph's little brother, the MM1 MiniMorph, contain the same sort of wide-ranging surprises?

The MiniMorph's functionality begins with the input level, which determines overall "personality" of its overdrive and saturation, though playing dynamics certainly impact the sound of the pedal. The circuit has a bevy of full-wave rectifiers and two high-gain preamps set in series. Gain (one of three mini knobs) controls the level of the preamp, and the large Drive knob controls output level. The distortion's EQ changes as you increase Drive; Gain forces Drive to push the rectifiers, resulting in robust harmonics, sustain, and compression. Morph controls output level of the distortion, and Dry mixes original signal with the effect. The MiniMorph uses what the company calls "shortest send switching" to provide transparent bypass and revert the effect to bypass mode if power is lost. The large master Level determines overall output, and Mode selects two EQ settings.

The TWA MiniMorph delivers sounds from across the fuzz family – splattering fuzz, synthiness, envelope-filtered octave fuzz, even the searing sound of an alien brain invasion. In other words, it's the perfect tool for fuzz-addicted guitarists. **– *Oscar Jordan***

ARTIST'S SPARK

The Suhr Scott Henderson Signature



Fusion guitarist Scott Henderson has built a career by pushing the envelope as a performer and a composer. And, as a globetrotting professional, he seeks instruments that afford comfort and playability while adapting to his playing style and doing away with annoying 60-cycle hum and radio frequencies. To address those needs, he teamed with luthier John Suhr to create the Scott Henderson Signature model.

The Scott Henderson guitar features a lightweight alder body, a roasted maple quartersawn neck, and an Indian rosewood fingerboard with jumbo nickel frets. It has Suhr's proprietary locking tuners and three Michael Landau Standard single-coils. A modified Fender six-screw chrome bridge includes a custom steel block, and the modified vibrato is set up so the strings can be pulled up a major third or pushed down an octave. The steel vibrato arm is thicker and shorter than traditional vibratos and features larger mounting screws in the bridge. It also comes with a contoured heel for better upper-fret access.

Price: $3,495
www.suhr.com

Its comfy D-shaped neck profile is .800"-.880" with a 1.650" nut width and it offers full support for fluid improvisation and chording. With its satin finish, the Indian rosewood generates a deeper tone. It's a complex and full-bodied sound. The Landau Alnico V Special pickups produce traditional single-coil chime, but with warmth and thickness, and they're silent even when playing through a high-gain head. Slightly hotter in output, they yield mid-range punch on the cleaner end of the spectrum.

The Suhr Scott Henderson guitar offers silky cleans, but also handles distortion beautifully, with lustrous articulation. The vibrato is smooth and expressive with all the personality of a vintage instrument. It's easy to play, stays in tune, and just might spark your musical artistry. – ***Oscar Jordan***

GEARIN' UP



GIBSON ALVIN LEE ES-335 '69 FESTIVAL

Gibson's Alvin Lee ES-335 '69 Festival re-creates Lee's famed Big Red. It has a maple/poplar laminate body in Aged Sixties Cherry, mahogany neck with Medium C shape, rosewood fretboard with 12" radius and pearloid dot markers, Bigsby B-7, Custombucker pickups in the neck and bridge positions, and a Duncan SSL-1 in the middle.



PRS 35TH ANNIVERSARY CUSTOM 24

The PRS Guitars 35th Anniversary Custom 24 models (Core, S2 Series, SE) use TCI pickups paired with mini-toggle switches that allow players to put either or both in humbucking or single-coil mode. Also new is a nitro finish with a cellulose base coat.



REVEREND SENSEI RT LE

Reverend Guitars' Sensei RT LE double-cut has a full-thickness korina body, Boneite nut, locking tuners, Revtron mini-humbuckers, and a Bigsby with Reverend's Soft Touch spring. It's available in Lime, Purple, Black, Orange, and Aqua.

INSTANT KARMA

The Collings 290 Custom



Sporting a lookalike Charlie Christian pickup in its neck slot, the Collings 290 Custom resembles the modded Les Paul Special deployed by John Lennon circa 1972 – an homage to that cool, unconventional, and utilitarian setup that marked John's move to New York City.

The 290 has a mahogany body and neck, and a 22-fret rosewood fretboard. The scale, however, is a smidge longer than a Special, at 24⁷/₈". It comes with a pair of Lollar pickups – a P-90 DogEar in the back and that Charlie Christian in the front. Look for a Kluson ABR-1 bridge and tailpiece, and Gotoh tuners with vintage buttons.

In the hand, the guitar's beefy neck was set up to perfection – unusual given that we grabbed it from a retailer, so props to the Collings dealer in Guilford, Connecticut – with big frets and excellent intonation in every position. With its Tone knobs set full up, the sound was big and lively through a silverface Princeton Reverb, each note popping and resonant.

Price: $3,600
www.collingsguitars.com

The real surprise was its tonal persona, thanks to a cool wiring setup using DiMarzio 500K pots and Jupiter Vintage Yellow capacitors. As you tweak the Tone knobs, you may be amazed at the vast EQ spectrum. Using the bridge pickup, pick a note and sweep the Tone pot from muted and woolly to brightly sweet, and enjoy the natural-sounding wah effect. The neck pickup, meanwhile, adds a warmer, jazz-flavored tone than the typical P-90. These are serious pro sounds.

Collings has a reputation for excellence, and this 290 Custom proved it's no hype. It's a high-end axe that'll provide a lifetime of playability – as well as tones that remind us of John Lennon just as he was getting into that New York groove. ***– Pete Prown***



Price: $199
www.walrusaudio.com

FUNKED-UP

Walrus Audio's Kangra Filter Fuzz

In a world of ever-expanding pedal possibilities, manufacturers are finding ways to increase the functionality of their stompboxes, lest gearheads find themselves with pedalboards girthy enough to rival Neil Peart's drum kit.

Brainchild of "Saturday Night Live" guitarist Jared Scharff, Walrus Audio's Kangra Filter Fuzz is a successful marriage of fuzz and envelope filter based on the guitarist's obsession with the '60s Kay Fuzz Tone.

The Kangra's two independent channels produce splattery fuzz in Vintage Mode or super sustain in Modern Mode. A Midrange switch provides flat midrange or a mid-scooped preset. The pedal's left side offers envelope filter sounds specifically designed to augment the fuzz, or it can be used as a standalone filter. The auto-filter side has controls for Frequency, Sensitivity, and Resonance to shape sounds even when the filter is disabled. Both work effectively with other pedals, and an additional switch enables the filter circuit to shape other pedals in the signal chain.

The true-bypass Kangra has an expression pedal input and accepts a 9-volt battery or adapter. The filter is warm and skanky and allows a range of tone-shaping possibilities. The aggressive, top-end fuzz also allows for warmer, tighter, and sustain capabilities, while the octave-up sound is magnificent. ***– Oscar Jordan*** VG

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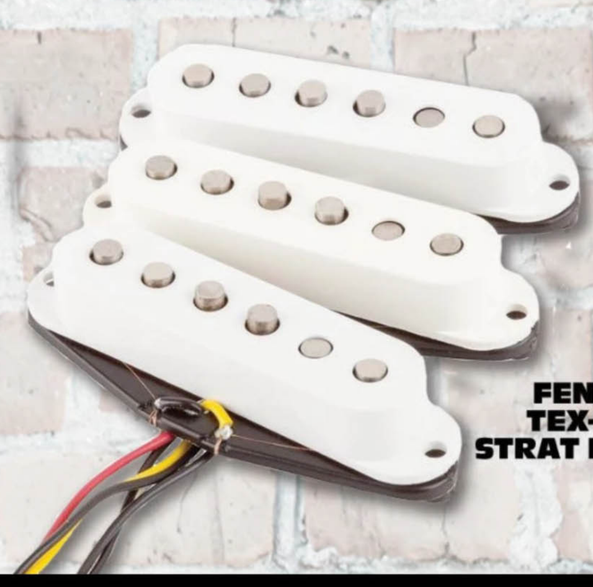
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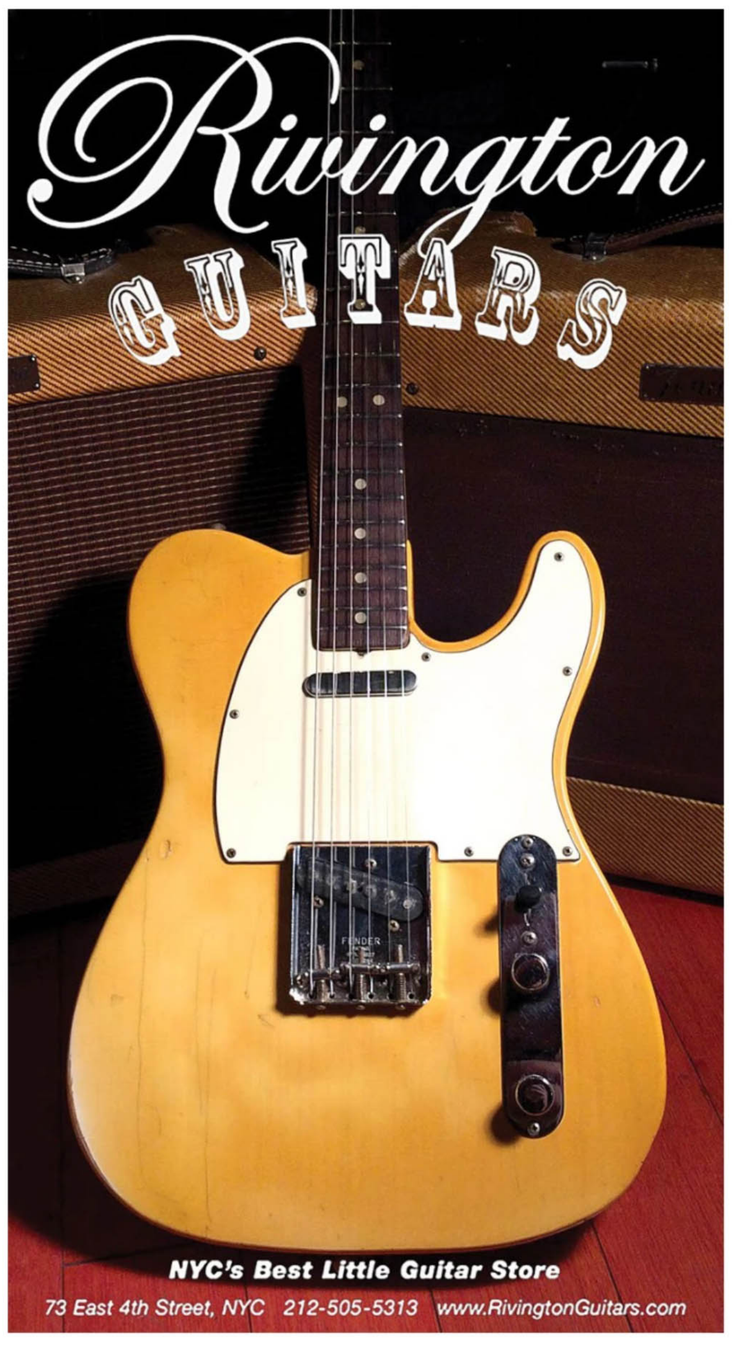
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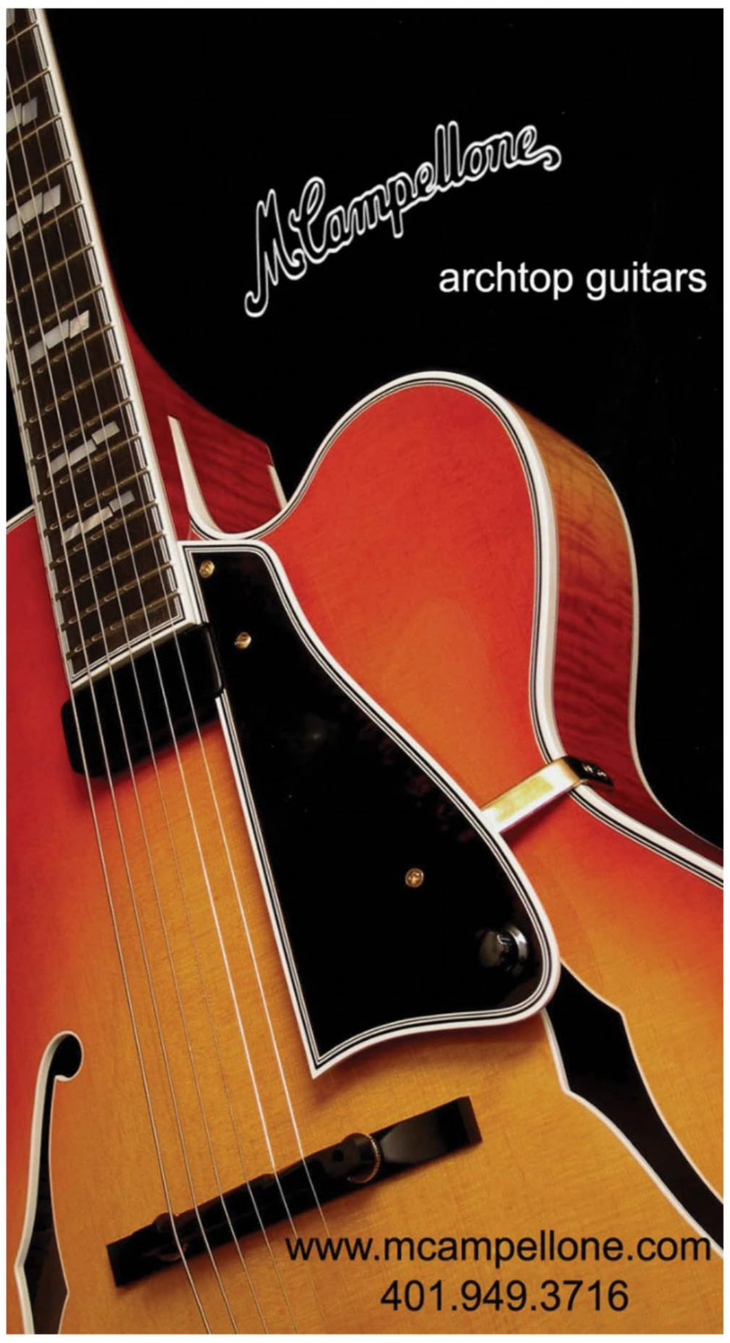

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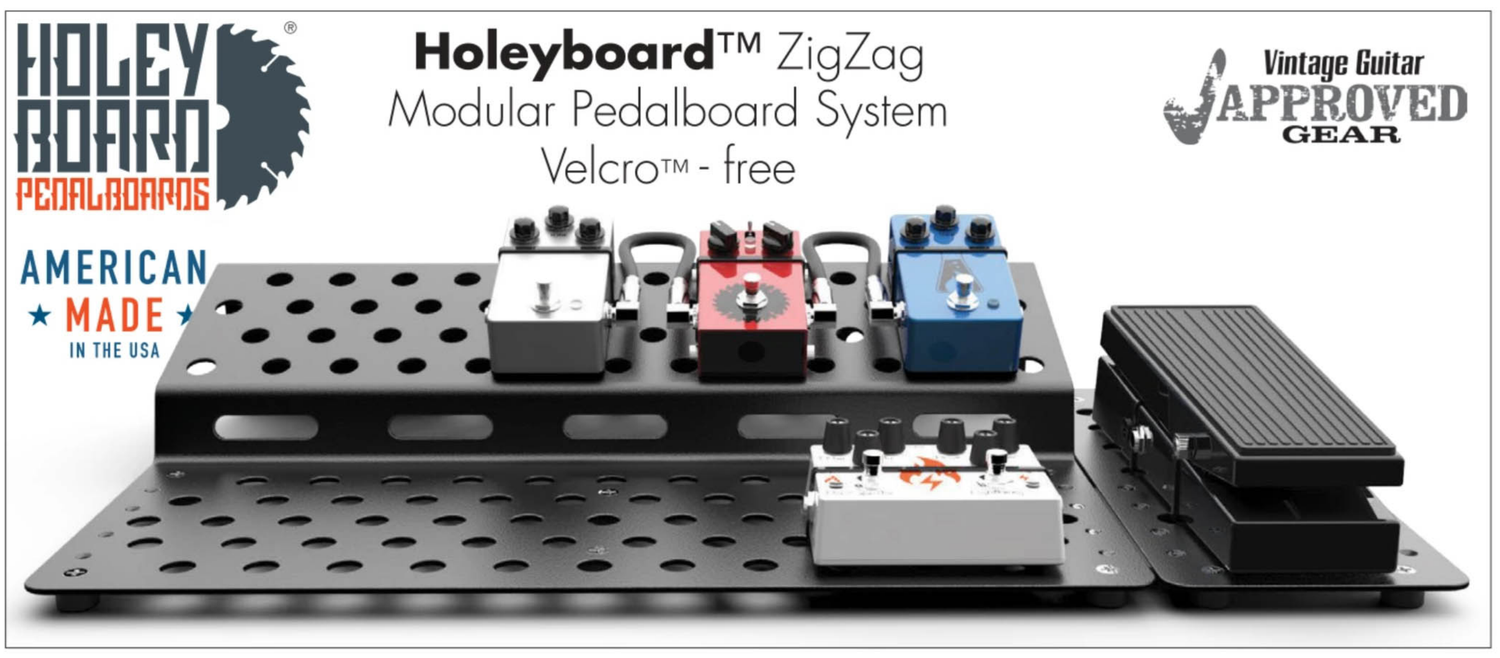

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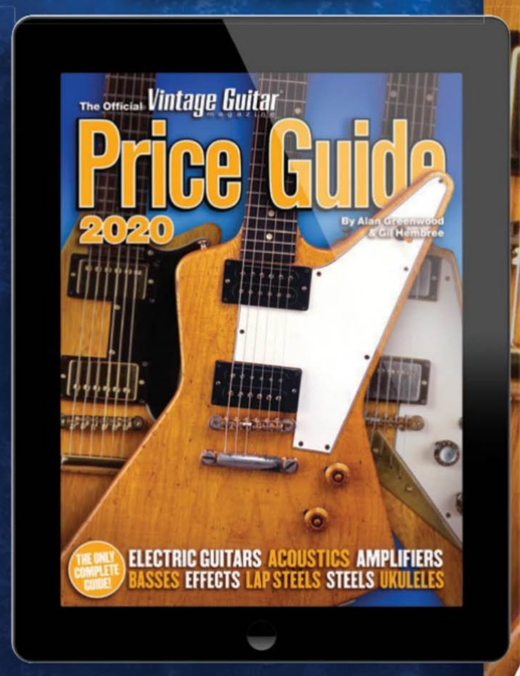
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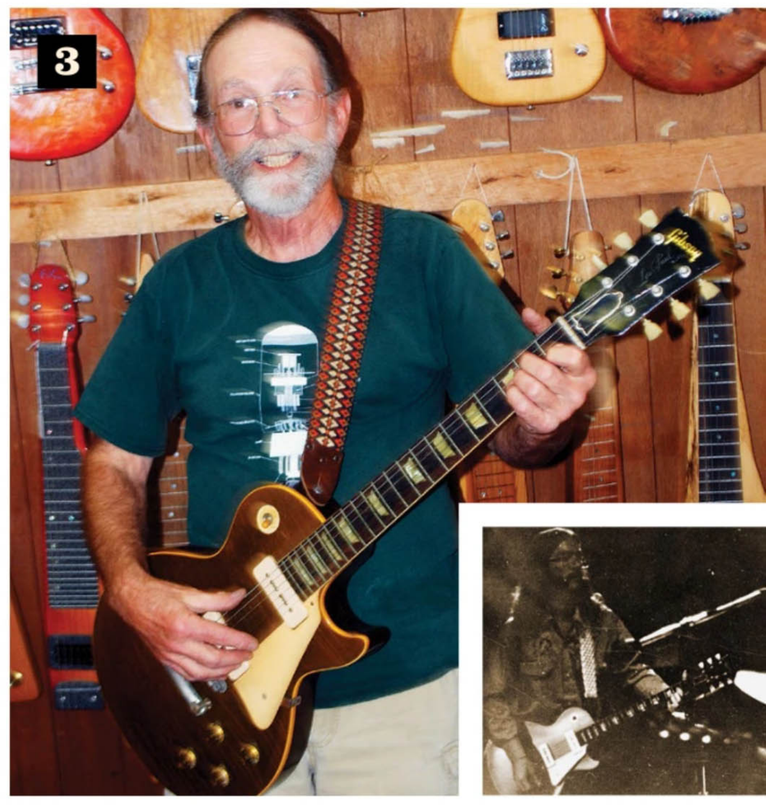
1) Kevin Rush put his array of colorful vintage Jazzmasters on full display for this shot. From left, they are a '62 in Olympic White, '63 sunburst, '63 in Shoreline Gold, and '64 in Lake Placid Blue.
2) Paul Swanson's lefty guitars include his Gibson Custom Shop ES-335, a Fender CS '65 NOS Strat and a Gibson CS ES-336.
3) Ron Lira bought his '57 Les Paul goldtop in October of '69 and recently celebrated 50 years of making music with it.
4) Bruce Kerr is longtime reader whose collection includes about 60 instruments and amps like this '95 reissue Strat (in Seafoam Green) and '65 Deluxe. Immediately after his new *VG* Classic Combo t-shirt arrived, he re-created the scene!
5) Tony Sheedy has been reading *VG* for 30 years and collects mostly vintage Strats and Teles. One of his coolest is this '54 Strat (serial number 115), which he says, "…has the very early smooth-shaft pots, and the body is really thick and blocky, which you'd expect in the first run." Here it is with his daughter, Taylah, when she was a year old, and today.

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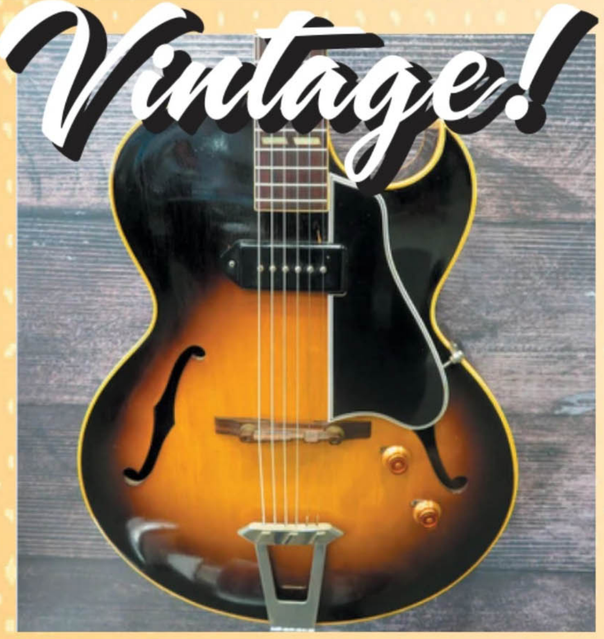
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