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LEE RITENOUR

STEVE LUKATHER

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1959/'60 LES PAUL JUNIOR "BLACK BEAUTIES"

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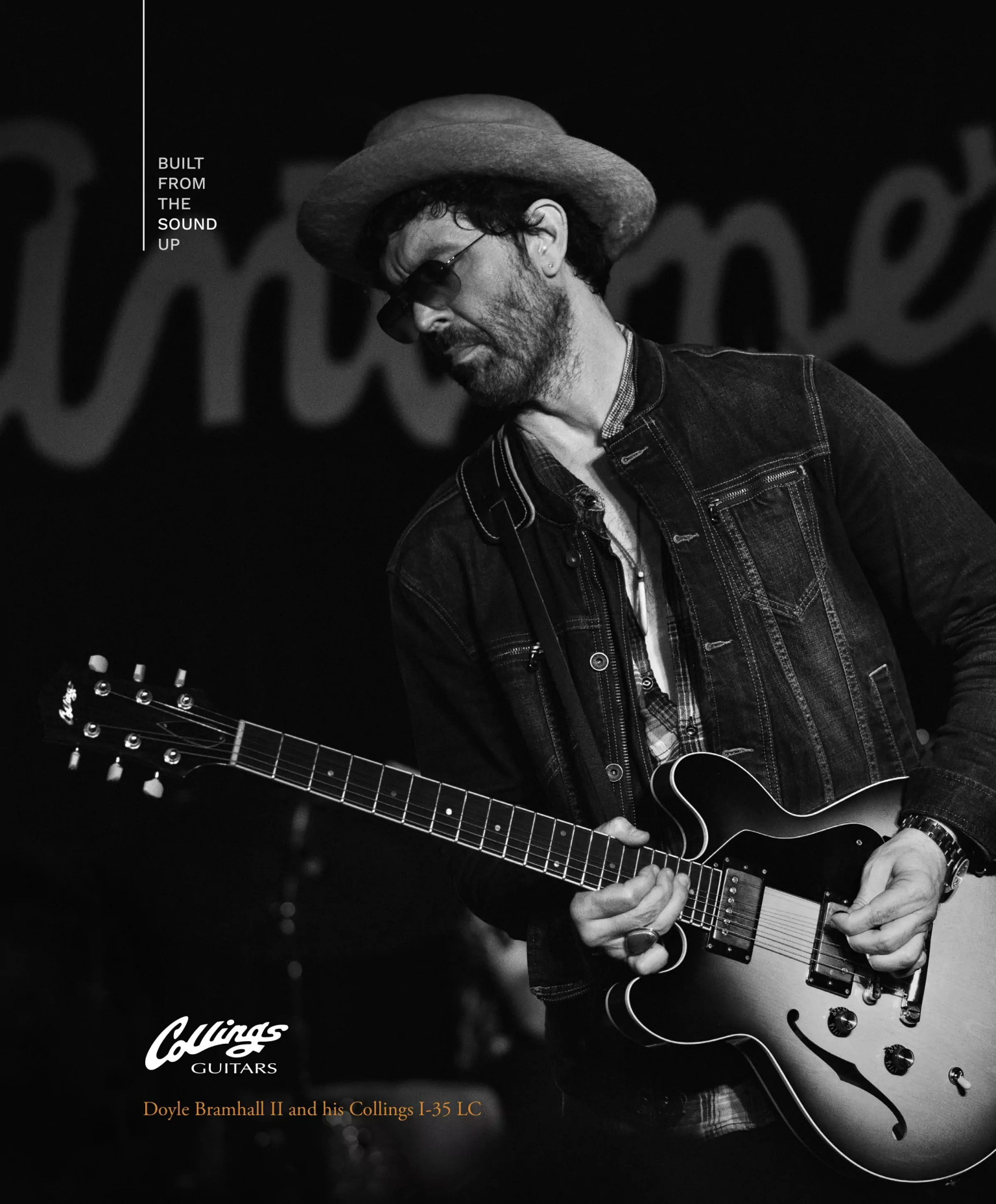

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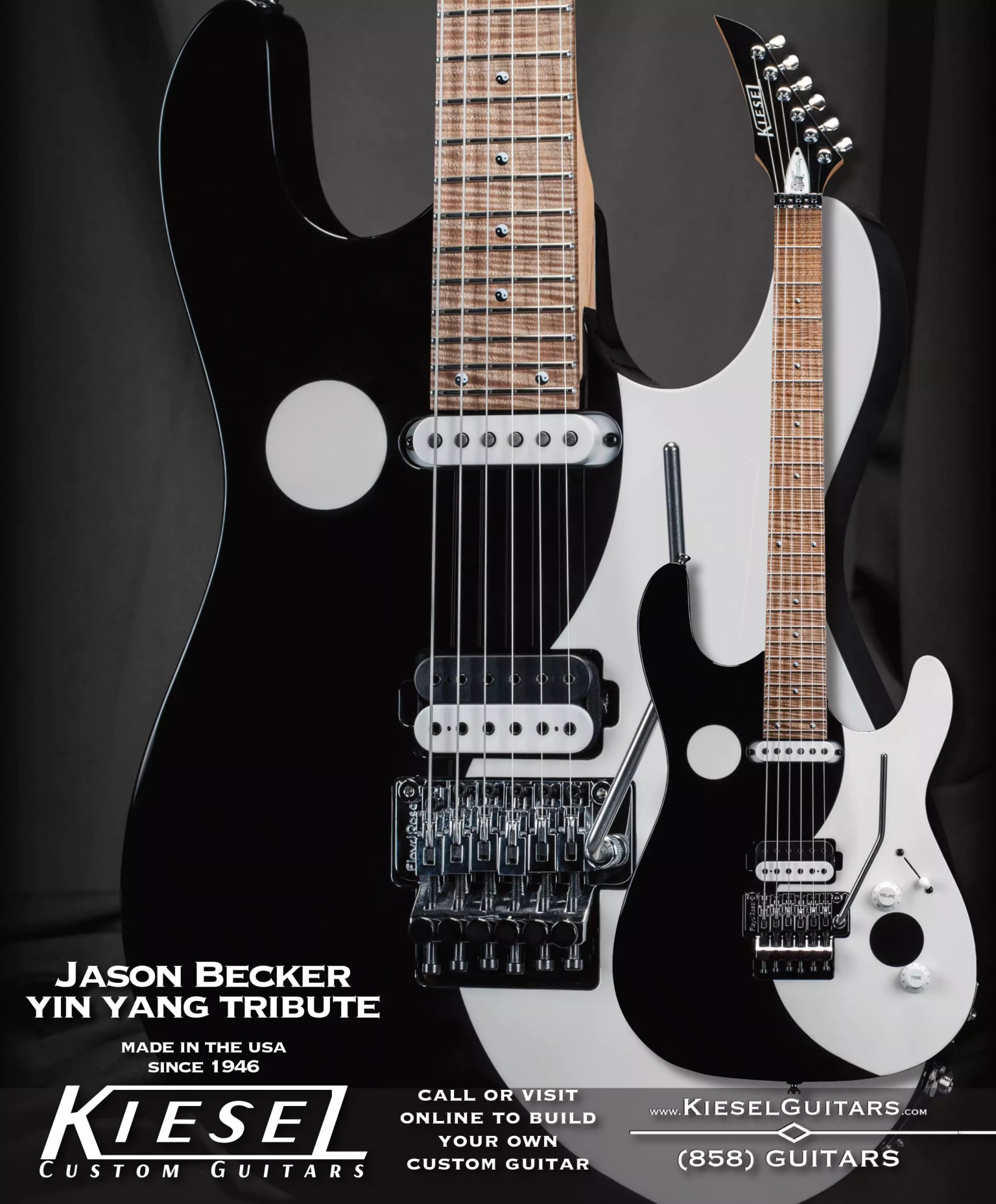

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CONTENTS

MAY 2021 VOL. 35 NO. 08

FIRST FRET

14 **Reader Mail**

18 **News and Notes**
Carvin Marks 75 Years; FAI Honors Lightfoot, Gilkyson, Browne; Dad's Day '21 Entry Info

18 **Steve Lukather**
Sun Shine

20 **Hilton Valentine**
1943-2021

22 **Michael Schenker**
Golden Guitar Jubilee

24 **Douglas Naselroad**
Instrumental Healing

26 **Tony Rombola**
Gothic Blues

28 **Rod Abernethy**
Carolina Acoustic Connections

29 **Yasmin Williams**
Fearless Imagination

DEPARTMENTS

46 ***Vintage Guitar* Price Guide**

74 **Upcoming Events**

82 **Classifieds**

90 **Showcase**

96 **Readers Gallery**

COLUMNS

50 **Pop 'N Hiss**
Eric Johnson's *Ah Via Musicom*
| By Pete Prown

52 **Fretprints**
Robben Ford, The Early Years: Emergence of a Blues/Jazz Virtuoso
| By Wolf Marshall

REVIEWS

76 **The VG Hit List**
Steve Cropper, Eric Clapton, Jimmie Vaughan, Greta Van Fleet, Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, Michael Schenker Group, Crack the Sky, Mudhoney, more!

84 **VG Approved Gear**
Cordoba 15CFM, Keeley Hydra, Tone Electronix Animalizzer, Fender Player Jazz Bass Fretless, Harden Engineering BluesBird, Jammy G, Breedlove Jeff Bridges Concert Copper E, ToneTron Billy Rocker 10

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

18 Steve Lukather

32 **UNITED THEY STOOD**
A Jersey City Tale
One of the great (if obscure) stories in 20th-century guitar lore, the history of the United Guitar Corporation unfolded just across the river from the glitter of New York. | ***By Peter Stuart Kohman***

38 **TONALLY TRANSLATLANTIC**
The Epiphone Devon Tremolo EA-35T
By the early '60s, Gibson amps were seemingly scattershot offerings in a rapidly evolving market. Those carrying the Epiphone badge were even more outcast, but the off-center approach taken in some designs greatly enhances their quirky appeal. Here's a textbook case. | ***By Dave Hunter***

42 **CLASSICS**
Straight out of Gibson's 1940 logbooks, this early ES-250 has one of the first "diagonal" pickups, hand-wound by Walter Fuller. The guitar and its companion EH-185 amp have great stories to tell. | ***By Ward Meeker***

58 **LEE RITENOUR**
Catastrophe & Innovation
Wildfires took his home, studio, guitars, and a lifetime of keepsakes, but "Captain Fingers" keeps his eyes on the future and continues to explore. His latest album fuses diverse styles, acoustic textures, and a minimalist approach while offering some of the most-intimate work of his career. | ***By Oscar Jordan***

62 **HEAVY STEPS**
J Mascis' Dinosaur Jr. Journey
Guided by his guitar work and songwriting, the first three albums by Dinosaur Jr. were alternative-rock touchstones that merged folk and country with '70s metal, goth, punk, and garage rock. Like any band with 35 years in the rear-view, "Dino" has survived challenges while forging forward. Here, the pensive face of the band talks about the music, events, and guitars that have shaped his sound.
| ***By Ward Meeker***

70 **BEAUTIES IN BLACK**
Two Rare Gibson Les Paul Juniors
Guitar dealers tell guitar stories much like anglers tell fish stories – there are those they "got" and those that got away. This is the story of a "got" or two. | ***By Ward Meeker***

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READER MAIL

LOVE OF GUITAR MUSIC

I'd like to compliment the *VG* staff on another issue well-done. The cover of Mike Campbell (March '21) was striking – the contrast of the image just pops off the page. The interview was great, and I checked out of few of The Dirty Knobs songs; it's definitely on the must-buy list I make after each issue.

While I always read *VG* cover to cover – the gear reviews and deep dives of gear past are entertaining and educational – my first destination is always the "Hit List." I've discovered bunches of music in those pages, and I turn other people on to the artists. I'd never heard of Joanne Shaw Taylor until I read the review of *Diamonds In The Dirt* (March '11). I checked her tour schedule and saw she was playing Rosa's Lounge, in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago, my hometown. I had my sisters, brother-in-laws, nieces, nephews, and various friends meet at the club. They were skeptical, but were hooked after the first song. Between sets, Joanne walked out to get some cool Chicago winter air. I ambushed her with two CDs to sign, which she graciously did. I saw her again a few years later at the Waukesha Blues Festival and she blew the roof off of the tent. If the festival happens this year, I'll go to see Robben Ford.

I recall reading *VG*'s review of *Holler and Stomp* by Chicago's Cash Box Kings (January '12). I never would've heard of them if not for *VG*. Most recently, I put The Flower Kings' *Islands* and Corey Wong's *Striped* on the to-buy list.

When I finish each *VG*, I pass it on to the 20-something guitarists at work – people who don't read magazines any more. Guess what? They love them. So, keep it up, *VG* people. The magazine is a treasure.

Dave Daniels
Glendale, Wisconsin

(Ed. Note: Dave, man... what can we say? We're elated that you appreciate the instrument profiles and interviews with players who matter (as a fan of Robben Ford, you'll dig Wolf Marshall's "Fretprints" in this issue) but we're especially glad to hear the "Hit List" has introduced you to new artists. Readers like you are the key to survival for those players, so we promise to keep doing what we do if you'll keep supporting them. Also, we've just started compiling a Spotify playlist to complement each issue, with songs arranged in order of appearance/mention in the magazine. Find it by visiting www.vintageguitar.com/spotify. A basic Spotify subscription is free.)

HONORING ANDRÉ

A.R. Duchossoir's name on the cover of the March issue really caught my attention, and your memorial shed light on a person I would have enjoyed meeting. I've had a copy of André's *Gibson Electrics* for about 15 years, and it helped me save serious money by explaining the difference between a mid-'50s ES-150 and an ES-125. I also got a copy of his *Gibson Electric Steel Guitars* a couple of years ago, shortly after I bought a '61 Gibson Skylark just like the one featured in "Classics" in that issue. Andre's passing is a real loss to the guitar community.

Ken Fraser
Kanata, Ontario

FIREFALL RECALL

Thanks for the great interview with Jock Bartley in the March issue. Having lived in Colorado during Firefall's heyday, I enjoyed it immensely. I once saw them at a club in Boulder, after which I chatted with Rick Roberts and went to a party at David Muse's house. I also used to have breakfast at the Aristocrat Diner, where Jock held court.

Jordan Dyas
Ridgewood, New Jersey

KUDOS FOR LOU

I was delighted to see the "Pop 'N Hiss" installment on Lou Reed in the March issue. However, far from being "not particularly talented musicians," the Velvet Underground were the opposite; Welshman John Cale was classically trained at Goldsmiths College and traveled to New York specifically to further his musical education with composer Aaron Copeland. Core members Maureen Tucker and Sterling Morrison were unconventional in their approach to their instruments, but in no way could they have been considered novices. Mr. Reed himself had been playing in bands since his teens, and his respect and adoption of jazz great Ornette Coleman's technique into his playing is legendary.

If one takes the time to listen to the Velvet Underground's *Live 1969*, you'll hear music of the highest order, brilliant in its execution. As *Rolling Stone* said in 1975, "(Lou Reed's) work with the Velvet Underground in the late '60s would assure a place in anyone's rock-and-roll pantheon."

Finally, Lou did not play an Epiphone Casino, but his iconic Riviera, as shown in the photo.

Drew Morrison
London

MOVIE-STAR MURPH

I just pulled the April issue from my mailbox and noticed the cover teaser text for the Murph Squire II-T. This little-known gem was made semi-famous in *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* from 1988, where it appeared briefly as Bill's first "beater" guitar during the rehearsal that introduces us to Wyld Stallyons; later in the movie, it was replaced by a headless Steinberger. And just before the end credits roll, George Carlin's character, Rufus, uses it to show off his chops after asking to jam with the "Two Great Ones" (close-up shots of Rufus' hands are actually "stunt guitarist"/composer Steve Salas). I captured a still from the DVD and spent hours tracking the identity of this obscure little beastie. I hope to acquire one some day.

Thanks for keeping it vintage and keeping it real. As a subscriber since '03, I love the magazine, though I do miss the old format. As Bill and Ted would say, "Be excellent to each other, and party on, dudes!"

Andi Marchand
Manchester, New Hampshire

SEND LETTERS TO

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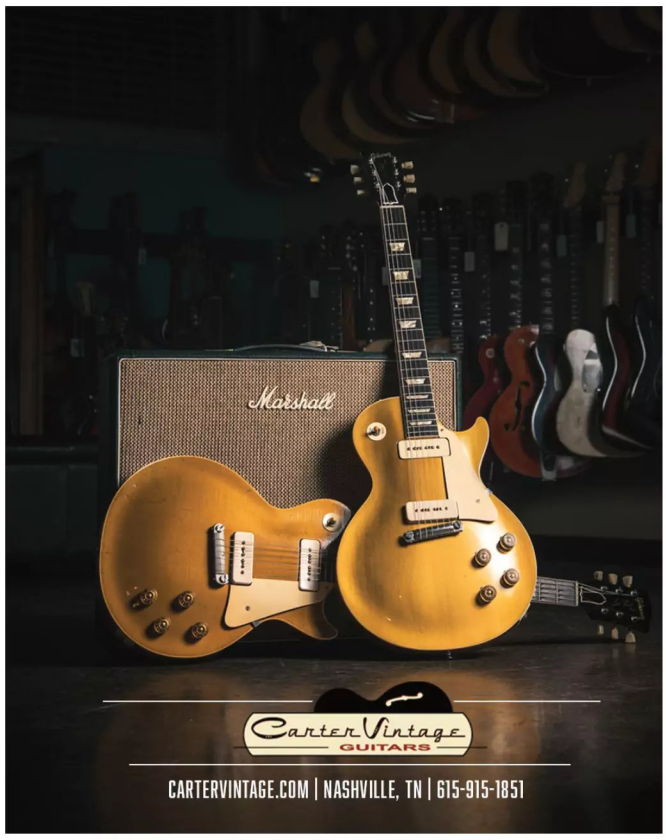

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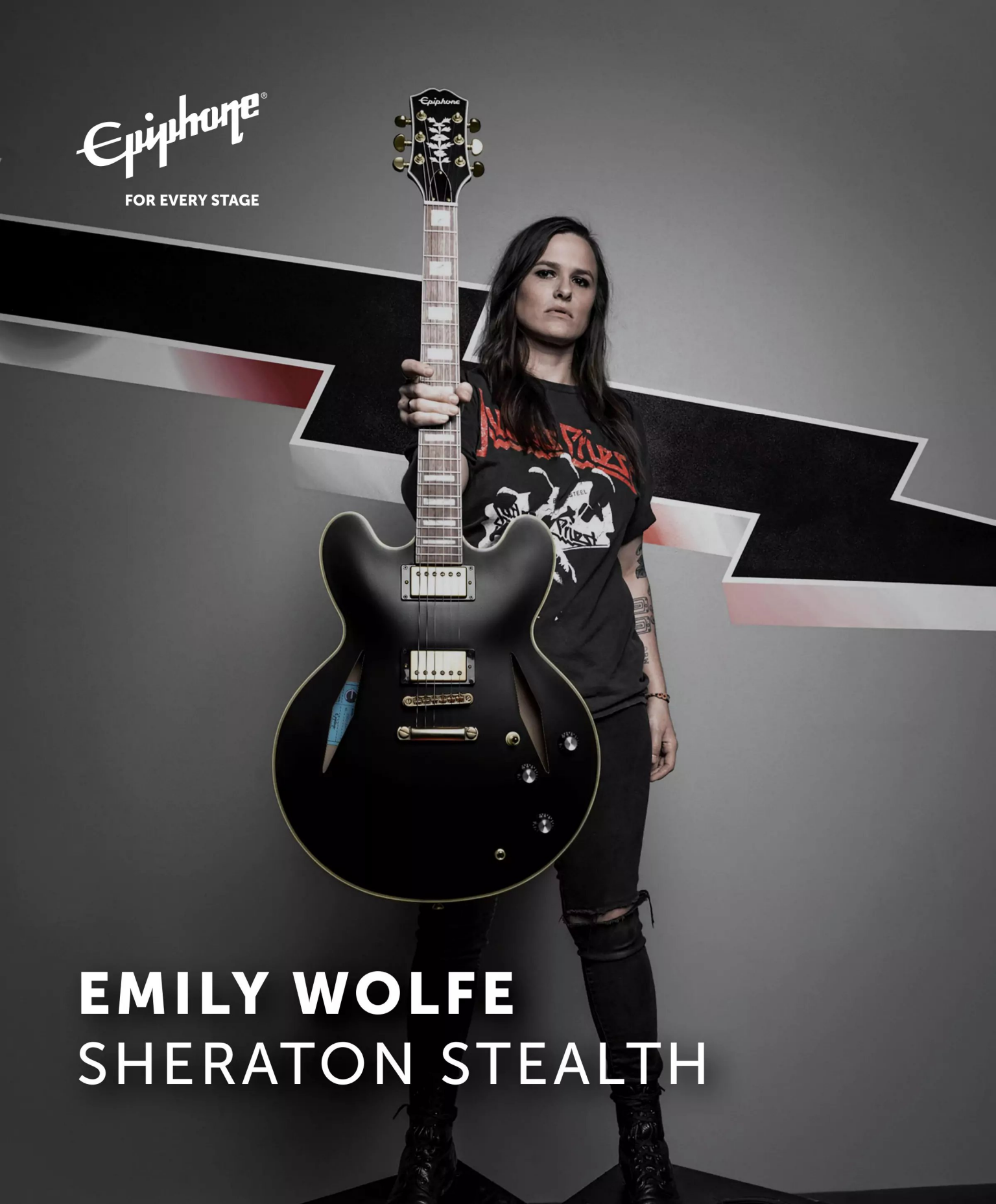


EMILY WOLFE
SHERATON STEALTH

FIRST FRET

Lowell Kiesel in his company's early days.

CARVIN MARKS 75 YEARS

Carvin Audio is marking 75 years in business. The company was launched by Lowell Kiesel in 1946, first making guitar pickups followed by steel guitars and, in '48, its first amplifiers. The decades since have seen the company offer an array of guitars, basses, amps, PA gear, and more. The company is still owned and operated by the Kiesel family.

DAD'S DAY '21

VG will honor fathers in this year's July issue, distributed just prior to Father's Day, June 20. As you may know, the feature relies on reader submissions. If you would like to be included, send a photo of you and/or your dad with your favorite guitars (shot or scanned 4" x 6" at 300 dpi and saved as a .jpg) along with a caption by May 15 to ward@vintageguitar.com, with "Dad's Day" in the subject line. If you submit a short video of you and/or your dad playing, we may use it on social media.

FAI HONORS LIGHTFOOT, GILKYSON, BROWNE

At the Folk Alliance International's annual International Folk Music Awards, held virtually on March 1, Eliza Gilkyson's "Peace in our Hearts" was named Song of the Year, while Gordon Lightfoot was given the Elaine Weissman Lifetime Achievement Award and Jackson Browne received the People's Voice Award. The ceremony can be viewed on FAI's Youtube channel and Facebook page.

OOPS! DEPT.

Page 44 of the April issue offered a great look at a pair of seldom-seen Fenders in Blue Flower finish, one of which we mistakenly referred to as a Precision Bass. As an informed reader, you probably noticed the headstock says "Telecaster Bass." We apologize for any confusion created by the error.

Steve Lukather: Alex Solca.

STEVE LUKATHER

Sun Shine

Steve Lukather has been a busy professional guitarist for 45 of his 63 years, as a founding member of Toto, revered session musician who played on countless hits, and solo artist.

Lukather's latest project, *I Found the Sun Again*, is his eighth solo album. It features five originals along with Traffic, Joe Walsh, and Robin Trower covers. Lukather found the process invigorating and inspiring in the aftermath of Toto's splintering amid a nasty lawsuit and the pandemic.

Last year, Lukather and longtime Toto vocalist Joseph Williams formed a new lineup – the 15th version of the band, and he's been the only

one in each. They worked on each other's new solo albums – Williams' is titled *Denizen Tenant* – as did keyboardist/vocalist David Paich, whose health now prevents him from touring.

"(The lawsuit) made me stronger and more focused and determined," Lukather said. "At the time when we ended [in October, 2019], I didn't have any music for a new record. I just knew I was going to do one. I work well under pressure. I figured I'd enlist help from some close buddies and make a record the way we used to do it in the old days, which was throw a chart in front of everybody, run it down once, and record. And that's what I did.

"I hired the right guys, wrote some cool tunes, and did a couple of cool covers because I wanted to make a record that *sounded* like it was done in 1971 or '72, but actually has the sounds of today, like hi-fi. No click tracks, no rehearsals, no demos. There was a lot of room for improvisation. I wanted to do kind of a jam-band thing, but with songs, and let everybody play."

That freedom is especially evident in the covers.

"That was the point of those. I'm not trying to make a hit record. I'm not trying to do a single with Cardi B or something like that," said Lukather, laughing. "I'm playing for my audience, I guess – the people who like what I do. I made this record for me, to see if I could do it this way, and that means playing the solos live – no fixing, nothing. I wanted to say, 'We're playing without a net here, boys!' I wanted to see if I could make a record in eight days, which I did. One song a day, do a few overdubs, and I'd do a vocal that night.

"I tried to under-produce the record as opposed to overproduce it, which (Toto is) so famous for. I just wanted to see what it was like not to have any pressure on me to do anything other than what I wanted to do. So yeah, it's a bit of a vanity record, but at the same time, it's a record nobody's making anymore. It doesn't sound like everybody else because sonically and playing-wise, I didn't approach it the way a modern record is made. I approached it like records were made when we started doing it in the '70s. You *had* to play."

"Luke" is known primarily for his guitar prowess, but he sings on his solo work and sang lead/co-lead vocals on Toto classics like "Georgy Porgy," "99," "I Won't Hold You Back," "Rosanna," "I'll Be Over You," and others.

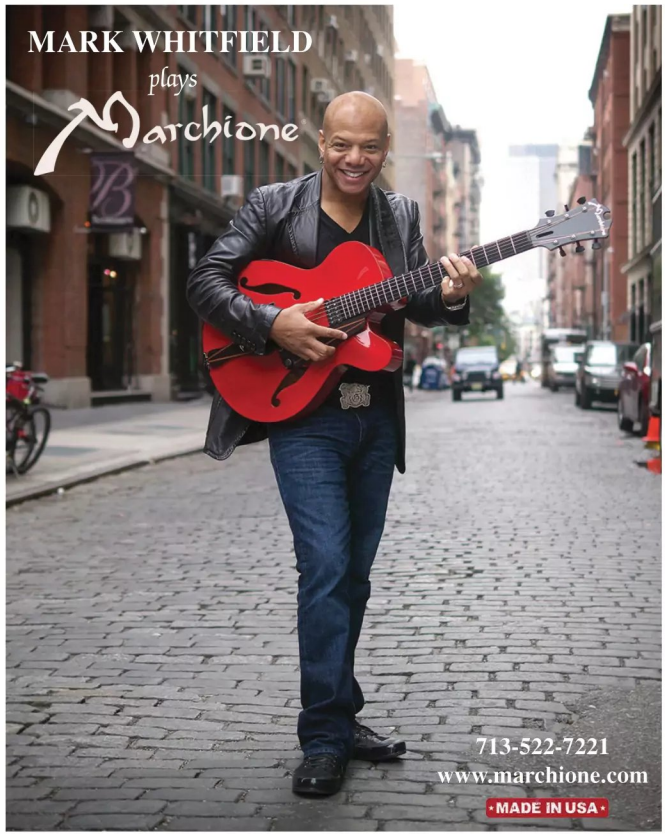
"I sing, but I would never put it on my resumé," he said. "I used to have to sing in my early bands because nobody else could. Then I got into bands with real singers. I'm good for a couple of tunes. I have a love/hate relationship with singing. I'm lucky I can do it a little bit, but it's hard, especially live."

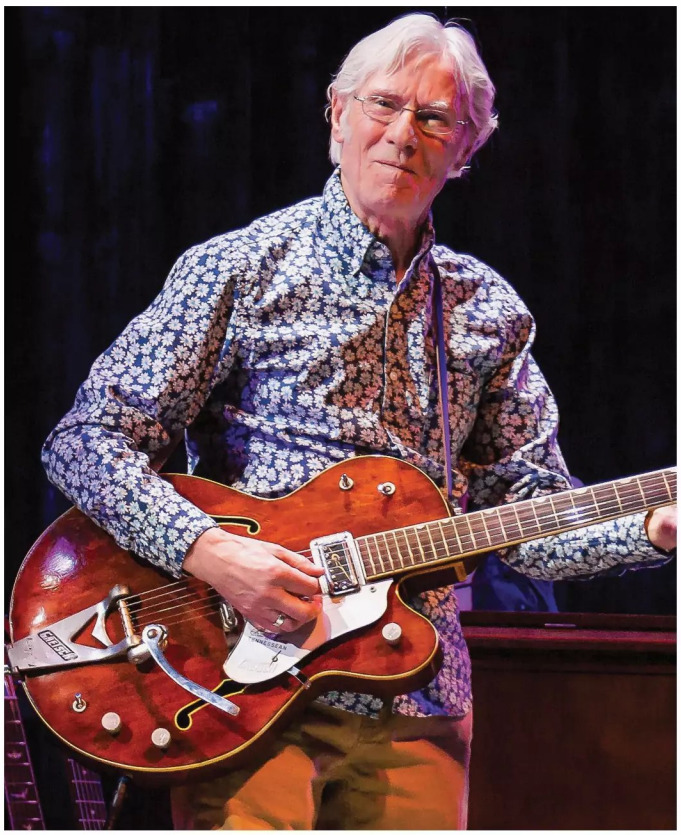
The only guitar heard on *I Found the Sun Again* is his signature Ernie Ball Music Man Luke III – totally stock because he doesn't believe in endorsing a signature guitar then playing a custom version that people can't buy.

"That's *all* I used, plugged into my Bogner Helios and a couple of stompboxes – boom! [The Music Man team] designed some ridiculously cool pickups. I'm able to get unique sounds out of them. I found a couple of interesting positions with different Tone and pickup settings, to get a throatier sound for the lead playing that's a bit different from everybody else. They're the most insane pickups I've ever played through. I can do everything with this guitar."

Lukather is eager to get back on tour this year with Toto and again with Ringo Starr and His All-Starr Band. Dates are booked. He plays daily because that's who he is.

"I *love* to play the guitar!" he said. "I got lucky to make a living at it for 45 years. I don't take that lightly. I know how lucky I am, and I'm grateful." ***– Bret Adams***





HILTON VALENTINE

1943-2021

"The first song I learned on guitar was 'House of the Rising Sun' by the Animals."

The statement could have come from literally thousands of fledgling guitarists in '64, when the record shot to #1, or in the decades since. It was the perfect vehicle – five chords, each arpeggiated so you heard every note clearly.

Hilton Valentine played guitar and came up with the memorable intro. The founding member of the band died January 29 at age 77.

Formed in hardscrabble, industrial Newcastle in northern England in 1963, the British Invasion group also included bassist Chas Chandler, organist Alan Price, drummer John Steel, and singer Eric Burdon. Their dark, moody sound was hugely influential; Tom Petty jumps to mind.

In a span of two years, the Animals' original lineup released a string of rock classics like "We Gotta Get Out Of This Place," "It's My Life," "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," "Boom Boom," "I'm Crying," "Bring It On Home To Me," and "Don't Bring Me Down," the latter featuring the guitarist's prominent fuzz tone. "See See Rider" contained one of the gnarliest solos in guitardom, with Valentine bending (or strangling) a single note 20 times in a row.

"It really was Hilton who made the early Animals a rock band, because I don't think the element of rock was in the band until we found him," Burdon told writer Tom Guerra in 2005. "In those days, Hilton wasn't just playing rock and roll, he *looked* rock and roll. Here was a guy with the greased mop of hair combed back, cheap leather jacket, winklepicker shoes, black jeans, and a smile on his face, playing through an Echoplex."

Valentine picked up guitar at 10, a fan of Buddy Holly and Lonnie Donegan.

"Skiffle was the main influence at the time, because it was the easiest to play on guitar," he told *Guitar Player* magazine in 1983. After fitting an acoustic with a pickup, he got a Rosetti Lucky 7 solidbody, then a Höfner Club 60.

Influences included the instrumental sounds of the Ventures, Duane Eddy, and England's Shadows and Bert Weedon, as well as John Lee Hooker. His group, the Heppers, played backyard shows with washboard, tea-chest bass, comb-and-paper, guitar, and a plastic sax that only had one note working. The Wildcats followed, with future Animals roadie Tappy Wright on rhythm.

When he sat in with the Alan Price Combo, the band asked, "Can you turn the echo down a bit? Can you turn it off altogether?"

The inspiration for recording "House Of The Rising Sun" came from Bob Dylan's debut LP. On his Gretsch Tennessean, 21-year-old Valentine began arpeggiating the Am-C-D-F chords, then to E in the repeat, but Price said, "That is so corny. Can't you play anything else?" Valentine's retort? "Just play the organ! It may be corny, but it's good."

Ironically, Price was given arranger credit for the public domain folk song – therefore he, not Hilton, received the royalties.

Following a re-release of "Rising Sun" that reached #12 in the U.K., the band recorded *The Ark* in '83. Summing up his style, Valentine said, "It was a thing of playing what you felt, and the solos I played with the Animals were what I felt. There wasn't any technique. All of the solos, live or on record, just happened with no forethought at all. Maybe that worked in my favor, because I was *so* simple, so basic, I was right for the Animals."

Rickenbacker gifted him six- and 12-string models, and he also used a white teardrop Vox Mark 12 and a '66 Telecaster.

Prior to *The Ark*, he'd gotten out of music and didn't even own a guitar. Instead, he managed a theater/restaurant in Hollywood. On the '83 tour, he used guitars borrowed from Wright, who was also Jimi Hendrix's roadie – meaning the SG Custom and Fender Mustang were Jimi's!

In recent years, Valentine gigged with roots bands the Headless Horsemen and the Woggles, and returned to skiffle, forming Skiffledog, which released two albums. In 2007 and '08, he again toured with longtime friend Eric Burdon.

His last musical project was co-writing "Impeachment Day," recorded by the RAF Irregulars (members of the Waitresses, Headless Horsemen, Nadasurf, and Lulu Temple). Both acerbic and celebratory, it takes aim at the recent political climate over an upbeat ragtime/Dixieland groove.

The Horsemen's Chris Cush recalls, "One time, we booked a gig with Hilton at the Brooklyn Bowl and had been doing rehearsals. He'd been having health issues, and when he showed up in a body brace we were all concerned he wouldn't be able to do the gig. But when he put on his Telecaster and plugged in, he was 20 years old again. Big grin. We started with 'I'm Crying,' and Hilton just killed. Music kept him young." ***– Dan Forte***

Quotes are from *Guitar Player* magazine, April '84, by Dan Forte, unless otherwise noted.

Hilton Valentine : Sandy Roe.

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MICHAEL SCHENKER

Golden Guitar Jubilee

Incredibly, it's been 50 years since Michael Schenker recorded his first guitar bit on a studio album – the Scorpions' debut, *Lonesome Crow*. To celebrate the anniversary, the guitar great has issued his first Michael Schenker Group album in 13 years; *Immortal* features an abundance of guests – singers Ronnie Romero and Joe Lynn Turner, keyboardist Derek Sherinian, and drummers Simon Phillips and Brian Tichy.

The lead-off track on *Immortal*, "Drilled to Kill," features fierce guitar/keyboard interplay between you and Derek.

Brian Tichy – one of the best drummers in the world – heard about the 50th anniversary, and offered six drum tracks. He called [producer] Michael Voss and said, "A buddy of mine is also a Michael Schenker fan and wants to make a contribution... He's a keyboard player – Derek Sherinian. I had put the guitar parts down myself to make the music [more personal], and I said to Michael, "What are we going to do with a heavy-duty keyboard player?" He said, "Why don't you do a keyboard/guitar jam?" I'd never done that before. It was a fantastic idea! When I heard the end result, I was blown away.

And there's a re-recording of the Scorpions' "In Search of the Peace of Mind."

That was the first note I ever put on a recording, the very first composition I ever wrote – in my mother's kitchen with nobody there. The title became the theme of my life – looking for contentment, peace, freedom, fulfilment, etc. On top of that, there was a lead break I played on my very first recording, and I would never change a note – like "Stairway to Heaven" or "Theme for an Imaginary Western." It's complete. I asked myself, "Where did this lead break come from? I was only 15 years old!" On the rest of *Lonesome Crow*, you can hear that I'm an amateur, I'm developing. To this day, I can't understand. And I wanted to make that song an epic 50th anniversary celebration – different than what I did before. I wanted to add a lot of guitar at the end. When I listened back, it sounded like an inner conversation, asking ourselves, "Should I go this way? Should I make this choice? That choice?" It sounded like questions and answers played on lead guitar.

Which guitars, amps, and effects did you use on *Immortal*?

It's very straightforward – my JCM800 50-watt Marshall. This time, instead of having 15 guitars lying around in the studio, I wanted to use the very first Dean I ever got, which I use live for "Rock Bottom" because I always go on an adventure, and it's always a suitable guitar for that solo. I decided, this time, to use that guitar as my main guitar. So I did... and a wah pedal; I'm so grateful for the Dimebag. It's straight into the amplifier.

By the way, that amplifier – my original UFO amp – broke down in '83/'84, and when I was looking for a new one, I eventually found the JCM800. Someone once told me, "Michael, did you know that you actually designed that amplifier?" I went, "What?!" He said, "Yes, you went to the factory in 1980 [to help design an amp] – invited by Jim Marshall – but you never completed it. The diagrams were there, and people put together that model." No wonder I ended up with that bloody amplifier!

How did the recent passing of two of your bandmates in UFO, Paul Raymond and Pete Way, affect you?

Badly. And Leslie West. I got so upset. It's a bit like, "Oh, dear Michael… time is coming. It won't last forever." It could be any time. But what I say is "I'll see you in heaven." I want to spread my wings when I leave and just go there. What else can you do? It's upsetting when overnight, such close people die. It's horrible. And it's annoying and upsetting – makes me angry. That's only based on my limited earthly understanding – but that's all I have, consciously. So, I react that way.

How would you compare your guitar playing now to back in the '70s and '80s?

Right from the beginning to now, it's a continuous development. I'm a kid in a sandbox – I just enjoy, discover, and play, play and discover. I don't compete, I've never compared anything, I've never looked for fame, money, success. That all happened by itself, based on circumstances. Just the pure joy of putting three notes together and creating goose pimples – that's my reward, that's where I'm happy, and that's what I do on a daily basis. I move forward on a daily basis. And I always look for, "What can I do that hasn't been heard before?" Or something that has an impact emotionally on people and on myself. I'm very happy doing that – much more than chasing fame and instant gratification or being part of a trend. – ***Greg Prato***

Michael Schenker: Matthias Rethmann.

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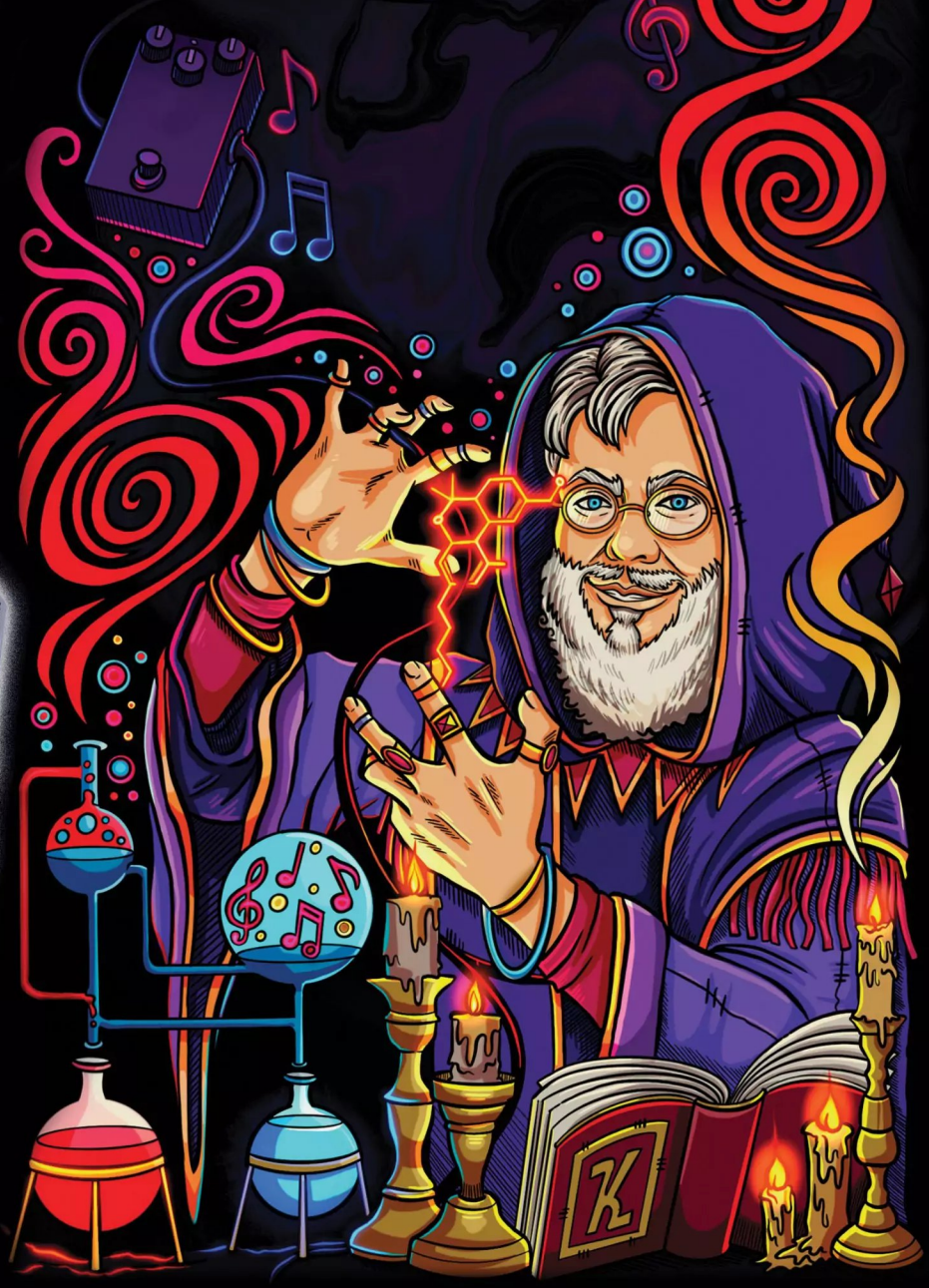

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Douglas Naselroad with a Troublesome Creek SD-1.

Troublesome Creek HM-1 Honeybee mandolins.

DOUGLAS NASELROAD

Instrumental Healing

Music heals the soul. For many, crafting the instruments that make music has healing power, too.

In 2012, the non-profit Appalachian Artisan Center in Hindman, Kentucky, hired Douglas Naselroad to establish its School of Luthiery. Soon after, he was approached by a man asking to be taught luthiery to help him recover from drug addiction.

"He was trying to give himself a goal to work his way through rehab," said Naselroad. "He was addicted to oxycodone and at death's door, to hear him tell it. It was a serious situation."

In '17, the AAC created the Culture of Recovery program, designed to partner with local substance-abuse recovery efforts and the Knott County drug court to provide trade apprenticeships – including luthiery.

"I've never been in recovery myself, but I've lost people close to me – people who drank themselves to death," said Naselroad, who started building guitars in 1969. "For some of the people here, it's gone badly. I have a strong conviction to create a safe place for them to pursue a goal."

The opioid epidemic has ravaged economically strained Appalachia particularly hard.

"I don't think anyone down here has gone untouched by it," Naselroad added. "And it's not just opioids. It's also meth, which hit this community as hard as anything else."

While the Culture of Recovery didn't have a plan to extend its reach, situations dovetailed and in nine years it has evolved to work with the National Endowment for the Arts, ArtPlace America, and the Appalachian Regional Commission. While Naselroad thought he'd be creating entrepreneurs, he quickly realized people didn't have the money and resources to start their own businesses – they simply needed *jobs*. To date, hundreds have gone through the program, and Naselroad has hired some of the best students who completed the luthier apprenticeships to work full-time at his non-profit Troublesome Creek Stringed Instrument Company, which makes acoustic guitars, mandolins, and dulcimers. Proceeds from sales of the reasonably priced instruments go back into supporting Troublesome Creek.

"We're a small crew, but growing," Naselroad said. "We're making instruments that pass muster with (major companies') custom shops, which is a lofty goal."

They offer nearly 20 models.

"The guitar we're proudest of is the Sweet Dread – a dreadnought with the depth of an OM, the round shoulders of a pre-war Gibson, and a 13-fret neck that makes it pretty groovy."

The dulcimers are hot and the mandolins are being received really well.

"I think they raised a lot of eyebrows," said Naselroad. "The guitars are competitive. I think people were a little more reserved about their roll-out. The biggest splash so far is with the HM Honeybee mandolins."

Troublesome Creek will be set apart, Naselroad believes, by its use of Appalachian hardwoods.

"Locally-sourced materials make our instruments unique. We use the finest regional timber we can get, and while some are classics like curly maple and curly walnut, many are unknown tonewoods. Quilted cherry makes wonderful guitars, and things like Osage orange, black locust, and mulberry can make really nice guitars. It's amazing, the tones we get.

"We use Appalachian red spruce because it's from here, and it's a *phenomenal* wood, especially for the mandolins," he added. "Some is torrefied. We've also built some out of torrefied maple, which is really dark and pretty. A lot of times, we use butternut for necks and internal blocks; butternut is like walnut but doesn't bring the same weight. We also use a lot of walnut, which is good for a really solid neck."

While the goal is to steer away from rainforest woods, in the short term, they're using ebony for fretboards and bridges.

"We bought two tons of persimmon but haven't yet figured out how to give it an attractive color," said Naselroad. "Still, we're building our brand around this menu of Appalachian tonewoods – not just for environmental reasons, but because our guys *love* to build out of Kentucky and Tennessee hardwoods. That's a badge of pride." ***– Bret Adams***

Douglas Naselroad: Kris Patrick.

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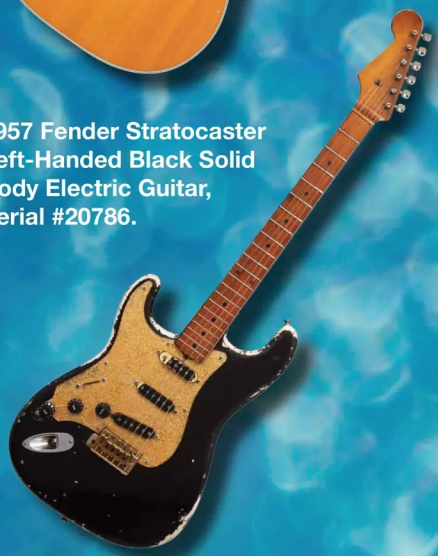

1957 Fender Stratocaster Left-Handed Black Solid Body Electric Guitar, Serial #20786.

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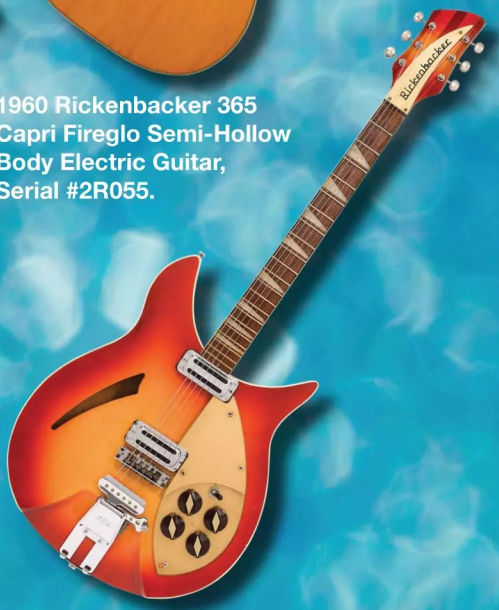

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TONY ROMBOLA

Gothic Blues

Godsmack guitarist Tony Rombola is moonlighting once again, on the third album by Apocalypse Blues Revival with fellow Godsmack member/drummer Shannon Larkin, bassist Brian Carpenter, and singer Shane Hall. The self-titled effort shows the band evolving beyond its blues-rock origins to a range of grooves including gothic psychedelia. Rombola's playing goes otherworldly and trippy, with post-garage/stream-of-consciousness fuzz soloing coupled with big riffs and dreamy arpeggiation. It's a dark, hallucinogenic take on the blues, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

How are you handling the pandemic?

I've been doing the exact things I always do; I don't go out much and my wife does all the shopping, so I stay home. Last year, Godsmack missed a bunch of shows, which was a bummer. Most weren't scheduled tours, so we only lost about a month's worth of shows. At the same time, we were about to wrap up that last record, so we have to write more music. That's what I've been doing all year.

Did the Apocalypse Blues Revival begin as a specific concept?

It's changed from when we first started. On the first record, it was pretty straight-ahead blues-rock. There were some rockabilly and shuffles and hotter rock that was more like Black Sabbath. On the second album, it shifted. Most of it came from Shannon because he was writing a lot. He writes all the lyrics so he can go in directions. It got more into a Pink-Floyd-type of thing.

The beginning of the album is very different than the end.

I liked it when it was more blues-rock. I was digging it, which is why I got into it. Shannon writes all the lyrics on his own, and I work with him on the music. A lot of the time, he'll have a form. When we did the first record, it was just him and me jamming a lot. We'd write riffs, then music around them.

On the new record, he was writing a lot of music on his own. Now, we get together after he puts together a formula; he'd show me what the vocals are doing, and I would make up music to go along with it. It's an opposite approach than if you record music and have to come up with lyrics.

I've always loved blues, and Shannon and I were just trying to make it different. Shannon likes to add weird things to trip-up the listener because he doesn't want to be too traditional. Some of the stuff is traditional, but if you hear weird stuff in there, it's usually him (laughs).

Did you have any rules about your guitar sound?

I was going to use single-coils, a Fender-type amp, and pedals from the very beginning – I didn't want a Les Paul or PRS with a high-gain amp because that's a Godsmack thing. I collect gear, so it gave me a reason to use other stuff. The new record is all one amp – a '65 Fender Super Reverb and the sound of the room. The SR has two original speakers and two Weber speakers, and I used one of my favorite Custom Shop Strats. The album is one guitar, one amp, and my pedalboard.

What was on your pedalboard?

I have an Xotic RC Booster, which is a clean boost that's great for jacking up clean tones. I also have an original TS808 Tube Screamer from 1980, a silver Klon Centaur, and an Analogman King of Tone, which is my main pedal; I use other pedals to boost it. I only use the Orange side of the King of Tone and I use it for everything with either the Centaur or Tube Screamer for extra drive. The fuzz pedal after that is the Analogman Sun Bender I use just for leads. I'll use the KoT as a lead fuzz boost so the body of the sound stays fat; fuzz can get real thin, and when you bounce back and forth from rhythm to lead, it was always a hard thing. But the King of Tone keeps things pretty fat. I also have Dunlop Cry Baby wah and a Univibe clone.

What's the latest news from the Godsmack camp?

Our singer, Sully Erna, just built a new studio, and we can't wait to get in there and make new music. We're going to write and record all year so we can go out with new music when it's time to go out. – ***Oscar Jordan***

Tony Rombola: Jaimée Alethea Hall.

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1965 Gibson ES-335
Sunburst. Can we review? Three things happened the year Ted McCarty left Gibson. Hardware goes from nickel to chrome, headstock pitch gets shallower, and neck sizes get smaller. Now, you gotta sort out which is more important. Let's say you can only choose one feature. Ding! That's right, the big-ass neck wins every time. This one has its original nickel bridge but the Schaller tuners make it cheaper for you. Big necks are always the hit of the party. **$12,500**

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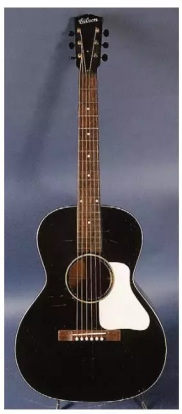

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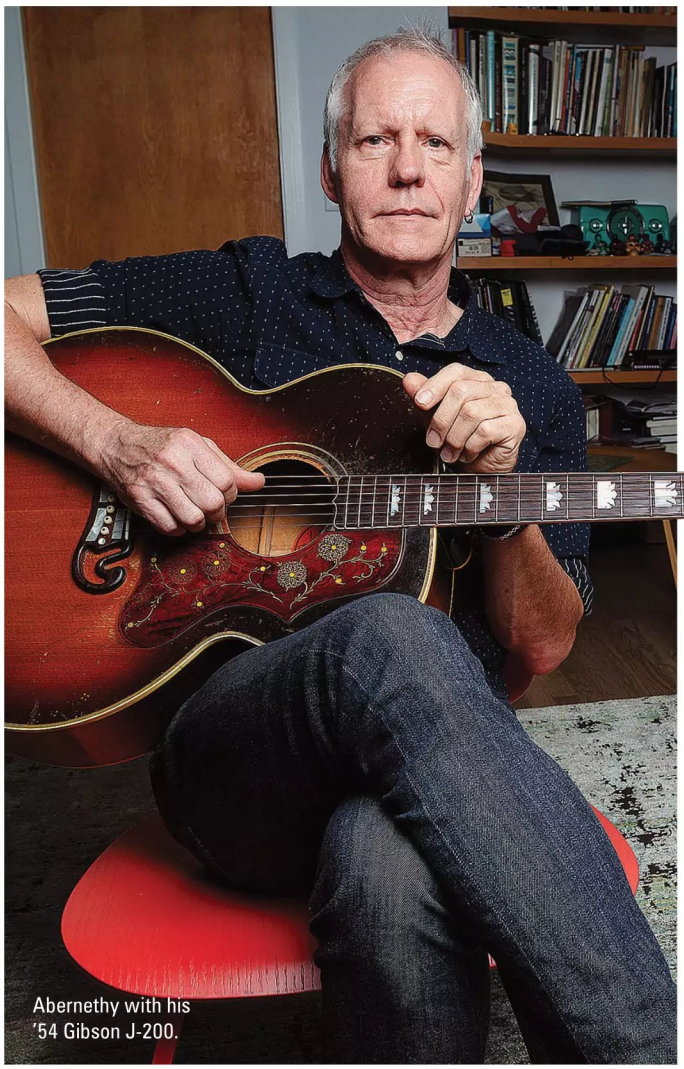
Abernethy with his '54 Gibson J-200.

ROD ABERNETHY

Carolina Acoustic Connections

A fixture on the North Carolina music scene, guitarist/songwriter Rod Abernethy has accumulated many memories, including the purchase of his mainstay instrument, a 1954 Gibson J-200.

"When I graduated from UNC Chapel Hill in '75, my mom wanted to give me a guitar for graduation," he recalled. "She said I could buy any guitar I wanted, no matter the price. The only stipulation was that I could never sell it – it would always be with me to remind me of her."

Abernethy's carte-blanche quest lasted more than a year before finally becoming reality through a chance encounter with an employee of a gas station near Asheboro. The guitar's owner, he noted, "… could have been Gomer Pyle's twin brother."

Per his mother's wishes, the guitar reminds him of her every day.

The title of Abernethy's new album, *Normal Isn't Normal Anymore* doesn't actually reference the pandemic.

"I started thinking about the album a couple years ago while touring the country and feeling a collective thought from folks about how things were changing faster than ever," he explained. "Things were getting crazy *before* the pandemic hit, and I wrote songs that reflected that collective state of mind. How was I to know everyone's state of normalcy would be totally redefined in 2020?

"Honestly, I had thoughts of never releasing the album because it might be viewed as too opportunistic," he added. "But, with a push from family and friends, I decided to go ahead, and I'm really proud of it now. It's the best writing and playing I've ever done."

Most of the songs are observations on everyman issues, and more than one is based on Abernethy's family history; "When Tobacco Was King" references the crop's history in North Carolina, while "My Father was A Quiet Man" chronicles his father purchasing a guitar for his son.

"It was a Gibson SG Special," he remembered. "I was the king of guitar in the seventh grade! Of course, I don't have it now."

There's minimal percussion, as the songs are rhythmically driven by strong chording, though Abernethy fingerpicks the leads.

"About 10 years ago, I wanted to come up with a method that combined flatpicking with fingerpicking and thumbpicking," he said. "I discovered Fred Kelly Slick Picks; they're not cumbersome, like most thumb picks.

"I file and shorten the pick surface so the tip meets the string at the same angle as one of my big triangle Clayton flat picks. I use them for rhythm, lead breaks, and fingerpicking without having to change from a flat pick to a thumb pick. It took a couple of months to teach my right hand to do it with a thumb pick, but now it's second nature.

"(Producer) Neilson Hubbard suggested not filling in the tracks with a lot of percussion. He wanted to showcase my guitars and vocals, and I trusted him with the overall vibe. I'm glad I did; I really love what he was able to capture."

Other guitars used on the album included a Taylor Custom GA, Taylor Leo Kottke signature 12-string, and a Boucher Studio Goose. Abernethy has owned the Kottke for two decades, describing it as "...my heart and soul. It's got the older Fishman mic/bridge pickup, and roars like a piano on stage."

Abernethy used a slide on the Kottke model for the bluegrass-like instrumental, "Whiskey & Pie."

"I'm tuned way down on that," he said. "Low to high, it's A♯-F-A♯-F-A♯-C."

The minimal electric-guitar parts were contributed by Nashville's Will Kimbrough.

"Will nailed every track in one or two takes," he enthused. "It was *amazing* to watch him."

Abernethy believes the times offer unique songwriting opportunities, so he plans to keep busy, and he's pleased with the new album.

"I wanted to sing songs about things I've learned on my journey in life, so far," he reflected. "And it's amazing how folks come up to me after a show to say, 'That happened to me, too!' and 'You're reading my mind.' Connecting with people is what I live for. Of course, I'm still learning things every day. Aren't we all?" **– *Willie G. Moseley***

Rod Abernethy: Jonathan Byrd.

YASMIN WILLIAMS

Fearless Imagination

On her latest album, *Urban Driftwood*, Yasmin Williams' wanderlust expands beyond the acoustic polyphony her fans know well. The songs are freer, hypnotic, more stream-of-consciousness, and feature complimentary instrumentation.

Williams has hit the ground running in the new year. She sat with *VG* to discuss alternate tunings, artistry, and the pursuit of one's identity on guitar.

Do your compositions come from your imagination, or noodling?

I'd say it's both. A lot of the time, if I'm noodling around, it's to get an idea that I previously had in my hands, so I can figure out how to play it. Sometimes songs just come from randomly playing. That's kind of rare. Usually, I have an idea of either an emotion or an atmosphere I'm trying to capture.

You have an idea you're trying to execute.

Yeah, technique always serves the song. I don't play just to use certain techniques. I'll play it only if it's needed to play the idea that I have – and I guess I have a lot of weird ideas (laughs).

On "I Wonder," you're tapping harmonics while playing something different underneath.

That's just for the bridge part, and I'm doing it on my lap; I flip the guitar to do the tapping part. That was a technique thing I had to practice a lot to sound decent.

Is playing everything yourself important to you?

It used to be. I want to get it all in. On my first album, *Unwind*, I didn't want to overdub anything. All the songs are pretty much first takes. I didn't want to overlay anything. On *Urban Driftwood*, I tried to focus on the ensemble – invite other people – because it's different and I couldn't do everything I wanted to do. I have to bring in other people who are a lot better than me at whatever their skill is. It's more fun, too. It's hard to do everything.

What did you want to do differently on *Urban Driftwood*?

Collaborate more, broaden my compositional style, and not focus so heavily on myself as a soloist. I tried to concentrate on making the compositions better, versus "How I can make this playable so I'm the only one needed to play it."

***Unwind* is a tighter-sounding record.**

My playing style was very rigid at the time. When I was composing those songs throughout those years, I wanted to be a solo-acoustic player. That's how I considered myself. *Urban Driftwood* came after graduating from college and playing professionally for two years. I realized, "I am a composer. I can incorporate more of that into my music." I also like the control of doing everything myself. If something goes wrong, it's my fault, but that's okay. I'd rather blame myself than something go wrong and have to go after someone (laughs).

How did you get into alternate tunings?

I was bored with standard tunings. Open D was the one I really liked. Open G was the one I heard on older blues songs. Those are the two I use, primarily. Erik Mongrain also inspired me. He's a French-Canadian and uses a lot of open tunings on acoustic guitar, as well, like open F.

You play guitar, kalimba, and tap shoes at the same time.

The kalimba thing came from Earth Wind & Fire. They have a song called "Kalimba Story," and growing up I thought it sounded so cool with acoustic guitar. So, I bought one. After a few weeks of practice, it sounded good. I'm looking for different voices I can incorporate – different melodic timbres and instruments I can use to complement the guitar. The tap-shoe thing happened after the kalimba. I ran out of hands trying to play the guitar and the kalimba simultaneously, but I still wanted a percussive thing. My feet were the only thing left, so I came up with tap shoes. I'm not a dancer at all (laughs).

Do you have a favorite guitar?

I have a custom Skytop that I love – the Grand Concert. It's kinda funky-looking, but amazing. It has holes in the front and two large sound ports on the side. The woods are not what you typically see, but I love it. It's my main guitar. I also have a Timberline T60HGHpc harp guitar. The Skytop is my main one, but I'm trying to use the harp more.

Any advice for aspiring guitarists?

Be yourself. Try to develop your playing voice as quickly as possible. It's helped me a lot. Try not to follow specific guitarists you idolize too much. Don't idolize anyone. When it's your voice, you're always going to sound better than if you imitate a specific person. Be yourself, because there's only one you, so you may as well play you. ***– Oscar Jordan*** VG

Yasmin Williams: Kim Atkins.

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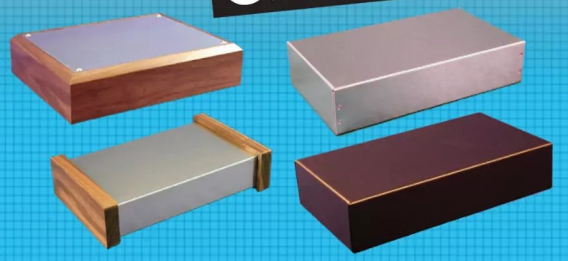

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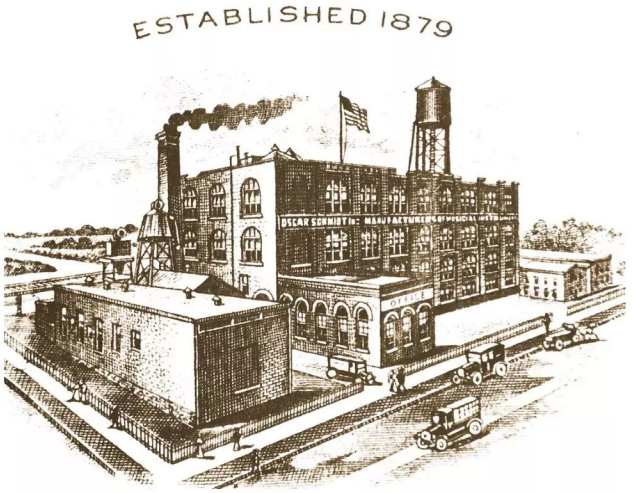


The fancifully illustrated Oscar Schmidt factory.

Johnston Ave in the 1940s – United's factory was at the far end of this street.

UNITED THEY STOOD....

A Jersey City Tale

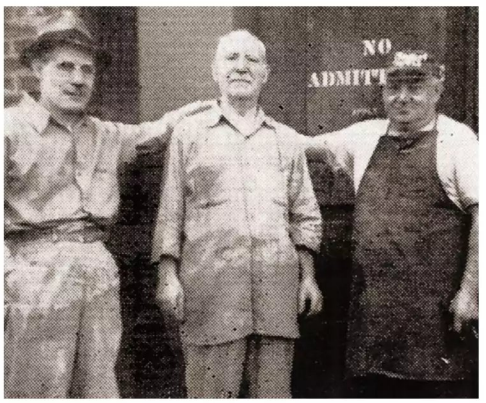
BY PETER STUART KOHMAN

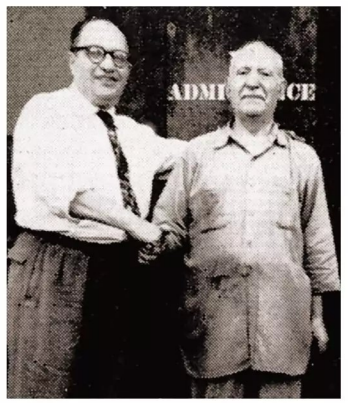
The history of the United Guitar Corporation, which unfolded in Jersey City, just over the river from the glitter of New York, is one of the great obscure stories in 20th-century guitar lore.

Jersey City, "left of the Hudson," was home to the Oscar Schmidt Company, builders of the pre-war Stella guitars iconic in blues lore. Once one of the 800-pound gorillas of the fretted-instrument business, Oscar Schmidt sputtered once the Depression hit, then split into smaller pieces. One of its trails leads to United – and includes a tangential connection to Epiphone and Guild.

Unlike the now-venerated Schmidt name, United is lost to history. The firm was owned and operated by a group of Italian immigrants with deep roots in the New York music trade and (as with the Larson Brothers before them) United's obscurity lies in the fact their brand rarely appeared on their product; for the most part, it was a wholesale operation, building instruments for others to distribute and sell. Occasionally, cheap flat-tops turn up with a small "United" sticker on the headstock, looking so similar to Harmonys and Kays they're often attributed to them. United's best instruments are found marked Premier, Orpheum, Stewart Orthofonic, and other trade brands. Even John D'Angelico's name can be found attached to United-made bodies, though they're a special case.

In the early 20th century, Oscar Schmidt was a vast operation, ranked as one of the largest guitar builders in the U.S. Though Schmidt himself was a German immigrant, many of his craftsman were Italian. Several factors led to its downfall. In 1929, Schmidt died unexpectedly while on a buying trip in





United's Partners in 1952. From left: Frank Colonese (left), Frank Forcillo, and Leonard Russo; Canio Pinto, Giorgio Montecalvo, and Frank Massielo; George Mann with Montecalvo.

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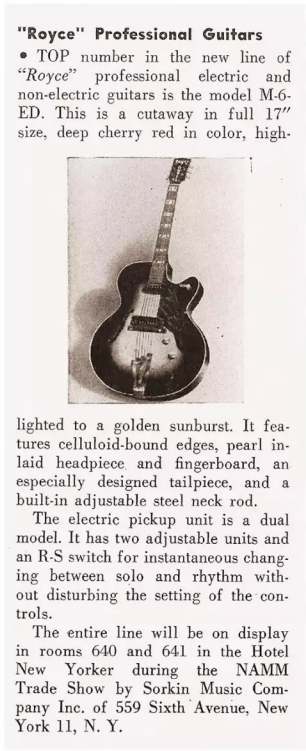


"Royce" Professional Guitars

• TOP number in the new line of *"Royce"* professional electric and non-electric guitars is the model M-6-ED. This is a cutaway in full 17" size, deep cherry red in color, highlighted to a golden sunburst. It features celluloid-bound edges, pearl inlaid headpiece and fingerboard, an especially designed tailpiece, and a built-in adjustable steel neck rod.

The electric pickup unit is a dual model. It has two adjustable units and an R-S switch for instantaneous changing between solo and rhythm without disturbing the setting of the controls.

The entire line will be on display in rooms 640 and 641 in the Hotel New Yorker during the NAMM Trade Show by Sorkin Music Company Inc. of 559 Sixth Avenue, New York 11, N. Y.

United's one retail push, the July '52 ad in *Musical Merchandise*. Sorkin's Royce brand announced in *MM*.

Czechoslovakia. The following month, the stock market crashed. Without its founder in harsh economic times, the company went through several reorganizations in the '30s. The Oscar Schmidt name survived on a rump operation that kept the zither and autoharp trademarks. From 1935, the successor to Schmidt's guitar division did business as Fretted Instrument Manufacturers, Inc., run by John Carner. Little information on Carner has survived, but whatever his credentials, the spin-off company floundered – though to be fair, it was in dire straits when he took over. FIM finally sold the guitar business (including the trade names Stella and Sovereign) to Harmony, and by '39 it folded. From this emerged The United Guitar Corporation.

A New Jersey incorporation certificate from spring 1939 lists four men as partners: John Carner, Frank Colonese, Frank Salvino, and Frank Masiello. Carner is the obvious link to FIM/Schmidt, though the others may have worked with him. Perhaps the money from the Harmony sale funded the new venture. Some claim United assumed operation of the Oscar Schmidt factory, but while the zither company kept Schmidt's 87 Ferry Street address, United emerged with its own factory on the opposite side of town.

Despite its name, Ferry Street is nowhere near Jersey City's waterfront. Rather, it's on the northwest side, in the "heights" above Hoboken. United's factory was located at 278 Johnston Avenue, by the Morris Canal Basin on the southeast side, adjacent to acres of giant railway junctions and docks in an historic-but-unglamorous industrial area called Communipaw.

The only known detailed source of information on United is an article from the July '52 issue of *Musical Merchandise* that describes the company as, "A rather unique organization, owned and operated by six men who are each experts in guitar craftsmanship. All of them served apprenticeship in their native Italy... and later with some of the well-known guitar manufacturers in the U.S. They started United in 1939, each an artist in his own trade."

John Carner wasn't even mentioned, but at least some of the United partners were likely veterans of Schmidt/FIM. Senior founding partner Frank Colonese became president of the company and also headed the finishing department. Born in 1908, he grew up in the instrument business; on the 1920 census, his father's profession is listed as "Repairer – Mandolins."

Vice president Canio Pinto was also foreman of the sanding department. At 42, he was the youngest of the bunch, and was born in New York, not Italy. Secretary Leonard Russo was also factory superintendant. Frank Massielo – the other remaining founding partner – was foreman of the assembly department. Born in Italy in 1892, by 1910 he was living and working with two brothers in Jersey City as a "Mandolin Maker" – likely for Schmidt. Giorgio Montecalvo was responsible for adjustment and tuning. He was older than his partners, born in Italy in 1880 and arriving in the U.S. in 1908. He is described in 1952 as "a well-known concert guitarist," but in 1930 was listed as "Machinist – musical instruments" on the census form.

The name most associated with United is Frank Forcillo. Not one of the founding partners, when the company started, he wasn't even working in the instrument trade; in 1940, he was a day laborer for the Ship Company-Dollar Line, in Jersey City. But he *was* an experienced guitar maker. Per several accounts, Forcillo was one of the first employees John D'Angelico let go after founding his own business in 1932.

The elaborate Forcillo guitar headstock; shades of D'Angelico.

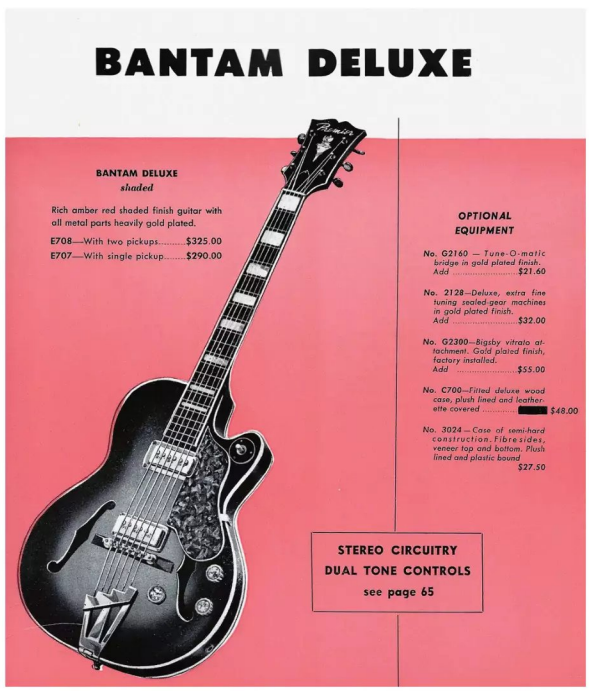
Lipsky's Orpheum line (left) was a bit less upscale, but still pro-quality. United's "budget assortment," the B&J Serenader.

This suggests Forcillo had been previously employed in the Raphael Ciani shop, where John was foreman. In '52, Forcillo was credited as United's "chief designer," with additional corporate duty as treasurer. Forcillo also built archtop guitars under his own name, similar in style to D'Angelico. At least some used pre-made United bodies. He holds a patent awarded in June, 1950, for an elaborate truss-rod design using the decorative pediment at the headstock crown as a working element (United never employed it).

The United plant in Jersey City is described as "over 5,000 square feet of floor space, some of the most modern machinery in the business and a corps of workers who learned the business in various leading guitar manufacturers plants."

The aspect of the "united" corps of owner/operators is the heart of the story. Rather unique at the time, some Guild histories have since co-opted this tale, ascribing that company name to a "guild" of workers founding it. The Guild company was founded by just two individuals – Al Dronge and George Mann – but the stories *do* have one crucial link – Mann.

The July '52 *MM* piece – timed to the NAMM show at the Hotel New Yorker – is basically a promotion for United launching an attempt to compete in the retail market.



The Premier Bantam Deluxe – United's finest moment?

"United Guitar Corporation... recently announced a new policy (to) concentrate its production and sales efforts on a line of professional-type guitars. Formerly, United had manufactured principally for wholesalers with private brands."

George Mann, listed as "sales manager," was key to this new policy, having been sales kingpin at Epiphone – the "face" of the company in eyes of dealers. He was pictured alongside the founding brothers as early as 1932. After Epi Stathopoulo's death in '43, Mann was crucial to brother Orphie keeping the company going. But, that partnership came to a sudden end in 1951/'52 when Epiphone suffered a debilitating strike. Enraged, Orphie brought Continental Music in as partner/distributor, moving production to Philadelphia in the process.

For whatever reason, Mann was cut out of the reorganized company, as were many employees orphaned by the sudden relocation. He likely approached United's management with a proposition to grab Epiphone's market while that company was sidelined. Mann is noted in the article as "...very enthusiastic over his present connection, looking forward to even greater heights for the six 'working' members of the firm."

The July '52 *Musical Merchandise* also included a full-page ad promoting United's new Professional models. In that pay-to-play publishing world, it guaranteed the feature story.

United's sole (and small) trade ad, placed throughout the '60s.

Despite this ballyhoo, the new marketing plan was short-lived. Perhaps the line failed to impress in that crowded NAMM year, or possibly Mann and his new employers proved quickly incompatible. Whatever went down at United, Mann immediately partnered with Manhattan music merchant Al Dronge to found Guild Guitar, officially registered in October '52. Mann's involvement with United was almost certainly over by then; perhaps he was working both sides the entire time. Ironically, he was also ousted from Guild's management after less than a year; for whatever reason, he couldn't keep a job!

At any rate, the 17" twin-pickup cutaway hollowbody archtop electric pictured in United's July '52 ad was quite modern. Few (if any) were sold with United's brand on the headstock, but the same basic instrument was supplied to a number of wholesale accounts in the following years. United soon introduced a more-distinctive product – a 13.5" hollowbody electric archtop often (but not always) built with a sealed top, sans f-shaped sound holes. The design is similar to Guild's period M65 and M75 but with a deeper body and arched back. These were also sold to different jobbers and appear under various brands.

For years, United's biggest customer was the Sorkin Music Company, in Manhattan. From the '40s through the late '60s, Sorkin's top house products were sold under the Premier name, relying mostly on United to supply unfinished hollowbody instruments they decked out in fancy finishes and glitter plastic. Sorkin also offered less-expensive lines including Marvel, Beltone, and Leo Master – all appear to be United product. In July of '52, Sorkin announced a short-lived high-end Royce brand; the guitar pictured is practically identical to what United was simultaneously promoting.

Another name often found on United products is Orpheum. By the '40s, the venerable brand belonged to Manhattan jobber Maurice Lipsky, which used suppliers including Kay and Gretsch (only *some* Orpheum guitars are United products). United also supplied some of Lipsky's cheaper Stadium-branded instruments. Practically identical pieces labeled "Serenader," "Stewart," and "Stewart Orthofonic" were sold by Bugeleisen & Jacobsen, another Union Square Jobber. Some of the cross-branded beginner flat-tops often now casually described as Harmony are actually the product of United, as are bottom-line mandolins, ukuleles, and baritone ukes that appeared under many brands (or were unmarked).

On a different level, United is also remembered for supplying pre-made bodies to John D'Angelico, which, considering the Forcillo connection, makes perfect sense. After crafting a very few purpose-built electrics in the early '50s, the master of Kenmare Street decided a guitar with built-in pickups had no need of his finely carved top and back. When a customer ordered one, he simply purchased a laminated body from United, added his own neck, and finished it out as requested. These occasionally turn up today – the most affordable of John's works.

By '56 (at the latest), United Guitar Corporation had reverted to a firm wholesale only policy: "Manufacturers of quality guitars, mandolins and ukes. Products are distributed by Jobbers." They placed a small ad saying so every year in the industry *Purchaser's Guide*. By the early '60s, the address remained 278 Johnston Avenue, but general manager was Bernard A. Forcillo, Frank's son. In '56, there is no trademark listed for "United"; it reappeared in '62 but was gone again by '69.

United survived into the late '60s, but the increasing flood of cheaper European and Japanese instruments severely undercut their market. One by one, the jobbers they had supplied turned to cheaper overseas product to re-brand, and United's business collapsed. The firm does not appear to have made it into the '70s.

At the same time, the Communipaw neighborhood fell into massive post-industrial decay as Jersey City's commercial status eroded and rolling bankruptcies created a moribund railroad industry. The area just east of the Johnson Avenue factory became one of the nation's largest eyesores, with acres of abandoned docks and rail yards heaped with mountains of industrial trash. For decades, this zone was a gripping symbol of American rust-belt decay. Today, the area has been largely reclaimed as Liberty State Park.

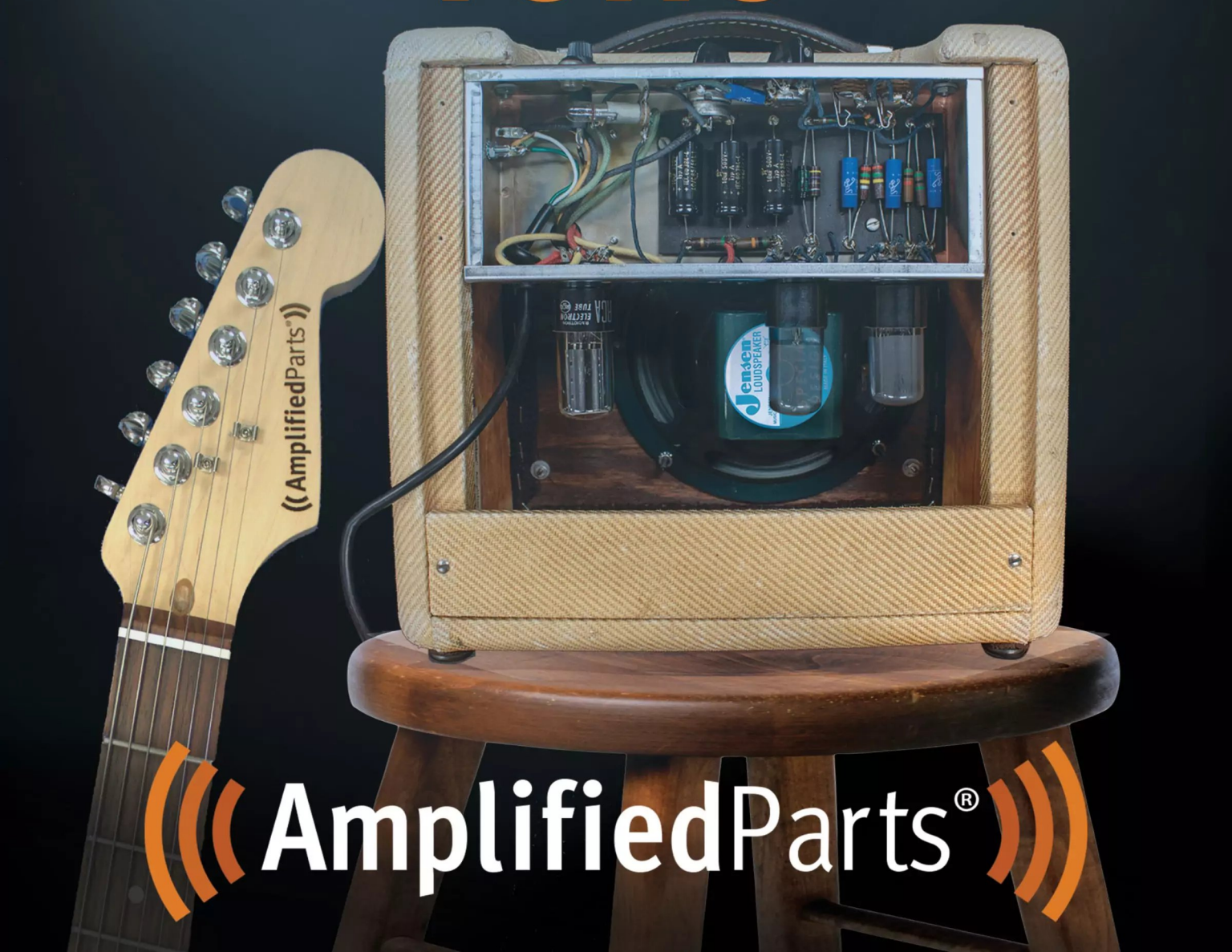
Remains of the United Guitar Corp. are few today beyond the usually uncredited instruments they left behind. The Johnston Avenue factory is gone, replaced by a row of small townhouse apartments. Next door, a one-story factory stands as mute testimony to the once-prosperous industry.

Forcillo lived on long past the company, dying at age 89 in August of '88. His obituary noted he "...made guitars for United Guitar Corp, Jersey City."

United's anonymous approach guaranteed its name has been relegated to a footnote; hopefully, the unique six-man firm rooted deep in the Italian immigrant lutherie tradition can be appreciated as much more. VG

A rare United logo on a low-end flat-top from the early '50s.

Build Your Tone



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TONALLY TRANSATLANTIC

The Epiphone Devon Tremolo EA-35T Combo

BY DAVE HUNTER

After giving the upstart Fender a run for its money in the amplifier department throughout the 1950s, Gibson segued into something that looked like surrender; by the early '60s, its amps appeared to be afterthoughts or scattershot offerings to a rapidly evolving market. And while amps carrying the Epiphone badge were even *more* like outcasts, the off-center approach taken in designing some of them greatly enhances their quirky appeal.

1963 EPIPHONE DEVON TREMOLO EA-35T COMBO

- Preamp tubes: two 6EU7
- Output tubes: two 6BQ5/EL84
- Rectifier: 6CA4/EZ81
- Controls: Loudness, Bass, Treble; tremolo Depth and Frequency
- Speakers: 12" Jensen Alnico Special Design
- Output: approximately 10 watts RMS

Gibson's parent company, Chicago Musical Instruments (CMI), acquired Epiphone in 1957, and soon after started turning out Gibson-like Epiphone guitars as a sister brand to help broaden the company's reach. It didn't do much with Epiphone amps until it began dabbling in a low-production run of combos circa 1959, which then evolved into the more-familiar models of the early/mid '60s.

Many fans of Gibson amps would agree the company did its best work in the late '50s and early '60s – parallel to the golden age of the humbucker-loaded Les Paul. The line was already descending, with great '50s

Amp courtesy of T.R. Crandall, photos by Dan Nordquist.

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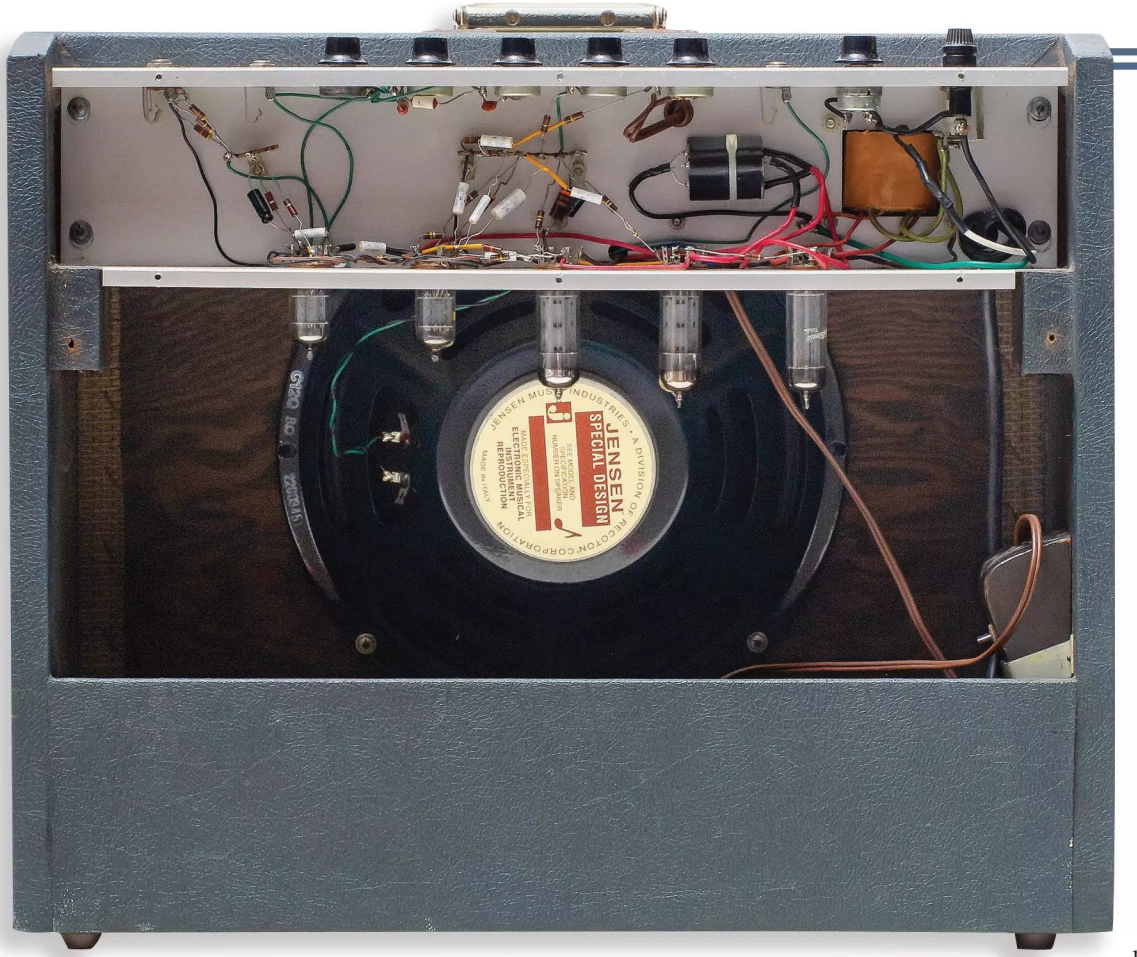


amps like the GA-50 and GA-70 Country Western leaving the lineup just before flagships such as the GA-40 Les Paul combo and its brethren moved from two-tone (late '50s) to tweed (1960), then departed the catalog in '62. Still, plenty of great-sounding amps remained in the catalog, and Gibson pushed them vigorously through most of the decade.

The B-list status of Epiphone amps of the day makes them conversely appealing, and their modest prices on the vintage market are no small part of that. They often present great-sounding bang for the buck, making them fun acquisitions for players and collectors who aren't ready to wade into the two-tone and tweed pools of the '50s. This '63 Epiphone Devon Tremolo EA-35T is a good case in point.

Sister amp to the Gibson GA-18T Explorer (and sharing its circuit if not its look just yet), it's a modest 10-watt 1x12" combo that would have been firmly in the "student" category back in the day, yet sits in a very popular "crankable low-watt" bracket here in 2021. If anything (to reference the industry leader), the EA-35T was Kalamazoo's competitor for the non-reverb rendition of Fender's Princeton combo. But while the overall features might have stood it alongside that more-popular amp, being Gibson-made, things were done quite differently.

Rather than the 6V6GT output tubes that were standard for many U.S. makers of the day, the EA-35T carries a pair of the slim, nine-pin 6BQ5 tubes better known today by their British designation – EL84. Though we see these in amps generating 18 or 20 watts per pair, factors in this design and construction rein it in at around 10 watts; the modest power transformer and 6CA4 rectifier tube (a.k.a. EZ81) deliver only about 276 volts DC on the plates of the EL84s, compared to 415 volts DC in the blackface Princeton. A rather diminutive output transformer further restrains the effort.

Instead of the 12AX7s that were common to the majority of guitar-amp preamps by the early '60s, the EA-35T uses a pair of 6EU7s for preamp, tremolo, and phase-inverter duties. The 6EU7 is a dual-triode like the 12AX7, and is similar in performance, but has different internal pin connections and uses a shared heater, so it's definitely *not* a substitute (though there are plenty to be found and new examples are still being made in Russia and elsewhere). In any case, like its Fender archetype, the Epiphone sandwiches its Bass and Treble potentiometers between the first gain stage of the 6EU7 and the second (a gain make-up stage), yet its EQ network is configured quite differently.

Half of the second 6EU7 powers the tremolo circuit, which modulates the output stage by interfering with the connection to ground at the dual-220k resistor network be-

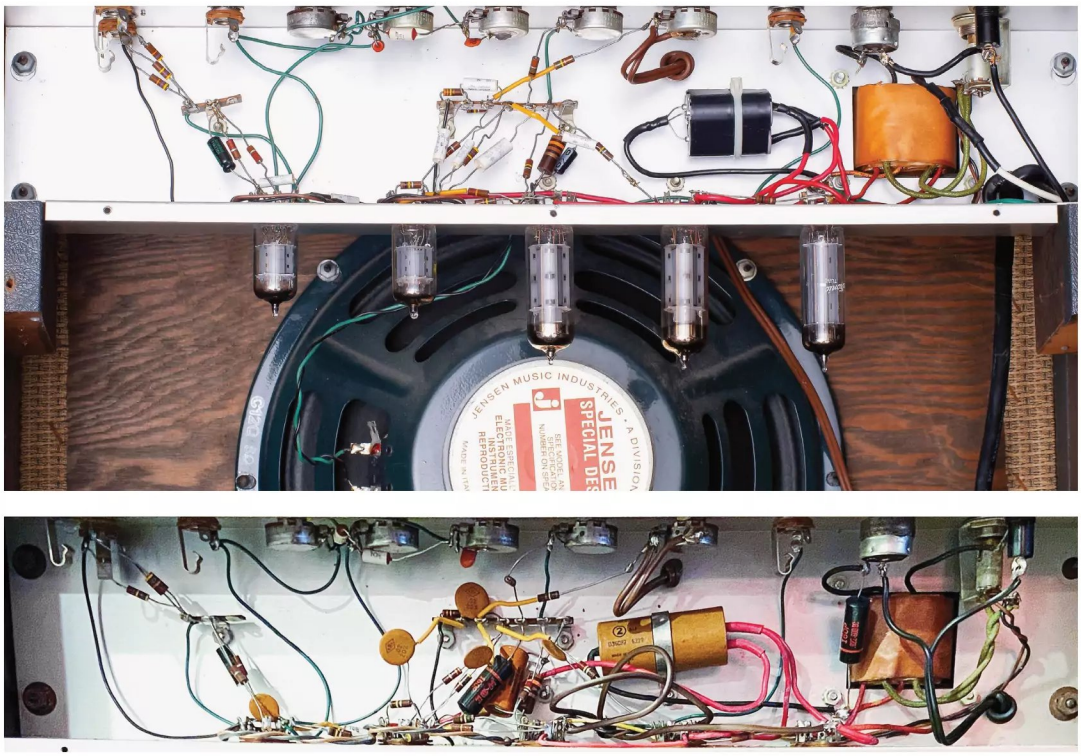
The modest output transformer (left) and power transformer are key in producing the amp's charming low-volume crankability.

tween phase inverter and output tubes – a common application in amps of this size. The second half of that tube forms the cathodyne (a.k.a. split-load) phase inverter, as would be done in the Princeton once Fender fully moved from brownface to blackface specs. Unlike those amps, though, the EA-35T has a cathode-biased output stage, which further constricts its output potential but arguably sweetens its segue into distortion.

One feature of the EA-35T that's potentially confusing without an owner's manual or schematic to reference is the Monitor-output jack between the inputs and Loudness (volume) control. This taps the signal after the controls for the first gain stage have had their way with it, enabling connection to a PA or larger power amp. At the other end of the panel, the "Ext. Spkr." jack is just that – an extension-speaker output conveniently placed so you don't have to root around underneath to find it. Interestingly, this is labeled "Echo Spkr" on the EA-35T's schematic, but it's not worth getting too excited over. Yes, the speaker plugged into this might echo, but only if you place it at the other end of the empty gymnasium you're playing.

A look inside the chassis further differentiates it from its market-leading rival; lacking the rugged circuit board of its competitor or most of its Gibson predecessors, it looks more like a Danelectro or Valco, with resistors and capacitors arranged pell-mell between tube sockets and top-panel components, with a couple of terminal strips for support. The use of budget ceramic-disc coupling capacitors also echoed the work of those makers, and enhances the slightly gritty nature of the amp while illustrating the circuit's simplicity.

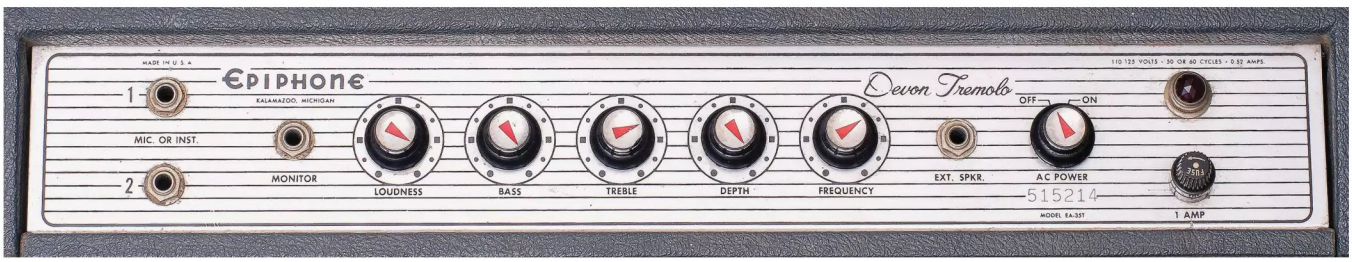
The Monitor jack (left of the Loudness knob) is a preamp output for connection to PA or a larger power amp.



This EA-35T (top) has a Jensen reissue speaker and its circuit has been repaired with several replacement parts. A nifty internal bracket carries the tremolo pedal for transport. The inside of an original chassis (bottom) reveals how simple the circuit really was; note the basic wiring that connects tube sockets and pots via two small terminal strips and the smaller ceramic-disc capacitors.

The EA-35T might not exude bountiful retro charm, yet it displays an understated, hip styling in its gray vinyl, wheat-colored grillecloth, and nifty Lucite-faced luggage handle. The top-mounted control panel is a short-lived transitional configuration between the tweed look of the '62's shorter top-mount panel and the angled top/front-mounted panel of the late '63 and after, which finally attained the styling adopted by the GA-18T Explorer a couple years before. If anything, the latter – likely thought a stylish modernization – today looks even more dated than the EA-35T.

The speaker is a reissue Jensen ceramic replacement for the original Jensen Alnico, but it accurately presents the combo's potential. Arguably more British-voiced than American (or perhaps a blend of the two), it's clear and bright with just a little bite and texture at lower volumes. Wound up higher, it slides into easy breakup with a textured but not overly pronounced midrange, and a nice overall mix of chime and warmth. Fun stuff, and generally still easy to find for well under a grand. **VG**



Original chassis: Juan Manzur.

Classics

This 1940 ES-250 with serial number 96385 left the Gibson factory bound for retailer New York Band on October 25, 1940 – the same day as the first ES-300, which bore serial number 96384. It was once owned by longtime Gibson employee Wilbur Marker and its current owner, Billy Soutar, has spent years researching its story.

"The pickup was hand-made by Walter Fuller, who for years worked as Gibson's electronics-lab supervisor," Soutar said. "It has a hand-bent brass mounting bracket like that on Les Paul's 1936 L-7, which Fuller converted to electric. This one, though, has individual polepiece risers with maple spacers between each, where the pole screws mount, like the individual poles on the ES-250 'Charlie Christian' pickup Walter created, but hidden under the celluloid cover. Unlike the ES-300 pickup, the top cover on this has countersunk holes to accept the polepiece screws."

Other details include a hand-shaped neck, "… very thin, rounded, and $1^5/_8$" at the nut, like on a Byrdland," Soutar noted. "The quality and figure are spectacular, like a period L-5."

The tuning gears are Kluson Sealfast units with amber keys, similar to the L-5 and Super 400 of the late '30s/early '40s.

"At some point, it was returned to Gibson, then shipped back to New York Band on March 4, 1941, this time listed in shipping logs as an ES-300. After being returned to factory again, it was marked 'sample' and went home with Wilbur Marker. By then, it was considered obsolete!"

Enter the P-90 pickup. Soutar recounts that a one-off/prototype ES-12 (serial number 95354) that shipped in April of '38 had adjustable polepieces on its pickup, which means Fuller had developed them by that point. Records also indicate that on July 12, 1940, Gibson returned Les Paul's L-7 to him after Fuller mounted the first diagonal pickup in it.

The EH-185 amp has serial number 16148 and once belonged to Les Paul. One of the earliest, it has the short-lived Thordarson tone circuit with separate Treble and Bass controls, which he later incorporated on the Les Paul Recording guitars.

"Les loved 185s made in this timeframe,'" said Soutar.

Finally, note the souvenir Nick Lucas pick and leather pick case, from the 1940 New York World's Fair. – ***Ward Meeker***

Do you have a classic/collectible/vintage guitar with an interesting personal story that might be a good fit for "Classics?" If so, send an e-mail to ward@vintageguitar.com for details on how it could be featured.

Photos: Steve Evans.

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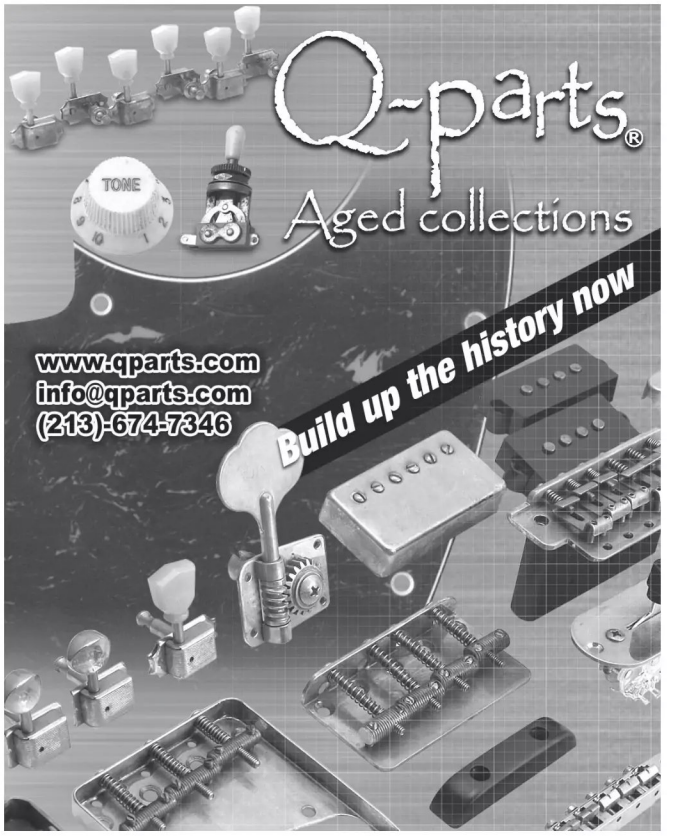
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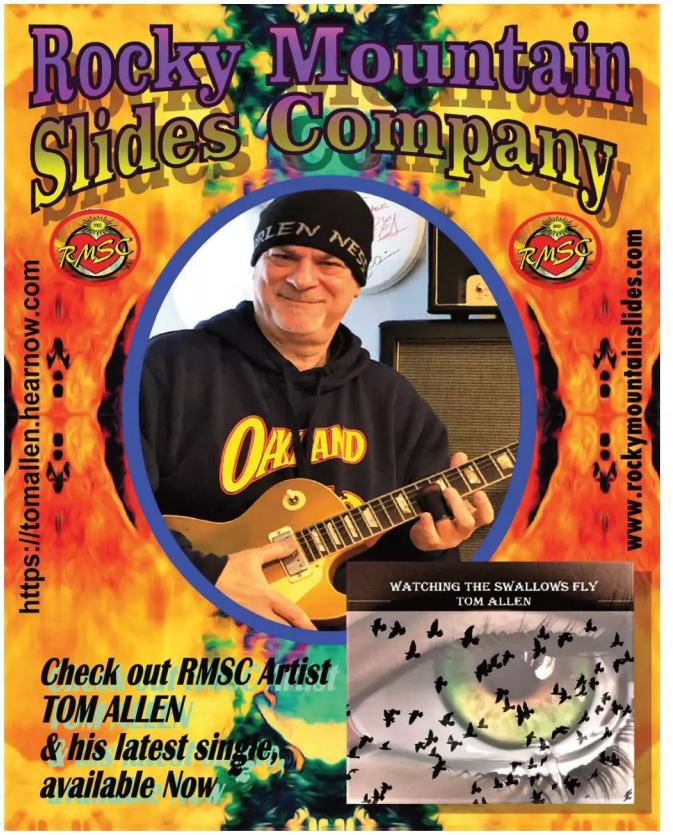
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Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Gil Hembree

1961 Epiphone Broadway (electric)

NEW & UPDATED LISTINGS

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1979	A-Bass Solidbody bass copy		$975	$1,300
1969	Ace Tone Solid A-5 Amp	2x12, solidstate	$140	$180
1980	Acoustic 120 Amp Head	125 watts	$150	$200
1969	Alamo Bass Tube Amp		$325	$450
1963	Ampeg B-12 N Portaflex Amp		$1,400	$1,850
1964	Ampeg BB-4 Baby Bass (4-string)	Solid color	$2,100	$2,700
1930	Bacon & Day Silver Bell #1 Plectrum Banjo		$1,500	$1,950
1930	Bacon & Day Silver Bell #1 Tenor Banjo		$1,350	$1,800
1967	Baldwin Model C1 Custom (Professional) Amp		$350	$450
2014	Carr Mercury Amp	8/2/.5/.1w, 1x12	$1,525	$1,975
1990	Charvel Charvette		$325	$425
2020	Collings D2HA	Indian, Adirondack	$3,000	$4,000
2020	Collings I-30	Two P-90s, flamed top	$3,100	$4,100
1997	Crate Vintage Club 5212/ VC-5212 Amp		$225	$300
1965	Da Vinci Model 440A/ D40 Custom Amp	1x12, reverb, vibrato	$1,000	$1,350
1996	Ehlers 15 CRC		$1,900	$2,475
1952	El Grande Valco Spectator Amp	Red and white, 1x8	$290	$375
1948	Epiphone B-1 Acou. Bass Viol	Plain maple sides back	$1,450	$1,900
1961	Epiphone Broadway (Electric)	Natural	$1,950	$2,550
1966	Epiphone Emperor (Thinline Electric)	Special order	$4,500	$5,800
1968	Epiphone FT 110 Frontier		$3,200	$4,100
1965	Epiphone FT 79 Texan		$2,250	$2,950
2020	Epiphone SG Prophecy/Prophecy SG		$500	$650
1964	Epiphone Sheraton	Sunburst, mini-buckers	$6,700	$9,000
1970	Epiphone Sorrento (2 pickup)	2 pickups, cutaway thinline	$1,900	$2,500
2012	Fender Bassman 100T Amp		$825	$1,100
1955	Fender Bassman Amp	Tweed, 4x10, 2 inputs	$5,300	$6,900
2020	Fender 70th Anniversary Broadcaster LE	Production model	$1,100	$1,450
2014	Fender Champion 40 Amp	ss, 40 watts, 1x12	$100	$130
2020	Fender '57 Custom Deluxe Amp	12 watts, 1x12	$1,175	$1,525
2002	Fender Cyber Twin Amp	2x65 watts, 2x12	$325	$425
1998	Fender Cyclone	Various (Mexico)	$400	$525
2020	Fender Tone Master Deluxe Reverb Blonde Amp		$525	$700
1966	Fender Electric XII	Candy Apple Red	$4,500	$6,000
1953	Fender Esquire	Blond, black 'guard	$26,700	$35,100
2020	Fender Brad Paisley Esquire		$750	$1,000
1982	Fender Harvard (Solidstate) Amp	ss, 20 watts, 1x10	$120	$155
2002	Fender Jaguar Limited Edition 1965 Reissue	CIJ	$850	$1,100
1988	Fender American Standard Jazz Bass (IV)		$800	$1,050
2010	Fender Road Worn '60s Jazz Bass	Mexico	$475	$625

Featured Survey Participant Kevin "Kebo" Borden with a 1968 Fender Paisley Telecaster Bass.

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
2020	Fender American Ultra Jazzmaster		$1,050	$1,375
1980	Fender Jazzmaster	Sunburst	$2,800	$3,700
2020	Fender Lead III Reissue	HH, Pau Ferro board	$350	$450
1961	Fender Precision Bass	Various Custom colors	$9,500	$27,300
2020	Fender Post Modern Stratocaster			
	NOS Aged Natural CS		$2,075	$2,700
1998	Fender Powerhouse/			
	P.Deluxe Stratocaster	Mexico	$350	$475
1952	Fender Telecaster	Blond black 'guard	$34,000	$44,000
2015	Fender American Elite Telecaster	US-serial number	$1,050	$1,350
2020	Fender American Original			
	'60s Custom Telecaster	Bound body	$1,100	$1,450
2013	Fishman Loudbox 100 Amp	100 watts	$235	$305
1967	Framus Charavelle 4			
	Bass Model 5/153	Thinline, double cut	$550	$725
1969	Framus Sorento 12 5/012	12-string version	$675	$875
1969	Framus Sorento 5/112/53	6-string version	$575	$750
2014	G & L ASAT Special			
	Detroit Muscle Series	Classic automobile colors	$825	$1,100
2019	G & L Fullerton Deluxe Dohney		$850	$1,100
2010	G & L L-2000 30th Anniversary Bass		$1,125	$1,500
2019	G & L L-2000 Bass		$975	$1,300
1988	Gibson 20/20 Bass	Headless-style	$1,100	$1,450
2012	Gibson 335-S Limited Run	Sunburst	$875	$1,150
2012	Gibson Advanced Jumbo Pro		$1,150	$1,500
2005	Gibson Advanced Jumbo Reissue		$1,625	$2,100
1963	Gibson Atlas IV Amp	25 watts, 1x15 piggy, brown	$475	$600
1962	Gibson B-25/B-25N	Wood bridge	$1,800	$2,400
1999	Gibson Chet Atkins CEC		$1,200	$1,550
1998	Gibson CL-10 Standard		$800	$1,025
1996	Gibson Dove	Various colors	$1,725	$2,225
1979	Gibson EB-0 Bass		$975	$1,275
1936	Gibson EH-100 Amp	1x10, 4 tubes/6 tubes	$550	$725
1947	Gibson ES-125	1st non-adj P-90 pickups	$2,000	$2,600
2002	Gibson ES-137 Custom	Split-diamond markers	$1,300	$1,700
1953	Gibson ES-140 (3/4)	Sunburst	$2,000	$2,600
1968	Gibson Firebird I	Sunburst, non-reverse	$3,000	$3,900
1980	Gibson Firebird I/Firebird 76		$2,250	$2,925
1963	Gibson Firebird V	Sunburst, reverse	$11,500	$15,100
1979	Gibson Flying V (Mahogany)	Various colors	$3,500	$4,550
1957	Gibson GA-9 Amp	Gibson 9 logo, 1x10	$500	$650
1952	Gibson J-185N	Natural	$11,000	$14,500
1968	Gibson Lancer Amp	Solid state	$60	$80
2014	Gibson '58 Les Paul Figured Top		$3,300	$4,300
2020	Gibson Custom Shop			
	1956 Les Paul Reissue		$2,600	$3,400

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2008	Gibson Melody Maker			
	Les Paul 125th Anniv.	2 pickups	$700	$900
1896	Gibson Orville Gibson	Basic/plainer models	$4,200	$39,000
1951	Gibson RB-100 5-String Banjo		$1,450	$1,875
2014	Gibson SG Angus Young	Small guard, stop tail	$1,425	$1,850
2006	Gibson SG Elegant		$2,200	$2,850
1975	Gibson TB-250			
	Mastertone Tenor Banjo		$1,150	$1,500
2020	Gold Star JD Crowe			
	GF-100JD 5-String Banjo		$900	$1,175
1986	Goodall BC425 Classical	Cedar and Brazilian	$5,100	$6,625
1967	Goya Rangemaster	Wide variety of models	$625	$800
2020	Grestch G2220			
	Electromatic Jr. Bass (used)		$150	$215
1979	Gretsch Atkins Axe (7685/7686)		$1,025	$1,325
2009	Gretsch Brian Setzer			
	Black Phoenix (G6136-SLBP)		$1,825	$2,350
1962	Gretsch Chet Atkins			
	Country Gentleman (6122)	George Harrison specs	$3,500	$4,600
1958	Gretsch Jet Firebird (6131)	Single cut	$5,200	$6,800
1956	Gretsch Round-Up (6130)	Knotty pine (2 knots)	$10,000	$13,000
2015	Gretsch White Falcon (Import)		$2,175	$2,825
2003	Grosh, Don Custom T Carve Top	Highly flamed Strat-style	$1,225	$1,575
1975	Guild Aragon F-30	Mahogany	$1,475	$1,925
1991	Guild Artist Award		$4,200	$5,475
1985	Guild SB-601 Pilot Bass		$450	$575
2001	Hamer Chaparral			
	12-String Bass (USA)		$1,500	$2,000
1950	Harmony H-190/H-191 Amp		$375	$475
2007	HiWatt Custom 100 Amp Head	100 watts	$1,300	$1,700
2020	Hofner Model 500/2 Bass	SC, 2 pickups	$1,450	$1,900
1986	Ibanez AXB Axstar Bass	Various models	$200	$400
1953	Magnatone Model 110 Melodier Amp	12 watts, 1x10	$550	$725
1985	Marshall JCM 800			
	Model 1987 Amp Head	50 watts	$1,190	$1,525
2020	Martin BC-16GTE Acou. Bass		$1,150	$1,500
1998	Matchless Brave 40 212 Amp		$1,300	$1,675
1976	MCI GuitOrgan B-35	Working/functional	$925	$1,250
1989	Mesa-Boogie Bass 400 Amp Head		$925	$1,225
1970	Microfrets Rendezvous Bass		$925	$1,200
1968	Mosrite Celebrity Bass	Red or sunburst	$500	$650
1977	Music Man Sixty Five Amp Head			
		65 watts	$350	$450
1962	National Val-Trem 40 Amp	17 watts, 2x10, t	$800	$1,050
1975	ODE/Muse Model D Banjo	Various models	$1,600	$2,100
1973	Oliver Model B-120 Head	35 watts	$425	$550
2008	Pignose G60VR Amp	60 watts, 1x12, tubes	$225	$300
1938	Recording King M-6 Tenor Banjo		$1,400	$1,800
1959	Rickenbacker M-11 Amp	12-15 watts, 1x12	$650	$850
1973	Rickenbacker Model 4001 Bass	Early '73 features	$2,950	$3,800
1999	Rickenbacker Model 4001			
	V63 Reissue Bass	Plain/opaque	$2,400	$3,100
1955	Standel Standel Tube Amplifiers	Various models	$2,000	$4,500
1973	Sunn Sorado Amp	Tubes, 1x15 or 2x15	$850	$1,125
2020	Supro Black Magick 1695TH Amp	5 watts, head	$675	$875
2020	Supro Keeley Custom 10 Amp	25 watts, 1x10	$550	$725
2000	Taylor AB2 Bass		$1,575	$2,050
2010	Top Hat Ambassador T-35C 212 Amp	35 watts, 2x12	$1,050	$1,350
1982	Trainwreck Custom Built Amp	Ken Fisher built	$22,000	$29,000

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Jerry Jones Electric Sitar, '02, red crackle, exc cond, $1750
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Harmony Silhouette '20, by Heritage, Maple top, mint, $1050

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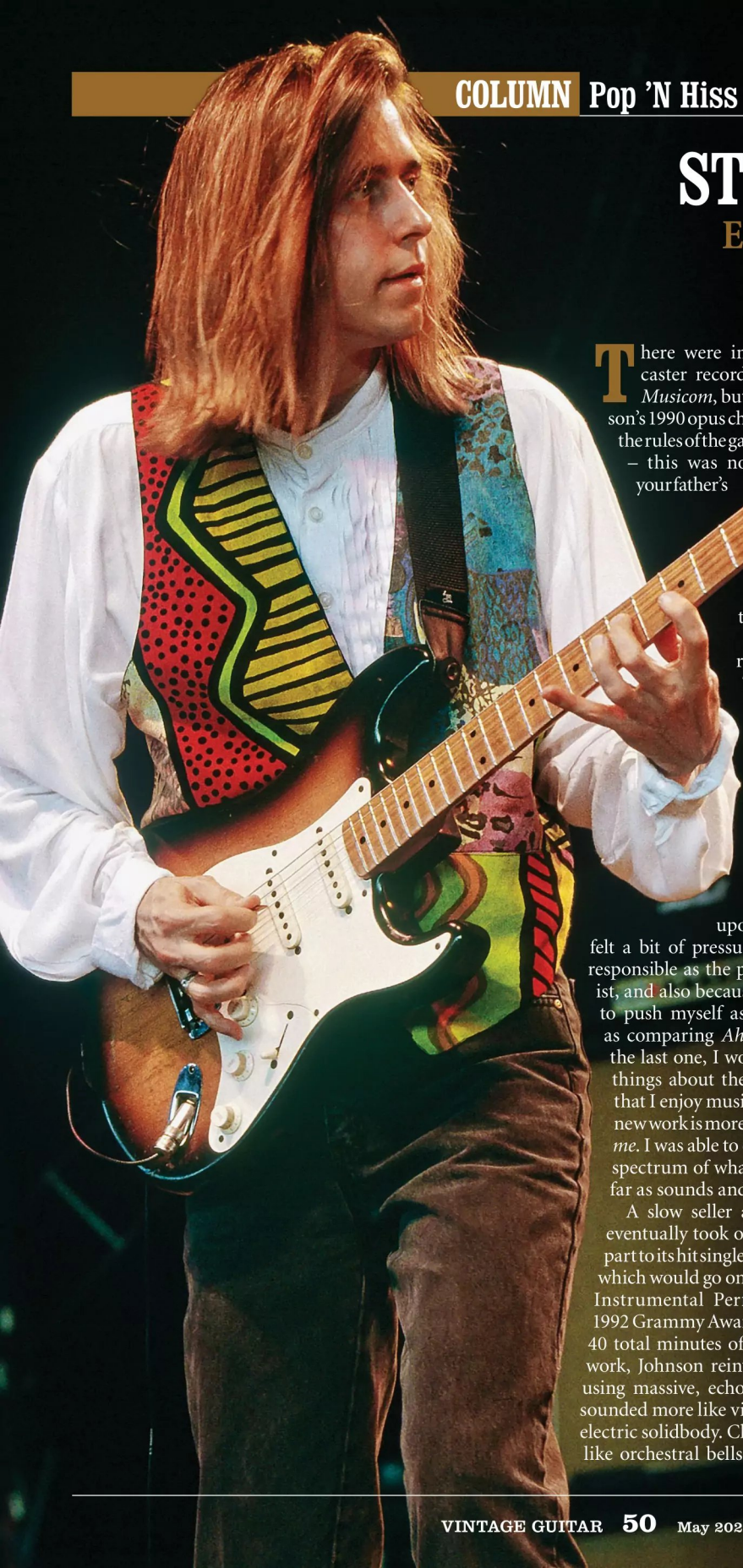
STRAT REVOLUTION

Eric Johnson's *Ah Via Musicom*

By Pete Prown



There were innovative Stratocaster records before *Ah Via Musicom*, but Eric Johnson's 1990 opus changed the rules of the game – this was not your father's funky quack-toned Fender.

After the positive reception for 1986's *Tones*, Johnson had gathered feedback and pondered his next move.

"One thing people told me is that they wanted to hear me play more guitar," he said upon its release. "I felt a bit of pressure because I was responsible as the producer and artist, and also because I really wanted to push myself as a player. As far as comparing *Ah Via Musicom* to the last one, I would say there are things about the previous record that I enjoy musically, but feel this new work is more comprehensively *me*. I was able to express the whole spectrum of what I want to do, as far as sounds and styles."

A slow seller at first, *Musicom* eventually took off thanks in large part to its hit single, "Cliffs of Dover," which would go on to win Best Rock Instrumental Performance at the 1992 Grammy Awards. But, across its 40 total minutes of blistering guitar work, Johnson reinvented Leo's axe, using massive, echo-laced solos that sounded more like violin or cello than electric solidbody. Chords popped out like orchestral bells. On FM rockers like "Cliffs of Dover" and "High Landrons," listeners were exposed to six-string runs that were part fusion, part psychedelia, part jazz and country – and *all* E.J.

"We only had three months to do *Tones*, but for this one I spent a year and a half," he said. "This allowed me the luxury to pursue particular sounds in detail – for example, I spent eight days trying to perfect my guitar tone for 'High Landrons.' Some people might think that's frivolous, but I was going after that Hendrix sound – to do that, you have to do all the weird effects and get the right alchemy of sounds."

Ah Via Musicom had a difficult gestation; sessions lasted more than a year during 1988-'89, using Austin-area studios Riverside, Arlyn, and Saucer.

"I did *three full versions* of the record," Johnson added. "The first studio was a great place, but I couldn't get a good live-sounding tone out of my guitar. Everything sounded thin and when you listened back, it sounded too cerebral – like we didn't let the music happen naturally, which is what we were aiming for.

"By the third version, we started to get good live performances, but I was still dissatisfied. I had originally planned to do the whole thing live, but instead had to overdub certain areas. So, the guitar parts are about 50:50 live versus fixed-up."

Apart from "Trademark," "Desert Rose," and other rock tracks, the cut "Steve's Boogie" served as a refreshing blast of country-and-western twang. It reminded listeners of Johnson's Texas roots, as well as his wide-ranging guitar influences.

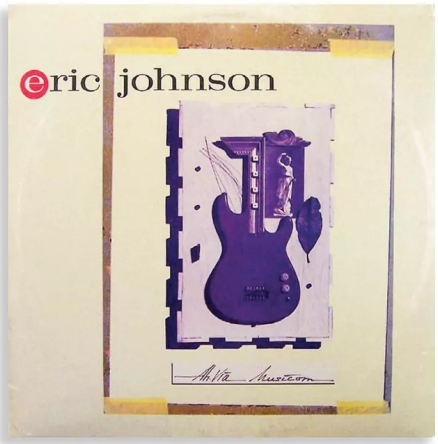
"I sequenced 'Steve's Boogie' to be an intermission between part one and part two of the album; the song is really a tribute to Steve Hennig, who plays that bendy solo in the middle. He's a fine player from Austin and has taught me a lot of stuff. Steve also turned

Eric Johnson: Max Crace.

me on to other country pickers like Danny Gatton, Jerry Reed, Chet Atkins, and Merle Travis. I also really dig Pat Metheny – and Wes Montgomery's playing is like everything I ever dreamed of on guitar. And everybody knows how I really feel about Jimi Hendrix. He had the Isley Brothers R&B licks and all that smooth Steve Cropper stuff – then he'd burn with the blues, all with great timing. Jimi was like a drummer on guitar."

Musicom is also where listeners finally began to understand the scope of Johnson's guitar vision. Like a Steve Howe or Robert Fripp, he's a rock player who listened heavily to jazz and fusion, but further possessed a picking hand that rivaled the frightening speed of John McLaughlin.

"I'm on the cusp between a rock player who thinks about scales and a jazzer who thinks about notes and colors over particular chords," he mused. "I don't known enough about scales to be really free, but I'm starting to learn notes that take me out of the standard pentatonic thing. They're not worked out, but the architecture is premeditated. They rise to an arc and then end – as opposed to just stringing a bunch of licks together."



Of course, you can't talk about Eric Johnson without investigating his notorious tone-factory of gear. For *Ah Via Musicom*, he used his fabled 1954 and '58 sunburst Stratocasters, as well as an early-'60s ES-335 for much of "Cliffs of Dover" (along with a Chandler Tube Driver). A Marshall 100-watt half-stack and Maestro Echoplex EP-3 completed the studio rig, and live he also deployed a Howard Dumble head ("It's like an overgrown Twin with *lots* of voltage running through it"), through a Marshall 4x12 with a Tube Screamer, Fuzz Face, and MXR digital delay. For clean tones of the period, there were a couple of old Fender Reverbs set about halfway, with a TC Electronic chorus and Echoplex, to help Johnson achieve bell-like chord effects. He also preferred to turn the Marshall's Presence and Treble knobs down all the way, to help conjure his much-admired violin tone.

Looking back at the album today, Johnson offers new perspective on the wider master-work, and even humbly admits it achieved a lofty goal.

"*Ah Via Musicom* was an effort to push myself to make the best record I could at the time," he told *VG*. "It was an exhausting effort, but I imagine a lot of people think of it as the best album I've done; I was trying to achieve a certain benchmark for guitar playing, and I suppose in some ways it did. I'm proud of it and it really is what I wanted to do – offer something to the art of guitar because it has giving me so much joy, happiness, and inspiration, from all the wonderful players and the instrument in general." VG

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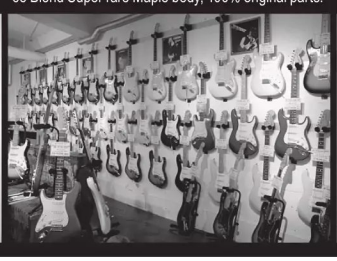
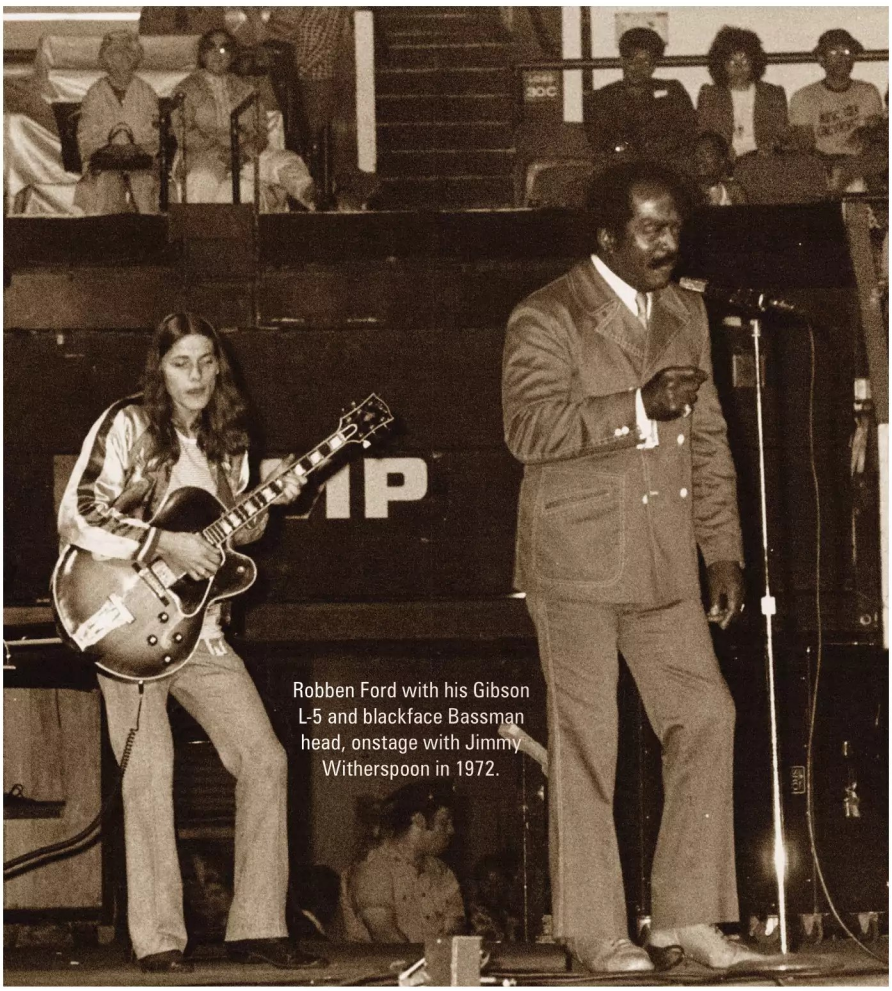




Robben Ford with his Gibson L-5 and blackface Bassman head, onstage with Jimmy Witherspoon in 1972.

ROBBEN FORD

The Early Years: Emergence of a Blues/Jazz Virtuoso

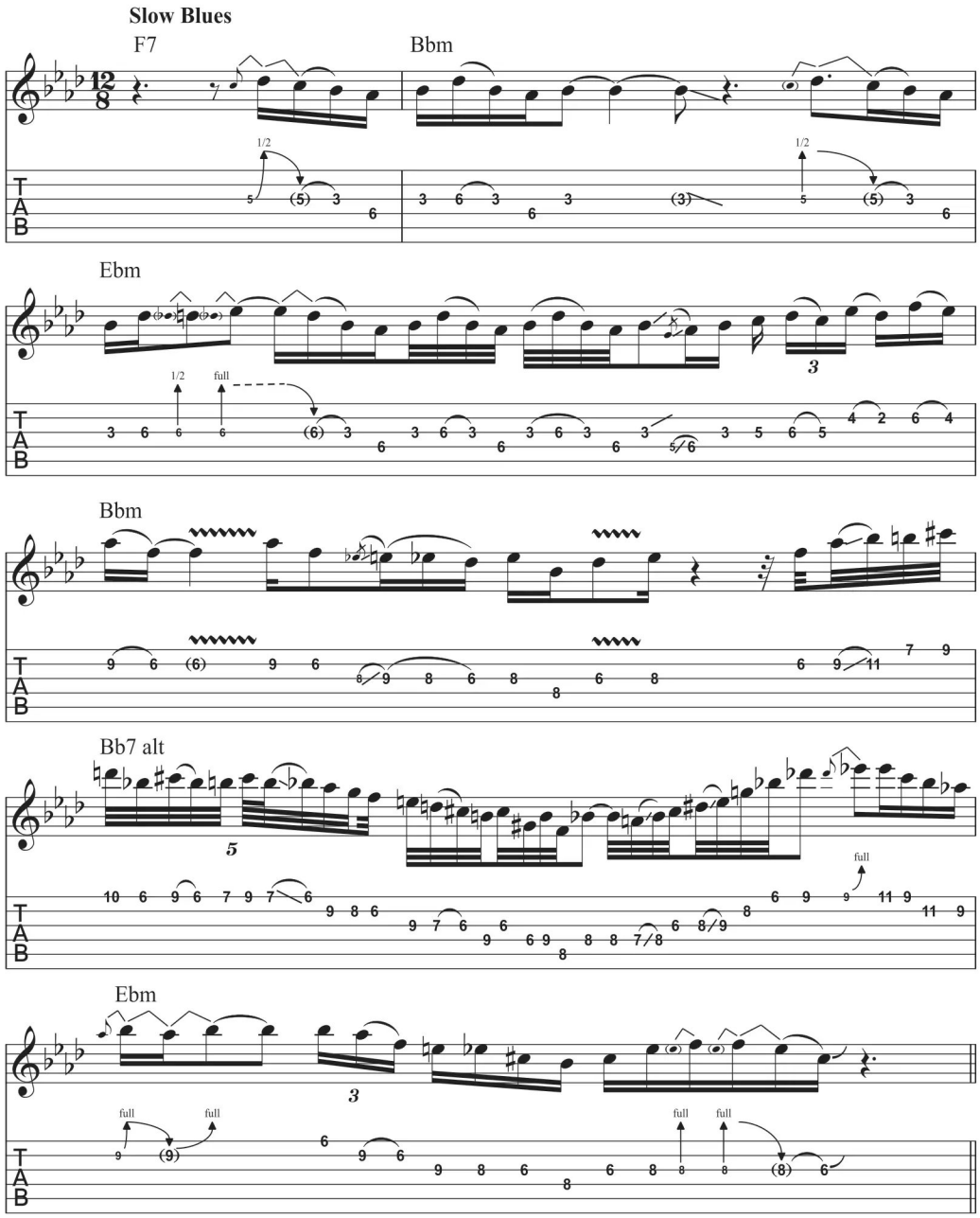
By Wolf Marshall

"Who is this kid?" gasped incredulous attendees of the Guitar Explosion festival at the Hollywood Bowl in June, 1973. It was a typical summer day, but the concert was anything but; an expectant audience there to see Roy Buchanan, T-Bone Walker, Shuggie Otis, Kenny Burrell, Joe Pass, Herb Ellis, Mary Osborne, and Jim Hall was astonished and mesmerized by this unknown guitarist, barely in his 20s, who exhibited the mastery, maturity, and soul of musicians twice his age. And the tone he produced on a large jazz box through an overdriven tube amp was truly otherworldly.

Ford was born December 16, 1951, in Woodlake, California, a rural community in the San Joaquin Valley. Two years later, his family moved to Ukiah, where he was raised and schooled. The third of four sons immersed in music as a youth, he came of age in a musical environment; his father, Charles, was a county-and-western guitarist/singer and his mother, Kathryn, played piano and sang. He studied saxophone at 10 while in the school band and, inspired by Mike Bloomfield and Elvin Bishop of the Butterfield Blues Band, began teaching himself guitar at 13. In the late '60s, he augmented his self-education in blues guitar with trips to San Francisco's Fillmore West and Winterland to see masters such as B.B. King, Albert King, Eric Clapton, and Jimi Hendrix. He concurrently developed the jazz side of his personality by listening to John Coltrane, Paul Desmond, Archie Shepp, Yusef Lateef, Roland Kirk, Wayne Shorter, and Miles Davis. Robben learned primary jazz chords from book one of *Mickey Baker's Complete Course in Jazz Guitar,* then added advanced and modern concepts by assimilating the piano of McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock. These, in turn, informed his compositions and improvisations, particularly in regard to note choices and extended harmony. The amalgam of blues-guitar technique and tone with jazz chordal thinking and saxophone phrasing remains a vital and telling cornerstone of his style.

After graduating high school in 1970, Ford moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and formed the Charles Ford Band (in honor of his father) with brothers Pat (drums) and Mark (harmonica). The group specialized in harmonica-driven electric blues and recorded sporadically for Arhoolie before Robben (on sax and guitar) and Pat joined labelmate Charlie Musselwhite on a national tour. Robben appeared with the Chicago blues singer/harmonica player on *Takin' My Time* and captivated listeners with his playing on the title track and cuts like "Love Me or Leave Me," which sported an early lead-vocal from Robben. He left Musselwhite's group in mid '71 to form a second Charles Ford Band, which added bassist Stan Poplin and found him handling lead vocals and doubling on guitar and piano. The quartet recorded an eponymous album in '72 with gems like "Blue and Lonesome" (henceforth a staple of Robben's repertoire), "Reconsider, Baby," "My Time After Awhile," "Black Night" and the irrepressibly swinging "Gibson Creek Shuffle." Robben's growing interest in jazz prompted him to assemble another quartet with keyboardist Paul Nagle, Stan Poplin, and drummer Jim Baum. This group featured the leader on guitar and tenor sax, and performed a potpourri of blues and jazz-rock that foreshadowed his approach of the coming years. The evocative ballad "You Don't Know What Love Is" and the modal "Eighty One" found Robben turning in lengthy, expressive sax performances while "Oh Gee," a 44-bar blues-with-a-bridge, struck a balance between uptempo swing and bebop tangents. "Miss Miss" and "Sunrise" (two ambitious Ford originals)

Ford/Witherspoon: Keystone Press/Alamy.



Slow blues is a challenging environment for any performer, given the omnipresent danger of becoming repetitious, formulaic, or mundane. Not so with Robben, who set his soul quotient high early on in a genre where timing, phrase feeling, contrast, and drama are paramount. This is demonstrated by tracks like "Blue and Lonesome," a minor blues in B♭. This excerpt from his riveting solo has all the right stuff – soulful opening statement built on simple ground-finding motifs and riff-like patterns decorated with slinky string bends and legato phrasing, a dramatic ascending sequence across the barline in measures 2-3 followed by a solid blues-scale line in 4, and a careening bebop phrase to usher in the iv chord, E♭m, in 5. The latter finds Ford exuding the energy of a jazz sax player with blistering double-timed rhythms and his foray into exotic diminished-scale sounds to express the B♭7 altered-dominant chord before resolving to a contrasting traditional blues melody in E♭m in 6.

hinted at his late-'70s fusion work and flaunted virtuosic jazz-rock chops tempered by his ubiquitous blues aesthetic. These tracks originally graced his now out-of-print '72 albums as a leader – *Discovering the Blues (Live)* and *Sunrise* – and were gathered on the compilation *Robben Ford Anthology: The Early Years*.

In '71, Ford began performing with Jimmy Witherspoon, a seasoned blues veteran 28 years his senior. "Spoon" was impressed by the teen's sax playing after Ford's quartet opened a show in Northern California, and raved about his musicianship; because he brought a guitarist for the concert, Ford played only sax that evening. However, that date marked the beginning of a relationship that blossomed and bore fruit in the blues world and beyond. Spoon hired his band and became a mentor and advocate.

Ford moved to L.A. to work with the singer and they toured the U.S. and Europe for the next five years. By contrast, with Musselwhite's raunchier traditional Chicago style of blues, Spoon's urbane approach welcomed Ford's evolving blues/jazz fusion inclinations. These aspects had surfaced and been documented on *The Charles Ford Band*, but were cultivated, nurtured, and grew exponentially in the environment of Spoon's band. He was afforded a showcase in the concert's opening segment (before the leader took the stage) and was given extensive solo space throughout. "Kansas City," from *Live Jimmy Witherspoon & Robben Ford*, is a representative piece that reveals Robben's increasing comfort and acumen in blending jazz elements with straight-ahead blues (to see great examples, search youtube for Robben Ford and Jimmy Witherspoon/"Black Omnibus" and "One of a Kind").

By '73, Ford had become a well-kept secret. With the

help of Spoon's management, that was remedied when he was inducted to the all-star lineup of the West Coast Guitar Explosion concert series in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The emerging virtuoso played alongside established icons in jazz, blues, and rock accompanied by a stellar rhythm section that included bassist John Heard. In that period, Ford began to make inroads; he was seen by Tom Scott and members of the L.A. Express, which he would join after leaving Spoon's band. This step facilitated Ford's move into the world of session playing that would soon put him in the company of musicians like Joni Mitchell and George Harrison. *Schizophonic*, an unofficial album, was a tentative effort as a solo artist, reputedly recorded for $100 per player. Conceived as a soundtrack for a low-budget film, it collected a batch of fusion-oriented Ford originals. Though Ford remains largely dissatisfied with the release, it remains an indicator of his composing and performing talents in the jazz-rock genre, and set a tone for future developments.

A question many ponder is why Ford, a forceful blues-rock-jazz player, gravitated to large archtop guitars in the period. But that sound is part and parcel of the effect he had on the Guitar Explosion audience. To those listeners, it was obvious he harnessed the overlooked attributes of an ungainly hollowbody jazz instrument to produce a highly identifiable fusion tone.

"My first really good electric guitar was a Guild Starfire III," Ford said. "It's a thinline, like a 335, but hollow with a single sharp cutaway and single-coil pickups. It's weird because I was going for the sound of Mike Bloomfield on Butterfield's first album, and he was using a Tele. But I heard that warm, thick tone from the

The saxophone experience and jazz influences of Ford's formative years informed the fusion pieces in his repertoire. "Sunrise" was an early portrayal of his blend of modern jazz, rock, and blues, and depicts his comfort with mixing diverse elements in a swinging, largely modal context. This example, played over a Dm7 chord and its extensions, begins with pentatonic blues lines enlarged with string bends and his signature slurs, which mirror sax drop-off embellishments. Note the use of Am pentatonic over Dm in measure 3 – a common jazz substitution. Here, he exploits a two-against-three phrasing in the triplet groupings. The long, double-timed phrase in 5-10 is filled with harmonic twists and turns. Check out his chromatic enclosure figures and bebop-scale cells used to outline chords and stretch the Dm tonality in 5-7. Measure 7 restores the Dm modality just long enough to begin a climactic ascending sequence in 8-9 that culminates in a bebop lick closely associated with Charlie Parker in 10.

"Kansas City" is a hardy 12-bar blues standard that has survived myriad treatments, from Nat Cole to the Rolling Stones as well as countless blues and soul-jazz artists. In Jimmy Witherspoon's set, the piece assumed a high-energy fast-shuffle groove, and Ford rose to the occasion with an exemplary solo, skillfully balancing traditional blues and jazz elements. He begins this chorus with B♭ major-blues melodies decorated with bends and those patented slurs. In measures 5-6, he handles the move to the IV chord (E♭7) with a long double-timed 16th-note line replete with bebop chromaticism. His final phrase over B♭7 returns to a complementary blues mood made more emphatic with the soulful gradual string bends imitated in different registers in 8 and 9.

bass pickup and the bright, open tone from the treble pickup on the Guild. I was also listening to a lot of jazz guitar – Kenny Burrell, Jim Hall, Wes Montgomery – and wanted to be a jazz guitarist. So, I thought I had to have a big Gibson archtop. For blues, they seemed fuller, louder, and more-resonant. I traded my Guild for a new Gibson L-5, around '70. That's what I played with the Charles Ford Band.

"The next archtop was a used Super 400 I got with Spoon, around '72," he added. "It had the Florentine cutaway and thinner neck, so it was probably a '67 or so. I fastened the bridge down with electrical tape so it wouldn't move when I bent strings. Later, I *pinned* it to the top with screws. With that guitar, I used light-gauge Ernie Ball strings and a medium pick; I often picked with the side or the round end. I played the Super 400 mainly on the bass pickup with the Tone all the way up through a blackface Fender Super Reverb turned up loud. That combination would sound great today! Before the Super, with Charlie Musselwhite, the Charles Ford Band, and with Spoon, I used a blackface piggyback Fender Bassman. That's the amp I played on the televised Witherspoon concert.

"One guitar that's never mentioned in my history is the ES-345 I bought from Elvin Bishop for $300. He played a dance at my high school in Ukiah, at the start of his solo career after leaving Butterfield's band. He also worked at a club nearby and I got to know him there. Some nights, there'd be no one in the audience, and I'd hang out with him between and after sets. Eventually, I heard he was selling a 345. He was living in a back room at the Keystone Korner club, in San Francisco, and I went to see him. He sold the guitar to me without getting out of bed (laughs). Though my main instrument was the L-5 at the time, I played that 345 on Charlie Musselwhite's *Takin' My Time* album."

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

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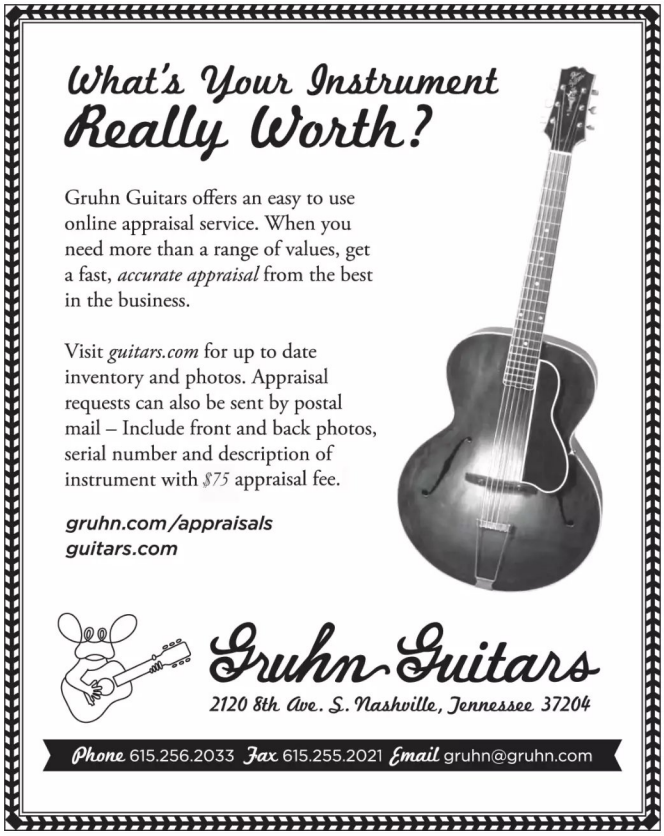
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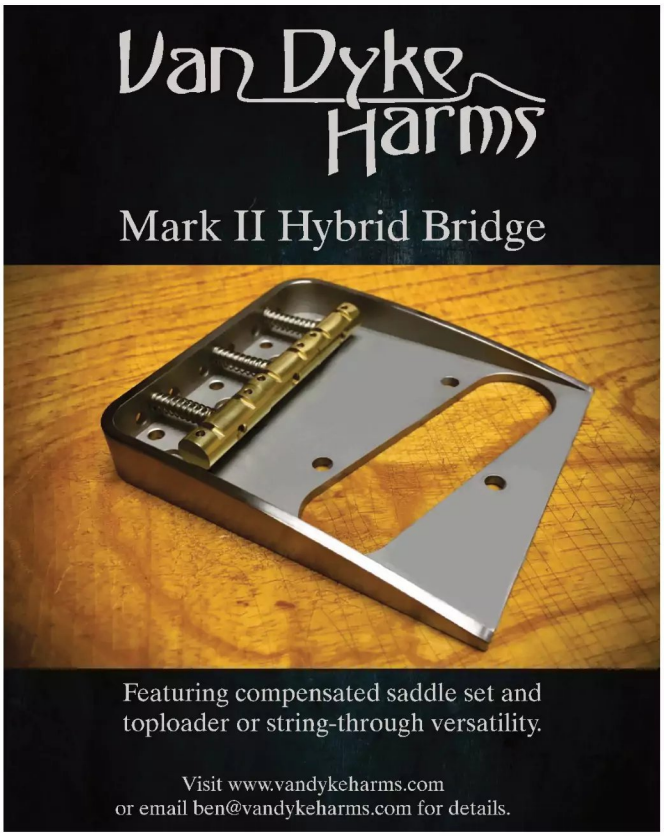
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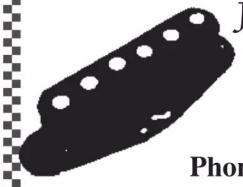

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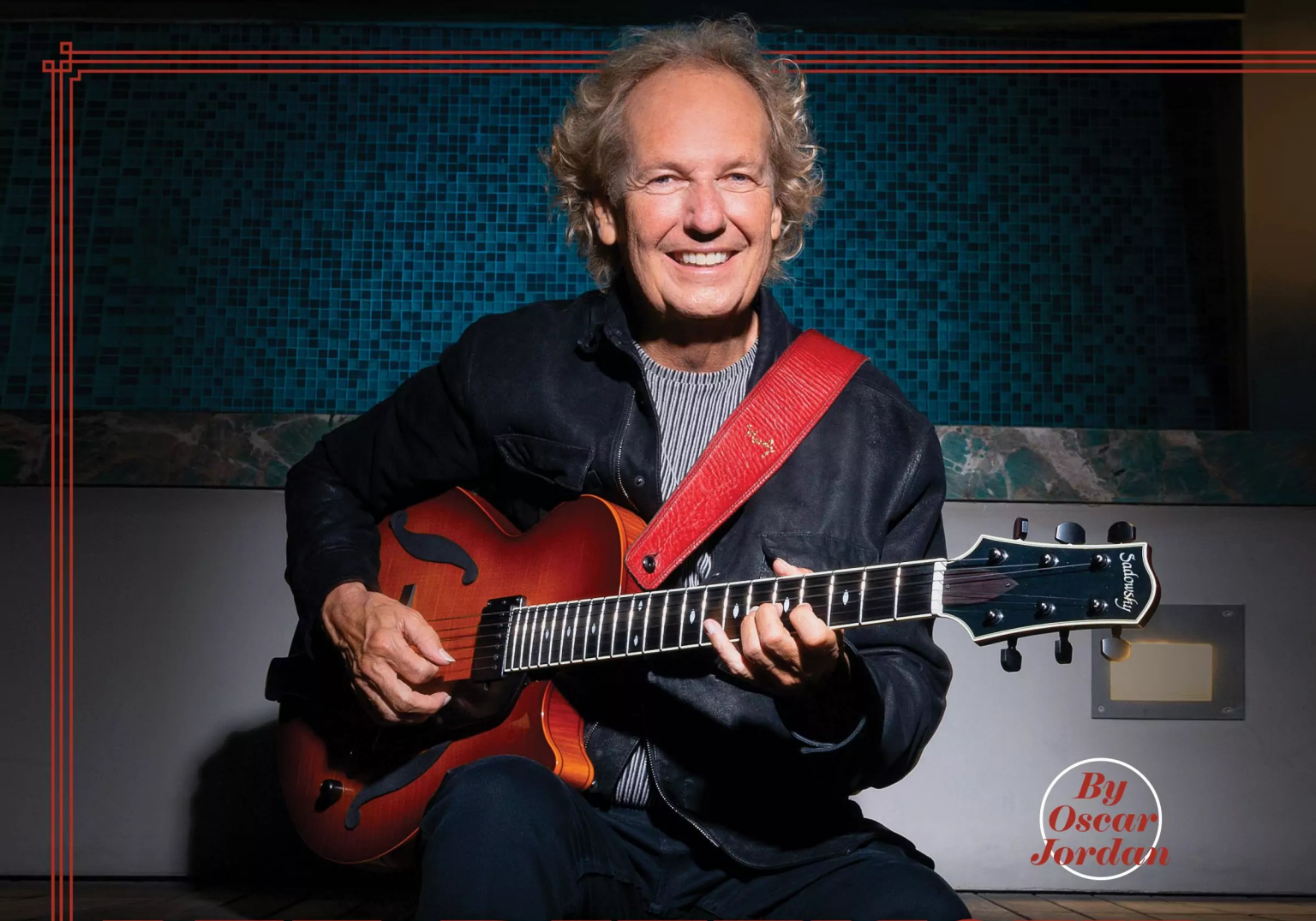

By Oscar Jordan

LEE RITENOUR

Catastrophe & Inspiration

With California's tragic Woolsey Fires having taken his home, studio, dozens of guitars, and a lifetime of memories, Lee Ritenour is now looking to the future. His mission? To explore the unexplored – an album of solo guitar. His latest album, *Dreamcatcher*, fuses diverse styles, acoustic textures, and a minimalist approach while offering some of the most-intimate work of his career.

Ritenour is philosophical about disaster, uncertain times, and the turbulent social climate that helped transform his thoughts into divine inspiration. Never underestimate the perseverance of Captain Fingers.

***Dreamcatcher* has to be your most emotional album.**

It was incredible timing because I've wanted to do this album over the last couple of years. I'd gone through the fire and lost my house and my studio in 2018, Covid this year, and I had an aortic valve replacement right after the fire. There were a lot of adventures thrown at me (laughs). I'm lucky I can put it all into music.

I lived in Malibu for 30 years; as a kid, I used to play casuals with my guitar when I was 16, and parties at Point Dume. I'd play parties for movie producers. I thought, "Wow, this place is cool. I want a house

Lee Ritenour: Alex Solca.

"Rit" with a 2009 Les Paul made by Mike McGuire in the Gibson Custom Shop, an Xotic XSC California Classic, a slot-head Taylor he keeps in alternate tunings, and his custom-built Sadowsky SS-15. His amps include a Mesa Triple Rectifier, Mesa Fillmore 100, and Fender blackface Twin Reverb reissue.

here someday." I bought my first house in 1979, just before the *Rit* album. I was 27 and I stayed there... even rebuilt it in the '90s. It was a beautiful house and a beautiful property.

Your whole life went up in smoke.

Yes. As the fire got too close, I told my wife, "Let's take a few things and get outta here." I grabbed seven guitars and my computer, and that was pretty much it. About a hundred guitars and 40 amps remained, along with every pedal I ever had since I was a kid. I lost music I'd had since I was 10 years old.

I had just built this new studio in 2018 and had a project going on, but the fire crystalized the things that are most important; it showed me when I started putting the album together that I've been

"The guitar is like a dream catcher. It's been with me since I was six years old."

playing guitar for 60 years. I've had such great opportunities and great experiences. I'm one of the few who's had the opportunity to be a session guy, an artist, and a soloist. Other people can say that, but not that many. I've been in groups and collaborations, playing almost every kind of music. A little of all of that was reflected in this solo project.

The last few years have had a profound effect on you.

When it's all said and done, this time will be a reflection of everyone taking a look at their own lives; their family lives, what they do in business, appreciating the things that are important to them, and maybe changing the things that are not.

What prompted you to channel those feelings into an album?

I've done about 45 albums, counting my collaborations with Fourplay, but I had never done a solo record. It was challenging and scary. I grew up listening to Joe Pass and Segovia, but I never thought of myself that way. I've always been a group guy. So when I committed to it, I found that I was doing a Lee Ritenour record. I was still producing it like I would any Lee Ritenour record, but it was *just* me (laughs). That meant having the right tone and the right sound for each tune and balancing the record with some rhythmic pieces – some jazzier, making sure that the tones were right, and inspiring myself to do each tune.

Lee Ritenour's latest album is titled *Dreamcatcher*.

Some of the pieces were stream-of-consciousness, like "2020," which was nine minutes long. There was some thematic stuff in it, but a lot was fairly improvised. Other tunes were composed from beginning to end. The compositional thing came into clarity with my songwriting and my whole guitar style. The whole Ritenour style is wrapped up in the tunes.

How did you decide which guitars to use?

Different guitars inspired different tunes. "Starlight" was named after the studio I lost. When I picked up that baritone guitar Taylor provided for me, I knew the song would be dedicated to all the great guitars I had to leave that day. It was a simple-but-melodic tune that evolved. The experience of the fire and losing a lifetime of guitars really inspired me; I'd had that studio since the '80s. And it wasn't so much about losing that stuff, it was the inspiration and what it meant to me.

Which guitars did you rescue?

The '49 Gibson L-5, a Les Paul that Mike McGuire made for me in 2009, a Sadowsky SS-15 that Roger Sadowsky built for me, a Taylor baritone, and a high-strung Taylor acoustic I used on "Couldn't Help Myself."

"Morning Glory Jam" has been a constant in your career.

I started thinking about these record dates that we used to do with Barry White. There would be myself, Jay Graydon, Wah Wah Watson, David T. Walker, Ray Parker, Jr, and Dean Parks. There would be four or five players all lined up in a row. Barry would come by and sing each of us a part, and we would play those parts. Everything we did would be buried in reverb, strings, Barry's big voice, and the Love Unlimited Orchestra. But the initial tracks would be these incredible guitar jams with everyone playing a rhythm part. So, for "Morning Glory," I picked up my Sadowsky and played the head fairly straight-ahead, like the tune was written. Toward the back half, the tune comes into these four or five guitars that groove with the same sound mixed together. I orchestrated it and grooved out on some rhythm. It was fun.

Your Gibson L-5 has a very special place in your heart.

I'm *so* glad I pulled that out of the fire. I've had that guitar since I was 13, when I told my dad, "I gotta get a guitar like Wes Montgomery." We'd go down to the Lighthouse, in Hermosa Beach, and hear Wes. I was so inspired by him. One night, we met this guitar player who was moving to Vegas and selling that L-5, which we bought for $600 bucks – a lot of money then. I told my dad, "This is the last guitar you'll ever have to buy for me (laughs)." That was a bit of a stretch. It's still a fantastic guitar.

You're also a Les Paul guy.

Yeah, I played my Les Paul through the Strymon Iridium; it needed a little more air to make sure it had enough orchestration room for the L-5, and I ended up miking the strings of the Les Paul. So, it's acoustic with my Les Paul playing the rhythm part. Going through Logic, it left plenty of space for the L-5 sound. I also used a guitar synth made for me by Roland.

Are you playing nylon-*and* steel-string on "Dreamcatcher?"

It's just the one nylon-string guitar, but I tuned them a little differently. What's nice about the Yamaha NCX5 is its DI and it does some shaping of the tone with the piezo pickup and a sampling of mics – some of that Line 6 technology. I dialed one of them a little brighter for one of the guitars.

Do you sympathize with guitarists who have to perform the solo to "Strawberry Letter 23?"

(laughs) I met Shuggie Otis, who wrote that guitar part. Quincy Jones heard the song and thought it would be perfect for The Brothers Johnson. Unfortunately, the guitar solo was not something George Johnson could pull off. Quincy got frustrated and told the engineer, "Call Ritenour! He'll get it done!" He said, "I'm going off to lunch. Have it done before I get back." I was told he was in a bad mood because nobody could play that guitar part. I thought, "Oh s**t! What is it!?" But I figured it out and we had it done before Quincy got back from lunch.

It must have been an amazing time, doing sessions in L.A. in the '70s.

When I was growing up in L.A., I worried about other guitar players like Larry Carlton, Mitch Holder, and Tim May. And guys like John Scofield, the rock and blues guys, the Nashville guys, and the guys in London. Now, there are incredible players, young and old, all over the world. We're all connected with the touch of a button. The quality of the music is amazing, and guitar players are bringing their styles to other parts of the world. The guitar is like a dream catcher. It's been with me since I was six years old, and now it's 60 years later. VG

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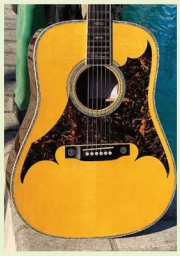
1963 Gibson J-50 a very nice all original example.

2006 Gretsch G6022CWFF White Falcon like new.

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1967 Fender Telecaster Custom all original example.

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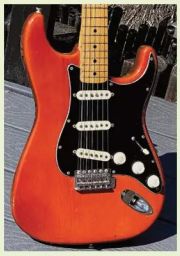
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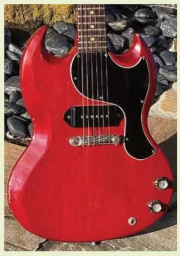
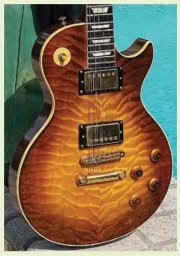
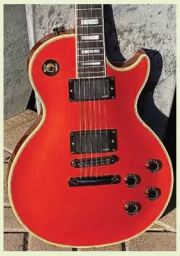

1964 Gibson SG Jr. last of the Stop Tailpieces.

1969 Gibson Les Paul Custom insane 1 owner.

1971 Gibson Les Paul Custom factory 3 pickups.

1978 Gibson Les Paul 25/50 The Best Flametop.


1980 Gibson Les Paul Heritage 80 Elite "NAMM".


1988 Gibson Les Paul Custom Ruby Red Metalic

2016 Gibson Les Paul R9 Rare Ocean Blue Top.

1994 Gibson Firebird VII 100th Ann. "Johnny Winter"

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

1967 Gibson ES-345TDCSV very original example.

1974 Gibson Johnny Smith 2 all original & Minty.

1969 Gibson L-5CES 1-off see-thru Cherry Red.

1974 Guild M-75 rare Black finish killer sounding axe!

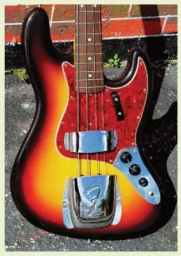
1964 Hofner President "Brunette" Thinline model.

1970 Hofner 459TZ Violin Beatle Guitar w/full effects.

1977 Rickenbacker 320 "Solid" no F-hole like Lennon.

1955 Fender Precision Bass best Blonde in the world!

1972 Fender Precision Bass 1-off factory "Lefty".


1965 Fender Jazz Bass Sunburst last unbound neck.

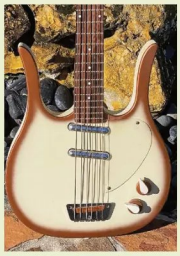
1965 Fender Jazz Bass See-Thru Blonde & Pre-CBS.

1965 Fender Jazz Bass Sunburst late unbound neck.

1980 B.C.Rich Mockingbird Bass rare in Sunburst.

1969 Rickenbacker 4001 Bass rare Mono electronics.

1972 Rickenbacker 4001 Bass Crushed Pearl inlay.


1959 Danelectro Longhorn 4623 6-string Bass.

1963 Mosrite Bass early Set Neck Bound Body.

1964 Hofner 5147 President Bass killer player.

1967 Vox Apollo V271 Mk.IV Bass Minty w/candy.

1975 Carl Thompson 4-string Fretless Bass.

1980 Alembic Series II SSB Bass $32K. list.

2011 Pete Hilton 4-string Bass 6 lbs. 13 oz.

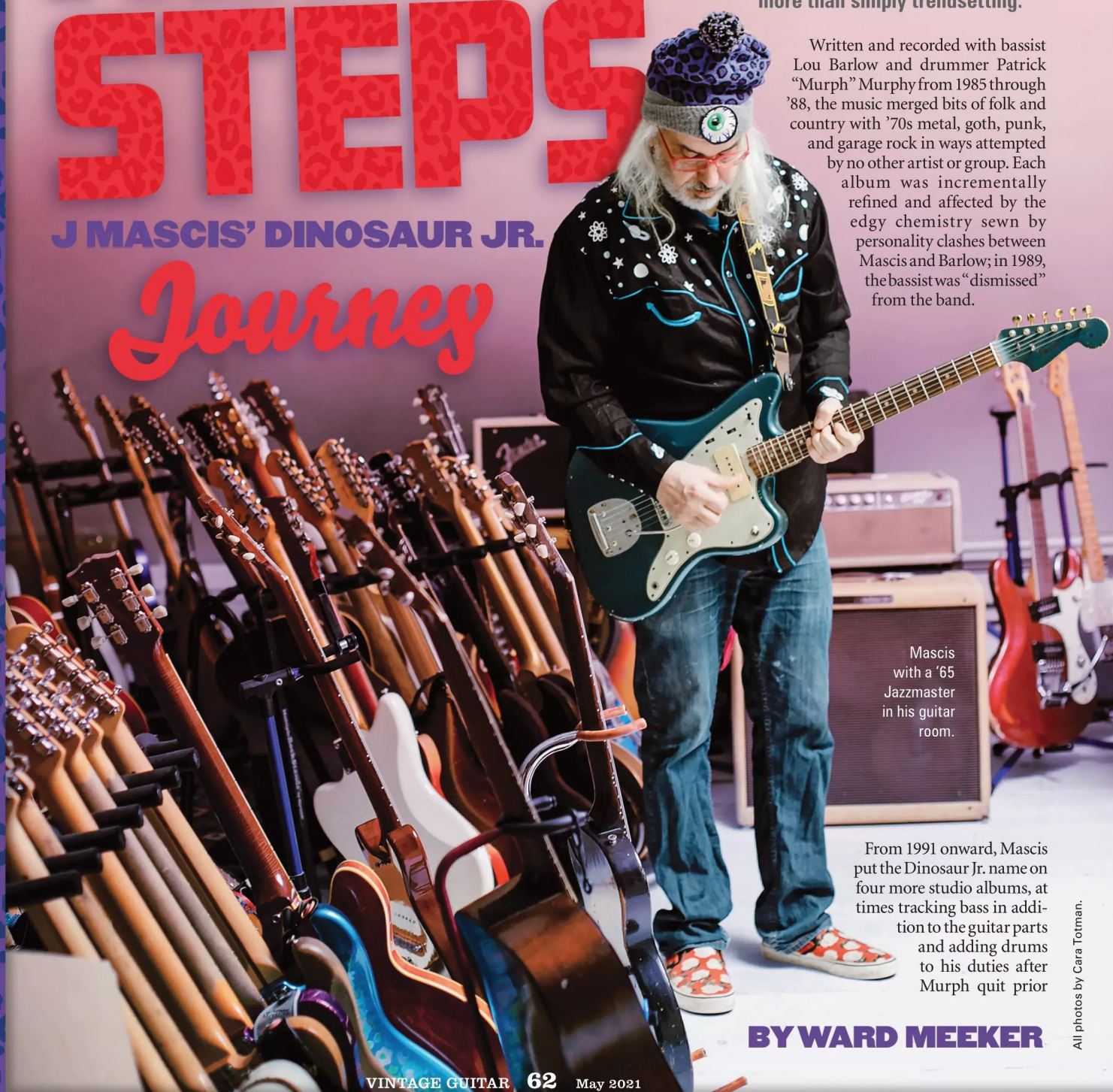
2012 Warrior Dran Michael 6-String Bass Spalted!

HEAVY STEPS

J MASCIS' DINOSAUR JR.

Journey

Fans recognize the first three albums by Dinosaur Jr. – *Dinosaur*, *You're Living All Over Me*, and *Bug* – as alternative-rock touchstones. Propelled by J Mascis' dynamic, alternating clean/distorted guitar sounds, their art was more than simply trendsetting.



Written and recorded with bassist Lou Barlow and drummer Patrick "Murph" Murphy from 1985 through '88, the music merged bits of folk and country with '70s metal, goth, punk, and garage rock in ways attempted by no other artist or group. Each album was incrementally refined and affected by the edgy chemistry sewn by personality clashes between Mascis and Barlow; in 1989, the bassist was "dismissed" from the band.

Mascis with a '65 Jazzmaster in his guitar room.

From 1991 onward, Mascis put the Dinosaur Jr. name on four more studio albums, at times tracking bass in addition to the guitar parts and adding drums to his duties after Murph quit prior

BY WARD MEEKER

All photos by Cara Totman.

to the recording of 1994's *Without a Sound*. In the gaps between latter-day "Dino" albums, he was a side-hustler, working with cohorts to make music as J and Friends, J Mascis + The Fog, Witch, Sweet Apple, Heavy Blanket, and Unknown Instructors. On solo work, he accompanied himself with truly deft playing, typically on acoustic guitar, often with dubbed electric leads. In 2005, he reunited with Barlow and Murphy.

The youngest of four kids in their family, Mascis gravitated to siblings' record collections, keying on the Beach Boys' *15 Big Ones* and *Endless Summer*, followed by Deep Purple, Aerosmith, Rolling Stones, and finally, punk. His first run at an instrument came in grade school.

"I tried to play guitar in our fifth-grade talent show," he said. "I had a band and we played the first song I ever wrote (laughs)! It was 'Barbara Ann' but with different lyrics... about Jimmy Carter."

Despite the turn onstage, guitar didn't stick. Two years later, though, came his first whack at a drum kit.

"I really liked pounding on the drums; I got *obsessed* with it. I think it was a primal urge," he said. "I practiced a lot, took lessons, and even played in the school band."

His first garage-band experience came in high school, hammering the kit in a hardcore punk group. When it flamed out, Mascis shifted course.

Mascis' '58 Telecaster, refinished in blue metalflake back in 1995, has been his lead-recording studio dog since being acquired in the early '90s. His '55 Esquire was refinished in the mid '90s. This '59 Strat is Mascis' largest vintage investment. A refin, it had replacement tuners and frets when he bought it; its gold hardware is original. A '56 Gretsch 6120.

"I wanted to write songs and decided I might as well play guitar because I didn't really like the style of any of the guitarists in town," he said. "So, I figured I'd show someone else how to play drums."

Thus went the first steps toward Dinosaur Jr. Like many groups, they were creating

Mascis is fond of Les Paul Juniors and his collection includes (left) this Cherry Red '59 double-cut, '61 SG Junior, and '59 double-cut. On the right are a '57 TV Junior and a '55 single-cut.

new music and planning a tour when the pandemic applied the clamps. With a bit of help, though, Mascis pushed a new album, *Sweep It Into Space,* to completion and oversaw the release of *Fed Up and Feeling Strange (Live And In Person 1993-1998)*, derived from solo acoustic gigs played back in the day.

The alt-rock guitar legend recently sat to discuss the classic guitars and amps that have helped shape his music for three decades.

What kind of music did you want to make when you first formed a band?

Initially, I had a concept of being really loud country – like *ear-bleeding.* I thought, "No one has done that." Then I tried to mix all the things I was listening to at the time – Nick Cave's old band, Birthday Party, The Stooges, the Wipers, Jesus and Mary Chain. I was mixing all these influences. It was really noisy, but with pop-y songs.

You couldn't find a local guitarist who shared your vision?

No, they were too technical and none were doing the kind of music I wanted to make. They were all trying to sound like Jeff Beck, and that just wasn't my interest.

So you had to buy a guitar?

Yeah, I painted the house next door and made enough money to buy a sunburst '65 Jazzmaster that had big Grover tuners on it, which I liked because I'd seen them on the cover of *Frampton Comes Alive.* That was the selling point. The neck was really worn, which I liked. I wanted a Strat, but when I went to the store – Slimy Bob's Guitar Rip-Off – they were asking $450 for a used one, and I didn't have enough. But they had a Jazzmaster for $300 and a Jaguar for $200, and I liked the way the Jaguar looked, but the Jazzmaster felt better.

You've said guitar felt "wimpy" when you first started seriously playing it.

Yeah, after playing drums, it felt that way. That's why I tried to go for volume, to get more impact out of it.

That was key to your sound, which has always employed a solid dose of effects.

Effects gave the guitar dynamics, which made it a more-satisfying experience, like playing drums. I could play quiet, then bash. It was more expressive.

Which pedals were you using early on?

First, I got an Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Big Muff, and shortly after a wah and an Electric Mistress at a flea market. I think I might've got a Tube Screamer, too, but I got rid of it because it wasn't extreme enough.

Which amps were you using at the time?

I had an Ampeg V4 first, and it blew up three

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times the first month (laughs). I took it back to the store and got a 100-watt Yamaha solid state head just because I'd seen Hüsker Dü using one. I thought, "If it's good enough for Hüsker Dü..." But it didn't sound very good; I didn't know much about guitar stuff.

At our first show, the best guitar player in town told me, "Your guitar sounds like s**t. You got to do something about that amp." He had a Les Paul and a Marshall, but I didn't have any money, so I had to stick with the Yamaha. That's when I started wearing earplugs, because it was so painful with the fuzz.

Eventually, I got an Acoustic 60-watt head that was like a Mesa-Boogie copy. It wasn't very trebly, but had a very nice sound. I think it had two 6L6GTs.

What set you down the path to amassing the guitars you have now?

Just wanting to get all the different sounds I heard from other players, different sounds to record with. I was trying to cover all the bases.

Since you chose that first Jazzmaster based on how it felt, is it safe to say you've never bought a guitar based on looks or originality?

I was definitely more interested in refins because I was looking for a sound and needed to *play* them more than collect them. When I buy a guitar, I always think there might be a couple of songs in it, which makes it worthwhile to buy. New guitars don't have that, for me, so I never really looked at them.

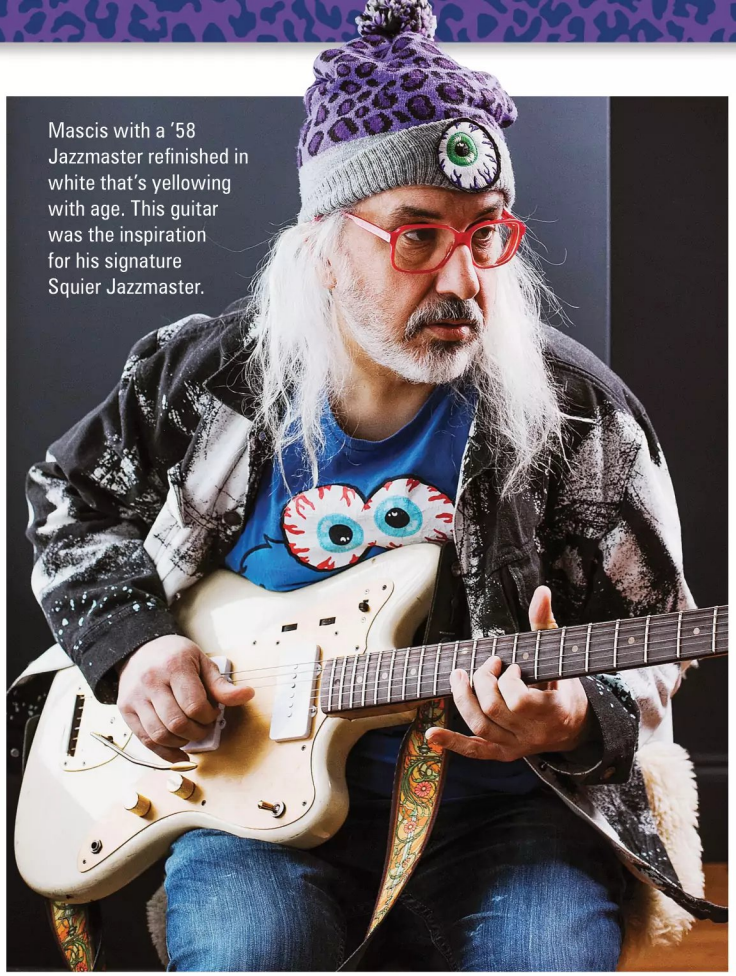
Did you experiment with guitars from one album to the next?

A little bit. In 1990, I got a '58 Tele top-loader, and ever since I've played almost every lead on that, on every album. I like what I play on it. Some guitars I get stuck in a rut with, but with that one I seem to play more stuff I like. For rhythm, I usually use a P-90 guitar through a tweed amp. My basic sound on a lot of the albums is a Les Paul Junior for rhythm and a Tele for lead.

How many Juniors do you have?

Five – two single-cuts, a double-cut, a three-quarter double-cut, and the '61 SG Junior, which the best-sounding one – the nastiest – but it's hard to keep in tune because it's so light and there's not much holding it together.

How did you find most of your guitars?



Mascis with a '58 Jazzmaster refinished in white that's yellowing with age. This guitar was the inspiration for his signature Squier Jazzmaster.

On tour, I used to go to all the guitar stores in different towns. I remember buying the first Junior – the SG Junior – for $450 in a pawn shop in Columbus, Ohio, in the early '90s. I bought it because I really liked the sound of a Junior that I'd played at Fort Apache studios. An engineer there, Sean Slade, had the '61 SG Junior I used there, and he had a TV Junior, but wasn't as keen to let me use that one. I bought my '58 Tele from the owner, Joe Harvard. They had a lot of cool guitars, and I developed a lot of my tastes from their guitars.

I remember getting a Les Paul in 1990 – a '52, for $1,000. The store had a reissue that was $1,600, and I couldn't figure out why. The '52 was refinished and somebody had made a different bridge for it. It had the original tailpiece, and I ended up putting a Bigsby on it to make it more Neil-Young-esque.

I have a lot of vintage guitars and amps. They pile up after a while.

How many guitars do you have?

I haven't counted, so I'm not sure, but definitely over 50; somewhere between 50 and 100.

Has it been a slow and steady build, or was there a time when you went a little crazy?

Yeah, both. They seem to come in waves. I've bought three or four guitars in week, then not for a year. In the early '90s, when I was getting some money and wanted to find all these sounds, there was a lot of, "I need a 330 and a tweed Twin... and another Junior."

Do you ever sell any?

Not often, but I have sold some. I'm not good at selling; I usually buy high and sell low. I wouldn't be a good shop owner (laughs).

Having bought so many in the early '90s, you're probably money ahead since values didn't go crazy until the mid/late '90s and early 2000s.

Yeah, and I always buy refinished and recovered stuff. I don't have anything too crazy-collectible; the most I ever spent was $6,800 for a '59 Strat with a maple neck. I think I had money from a royalty check I wasn't expecting. I'd been looking for awhile but they seemed to always be over 10 grand, and I didn't want to spend that much. But mine isn't original finish and it had new tuners and frets. I think it might have been a Mary Kaye because it had the original gold hardware.

Who were the guitarists you listened to most as you progressed as a player?

When I started, I liked Keith Richards and Mick Taylor, then Ron Asheton from the Stooges and Greg Sage from the Wipers. Through those four I was trying to create my own style. And then people would tell me about different players. I never liked Kiss until I started playing guitar; I thought they were kinda dopey or something, but a guitar player friend was like, "No, you *have to* listen to Ace." So, I did and I really got into Ace's playing. I liked some of the guitarists in punk bands – the guys who would actually play leads, like Bones (Anthony Roberts), from Discharge, and Fast Eddie Clarke, from Motörhead. I always played lead when I picked up guitar. I was never really into chords until I tried to write songs. I'd try to play leads along with records. Barre chords seemed difficult when I first started – holding all the strings down at once. So, I played a lot more open chords. But I was just more interested in playing lead.

What motivates you to create new music?

Wanting to make an album, I guess, as an

This '58 Jazzmaster with anodized pickguard and gold hardware was refinished before Mascis bought it in 1995. Other Jazzmasters in his collection include these from '59, '62, and '65 in well-aged Lake Placid Blue.

excuse to keep touring and have new songs to play, more than anything.

Which guitars do we hear most on *Sweep It Into Space*?

It's the Tele on most of the leads, and a TV Junior I played a bit. There's also a St. Vincent guitar I got from Ernie Ball. I use a lot of capo and if I end up on the ninth fret, a lot of guitars won't play in tune, but the Ernie Ball handles that pretty well. Plus, it has three mini-humbuckers, which I'd never played and I did end up liking that sound.

I used a '72 Les Paul Deluxe with mini-humbuckers a bit, too. I was in a Thin Lizzy phase when I decided to get the Deluxe. It has the embossed pickups. I just got that from Black Book Guitars, in Portland. I was in there on tour when I first played it, and then bought it once I got home.

Did that Thin Lizzy binge influence any of the new songs?

I don't know if it comes across, but there were a few times; "I Ran Away" has a few things where I tried a guitar harmony thing. It's not blatant.

Do you often go on listening benders?

That happens all the time. I'm always going through phases where I listen to something a lot.

Which amps do we hear most on the album?

I stuck with the '59 Vox AC15 I've used a lot for leads, and a tweed Bandmaster a lot for rhythm. That was my first tweed amp and I've used it a lot since I got it in '91. I used to take it out on tour, but it's not very loud for live, especially if I have a whole pile of amps.

I remember seeing Stevie Ray Vaughan when I was a kid and he had, like, 20 amps onstage and a big plexiglass shield in front,

which I didn't understand. For the encore, he knocked over the shield and you could finally hear all the amps, and I was like, "Why didn't he do that at the beginning?"

Are there a few tracks on *Sweep It* that have become your favorites?

I like all of them, but on most albums my favorite is the first song. I'm excited to play "I Ain't"; I'm trying to figure out which guitar to play it but I haven't had a chance set up all my stuff with the guys. I have a few in mind to try – a Phantom Vox copy that I put a Tele neck on and a Mastery vibrato. That's my favorite shape, and with the Tele neck it plays pretty cool. I'm hoping it works for that song. I also really like the next one, "I Met the Stones," which is pretty rockin' and should be fun to play.

Did you plan to have your friend Kurt Vile play on more than just "I Ran Away"?

Yeah, he was definitely going to come back, until the pandemic forced us to change plans. To finish the album, I had to figure out how to engineer, which I'm not too good at. That was interesting, but it ended up okay. I have Pro Tools, but I usually mix on half-inch tape, just to have it exist in reality. I didn't do that this time because it wasn't mixed at my house, but maybe I'll put it on tape just to have it.

Are you planning a tour?

Mascis paid $1,000 for this '52 Les Paul in the early '90s. Already refinished, it had a funky replacement bridge that he ditched while installing the Bigsby. This '57 Les Paul TV Junior can be heard on the new Dinosaur Jr album, *Sweep It Into Space*. A refin '52 ES-295 and '63 ES-330TD.

Yeah, we have lots of *planned* shows from this spring through next summer, but will we be able to do them?

Do you still dig touring?

Yeah, I like it more now than I used to. In my 20s I was kind of down on it, for some reason. But as I got older, I got more into it and learned to appreciate it more. VG

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1959 (left) and '60 Les Paul Juniors in factory black finish.

BEAUTIES in BLACK

TWO RARE GIBSON LES PAUL JUNIORS

Guitar dealers tell guitar stories much like anglers tell fish stories. There are those they "got" and those that got away, and either can render reactions ranging from a sigh to a gasp to a hearty belly laugh – often at the dealer's expense. This is the story of a got – or two.

BY WARD MEEKER PHOTOS BY SUZI GORMAN

In the summer of 2010, Dave Hinson, proprietor of Killer Vintage, St. Louis, took a phone call from a local customer who had spotted an ad online describing a "Black Les Paul Junior" for sale in a town about 150 miles away. Like any dealer worth his salt, Hinson snapped to attention, jumped online to pull up the ad, then made a call.

Backs of the '59 (left) and '60.

"The guy told me he got the guitar in the mid '90s from his uncle, who is a retired state patrolman," Hinson recalled. "All he really knew was that his uncle had acquired it in the '70s from a band in Arkansas."

Plans were made for the men to meet halfway to give Hinson a look-see.

"I knew at first glance it was real," he said. "It had a perfect neck-set and no changes or repairs. It *does* look as if it had been knocked around more than played, but I paid his asking price and told him, straight up, that it was worth more. But he wasn't a player and said he needed the money."

Made in late 1959, the guitar bears serial number 9 32517. And while Gibson certainly produced its share of black instruments, ranging from mandolins to the original Les Paul Custom (in the color preferred by the man himself, Les Paul) to the Everly Brothers Flattop, for Hinson *and* every other dealer and expert with whom he shared pictures, this was a first.

"In 40-plus years of digging up and dealing guitars, I had never seen a black Junior," he said. "And when I showed it to several dealers and experts, such as Kurt Linhof, Dave Belzer, Dave Crocker, and a few more, they agreed it was real and none had ever seen one before. It was a reaction like 'I'll be damned!' Just slightly more subdued than 'Holy s***!' You get the idea... Basically, '*Wow!*'

"It's from the period when the Epiphone Coronet was given a slab body, and most of those were black with white pickguards," he said, recalling his rationale. "So it may have been a special order – or a screw-up – who knows? But, since Gibson did Coronets in black, it made sense there would be more Juniors. I had also heard rumors of a store somewhere that ordered a lot of black Gibson guitars. I have no evidence of that, but it's part of the folklore."

After the score, Hinson went about his business, proud new owner of a funky guitar he figured would hang as a unique piece in his permanent collection alongside other prizes like a 1960 Gibson ES-335, a natural-finish '66 Epiphone Sheraton, '60 Tele Custom, '64 Epi Crestwood Deluxe with white finish, '52 Fender Esquire, several other Les Paul Juniors, a '60 Les Paul TV Special, 1940 D'Angelico Style A, and a '66 Fender Jazz Bass in Olympic White with matching headstock, to name just a few. "I only keep guitars I can use on gigs," he said of his stuff. "None are museum pieces, but all are great players"

Just more than a year later, another guitar came calling.

"A few months after I had shown him pictures of the '59, my friend Ken Daniels, at Truetone Music, called to tell me he had found a 1960 Junior with black finish, and he thought I should have it."

The '60 is "very clean, with minimal signs

The white-on-black scheme was introduced on the slab-bodied 1959 Epiphone Coronet (left). This one has non-original Volume and Tone knobs.

Epiphone Coronet photo courtesy of Albert Molinaro.

of use," Hinson said. "It's also late-year production, so like the '59, it has the extra digit in its serial number – 0 12051." And though its finish is in markedly better shape, it has a minor headstock crack that was professionally repaired long ago, with no touch-up paint. "Even with the repair, I knew I *had* to have it," Hinson said.

Neither guitar shows any sign of being oversprayed or ever having a different finish. "They were likely just custom-orders," Hinson theorized. "It *does* take a minute to get used to looking at black with a tortoiseshell pickguard – it just seems odd at first. But it does *not* take all that long to come to the conclusion that they're just *extremely* cool!"

VG contributor and former Gibson historian Walter Carter sees no reason to doubt the guitars' authenticity.

"Anyone who has ever dug into the company's production practices knows that you never say 'never' when it comes to Gibson," he said. "The archives show all kinds of oddities, from an electric mandocello to double-pickguard flat-tops. Unfortunately, the daily shipping logs from mid 1958 through 1960 are missing, so these guitars aren't documented in Gibson's archives.

"In addition to the possibility of a custom order, you always have to keep in mind that Gibson was a company trying to make a profit, and the fewer guitars they had to throw away, the more profit they would make," he added. "A black finish can cover a variety of mistakes or blemished wood. It's not at all surprising that a black Junior – or even two of them – would be discovered. If anything, I'm surprised more haven't turned up."

Why Gibson didn't offer black as an option on the Junior is a mystery likely to go unsolved. But the company's Custom Shop has expressed interest in creating a black-finish Junior "reissue" using these two as models.

Today, Hinson says, both guitars are "...resting carefully, ready to be unleashed on any tube amp, with pent-up vengeance for all those years they didn't get played!

"I hope there are more out there," he said. "I've been telling people to start digging through their closets... But maybe I shouldn't!"

In late 2016, Gibson re-created the 1959 Junior as part of its Collectors Choice series.

"It turned out to be the darling of the '17 Winter NAMM show," Hinson noted. "They'd planned to make 300 of them, but the project was derailed by Gibson's bankruptcy and only 75 to 80 were made. It's frighteningly accurate and came very close to the exact tone feel and look of the original."

This feature originally appeared in the February '12 issue.

jimmy wallace
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The Indiana Guitar Show, April 10 & 11, at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E Main St, Danville, Indiana. For more info visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com

NY Guitar Show, April 17 -18, **Cancelled**. at the Freeport Recreation Center, 130 E Merrick Rd. Freeport, NY 11520. Hours 10am-5pm. Contact Rich Johnson at 516-435-8382 or rich@thefishingline.com

Nashville Guitar Swap Meet, April 18, at 3204 Gallatin Pike, Nashville, TN 37216. Hours 10am to 4pm. Contact Randy Cooper at 731-298-9239 or playerguitars@yahoo.com

Dallas International Guitar Festival, April 30 through May 2, at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX, For more info visit www.guitarshow.com. **(See Advertisement on page 75.)**

MAY

Jakes Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, May 1-2 at Jakes Flea Market 1380 Rt 100 Barto, PA 19504. Hours 8-1. Masks required. Contact Justin Treichler at 484-256-6515 or jakesfleamarket.com

Eastern Kentucky Guitar Show, May 2, Boyd County Community Center, 15605 KY-180 Catlettsburg, KY. Hours 11-5. Contact Jeff Preston at prestonffh@aol.com or text 606-923-4130. **(See Advertisement on page 74.)**

Northeast Guitar Expo, May 23 – postponed from April 25 at the Verve Hotel and Convention Center, 1360 Worcester St., Natick, MA. Hours 11-4. For more info call Peter Occhineri (860) 983-6774, email - NortheastGuitarExpo@gmail.com, website - www.NortheastGuitarExpo.com

JUNE

Tacoma Guitar & Drum Festival, June 26-27, postponed from April 17-18, at the Tacoma Dome; 2727 E D St, Tacoma, WA. For more info contact Bruce at (253) 445-1973, bruce@adolphagency.com or visit www.tacomaguitarfestival.com.

AUGUST

Carolina Guitar Show, August 14-15, WNC Ag Center, I-26, Exit 40, 1301 Fanning Bridge Rd., Fletcher/Ashville, NC 28732. For more info: Bee 3 Vintage at 828-298-2197. www.bee3vintage.com

Amigo, SoCAL Guitar Show, August 21-22, OC Fair & Event Center, Costa Mesa, CA. Contingent on state covid guidelines. For more info Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

SEPTEMBER

Seattle-Tacoma Guitar Show, Sunday September 19th at the Kent Commons, Kent, WA. For more info contact Bruce (253) 445-1973, bruce@adolphagency.com or visit www.seatacguitarshow.com.

OCTOBER

Guitarlington 2021, October 16 & 17 at the Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington TX. For more info contact Ruth Brinkmann (817) 312-7659 ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com , Larry Briggs (918) 288-2222 larryb@stringswest.com, Dave Crocker (417) 850-4751 davelcrocker@gmail.com, Fax (817) 473-1089 www.texasguitarshows.com. Co-sponsored by Vintage Guitar

NOVEMBER

Rockford Guitar & Drum Show, November 6, 2021. Tabala Event Center 7910 Newburg Rd Rockford IL 61108. Hours 10am-3pm. $5 at the door. Contact Chip Messiner at 815-877-9678 or www.rockfordguitarshow.com

2022

JANUARY

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, January 28-30, at the Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL. Public 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

If you have information regarding upcoming guitar shows or events, visit http://www.vintageguitar.com/guitar-show-submission or e-mail james@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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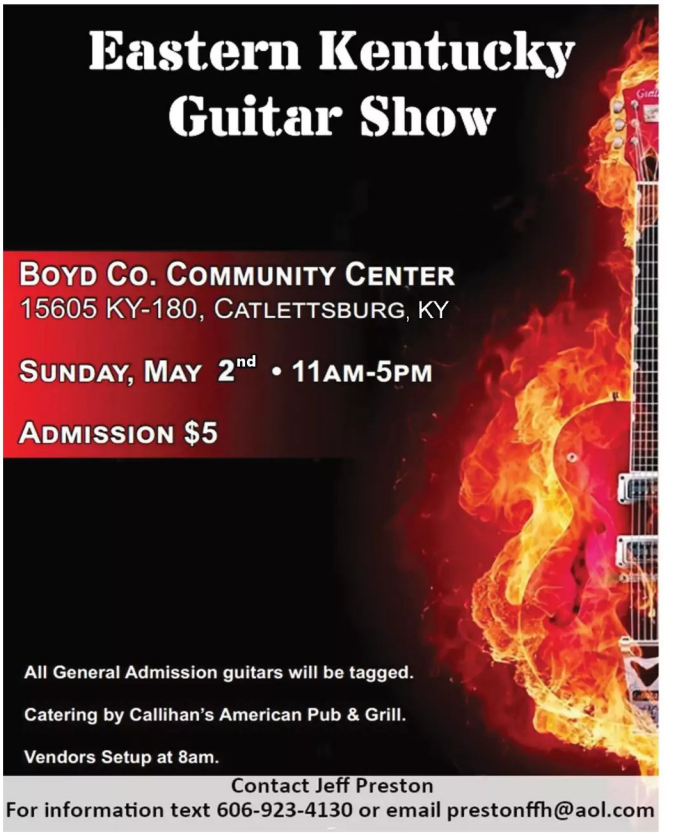

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THE MARCH FORWARD

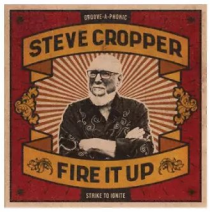
Jake Kiszka

Surviving the slings and arrows of Led Zeppelin comparisons, a world tour, and Grammy win, Greta Van Fleet's second LP delivers some of the most-beloved tropes from '70s rock. Bassist Sam Kiszka, guitarist Jake Kiszka, vocalist Josh Kiszka, and drummer Danny Wagner (along with producer Greg Kurstin) shine a light on just how much popular rock has changed and regressed.

Greta Van Fleet
The Battle at Garden's Gate

Melding psychedelia, orchestra, and Zep-style musical flourishes, GVF cannot escape its source material. Jubilant chord voicings jangle and crash sweetly against Josh's stratospheric wailing and Kurstin's warm production. It's a banquet of dreamy epic rock, pretentious touchy-feely lyrics, and '70s-era Rush – *all* a good thing. Jake offers bombastic perfection as his multi-tracked guitars blend with piano, cello, organ, and vocal layers. "Age of Machine" and "Stardust Chords" echo the sounds of late-night, marijuana-drenched deep cuts. Jake is a student of the epic blues-rock guitar solo and handles his business like a boss.

The Battle at Garden's Gate is a philosophical think piece on love, materialism, and modernity that finds the young ensemble evolving with confidence. ***– Oscar Jordan***



Steve Cropper
Fire It Up

Steve Cropper is an unlikely guitar hero. He swears he's *just* a rhythm player, purely in service to the groove. But oh, what rhythm and oh, what grooves. So, when Cropper releases a new solo album – what he's calling his first proper solo album since 1969 – it's time to listen up.

And it's time well-spent, as *Fire It Up* is packed with guitar – layers of Cropper, playing rhythm riffs, groovy grooves, and yes, solos. It's a whole lot of a good thing.

Just as you would hope, the music is a step back in time to Stax days, along with some rocking tunes that might have been more at home with crosstown Memphis rival Sun Records and some funk that sounds very Hi Records. Cropper is aided by drummer Nioshi Jackson, vocalist Roger C. Reale, and Jon Tiven on bass, sax, harmonica, and keys. It's a tight little group that knows its business.

The title track is bouncing R&B buoyed by Cropper's six-string riffs. "Far Away" and "She's So Fine" are sweet soul, while "Bush Hog" rides the funk. All pay homage to the classics – which, by the way, Steve Cropper helped create. ***– Michael Dregni***

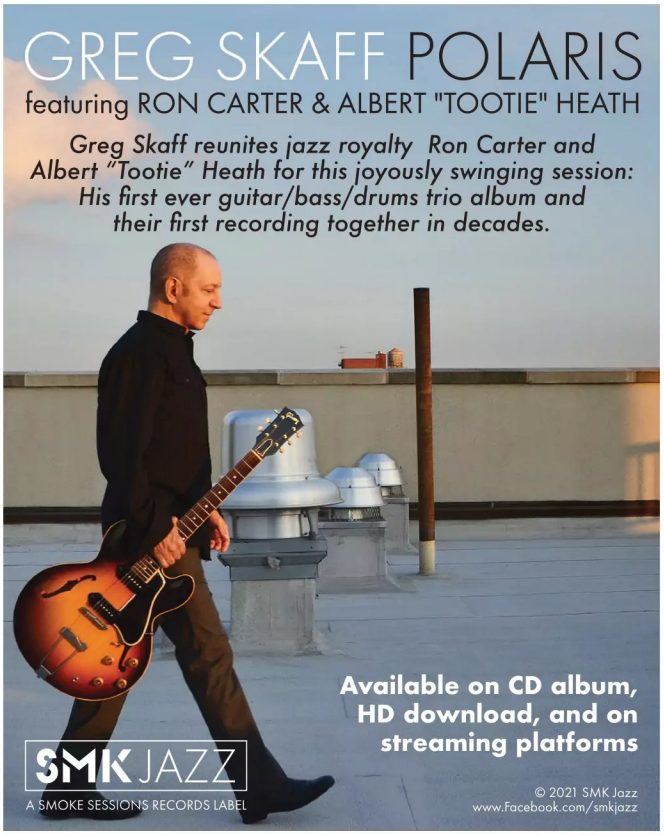
Joyann Parker
Out of the Dark

Joyann Parker is a powerhouse vocalist and relative newcomer to the national blues scene, first gaining recognition beyond her Twin Cities base courtesy of a well-received 2018 release, *Hard to Love*.

Its follow-up features an expanded array of sounds and styles in a pursuit enabled by guitarist/co-writer/co-producer Mark Lamoine, whose ES-335 can be heard on nine of the album's 11 tracks.

Lamoine's chops are evident throughout, but this is no jam-band outing. Instead, he opts for strategic fills and sympathetic lines that complement Parker's voice. The approach is evident on the simmering opener "Gone So Long," which features gritty, evocative lines from a modern Tricone Style 1; the acoustic-tinged ballad "Either Way" (with Lamoine on a D-28); the Latin vibe of "Predator"; and the slow, soulful title track, with Parker's yearning, wailing vocal lines paired with Lamoine's White Falcon.

DUDLEY TAFT
Cosmic Radio
DUDLEY TAFT Cosmic Radio
"Taft's rhythm section is tighter than a hound fed tick, and his vocals and greasy, searing guitar cut through the tracks like a razor through marshmallow fluff." - American Blues Scene
"It's far beyond just distorting the guitar sounds over the standard blues framework. It's a real new rhythm and harmony approach." - Blues Rock Review
"If you are curious about how Hendrix might have sounded if he'd stayed around long enough to jam with Kurt Cobain, check this one out." - Blues Matters, UK
"Once again, Taft has risked a balancing act between catchiness and hard-as-nails blues music, and once again he has succeeded." - Metalglory
"55 minutes of pure rock 'n' blues pleasure." - Sound Guardian, Croatia
"...the kind of thing that can burn out the speakers if you go too loud." - Blues Again, France
www.dudleytaft.com


GREG SKAFF POLARIS
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Parker, a multi-instrumentalist who's no slouch with a guitar, also gets into the act, cutting loose on the straightforward pop-rock of "Carry On." It's a song of positivity and hope that, like the other tunes on this album, is tailor-made for pandemic-era listening. **– *Sean McDevitt***

Smith/Kotzen

Smith/Kotzen

This is one of those projects that gets guitar fanatics drooling. Iron Maiden cornerstone Adrian Smith and prolific American veteran Richie Kotzen join forces for a hard-rock album with a modern sound steeped in their '70s classic-rock and blues-rock influences.

The duo trades lead vocals and bass duties, and Kotzen plays drums on five of the nine tracks. The leadoff, "Taking My Chances," brings some interesting playing, even if it lacks a hook. The playing on "Running" sharpens the melodies and guitar grooves. "Scars" opens with flowing acoustic lines then transitions to warm, bluesy runs with tougher, faster parts as the intensity builds over six minutes. Threaded-together solos, soulful bends, and vibrato touches highlight "Glory Road," while the speedy rocker "Solar Fire" includes Smith's fellow Maiden trooper Nicko McBrain on drums. "I Wanna Stay" is a hazy ballad with woozy shredding and a meaty blues solo.

Smith/Kotzen does *not* sound like Iron Maiden. What would be the point? The guitar work sizzles, as we have a right to expect from accomplished players. Here's hoping a few of the songs stick in your head. **– *Bret Adams***

Jorge Garcia

Crossover

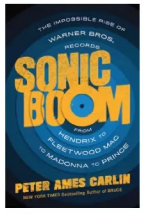
Jazz covers of FM rock can be cringe-worthy unless you do it right – and Jorge Garcia does it *right*. His take on Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze" recalls the groove of '70s releases from the CTI label, with killer guitar improv and a smokin' electric-piano solo. A jazz version of Led Zeppelin's "Black Dog"? You bet – and Garcia nails it with a cool harmonized riff, soulful tone, and funky $^{6}/_{8}$ drum pattern.

The innate swing of Jethro Tull's "Living in the Past" morphs into a George Benson vibe in Jorge's capable hands. His improvisation is rich, complex, and emotive. Yes' 1972 smash "Roundabout" was famous for its Squire/Bruford groove and here, Garcia brings out that Afro-Cuban energy with a dash of Motown in the soul-jazz pocket, á la Pat Martino, Grant Green, or Eric Gale. Also check out Nicky Orta's walking bass and wicked solos.

One surprise is a sweetly grooving version of the Beatles' "Blackbird." We've noted before how conducive Lennon/McCartney songs are to jazz, thanks to their innate harmony; here, Garcia turns the 1968 gem into effortless, Metheny-tinged fusion.

Grab *Crossover* without giving it a second thought. It's a classic-rock archtop cooker. **– *Pete Prown***

Adrian Smith and Richie Kotzen.



Peter Ames Carlin

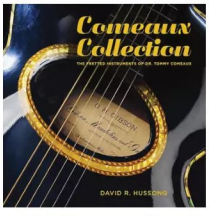
Sonic Boom: The Impossible Rise of Warner Bros. Records, from Hendrix to Fleetwood Mac to Madonna to Prince

Chances are a significant chunk of your music collection is from artists on the Warner Brothers, Reprise, Atlantic, Elektra, Asylum, and Sire labels. Innovative executives and record producers like Mo Ostin, Joe Smith, and Lenny Waronker were given incredible power and flexibility, with the belief that quality music would sell records.

Movie mogul Jack Warner started his record company in 1958 and bought Frank Sinatra's Reprise Records in '63. Both men despised rock and roll, and initially forbade signing rock artists. They couldn't accept the changing culture, but ultimately relented.

Mo Ostin signed the Jimi Hendrix Experience when Atlantic's Jerry Wexler passed and called Hendrix a "lower-case B.B. King." Baffled executives heard *Are You Experienced?* at a budget meeting and hated it. Ostin's boys loved it and thought their friends would, too. Yet another executive called Ostin to complain about Eric Clapton, saying his advance payments were too big for what his albums had been selling, therefore, they shouldn't release *Unplugged*. Ostin triumphed.

Carlin's book includes statistics and sales figures to illustrate Warner's gigantic success. He also recounts the gamesmanship and attempted power grabs that a huge corporation weathering the music business' ups and downs generated. A fascinating look into a bygone era and business model. **– *BA***



David R. Hussong

Comeaux Collection: The Fretted Instruments of Dr. Tommy Comeaux

Dr. Tommy Comeaux was a musician in

Smith and Kotzen.: John McMurtrie.

extra EXTRA

MIKE SCOTT
Collecting Things

L.A. jazzer Scott plays plectrum archtop and fingerstyle classical, melding both here. "Sol Minor Prelude" is flat-out gorgeous nylon-string while "Boom Diddle It" is modernized West Coast swing – Mike demonstrates elegant fluidity in his improv. "On a Clear Day" shows the kind of understatement that made a legend of Jim Hall. Mike Scott plays simply exquisite jazz guitar. – ***PP***

SAGA
Symmetry

Canadian smart-rockers Saga forge ahead with titillating melodies, imaginative lyrics, and the underrated virtuoso-guitar stylings of Ian Crichton. Excellent musicianship and writing support new tunes and reimagined classics. "Tired World," "Wind Him Up," and "No Regrets" get the pastoral treatment. Crichton shreds with brilliance, as violin and keys offer rural ambiance to compositions that breathe. – ***OJ***

PATRICE VEILLON AND ARNAUD LEGRAND
Histoire des luthiers Jacques & Jean-Pierre Favino

Based in Paris, Jacques Favino and his son, Jean-Pierre, built perhaps the best and most highly prized modern Gypsy jazz guitars, keeping alive the legacy of Django Reinhardt's Selmer-Maccaferri. This glorious French book tells the Favino story and elucidates the various models with lovely photography and design. And along the way, it highlights the guitars' champions, including Matelo Ferret, Tchan Tchou, Moréno, and more. – ***MD***

CRACK THE SKY
Tribes

The cult favorite's 18th studio album is deeply textured, its lyrics addressing America's political strife. Rick Witkowski, Bobby Hird, and John Palumbo weave a multitude of varied guitar parts. "Tribes" blends guitar splashes, while the dramatic "Another Civil War" incorporates banjo and mandolin. The epic "Quick" rocks with resonant guitar solos, and "Boom Boom" quakes on a slow hard-rock riff. – ***BA***

APOCALYPSE BLUES REVIVAL
Apocalypse Blues Revival

A heavy psychedelic band with gothic overtones, ABR is a nod to doom metal, Pink Floyd, and the Doors with snatches of traditional blues. Guitarist Tony Rombola blazes while embracing the sonic architecture of a bad acid trip. It's a rock musician's take on the blues, with predictable results. – ***OJ***

KHRUANGBIN
Mordechai

From Thai to Iranian rock, soul, dub, and psychedelia, Houston's Khruangbin is wonderfully eclectic, fusing international sounds and influences. This third LP features further otherworldly musical explorations by guitarist Mark Speer, bassist Laura Lee, and drummer Donald "DJ" Johnson. This is the band's masterpiece, *so far*. Speer and company have enviably big ears and a rare musical ability to pull it all together. – ***MD***

MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP
Immortals

Michael Schenker leans into a 50-year career with 10 mighty tracks. An army of music veterans assists on a bevy of hard-rock styles with Schenker's gift for melody and tone intact. Highlights include the Dio-esque "Sail The Darkness," the superb riffing on "Come On Over," and the exquisite "In Search Of the Peace Of Mind." – ***OJ***

SOFT WORKS
Abracadabra in Osaka

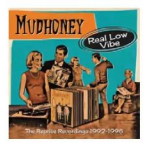
Soft Works was a reunited Soft Machine with Allan Holdsworth, bassist Hugh Hopper, horn/keys man Elton Dean, and drummer John Marshall. All, save Marshall, are now dead; this live set captures the short-lived lineup at a 2003 Japan gig. The music features spirited improvisation; hear Holdsworth in prime form with glassy chords and fingerboard-warping solos in "Seven Formerly." Riveting jazz-fusion. – ***PP***

DAVE KELLER
You Get What You Give

On his latest album, soul/blues singer and guitarist Dave Keller gets by with a little help from his friends. Across 13 duets (including performances with Trudy Lynn and Joe Louis Walker), the Strat slinger mines the sounds of the South that inspired him. It's music with a mission, and proceeds from album sales go to the fight for racial justice. – ***SM***

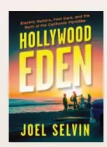
DALE ANN BRADLEY
Things She Couldn't Get Over

Widely admired for her fervent, no-frills vocals, Kentucky native Bradley tackles songs old and new with traditional guitar/banjo/fiddle/mandolin/Dobro bluegrass accompaniment. Here, she leaves the guitar work to Kim Fox and Jim Hurst, who lay down a solid rhythmic foundation, adding clean flatpicking passages to both "After While" and "Lost More Than I Knew," with swooping Dobro from Matt Leadbetter. – ***RK***



MUDHONEY
Real Low Vibe: The Complete Reprise Recordings 1992-1998

This four-disc box celebrates the mid-career major-label output of Seattle icons. Often overshadowed by the quartet's seminal Sub Pop releases, these gems see our heroes melding Blue Cheer, Captain Beefheart, and Black Flag. All rarities and the live disc starting the set have been previously released. Still, a worthy chapter in the story of the only grunge band that matters. – ***Dennis Pernu***



JOEL SELVIN
Hollywood Eden

This cultural history of Southern California unpacks the early days of rock and roll, its carefree lifestyle, and great musicians. It's not a guitar book, but the instrument is woven into anecdotes involving Phil Spector, Brian Wilson, and the Wrecking Crew. Look for session sagas featuring guitarists Tommy Tedesco, Billy Strange, Howard Roberts – and a kid named Glen Campbell. – ***PP***

the Cajun band BeauSoleil, as well as a vintage music "archaeologist" and instrument aficionado. Starting in the 1970s, he built an enviable collection of guitars, mandolins, and resonators – some he toured with, others he saved for their historic value.

This volume presents the instruments with photography by Jim France and smart, passionate text by *VG* contributor Dave Hussong. An homage to Comeaux is interwoven with tributes from friends including Jerry Douglas, Sonny Landreth, Michael Doucet, Eric Johnson, and Tim O'Brien.

The range of instruments is stellar; archtop guitars from the big-band era, steel-bodied Hawaiian guitars of the 1920s and '30s, Fender and Gibson solidbody electrics from the 1950s and '60s. Among the stunners are examples crafted by Orville Gibson, Lloyd Loar, John D'Angelico, and James D'Aquisto.

Full-guitar shots are all small (which is too bad), but larger photos celebrate the details. You'll see exquisite inlays on a 1902 O.H. Gibson guitar, beautifully figured wood on a range of mandolins, and glorious engraving and all-around craftsmanship on a 1990 Dobro presentation model, among many others. ***– MD***

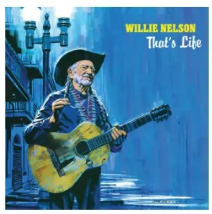
Jimmie Vaughan

Jimmie Vaughan
The Pleasure's All Mine

Vaughan's 2010 album, *Blues, Ballads and Favorites*, honored his blues, R&B, country and rock roots, followed a year later by a second volume. This reissue offers both – all 31 exuberant, raw performances, mostly covers. Backed by A-list Austin players, with Billy Pitman playing rhythm, Vaughan is everywhere, singing and firing off stinging Strat breaks wherever it feels right.

He often follows the original arrangements, as he does on Dale & Grace's Louisiana swamp-pop standard "I'm Leavin' It Up to You" (a duet with Lou Ann Barton), Bobby Charles' "Ain't Gonna Do It No More" and Guitar Junior's "Roll, Roll, Roll." On Willie Nelson's "Funny How Time Slips Away," he adds stinging figures around organist Bill Willis' excellent vocal, and doesn't let up on his explosive instrumental "Comin' and Goin'." Rosco Gordon's original "Just A Little Bit" retains the original feel, with Vaughan adding brief, lyrical statements.

Occasionally, he completely re-imagines a tune, as he does singing and picking his way through a double-time version of Billy Eckstine's "She's Got the Blues for Sale." Webb Pierce's country hit "I Ain't Never" becomes a chugging Chuck Berry romp. Ray Charles may have recorded "Greenbacks" as a vocal, but Vaughan converts it to a swinging instrumental showcase. ***– Rich Kienzle***

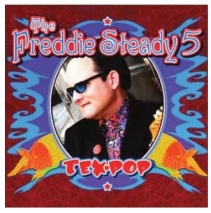


Willie Nelson
That's Life

My Way, Willie's 2018 Grammy-winning Frank Sinatra homage, clearly didn't satiate his desire to explore songs by the vocalist whose style profoundly influenced his own. With the same co-producers (Buddy Cannon and keyboardist Matt Rollings) and many of the same musicians, he interprets 11 more songs on his terms. To his credit, he avoided the original, now-iconic '50s and '60s arrangements by Nelson Riddle and others.

Nearing 88, his voice is a bit rougher but Willie's distinctive phrasing remains. He thrives in the jazzier settings, dominated by Rollings, L.A. guitarist Dean Parks, Nashville pedal-steel master Paul Franklin and, of course, Trigger. An easygoing "Nice Work if You Can Get It" features a supple, boppish Franklin break. Parks injects a solid solo into an aggressive "I've Got You Under My Skin." Trigger emerges on "You Make Me Feel So Young" and the stomping, gospel-flavored "Lonesome Road."

On "That's Life," he adheres more faithfully to Sinatra's R&B treatment (the only way to sing it), enlivened by Mickey Raphael's harmonica and Franklin. Franklin and Parks subtly accent and embellish the Latin-flavored big-band arrangement of "Luck Be a Lady," with Franklin uncorking another brief (but focused) chorus, much the way he does on "Learnin' the Blues." ***– RK***



Freddie Steady 5
Tex Pop

Austin's Freddie Krc has worn many hats – singer/songwriter, producer, drummer, label head, guitarist, harmonica hyperventilator – with Jerry Jeff Walker, Roky Erickson, Sal Valentino, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Carole King, and the many bands he's led. This reissue of a 2007 effort boasts five bonus tracks and excellent fidelity.

The 14 originals and co-writes with Explosives partner Cam King, including a Music Machine nod in "Cavestomp 2001," are teamed with covers of P.F. Sloan, Lovin' Spoonful, and Gene Clark-era Byrds tunes. The versatile King's lead guitar ranges from jangly 12-string to Latin-tinged acoustic to gnarly bends. The Sir Douglas organ cheese, courtesy Patterson Barrett, leaves no doubt where Krc's roots are, but just in case there's "(I'm an) Armadillo."

The '60s sensibilities manage to tightrope the fine line between reverence and nostalgia with integrity, never lapsing into caricature. The throwback devices color the overall sound without defining it, and

Jimmie Vaughan: Matthew Sturtevant.

Eric Clapton

Robert Cray

Marcus King

Lianne La Havas

the original material more than stands on its own.

An added treat is the custom cartoon cover art by Cyril Jordan of the Flamin' Groovies. – ***Dan Forte***

Eric Clapton
Crossroads Festival 2019

Eric Clapton's Crossroads Festival has become *the* guitar event since its inception in 1999. With a diverse cast of the greatest pickers in the world, the event is a fundraiser for Clapton's drug rehabilitation facility on the island of Antigua. This one marked the event's return after a six-year hiatus.

Available in three CDs, two LPs, two DVDs, and two Blu-rays, this collection of highlights from the 2019 festival features entertaining artistry and fret-burning excitement. Held at the American Airlines Center, in Dallas, the two-day event has been edited to four hours. Superbly shot and edited, performers include Gary Clark, Jr., Buddy Guy, Jeff Beck, the Tedeschi Trucks Band, Marcus King, and Keb' Mo', Lianne La Havas, to name a few.

While there are pacing issues and the inclusion of overplayed chestnuts, the performances are powerful, especially "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" with Clapton and Peter Frampton along with the Merle-Haggard-penned, "Tonight The Bottle Let Me Down," featuring Albert Lee, Jerry Douglas, and Vince Gill. Closing with ensemble performances of Prince's "Purple Rain" and Joe Cocker's "High Time We Went" was an inspired choice to cap this six-string event. – ***OJ***

Bob Dylan
1970

Not yet 30, Bob Dylan had already conquered the world at the beginning of the 1970s. Wisely, he plowed ahead, entering a New York studio with ringers David Bromberg, Charlie Daniels, and another world-conquering hero – George Harrison. These sessions, gathered in this three-CD boxset, later morphed into the *Self Portrait* and *New Morning* albums.

Reflecting the return-to-roots era, arrangements reveal a rural-gospel vibe and guitars aplenty. As working tracks, not every cut is finished; the disastrous Vietnam War still lingering, a minute-long snippet of Buffy Sainte-Marie's "The Universal Soldier" stings us in the heart. The cowboy swagger of "Ghost Riders in the Sky" rides atop polished bass work from Daniels years before "Devil Went Down to Georgia."

On May 1 – exactly one week before the release of the Beatles' final album, *Let It Be* – Harrison joined Dylan for a day of recording. George adds Bakersfield twang to "Mama, You've Been On My Mind," plus an unreleased "Time Passes Slowly." Bromberg's contributions shouldn't be underestimated; his Dobro on "Alberta #1" is heavenly. On August 12, Woodstock veteran Buzz Feiten played lead guitar on "If Not for You."

While *1970* isn't mandatory, it contains potent stuff. There's wondrous Dylan here. – ***PP*** **VG**

Eric Clapton , Robert Cray, Marcus King, and Lianne La Havas: Cooper Neill.

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INSTRUMENTS FOR SALE

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1943 Martin D18 $17k, 1957 J200 (nat) $11k, 1958 D18 $5.4k, 1960 ES335 $18k, 1948 D18 $7k, 2012 LP Standard AA+ top $2400, Gibson LP Traditional AA+ top $2200. rich@thefishingline.com

1931 National Style 2 round neck, all original, except neck professionally re-set. Great action. Roses engraving. Beautiful tone. original case. $16,500. USD. Buyer pays freight from Australia, any duties liable and insurance. Contact 614-0960-6185

Gibson HG-22 1932 with a FON of 206, which places this guitar as one of the first 14 fret flat tops Gibson ever made. This is the oldest registered HG as listed in Spann's guide & may have been a prototype. Tuners, truss rod cover, and nut/saddle changed. Repaired top, side, seam cracks, Recently been professionally set-up by a skilled luthier. Comes w/ vintage case. $3600. wgarstecki@wi.rr.com

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INSTRUMENTS WANTED

Looking for 80s Guild Starfire 4 with master volume . I sold a black one to Saratoga Guitars in 1998 and i would buy it back if possible. Please contact me if you might know where that is or you have one that you would like to sell. gritbox2001@yahoo.com

Vintage gibson, martin, guild & national resophonic instruments wanted in good ++ or better condition. 1920-2001. Also wanted: 1960s ampeg goldenglo reverborocket amp, in good working condition. If you know tube amps, yep that's the one! Contact: Willis at Delta Prince Music, AZ., deltaprince@cox.net

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BIRD CAN SING

The Harden Engineering BluesBird

If you're wondering about builder Bill Harden's inspiration in creating the BluesBird, think Coodercaster – a customized Frankenstein's monster of a guitar based on a pickup or two that wail.

Ry Cooder made the original Coodercasters to his own specs—vintage Strats modified with el cheapo Japanese gold-foil pickups. The looks weren't important – the tone was.

Harden is wise to all that. His BluesBird is an affordable roots and blues machine that really sings.

He starts with a paulownia double-cut body; the wood is lightweight, fine-grained, and solid. He then adds a maple neck with a beefy C shape and 14" radius, and a rosewood fretboard with medium jumbo frets measuring $1^{11}/_{16}$" at the nut. Scale is 25.5". This is a guitar made to get down to work.

Price: $850
www.hardenengineering.com

The pickups are, of course, the key. Harden uses his custom hand-wound "Esmeralda" Tele set that personifies high output. That humbucker neck pickup shoots out a solid 10k while the bridge pickup boasts ceramic magnets with an 11-12k jolt.

The tuners and bridge are from Wilkinson while the tone circuitry is Harden's own "Wide Range" tone control.

We plugged into a suitable '59 tweed Deluxe and stood back.

Simply put, it was impossible to make the BluesBird sounds less than rocking. That bridge pickup has the hard-driving charm of a P-90, offering up plenty of sting and distortion. The neck unit starts sweet and soulful, then can dial up a healthy down-and-dirty blues tone. Switch both on and you get a balanced union: they work lovingly together and don't fight each other. You can go from Buck Owens to Hubert Sumlin to, yes, Ry Cooder.

Built in Chicagoland, the BluesBird comes in an appropriate Sonic Blue with a slightly distressed finish – leaving you plenty of space to continue to wail on it. – ***Michael Dregni***

Price: $149
www.cordobaguitars.com

HAWAI'I NOT?

The Cordoba 15CFM

The ukulele phenomenon shows no signs of slowing, with models ranging from well under $100 on up to thousands. The Cordoba 15CFM is on the budget end.

The 15CFM has a 15.125" scale with flamed mahogany top and headstock veneer befitting its "Concert Flamed Mahogany" designation, along with laminated mahogany back and sides. Details include pearloid inlays, abalone rosette, and composite nut and saddle. Offered in bold colors – Jade Green, Sapphire Blue, Granite Gray, and Rose Red – it's finished with satin polyurethane. No question, it's a looker.

With Aquila synthetic gut strings and tuned A-E-C-G (low to high), the Cordoba is pleasantly loud, with a warm, clear voice. Notes pop with bell-like timbres and fretting the flat pau ferro board is fast and easy. Guitarists and bassists should have no problem adapting; the most challenging aspect will be learning your way around a new tuning. But with just four strings and a pleasing overall tone, it's an enjoyable task.

Best of all, this China-built uke has something of a no-brainer price tag. For under $150, it's a nicely constructed instrument that looks great and sounds glorious, making the 15CFM a fine starter ukulele for young folks who want to hop on the bandwagon and jam with friends, or a worthy instrument for more serious players. – ***Pete Prown***

THE WOOD ABIDES

Breedlove's Jeff Bridges

Sustainably sourced guitars – those constructed with wood harvested from managed land rather than the wilds – are often on the pricey side. Breedlove has worked with actor/musician Jeff Bridges to create his Signature Concert Copper E, a planet-friendly flat-top with a wallet-friendly price tag.

Part of Breedlove's Organic Collection, the Signature Concert Copper E has notable features for an under-$700 steel-string. Neck, back, and sides are African mahogany, while the spiffy "torrefied" top is spruce, sourced from Switzerland. This process of heating and drying the wood in a kiln purports to reveal sonic traits resembling those of an aged vintage instrument. African ebony is used for the 20-fret fingerboard, brid ge, and headstock overlay. The earthy phrase "All in This Together" is inlaid on the fingerboard (some proceeds from each sale go to the Amazon Conservation Team to help protect rainforests and traditional cultures).

The guitars are assembled in China, where they are topped off with a semigloss Copper Burst finish before being shipped to Bend, Oregon, for final inspection and setup by Breedlove technicians. Another environmentally friendly bonus is the way Breedlove details the point of origin for every part of the Concert Copper E.

Price: $699
www.breedloveguitars.com

The guitar has a scale of 25.5" and a mid-size concert-shaped body for comfort, if a traditional dreadnought is too large for your frame. For jamming and gigging, an internally mounted Breedlove Natural Sound preamp runs on two AAA batteries in a compartment by the end pin. Volume and Tone thumbwheels are tucked just inside the soundhole.

In hand, the Signature Concert Copper E is a nice-playing acou stic with a slim-profile neck for easy fretting, strumming, and fingerstyle. Acoustically, there isn't much bass dimension; if that's a requirement, you might check out a Breedlove solid-top. However, the Signature Copper E really comes to life when you plug it in. Using an acoustic amp or PA, the preamp and pickup deliver a surprisingly natural, balanced tone. Combined with the Copper E's ease-of-play and light body, the acoustic truly sparkles, making it ideal for gigs or rehearsals.

This Jeff Bridges box is a contender in its price class, delivering looks, acoustic/electric tone, and playability.

– Pete Prown

GEARIN' UP

GIBSON ORIANTHI SJ 200 CUSTOM

Gibson's Orianthi SJ 200 Custom has a neck modeled after an ES-345, pickguard with Lotus Flowers, mother-of-pearl dot inlays, figured Sitka spruce top, maple back, gold Grover tuners, distinctive Cherry nitrocellulose lacquer finish, and a custom LR Baggs with under-saddle piezo pickup and sound-hole-mounted preamp and controls.

EHX RIPPED SPEAKER FUZZ

The Electro-Harmonix Ripped Speaker fuzz has a Rip control that sets clipping levels at the top and bottom of the signal, Fuzz for effect level, and Tone for active tilt-shift EQ. The pedal is wired true-bypass and runs on batter-ies or wall power via 9-volt adapter.

DEAN MD24 FLOYD RM VINTAGE

Dean's MD24 Floyd Roasted Maple Vintage has a bass-wood body with contoured arm cut, bolt-on/C-shaped maple neck with satin finish, 12"-radius fretboard with abalone dot inlays, Floyd 1000 Series vibrato, Grover tuners, and Seymour Duncan TB5/APH-1 Zebra pickups.

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NO FRETS, NO SWEAT

Fender's Player Jazz Bass Fretless

The fretless has long been mysterious territory for bassists dazzled by the sonic achievements of Jaco Pastorius, Pino Palladino, and Tony Franklin but reluctant to compromise their intonation. The Fender Player Fretless Jazz Bass seeks to give bassists that timeless vibe without a major investment, plus a few bonuses.

Made in Mexico, the Player Jazz Bass Fretless puts *a lot* of bass on the table for $749: 3-Color Sunburst or Polar White (with a parchment pickguard), a fast C-profile maple neck, 9.5"-radius pau ferro fingerboard, two Player Series Alnico 5 single-coil pickups, and two Volume controls with a master tone. The offset body is alder and the neck has a 34" scale. As the nut is only 1.5" wide, the Player Fretless Jazz has a slim, narrow neck that is remarkably easy on the hand.

Price: $749
www.fender.com

The major feature is the addition of inlaid fret markers, allowing bassists to stay within bounds of intonation. If you've never played fretless before, there are two tricks to success. Like slide guitar, you must grab the note *directly over* the fret (that is, where the fret *would be*), unlike conventional bass and guitar. This is essential for nailing a well-intonated attack. The second trick is to take advantage of its flatwound strings and develop a good wrist vibrato. That combination produces the warm tone that draws certain players to the fretless bass – and that *mm-wahhh* sound is great on this one.

After testing this bass for weeks, it was hard to find any flaws. It's a four-string with killer looks, tone, and real Fender heritage. The fretless markers make a difficult job much easier; after that, it's up to you to stay focused and play correctly. You will be rewarded with gorgeous sounds.

– Pete Prown

Price: $249
www.robertkeeley.com

THE LIFE AQUATIC

Keeley's Hydra Stereo Reverb & Tremolo

Stompbox wizard Robert Keeley's latest creation packs a boatload of deep-sea diver sounds in one small package.

The Hydra Stereo Reverb & Tremolo offers three reverb algorithms (Room, Plate, and Spring) and three tremolo patches (Sine, Vibrato, and Harmonic), while an infinite reverb trail setting produces sustained textures.

In addition to user-friendly tone-shaping controls, the Hydra has three pre-sets that allow guitarists to access and capture their favorite tonal combinations. The tremolo controls include Rate and Depth, while the reverb side offers Dwell, Mix, and Color knobs. Others allow users to rearrange the order of effects or alter the effects' personalities. An expression pedal can be used in place of the onboard tap tempo or be assigned to other knobs. There's even remote switching for rack users.

The wild, pitch-warbling vibrato is fun, but it's the subtle ambient coloring that truly shines. Each setting can be modified to alter the tone and size, along with tail length, speed, and depth. The Hydra can also be set up for true bypass or buffered bypass with trails. The overall quality is smooth, warm, lush, and dreamy. Powered by a 9-volt adapter, the Hydra is simple to use and will add fullness and dimension to any signal. ***– Oscar Jordan***

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

The ToneTron Billy-Rocker 10

Small amps are big. As venues become increasingly intimate and amplifiers are miked through sound systems rather than muscling-up to broadcast across a full room, you no longer need to schlep a stack. In fact, some shops report having a tough time selling amps with more than 35 watts of sonic oomph.

All of that is good news for tone, as small can be beautiful – and your significant other, neighbors, and back will all thank you. One option in this segment is the ToneTron Billy-Rocker 10.

Established in 2006, ToneTron amps are hand-built by Jeffrey Falla, who customizes to each buyer's taste and requirements while producing 10 to 20 amps each year. Falla engineered the BR10 to be similar in size to the beloved Fender Princeton but with more depth of tone – mainly the ability to deliver tight, thick low, creamy mids, and chimey highs. This little fellow uses a pair of cathode-biased 6V6 output tubes and cranks out 10 to 12 watts through a 10" Weber Ferromax speaker.

The Smooth/Full control is key here. In Smooth, the overall power is slightly reduced and the tone has a smoother, better-defined clarity. In Full, the harmonics bloom and the tonal clarity opens, along with a bump in overall power.

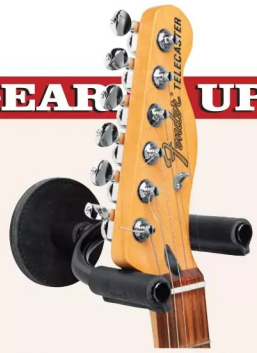
Falla's overarching goal was versatility; he sought to build a small amp that could excel in a variety of settings. At the same time, he wanted to ensure that the little guy sounded large.

We plugged in a '52-reissue Telecaster and the Billy-Rocker sang pure rock-and-roll tones. It can play clean and it can do dirty, thanks to an amazingly sensitive response to attack. The amp is articulate, offering clarity and sweet chordal sounds. Hit it hard and the overdrive is heavenly.

The BR10 is housed in Falla's unique cab and baffle design, which looks cool and offers tonal pluses including enhanced bass response. It's available in either red or blue detailed grillecloth and knobs.

– Michael Dregni

GEAR UP



LEVY FORGED-STEEL HANGERS

Levy's hangers for guitars and basses are made of solid/forged steel. Their leather-wrapped pegs and standoff accommodate straight and angled headstocks, while a matching leather disk covers the mounting plate. Color options include black, brass, and smoke with matching/contrasting leather in black, brown, and tan.

RESOMAX BRIDGE

Graph Tech's ResoMax Bridge is made from organic polymers, with flexible legs that conform to the top of the guitar. Fully compensated, it's offered in standard and ultra-low height to fit the neck angle of archtops, and its thumb-wheels allow players to adjust action.

SUPRO KEELEY CUSTOM 12

The Supro Keeley Custom 12 generates 25 watts output using two 6V6GT tubes through a Celesion G12M-65 speaker. Controls include Volume, Treble, Bass, and Master. Its cabinet is made from poplar covered in Blue Rhino Hyde vinyl.

DIGITAL SIX

Jammy Instruments' Jammy G

Digital, MIDI, and synth guitars have been around for decades. One newer entry in the field is the Jammy G, a digital guitar connected to an app that accesses its sounds and the ability to control MIDI instruments. It's also highly portable for strumming on the go.

Part of that portability is due to the neck and body easily separating via a latch in the back. To get going, assemble the body and neck, charge the internal battery, and download the app, which connects to the instrument via Bluetooth. This phone/tablet app is the heart of the experience, as it calibrates the strings, provides effects, and guides how the Jammy will react to your playing.

Price: $449
www.playjammy.com

There are two ways to play the Jammy – using the onboard sounds when connected directly to an amp or headphones, or as a MIDI controller, using it to drive hardware synthesizers or soft synths.

What makes the Jammy different from most digital guitar approaches is that it separates the picking function from the fretting function, with two completely different string banks. Once set up, the guitar works reasonably well for strumming. Single-note lead work requires some tweaking of string sensitivity, but like every guitar-synth device ever, the player must adjust their playing to the device's idiosyncrasies. Also, the picking set of strings doesn't ring out like a traditional guitar (these "strings" are actually sensors gathering data and not meant to be a real guitar).

The Jammy G has clear strengths and weaknesses. On the plus side, its firmware receives regular updates, unlike the closed design of guitar synthesizers and pedals. Whatever it lacks now, you can bet its designers are busily working on updates, so keep an eye on this axe.

– Pete Prown

Price: $265
www.txpedals.com

FUZZ FEAST

The Tone Electronix Animalizzer

At first glance, Tone Electonix's Animalizzer might appear to be a Big-Muff-style fuzz with too many knobs. A closer look is in order...

A Volume control and a three-band EQ get the user wailing out of the gate, but it's the Pre-Gain and dual Stage controls, each with multiple clipping diode selections, that adjust the amount of low frequency and clipping options. These were designed to sculpt a bevy of sounds, from smooth overdrive to angry mayhem.

The Mid knob is essential for guitarists on either side of the "more midrange versus scooped midrange" debate. Depth controls how much low-end is pushed into the clipping section. Ungodly distortion and fuzz can be summoned. Tweaking the Fuzz knob controls how much boosted signal passes into the clipping stages.

Both silicon and Germanium diodes are at the guitarist's beck and call, with fully adjustable Pre-Gain and lots of clipping options. Users have control over an EQ that ranges from Eric Johnson's warm wall of majesty to garage punk night terrors.

The Animalizzer cuts, does the gnarly, uses a 9-volt adapter, and is incredibly musical. It's a versatile stompbox for boutique-level overdrive, distortion, and fuzz that can be crafted to the user's whims; spend a little time with it and you'll discover a fully adjustable, all-in-one grunge machine that produces a feast of dirty sounds.

– Oscar Jordan VG

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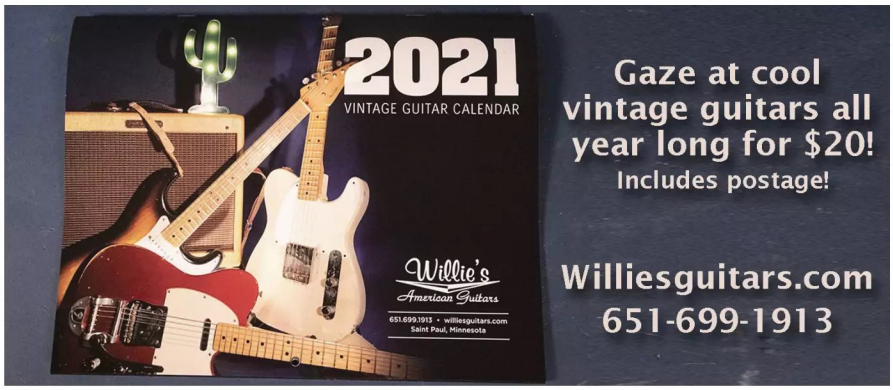

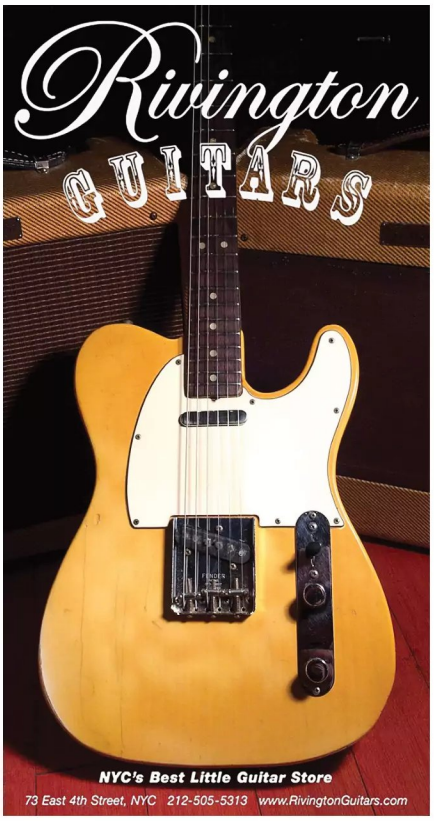

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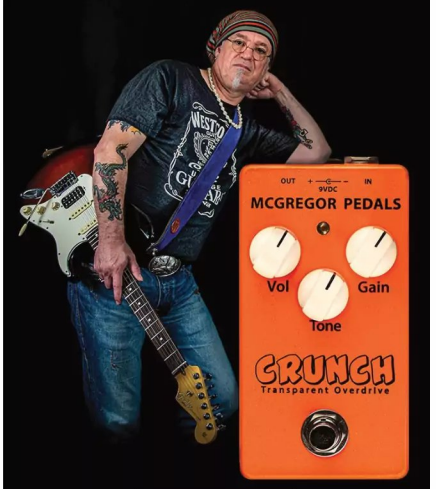

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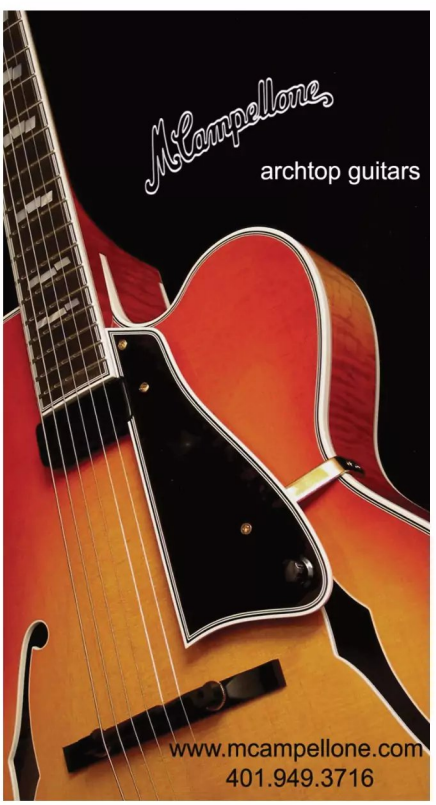

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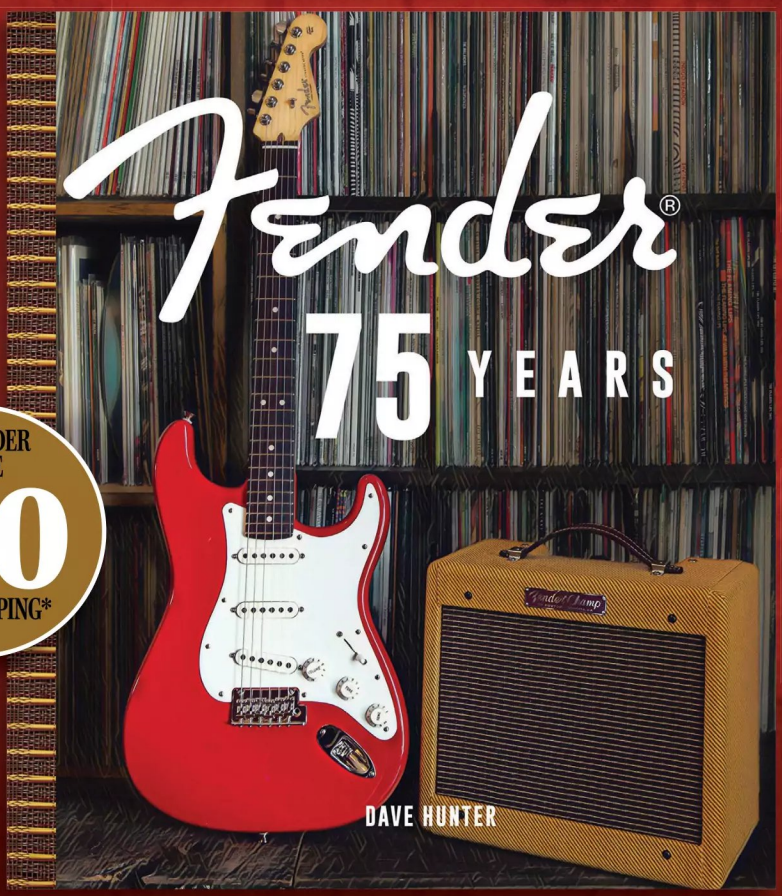

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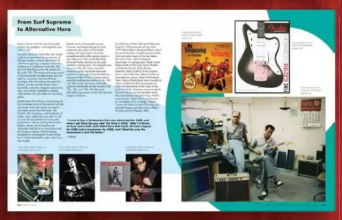
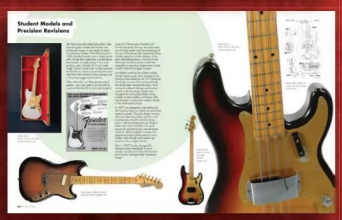
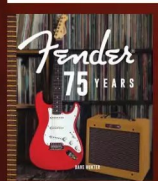


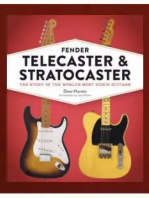


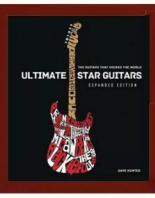
Fender 75 Years
By Dave Hunter
Format: Hardback, 224 Pages
Illustrations: 300 color & b-w photos
Size: 9.25 in x 10.56 in / 234.95 mm x 268.22 mm

You know Dave Hunter from the pages of *Vintage Guitar*. Now you can join him as he traces Fender's entire history to the present. From the company's first instrument – a lap-steel guitar produced in 1946 – to founder Leo Fender's groundbreaking early six-string "Spanish-style" guitar designs like the Esquire that set the standard for the electric guitar explosion to follow. All the innovations and landmark models are here, as well as legendary players who became synonymous with Fender instruments across musical genres. Authoritatively written and lavishly illustrated, *Fender 75 Years* is the officially licensed anniversary celebration of the company and its legendary instruments.

It's the definitive look at the Fender's first three-quarters of a century and a must-have for the shelf of any guitar enthusiast.







THE DAVE HUNTER COLLECTION

The collection includes ***Fender 75 Years*** ($50), ***Fender Telecaster and Stratocaster: The Story of the World's Most Iconic Guitars*** ($40), and ***Ultimate Star Guitars: The Guitars That Rocked the World, Expanded Edition*** ($19.95). Receive the entire collection at the discounted price of **$99.97**

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Readers Gallery

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1) Here's a look at Andrew Bazeley's instruments on their annual "day out." In back are a Maccaferri, 1915 Gibson Style O, '28 National wood-bodied Triolian tenor, '29 steel-bodied Triolian, '28 Style 2 Tricone and wood-bodied Triolian, '46 Gibson L-5, '18 Gibson L-1, '46 J-45, '49 L-4C, '67 B-25-12, and a '62 J-50. In the middle is a banjo of unknown origin, three solidbodies built by his son, a '90s Dano, '64 Gibson Melody Maker, '63 Framus Strato, '58 Höfner Club 50, a 1905 Jose Ramirez flamenco, late-1800s Sentchordi Hermanos, 1895 Harwood, 1898 Washburn, an early-'60s Vicente Tatay, and a '76 Ibanez Cimar. Along the bottom are an old banjo-uke, 1990s Epiphone five-string banjo and bass, and a lap-steel.

2) Dave Walsh has been playing and collecting vintage instruments since the early '70s. "Like most back then, I was obsessed with Fenders, Gibsons, Gretsches, and Martins," he said. "But I've discovered the value of vintage Guilds." From top to bottom/left to right, here are the guitars that showed the way – a 1970 D-25BR, '65 F-30 NT, '54 F-50, '81 F-30R NT, '75 G-75, '69 D-55 Brazilian, '63 CE-100DN, and a '67 CE-100D.

3) Longtime reader Lee A. describes himself as "nuts about vintage Fender amps," and offers this shot as proof. From front to back are a '66 Champ, '65 Princeton Reverb, '75 Princeton Reverb, a '64 reissue Deluxe Reverb, and a '65 Vibrolux Reverb.

4) Kitt Cox's favorite guitar is this '62 Guild M-20, perched here alongside her Santa Cruz 1929 00 and her dad's Martin baritone ukulele.

SEE MORE PHOTOS ON WWW.VINTAGEGUITAR.COM

James Wolowicz paid homage to the Battle of Britain and the Supermarine Spitfire by building this tribute guitar with a little help from luthier Matt Creter. "Like the fighter, it screams!" James said.

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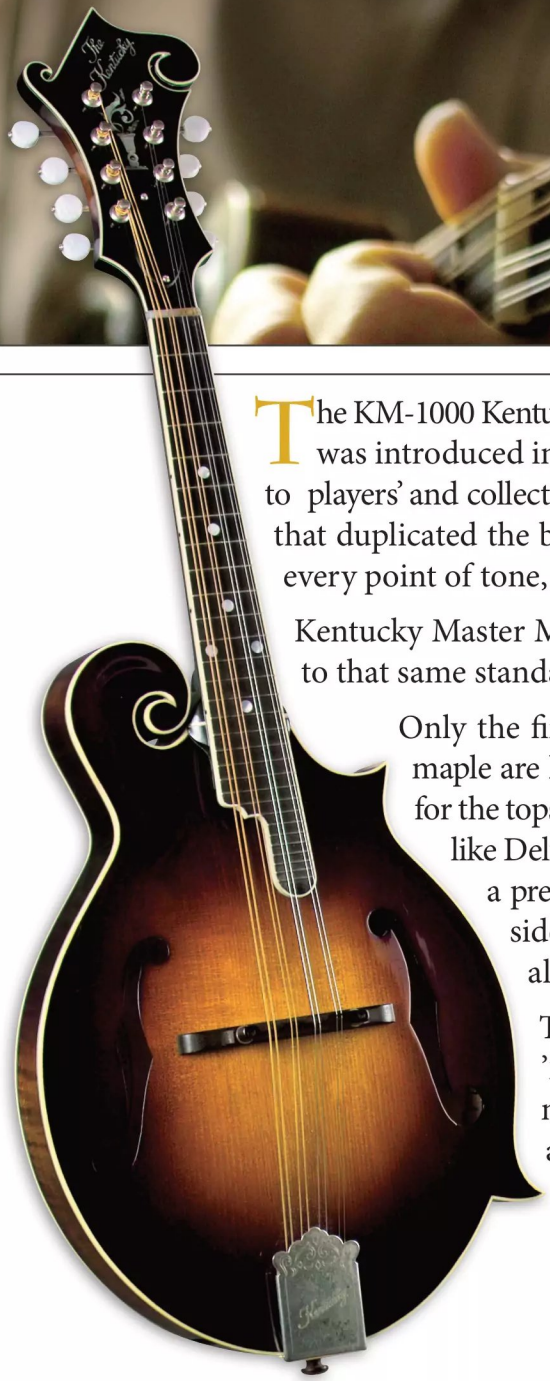

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Fender

Stratocaster, 1957, Lefty, J Black body refin, neck original, non-tremolo, beautiful, original tweed hsc, exc $17,500
Telecaster, Paisley, 1968, all orig, maple neck, vgc+,ohsc$15,500
Esquire, 1958, Blonde, exc, ohsc $22,500
Tele 1973, Black, 4 bolt Maple, Dimarz hb neck vgc, ohsc. $3750
Electric XII, 1966, sb, marked 'Special", exc+, ohsc.....$4500

Gibson Solid Body

SG Custom Jimi Hendrix, 2020, Aged Polaris White,Ltd.Ed. Custom Shop 1967 SG™ Custom, mint ohsc.....$8750
Les Paul Standard, 1958, sunburst, nice flame, vgc+,ohsc.....
Les Paul LEFTY Traditional, 2012, sb, Duncans, vgc ...$1495
Les Paul Goldtop Traditional, 2014, 2 P-90s, Bigsby added with invisible foot print, near mint, ohsc..$2250
Firebird 1, 1963, Sunburst, pghd repair, exc, ohsc.....$8900
Les Paul Junior, 1959, cherry, dub cut vgc++,hsc $7900
Melody Maker, 1962, sb, double cut 1 pu, exc, ossc..... $1795
Melody Maker, 1964, sb, dub cut, 1 pu, 1 11/16" nut, exc.. $2195

Gibson, Epiphone & Other Electric Archtops

ES-5, 1949, sb, 3 P-90s, 3 vol & Master, vgc+, hsc.....$7500
ES-5, 1951, Blonde, 3 P-90s, curly Maple body & neck, dark Brazilian brd, pearl blocks, 1 owner, exc+ ohsc $11,900
BB KING Lucille, 2012, Black, "BB KING" Crown logo..$3000
Howard Roberts, 1975, SB, oval hole, 1 hb, vgc+, hsc .$1995
ES-125 3/4, 1959, sb, thin noncut, P-90, exc.....$2300
GUILD Starfire IV, Walnut, 1973, 2 humbuckers, vgc ..$1500
Ibanez Artist2616, '78, nat, 2pu, signed, exc, ohsc $2500

Gretsch & Rickenbacker

Rick 365 Capri, 1961, Firglo, 2 pu, Trem, thick body, exc+....$7950
Rick 370-12, 2008, MapleGlo, 12-string , 3 pu exc, ohsc$2250
Rick Bantar 6000, '64, fireglo, **5-str elect Banjo**, ohsc.....$13,500
Rick Deluxe Lap Steel, silver w/gold, exc, ohsc $1750

Acoustic Archtops

D'Angelico New Yorker, 1946, sunburst, built when John had no apprentice, all orig. exc, ohsc $30,000
Gibson Super 400 Premier, 1940, sb, cutaway, exc,ohc ..$16,500
Gibson L-5C, 1952, sb, Flamed Maple b&s, exc, ohsc.....$9500
Gibson Style U Harp Gtr, 1907, Black, 21", exc-, ohsc..... ..$7500
Cromwell ca 1938, by Gibson, SB, 16 1/4" ,exc, ssc...$1295
Heritage Golden Eagle, recent, Blonde, floating pu, nm $4500
Ibanez 2461 Johnny Smith, 1977, SB, 2 pu, exc, ohsc.....$2450
KAY N-1, ca 1959, 17" cutaway , new frets, plays great. $995
Moll, John Pizzarellli model, 2002, Blonde, vgc+, ohsc.....$3950
National N-1140, 1950, sb, 16" non-cut, vgc+, ohsc.....$1350
Stromberg Master 400, Blonde, 1946, loudest!, ohsc $35,000

Other Electric Guitars

Carvin Double neck Model 11, c 1968, sb, Mandolin (1 pu) and Guitar (2 pu) necks, exc, ohsc.....$3950
B&G Crossroads Little Sister, new, Cutaway, sb, 2 hb..... $1450
Danelectro C2N12, Dane"C" Series, ca 1967, solid body 12-string, Alligator finish, 2 lipstick pu, all orig,gb, ...$2650
Danelectro 6/6 Doubleneck, ca 2000, blue sparkle, 6-string electric and 6 string Baritone, exc, gb..... ..$1195
Hallmark Series 1965, Aquaburst, 2 pu, Trem, mint,cert.....$795
Tom Doyle 7-String Tele (style), c. '06, csb, 1 hb, exc, gb..$2000
G&L SC-3, 1987, Red 3 singles, tremolo, rwood brd.....$895
Hofner 4575 Verithin, '60s, sb, 3 pickups, exc, hsc $1500
MCI Guitorgan B300, Japan, Red, 335 style, pedal ,hc... $1950
NASH Strat, NEW, Sonic Blue '63 Style, Lollars, Alder body, light relic, Rosewood board, ohsc.....$2250
National Studio 66, c 1964, Black, reso-glas body, 1 pu $995
Spalt Player's Choice Tool #2, NEW, 2 pu, natural.....$3250
Steinberger GL4T, 1995, black, Hum/s/s, TransTrem exc....$3950
Supro '60', c 1957, White, Coodercaster pu, pinstriped, ...$1295
Teuffel Bird Fish, recent, 3 pu, leather case, exc $8900
TokaiLS196 VF "Reborn Old" logo, ca 2018, a '59 LPcopy, light sb exc-, brown Gibson case.....$1500
VEGA Model 99, ca 1962, sb single cut,1 pu, ossc.....$2750
VOX Student Prince, V229, Italy, c1967, sb, hollow 1pu....$850
WOODY PHIFER, Signature, ca 2005, figured Maple top, curly Maple back, sides & neck, exquisite,near mint....$7900

Basses

Alembic Essence 5 String ,1994, AAA curly top, Ebony board, 34" scale, LED dots, 2 pickups, new~ $11,500, nm.....$4500
Fender Bass VI, 1974, Sunburst, R'wood board with pearloid block inlays, 30" scale, 3 pu Trem, exc, hsc....$4950
Jazz Bass, 1977, sb, Maple neck, pearl blcks, ri pu, exc hsc.$1950
Jazz Bass, 1983, White, RW board, ohsc, near mint.....$1450
Gibson EB-6, 1960, 6 Str Baritone, sb, 1 PAF, exc+, ohc..$11,900
Gibson G-3, 1975, Grabber Bass with 3 pickups , hsc..$1500
Gibson RD Artist Bass, 1979, Sunburst, exc, ohsc $2400
Hofner Club Bass 500/1, c 1968 single cut, exc, ohsc $2250
MusicMan Stingray, Fretless, '79, Nat, RW board,exc+$2500
Rickenbacker 4003,2008, JetGlo Black, upgraded crushed pearl inlays, straight neck and low action, ohsc.....$1995

Martins

F-7, 1936, sb, 16" archtop Spruce top, Brazilian b&s, CF Martin vertical logo exc, haxagonal inlays ohsc...$6500
D-45, 1972, 1 upper bout top crack, exc, blue case $6500
D-35, 2006, exc+, ohsc...$2000
D-28, 1938, h'bone, orig finish, new brdg & plate, vgc+...$65,000
D-28, 1949, Sunburst top refinish , nice Braz, vgc.....$8950
D-28 Aged Authentic, what a guitar! New is Old, hsc.....$7999
000-28, 1946, refinished nicely flat & thin, exc, ohsc $10,000
000-21, 1905, all orig, 5th 000 made, 1 owner, exc+, hsc$24,000
D-18, 1958, new bridge plate, exc, ohsc.....$5500
0-18, 1958, small pg crack repaired, exc, ssc..... ...$4750
D-18, 1973, w/ B-Bender installed by Gene Parsons. $3350
CEO-4R, 2002, sb, Adir top, RW b&s, nm, ohsc.....$2250
2-17, 1926, tip-top shape, all Mahogany, all original $3500
Schmidt & Maul, 1845, 2 1/2, Brazilian b&s, earliest X,ohc.$6900

Gibson & Epiphone Flat Tops

EPI Texan, 1964, natural, 1 5/8 nut, adj. bridge w/ ceramic saddle, hairline heel repair, sounds hugely, exc $3750
B-12-45, 1964, natural top 12-string,adj brg, vgc+ $1250
J-50, 1966, repro pg, 1 5/8" nut, vgc+, hsc..... ...$2950
J-185 12 String, 2001, blonde, Spruce top, curly Maple b&s, 1 7/8" nut, 24 3/4" scale, Arlo signed top,exc, ohsc. $2500

Other Flat Tops & Classicals

BEARDSELL 4-G Slot'd, 2003, Spruce top, Myrtlewood b&s, 25.4" scale, 1 3/4"nut, Petite Bouche sound hole 2 sound ports, Laskin arm rest, loud! exc, hsc.....$4250
BRONDEL A-1, '07, Ital Spruce, Bloodwood b&s, hsc $3950
Collings OM3A-Cutaway, 2009, Adir. top, Rwood b&s $4250
DYER Harp Guitar, Style 4, ca 1920, a nice one!, hsc.....$4500
Goodall TR OM, Recent, Rosewood b&s, mint.....$4250
Goodall RGC, 2000, 15" jumbo, Englemann top, 1 13/16"....$3500
GURIAN J-R, ca 1976, Jumbo, Rosewood b&s, vgc,ohsc ...$2000
Laplante Gene Autry D-45 Replica, Brazilian.....$9250
Linda Manzer PIKASSO Guitar, 1 of 2, pearl trimmed, multi necked masterpiece, ohsc..... CALL
LOWDEN F-25, 1998, Ireland, Red Cedar top, Rosewood back & sides, pu, exc, ohsc $2900
REGAL Double Soundhole Flat top, ca 1929, Oddity! $2950
STAHL by the Larson Brothers, 13 1/2" wide, Brazilian b&s, pearl trimmed Adi Spruce top, pearl rosette, exc, hsc... .....$9500
Steve Klein M-43 Rosewood Jumbo, '90s, Calton case $12,950
Taylor K-14CE Bldrs Ed, 2019, Shaded finish, Spruce to, Koa b& sides, pearl trimmed, Abalone vine, pu, mint, ohsc $3750
Veilette Avante, NEW, high strung 12 str, Black, pickup, ... $1195
Velazquez El Classico, 1961, Braz b&s, exc-, ossc.....$2750
Kenny Hill Perf. Classical, 2012, lattice, rosewood b&s.....$3500
Kohno Mod.15, 1978, Spruce top, RW b&s, 660 mm, exc.....$2400

Resonator, Steel & Slide Guitars

National Aragon, 1939, sb, Wood, Loudest & Rarest, exc... $12,500
National Triolian Tenor, 1937, brown burst Piano finish, metal body, bound board with 21 frets, vgc, hsc.. .....$1500
National Style 0 Mandolin, 1930, exc, ohsc.....$2500
Triolian Wood Body, 2010, 2 tone brown/yellow sunburst, round neck, near mint, ohsc.....$2295
Gibson Console Grande, ca 1952, curly Blonde triple neck, so beautiful, legs, ohsc.....$2900
Fender Double 6 Lap Steel, ca 1953, Blonde Tele finish over Ash body, 3 legs, 23" scale, vgc+, hsc.....$950

Mandolins & Banjos

Gibson K-1 Mandocello, 1913, blonde, exc, ossc.....$3750
Gibson H-4 Mandola, 1915, reddish burst, F-body, exc+.....$7000
Gibson H-2 Mandola, 1923, reddish burst, adj rod, exc+, ..$5000
Gibson F-5 Mandolin, 1955, sb, ,ohsc, nm.. .....$6950
F-4 1928, sb, adj rod, a beauty, great tone, exc, ohsc....$6950
Gibson A-2-Z, 1924, Snakehead, blonde, exc, ohsc.....$4500
Gibson A-1 Snakehead 1923, black, refret, ohsc, vgc+.....$2450
Monteleone Grande Artist, sb, from the master's hand $21,000
Gibson RB-250 Mastertone, 1957, Bowties, 4 hole arched top tonering, 1 ownernear mint, ohsc.....$3500
Gibson PB-3 Mastertone Plectrum Banjo, 1925, 60 hole Archtop , all original, vgc+, newer hsc.....$2400
Deering Black Diamond 5-String 1995, 3-ply Maple rim, Mahogany snap resonator, Grenadillo ToneRing exc, ohsc$2200
Goldtone OB-3 NEW, Mastertone™ No-Hole Flat top..... $1699
S.S. Stewart 5-Str Banjeaurine, ca 1899, 10"x21".....$895
VEGA Earl Scruggs 5-string , ca 1964, Tubaphone tone ring, Keith/Scruggs tuners, exc, ohsc..... ...$2150
Vega Professional Tenor, c 1930, vgc, hsc.....$800

Amps

Fender Bassman, 1958, recovered , 4 x 1959 Jensen P10S 12 watt speakers, origi transformers, sounds great...$3900
Fender Concert '62, Brown 4 Oxford 10s", trem, vgc..... . $1950
Fender Princeton, '63,Brown, Celestion speaker, vgc+.$2195
Twin Reverb, 1968-69, drip edge , 2x12" EVs, vgc+.....$950
VibroChamp, 1966, Blk Panel, sounds great, vgc++....$1250
Headstrong Lil King NEW, Brown, Listen to one $1995
Magnatone Troubador 213, 1964, 1 Jensen C12R 12".....$1495
Magnatone Custom 460 ,1961, 2 12" Oxfords, Trem, exc ... $2195
Teisco CheckMate 30 Amp, '70s, it's Round! Tremolo ...$500
Vox AC-30, c 1964, new Vox grill cloth, orig spkrs.....$3450
Roland Space Echo, c 1979, RE-150,green/black, exc...$995

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