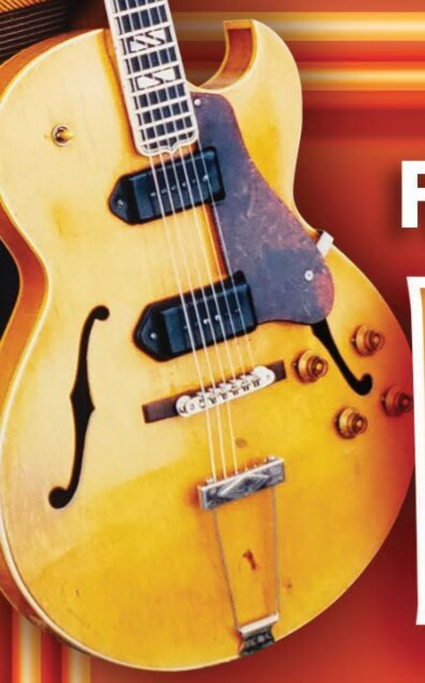


FENTON ROBINSON'S ES-225

URIAH HEEP'S *DEMONS AND WIZARDS*

Vintage Guitar® magazine



NANCY WILSON

JERRY DOUGLAS

GUTHRIE GOVAN

WALTER BECKER

GA-20's MATT STUBBS

MIKE ZITO

'83 MODULUS GRAPHITE FLIGHT 6

'61 GIBSON GA-8 DISCOVERER

SPOTLIGHT ON ACCESSORIES

ALLIGATOR RECORDS

50 YEARS OF BLUES GUITAR

Brian Setzer

Return to Rumble

September 2021 Vol. 35 No. 12

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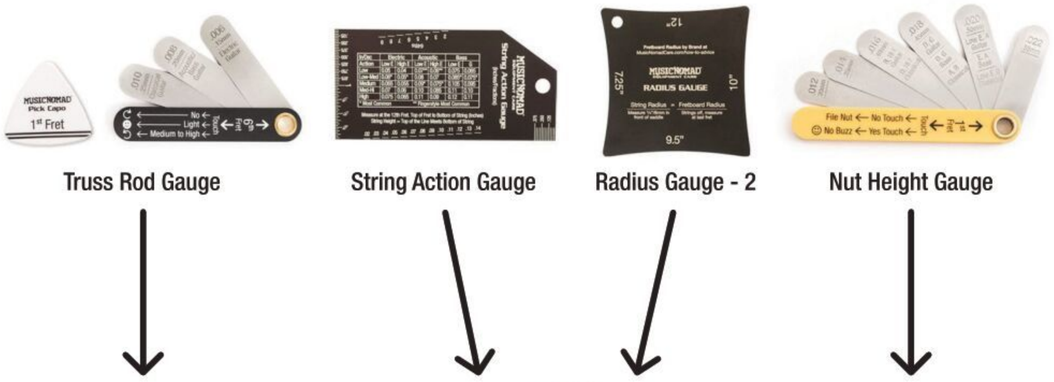
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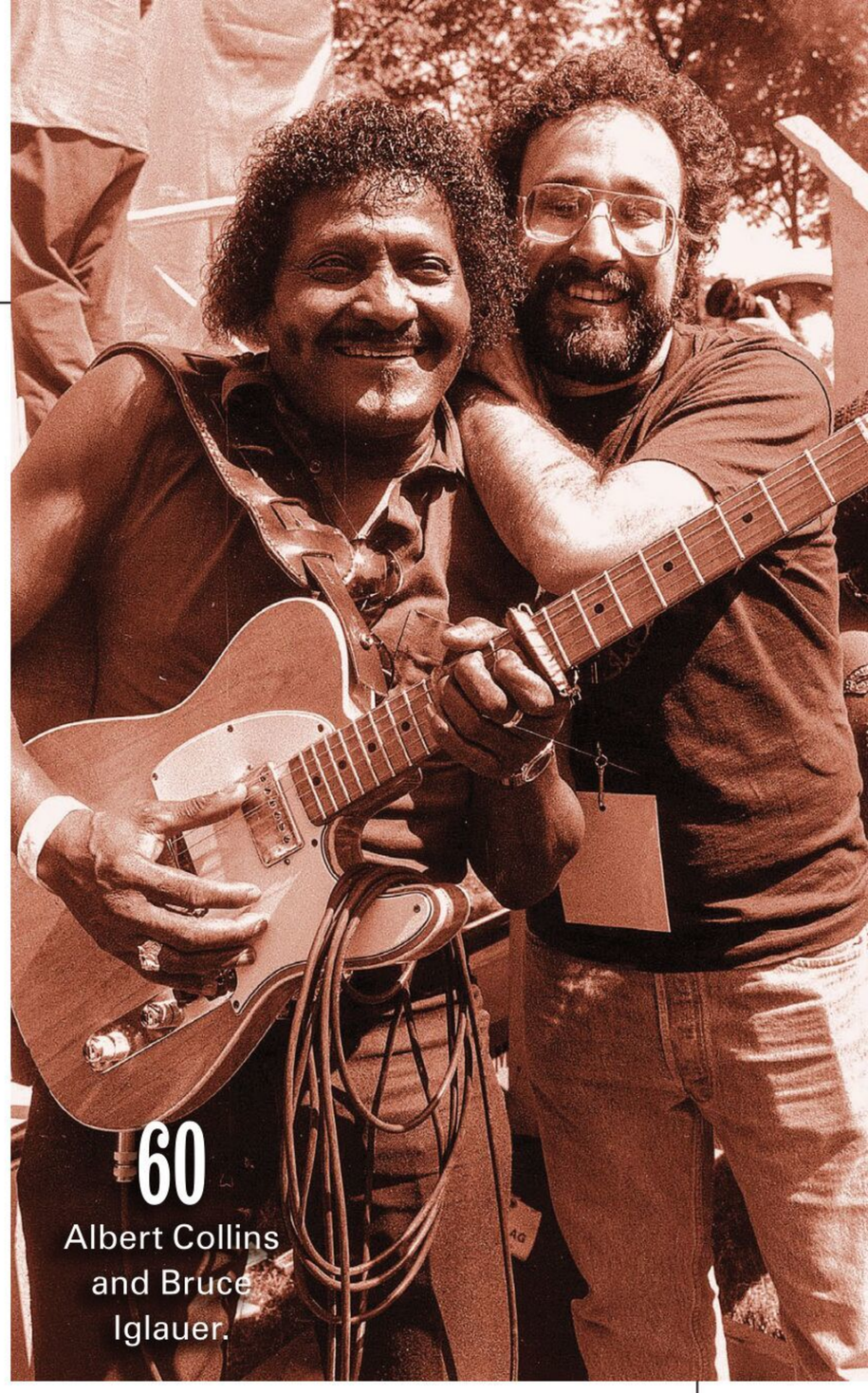
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34 **HI-/LOW-TECH**
The Modulus Graphite Flight 6
In guitar history, irony is almost always the result of circumstance – the market changes quickly or someone makes a mistake that somehow works. Rarely is it planned, but that's what happened with this bizarre piece. | ***By Michael Wright***

38 **SONIC SATELLITE**
The Gibson GA-8 Discoverer
At the end of the '50s, "space" was the name of the game, and any gear that hoped to grab a share of the rock-and-roll market was named accordingly. Fender and Gretsch were in early with the Stratocaster and Duo Jet, while Gibson displayed delayed hipness with the Flying V and Explorer. By 1960, it was time for amps like this one to begin re-entry. | ***By Dave Hunter***

42 **CLASSICS**
Boz Scaggs' version of "Somebody Loan Me a Dime" spurred Kevin Ludwig to buy Fenton Robinson's debut album. Two decades later, he found the blues legend's famed Gibson ES-225 – and made it his mission to return the stolen instrument to its rightful owner. | ***By Ward Meeker***

60 **ALLIGATOR GREATS**
Bruce Iglauer Recalls 50 Years of Blues Guitar
Bruce Iglauer was turned on to blues by the fiery slide playing of Mississippi Fred McDowell and Elmore James. Passion for the music spurred the Delmark Records shipping clerk to help Hound Dog Taylor cut his first album, and in turn start Alligator Records. The ensuing years have seen the label record many elite blues players. Here's the story, including Iglauer's personal guitar highlights. | ***By Sean McDevitt***



60
Albert Collins and Bruce Iglauer.

64 **DOG TRACKS**
GA-20's Hound Dog Taylor Tribute
Hound Dog Taylor's full-steam-ahead approach to guitar has been hugely influential. Two players who best exhibit its impact today are Matt Stubbs and Pat Faherty, who used vintage Teisco guitars and Silvertone amps to record *GA-20 Does Hound Dog Taylor: Try It...You Might Like It!*. Here, Stubbs tells its tale. | ***By Ward Meeker***

68 **BRIAN SETZER**
Return to Rumble
He lives life answering the call of music, and while his new album revisits the tried-and-true rockabilly themes that have spurred him for decades, it also meets his personal challenge to keep it fresh – and laden with great guitar tones. | ***By Ward Meeker***



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PHOTOS: COVER: Brian Setzer: Russ Harrington. Bruce Iglauer and Lonnie Brooks: Chris Monaghan. Fenton Robinson's ES-225: Tom Everett. **THIS PAGE:** B. Iglauer and Albert Collins courtesty Alligator Records.

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READER MAIL

YAY, RAY!

What a treat to open the mailbox and get a smile from Ray Benson (August '20). Just as his music has put a smile on my face for 50 (gasp!) years.

Asleep at the Wheel was instrumental (so to speak) in propagating a unique American music form with a mastery few could match. More importantly, they brought joy. They portray their art as a community where you could live, not just some set pieces to be admired. As their mastermind and constant, Ray Benson should be given a Nobel Prize for just walking around.

Vintage Guitar is my favorite piece of regular mail. I savor it by reading just a little each day, in hopes I won't finish the current issue before the next one arrives. Thanks for what you are and all you do!

Bryan Bowman
Wilmington, Delaware

REGARD FOR RUSTY

Being a guitar player in the late '60s, I was in awe when I first heard the solo on Buffalo Springfield's "Kind Woman." I soon learned it was a pedal steel played by Rusty Young ("First Fret," August '20). When the first Poco album came out in 1969, hundreds of guitarists like myself went out and bought a pedal steel.

Rusty was such an innovator, playing through Leslies and fuzzboxes. More than that, he was also amazing on guitar, dobro, mandolin, banjo, lap steel, and anything else with strings.

I met Rusty a few times in the '80s, and he was a very nice guy – he even showed me a few of his tricks. Then, after my best bud, Rick Lonow, joined Poco in 2016, I got to know Rusty better. He was a very warm and quiet guy, but could also tell some great stories.

I was at the very last Poco concert and went to dinner with Rick, Rusty and his wife, Mary, and the rest of the band. We were at a nice place on the water and I remember Rusty and Mary going out to the deck to watch the sun set. They were still in love. Happy trails, Rusty, and thank you for everything. You will be remembered.

Gary Hibbard
Orlando, Florida

FUZZ(Y ON THE) DETAILS

On page 47 of the June 2021 issue, Vinnie Martell states that Tim Bogert's use of a fuzz tone on his bass guitar was "innovative and cool" and "groundbreaking." However, Paul McCartney had already used the effect on his bass in 1965 on "Think For Yourself," from *Rubber Soul*.

Toby Pittman
Grovetown, Georgia

(*Ed. Note: You're right about McCartney using it before Bogert did, but we think Vince was simply giving props to his bandmate. Also, it's interesting to note that producer Don Law, recording engineer Glen Snoddy, and a faulty mixer at Bradley Film & Recording Studios, Nashville, helped session ace Grady Martin introduce fuzz to his Danelectro six-string bass as they recorded the walking-line solo for Marty Robbins' 1961 hit "Don't Worry." Check it out online... or in your vinyl collection. And for more perspective, read Michael Dregni's profile of the Maestro Fuzz Tone in the December '13 issue or at vintageguitar.com/17397/maestro-fuzz-tone.*)



SALUTE TO UNITED

Thanks so much to *VG* and to Peter Stuart Kohman for the great feature on the United Guitar Corporation, in Jersey City (United They Stood: A Jersey City Tale," May '21).

With the most prominent guitar makers' histories so often told, those of important lesser-known companies would otherwise be lost to the ages. One can only imagine how many guitarists discovered a lifetime of playing, inspired by United's instruments. I find it heartwarming to shine a light on the entrepreneurs and craftspeople who dedicated their lives and talents to building guitars for the consumer market, and to learn about the history, people, and peripheral connections to other well-known builders and brands during a golden age of American manufacturing.

Bob Crelin
Branford, Connecticut

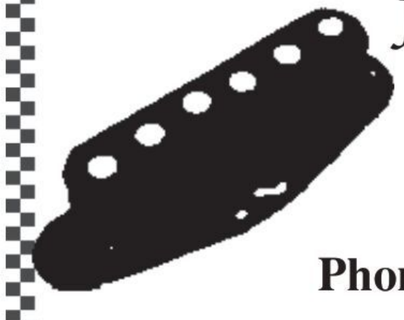
(*Ed. Note: Bob, we agree – Peter's features are always a great read. Given the response to part one of his piece on United (part two will appear next month), he asked us to pass this along: "Thank you, Bob! You sum up exactly what I felt about United and why I was excited to find enough new material that shed light on the story of those forgotten craftsmen. While putting the piece together, I realized that my own first guitar, bought by my mother for $20 at a garage sale in 1972, was a United product. So I'm one of those players!"*)

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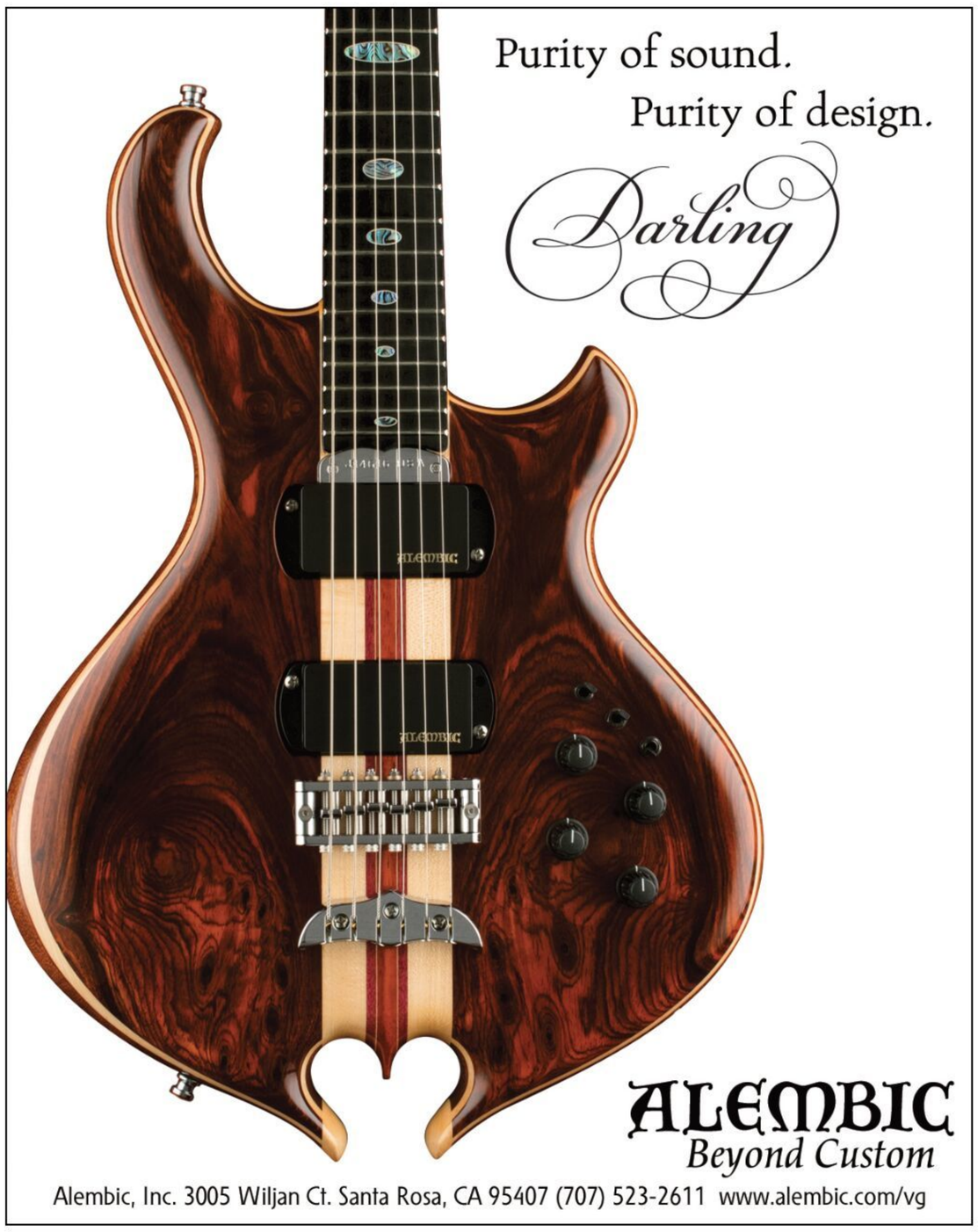
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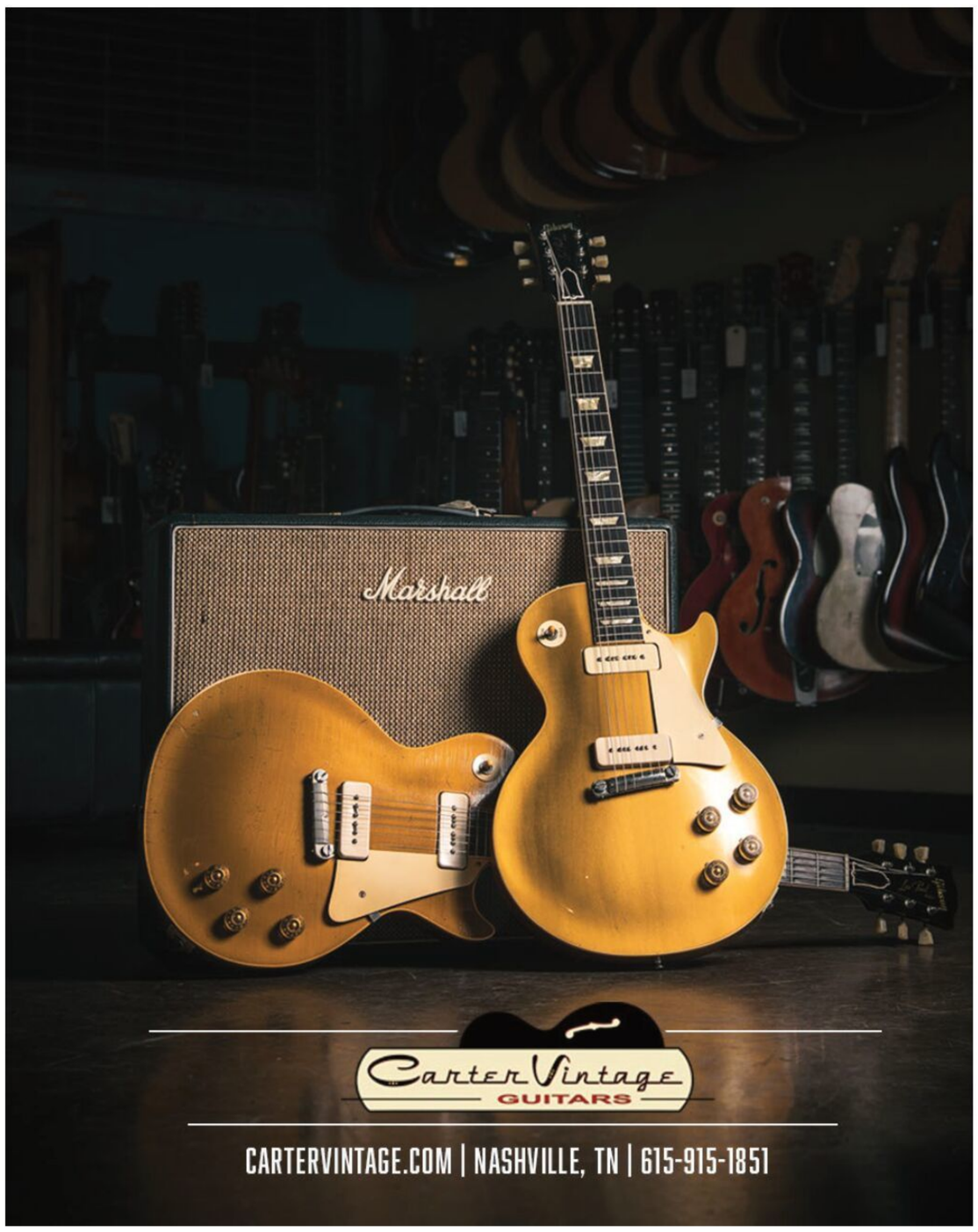
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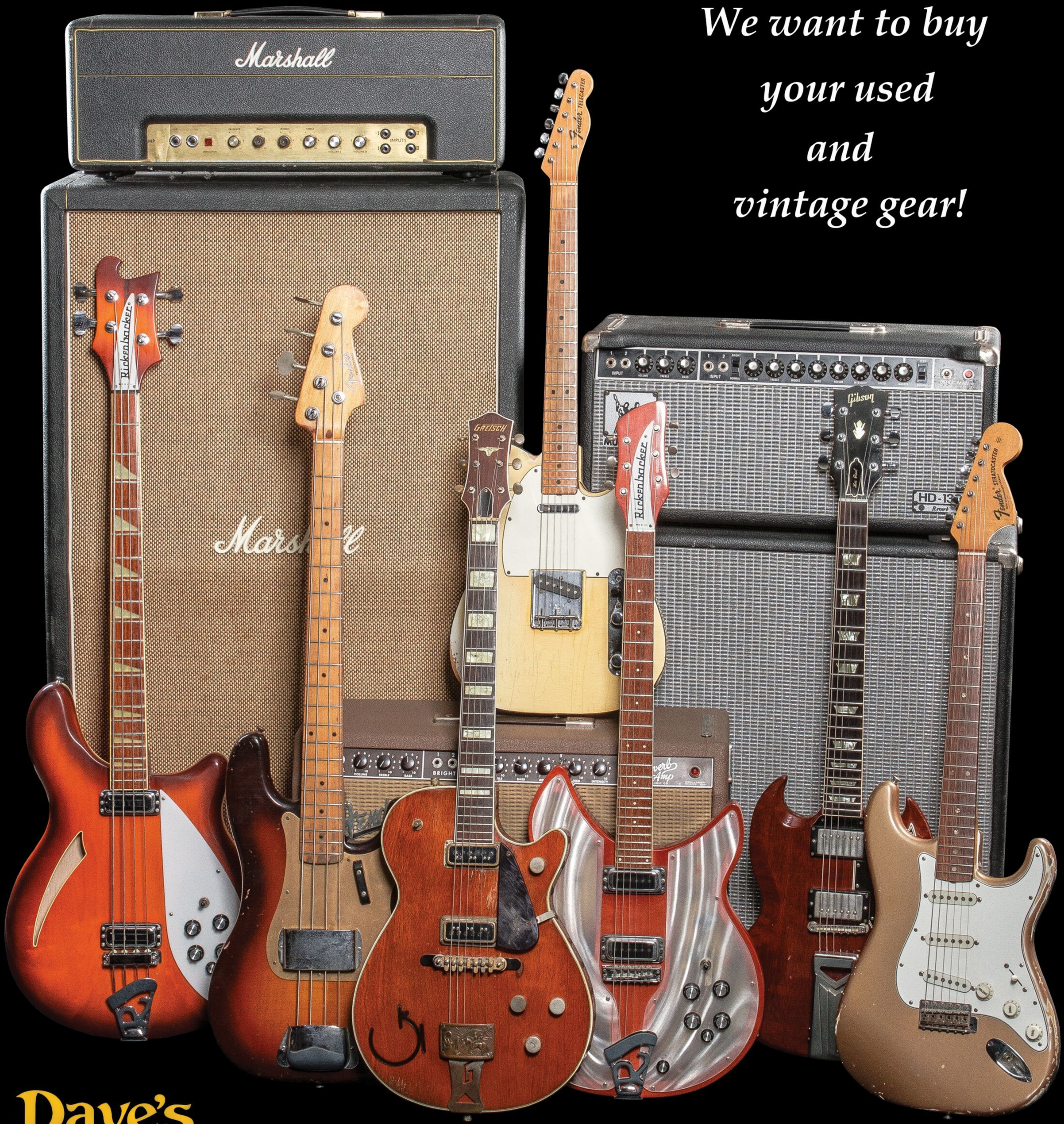
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FIRST FRET

MARINO RETIRES

In a statement released online in late June, legendary guitarist Frank Marino broke heartbreaking news to fans.

"With sorrow, I am forced to announce my immediate retirement from touring, and possibly all things related to continuing my career, due to an unexpected and debilitating medical condition which makes it impossible for me to tour," he said.

"I want to thank all the people who supported me all of the last half-century. I know many were looking forward to seeing us play this fall and I was looking forward to getting out again and doing more shows, but it appears that in the absence of a miraculous recovery, my concert DVD *Live at the Agora* will constitute the last show I will ever have played.

"I ask any that are believers to include me in their prayers."

GIBSON GIVES LAUNCHES TEMPO PROGRAM

Gibson Gives, the philanthropic arm of the famed guitar company, recently launched a program it calls Training and Empowering Musicians to Prevent Overdose (TEMPO), which will collaborate with MusiCares, Harbor Path, and seven non-profit organizations in an effort to save the lives of musicians amidst an ongoing rise of opioid overdoses stemming from confinement and Covid 19 closures. TEMPO provides non-profits and venues with training necessary for administering naloxone to prevent opioid overdose.

OOPS! DEPT.

Our "Classics" feature on page 40 of the June issue misidentified one of the Rickenbackers as a '68 370/12. A couple of sharp-eyed readers were quick to point out the guitar had only six strings and lacked the middle pickup of a 370. What you see on the page is a 360 – and our shame for not double-checking the label on the photo's archive sleeve. Our apologies for the confusion.



NANCY WILSON

One Heart

The Covid-19 pandemic halted much of our lives, but there was a silver lining. Many musicians who couldn't tour or record normally were able to make new music, including long-dreamed-of projects.

One such musician was Nancy Wilson. The legendary Heart guitarist/vocalist finally had the time to record her first solo album, *You and Me*. She'd done side band projects such as the Lovemongers (with sister, Ann) and Roadcase Royale, but the emotional ballads, tough rockers, and inspired covers on *You and Me* are her own vision.

Would this album have happened without the lockdown?

"I always intended to do something like this and always felt there wasn't enough time inside the Heart vortex because we're a hard-working rock band doing lots of touring and lots of projects," Wilson said. "I might have actually done it, but maybe not in this particular time slot. It forced my hand to *use* the time."

You and Me was recorded primarily at Wilson's home studio. She used her '63 Telecaster, a signature Martin HD-35, and a Gibson mandolin while working remotely and trading files

Nancy Wilson: Ricky Steel.

with guests including Sammy Hagar, Duff McKagan, and Taylor Hawkins.

"I had a little studio apartment to keep my stuff set up and not worry about the racket I'd be making!" Wilson said, laughing. "It's a building outside the house, and it was freeing to have that space where I could go blast guitars with my Deluxe and my Telecaster, and record and write. I took full advantage of the blessing inside the greater curse to be afforded the time to woodshed."



Wilson doesn't think *You and Me* resembles Heart, but she wasn't consciously avoiding comparisons.



Wilson with her signature Epiphone Fanatic.

"The album has its own sound because I mainly sing it myself, so it doesn't try to compete with Heart whatsoever. I always wanted to sing more, and I got to really take big license as a singer. Even though I'm not the greatest singer on the planet, like my sister is, I had so much fun doing it. I'm the grateful character-actor of a singer!

"I wasn't intentionally trying to avoid the Heart sound, which is Ann's vocals inside the rock context, with ballads and big rockers."

Most of the songs are collaborations, but Wilson did write a few herself. She attributes her self-confidence as a solo songwriter to scoring films for her ex-husband, writer/director Cameron Crowe.

"When I started to do scores, for *Almost Famous* and all that stuff, it was really freeing for me as a musician. For one thing, I didn't have to worry about lyrics for a while. That's the worst part about songwriting for me – feeling adequate enough as a lyricist," said Wilson, who scheduled a concert with the Seattle Symphony in July and would like to do more in other U.S. cities.

A *You and Me* highlight is "4 Edward," Wilson's acoustic instrumental tribute to Eddie Van Halen. She had once given him an acoustic when he told her he didn't have one.

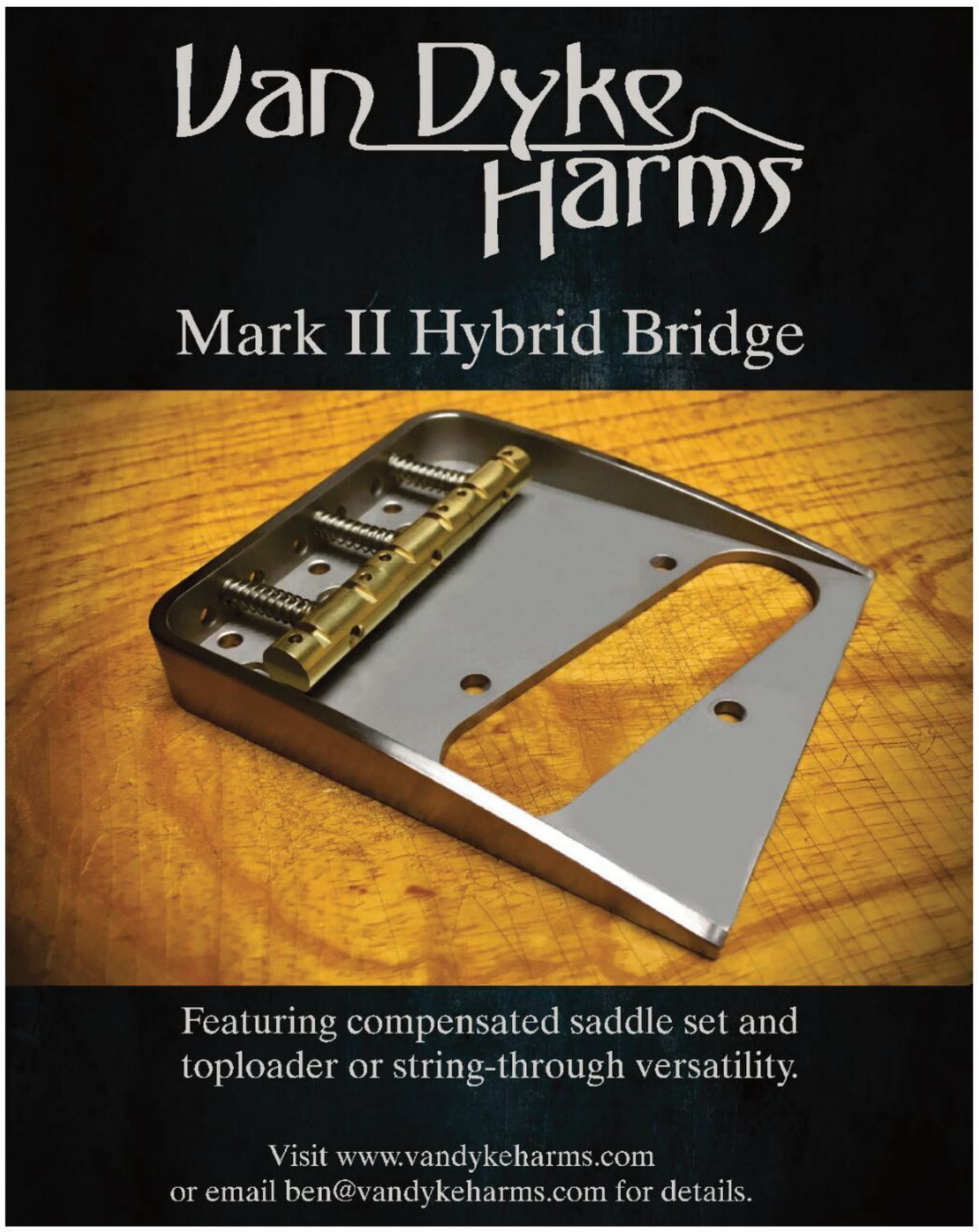
"I'm doing a definite tip of the hat to him – a melodic piece from 'Jump.' I recall the basic structure of what I heard that one morning at the crack of dawn that he played for me over the phone after I gave him that acoustic. Like all of his great writing, I remembered that a lot of it is major chords, not minor chords. That echoes his eight-mile smile that he always had on his face when he was playing.

"I needed to not get too bluesy with it. I had a little piece recorded in my phone that I've used a few times on stage for the intro to 'Crazy on You,' and thought I could use that, a little bit of 'Jump,' and harmonics that echo his uplifting, heavenly sound. I tried to figure out how to do his hammer-on thing on acoustic, but I tell you, I could not achieve it. It would've been cool, but I think that belongs in the land of electric guitar."

She's also celebrating her new signature Epiphone Nancy Wilson Fanatic.

"It's a guitar you can really go over the top with – a dirty sound, a big distortion thing depending on the amp, of course. It can go to the big, fat, dirty, cool rock sound, and with the five-way toggle you can go many other places with it," Wilson said. "Lots of tones! And I wanted it to be affordable." ***– Bret Adams***

Nancy Wilson: Sacha Jonathan Guzy.

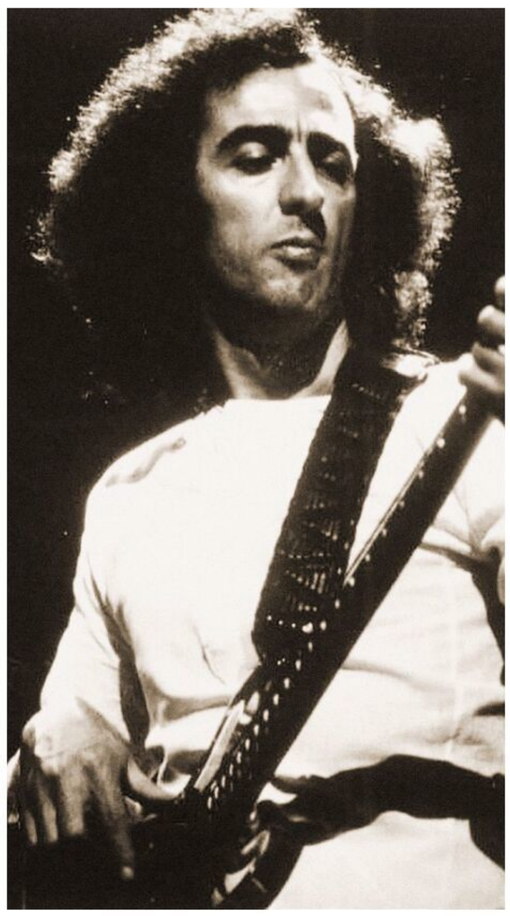




IN MEMORIAM



Jeff Labar



Rick Laird



Ellen McIlwaine

JEFF LABAR

Jeff Labar, guitarist in the ’80s hard-rock band Cinderella, died July 14. He was 58.

Labar was born in Darby, Pennsylvania, and grew up in Upper Darby. Inspired by an older brother, he started playing guitar and joined Cinderella in 1985, just prior to the band recording its first album, *Night Songs*, for Mercury Records. He contributed to all four Cinderella albums and remained with the band until it dissolved in 2017. He is survived by his parents, wife, son, and extended family.

RICK LAIRD

Rick Laird, bassist and founding member of Mahavishnu Orchestra, died from lung cancer on July 4. He was 80.

Laird was born in Dublin in 1941. His mother played piano, his father the ukulele; Rick started playing both at age three. At five, he was able to read sheet music as he began lessons on guitar and piano. At 12, he began lessons in Spanish guitar, but simultaneously took interest in jazz when his mother bought a pair of drum brushes for him and made him play along to records.

At 16, he moved with his father to New Zealand, where he bought a Maton guitar and learned chords while playing along to songs on the radio. Hearing an Oscar Peterson record with bassist Ray Brown, he started to play bass lines on his guitar before buying a six-string bass. Two weeks later, he joined a group in Auckland. At 18, Laird became a full-time musician. His first band split, but he joined another that performed throughout New Zealand. At 19, he moved to Australia to become part of Sydney’s active jazz scene. There, he scored gigs backing top musicians including Don Burrows.

In ’62, he moved to England, where he studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and played in The Brian Auger Group, which included guitarist John McLaughlin. After refusing Auger’s request that he switch from upright to electric bass, Laird quit and soon became house bassist at Ronnie Scott’s Jazz Club, where he backed Wes Montgomery and other notables.

In ’71, Laird and McLaughlin formed Mahavishnu Orchestra with the intent of fusing jazz and rock with Indian classical music and other forms. The group, with Laird on electric bass, released *The Inner Mounting Flame* and *Birds of Fire*, along with the live *Between Nothingness & Eternity* before dissolving mid decade.

Laird then began touring the world, backing a string of esteemed jazzers including Joe Henderson, Stan Getz, and Chick Corea. In ’79, he released his only solo album, *Soft Focus*. By the mid ’80s, he transitioned away from life as a musician, shifting to photography; he did shoots for fellow musicians, portraits, and stock photography for agencies. He continued to write and record music, but didn’t release the work publicly.

Laird is survived by a daughter, a sister and brother, and his partner, Jane Meryll. ***– Ward Meeker***

ELLEN MCILWAINE

Blues guitarist/singer Ellen McIlwaine, who emerged as part of the ’60s folk scene in Greenwich Village, died June 23 after being diagnosed with esophageal cancer six weeks prior. She was 75.

Born in Nashville in 1945, McIlwaine was adopted by missionary parents who moved to Japan when she was two; as a child she was exposed to Japanese folk and classical music as well as American blues and R&B on local radio stations, along with the Grand Ole Opry on Armed Services Radio.

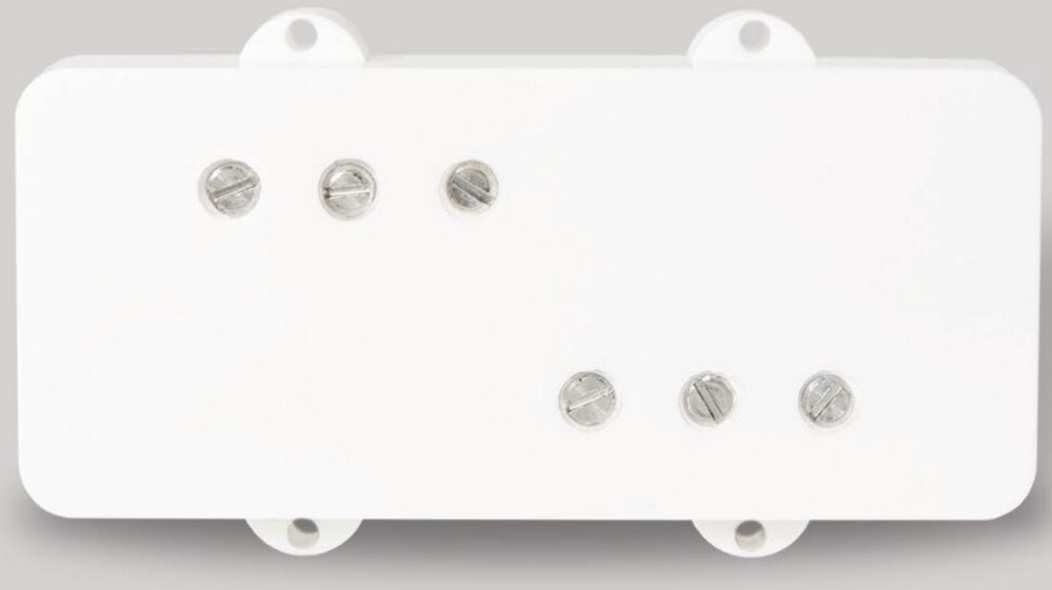
When her family moved to Atlanta, McIlwaine discovered guitar while studying at an art school. After cutting her teeth performing in local coffee houses, in 1966 she moved to New York City, where she scored a six-nights-per-week gig at the Café Au Go Go and opened for Muddy Waters and John Hammond. Her slide-blues solo act became popular and she shared stages with Richie Havens, Mississippi John Hurt, Jimi Hendrix, and others.

In the early ’70s, she recorded two solo albums, and in ’74 was the only female contributor to *The Guitar Album*, which included Link Wray, Rory Gallagher, John McLaughlin, and Roy Buchannan. McIlwaine maintained a busy career through the next four decades, highlighted by her 1982 album *Everybody Needs It* with Jack Bruce, a 1990 tour with Johnny Winter, work on several film scores, an array of collaborations with artists in several musical genres, being featured in the documentary *A Slide Through Time*, participating in Patty Larkin’s La Guitara ensemble and Sue Foley’s Guitar Women tour, and being interviewed for the 2013 Hendrix documentary *Hear My Train A Comin’*.

McIlwaine moved to Calgary in 1991 to be part of an active regional blues scene. Her final studio album, *Mystic Bridge*, was recorded in 2006, but she continued to perform locally, and in 2019 received the Toronto Blues Society’s Maple Blues lifetime achievement award. ***– Ward Meeker***

Jeff Labar: Hector Acevedo/Zuma. Ellen McIlwaine: Brian Zahorodniuk.

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JERRY DOUGLAS

Helping Hiatt

In April of 2020, Jerry Douglas and his band were set to back singer/songwriter John Hiatt on his new album, *Leftover Feelings*, then play a joint tour. The pandemic, of course, delayed everything for a year.

Hiatt has worked with great slide players in the past, including Sonny Landreth and Ry Cooder. Douglas enjoyed falling into that groove with him, and the experience was heightened by using Douglas' band – guitarist Mike Seal, fiddler Christian Sedelmyer, and upright bassist Daniel Kimbro.

Hiatt's voice, Douglas says, "...is a character in his life. He's like Willie Nelson or Tom Waits. You know who it is immediately. The thing I want to do when I'm playing with a singer is to keep them front and center. You style your backup line to accentuate what they say and keep the light on them."

As accompanists, the band shares that goal. On the rockabilly flavored "Long Black Cadillac," they created aggressive rhythmic backing.

"I've been asked several times, 'Who's playin' drums?' But there aren't any," said Douglas, who also produced the album.

Seal provided particular empathy on the somber "Light of the Burning Sun," which is based on a tragedy involving Hiatt's oldest brother.

"There's one place where the policeman tells his mother what's happened," Douglas explains. "I don't know where Mike got this, but it sounds like the bottom dropped out. It just framed it so perfectly."

For the ballad "Buddy Boy," Douglas created a string-quartet feel with Kimbro and Sedelmyer. He used his Jason DuMont Rodeo lap steel through an amp on "I'm in Asheville." "It sounds like another string part, because it's got the sustain," he noted. "I keep vibrato to a minimum."

Recording at RCA Studio B, site of historic recordings by Elvis Presley, Chet Atkins, the Everly Brothers, Dolly Parton, Waylon Jennings, and Willie Nelson added to everyone's enthusiasm. Douglas had jammed there with Atkins in the distant past.

"The room has its own sound. It's got a tile floor and that funky acoustic tile on the ceiling and in the walls. But much of the sound comes from that floor; you can't get rid of it, so you have to make it your friend and use it to your advantage. We cut it all live. It's really hard to do any kind of overdub in that room because it's so live."

Hiatt's vocal and guitar were separately miked, but the vocal mic picked up ample guitar.

"We couldn't overdub vocals because we'd have to do the guitar at the same time."

Douglas says Hiatt is a solid rhythm player who accompanied himself with two vintage banner-logo Gibson J-45s. "One's just a little bit brighter than the other, but they're great because they ride on top of all the low-end [from] the band. They have a lot of upper-mids that keep everything clean. That's why the bass is so clear."

On the album, the producer played his Jerry Douglas Blackbeard resophonic, the culmination of 15 years collaborating with luthier Paul Beard. "I told him that the first real Dobro I ever saw was black and had a red fretboard. He said, "Nobody will want a red fretboard.' I said, 'Just humor me. Build me one.' And now it's the biggest selling guitar he has."

The Blackbeard includes a Fishman Nashville resophonic pickup he helped design. "It's two pieces – a ceramic part and a wooden part. It's basically a piezo."

A Lollar foil pickup occupies the neck position. Both the Blackbeard and DuMont have Hipshot DoubleShot tailpieces that allow him to switch from G to D tunings.

Onstage, he carries a series of pedals and runs the pickup through a signature-model Fishman Aura with 16 microphone image settings; his favorite emulates the classic RCA 77 ribbon mic. When playing with amplified instruments and drums, he adds, "I'll go to a brighter microphone (image) like a Neumann U-67."

With covid in the rearview, Douglas and his band look forward to touring with Hiatt.

"You don't *know* a song when you're recording it," he reflects. "You learn it later. The record's good and it sounds great, but it's going to sound better when we get to know it and get out on the road and play it a few times in front of people. That's when it really comes to life." ***– Rich Kienzle***

Jerry Douglas: Patrick Sheehan.

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GUTHRIE GOVAN

Aristocratic Guitar

Guthrie Govan is at times more stunt pilot than conventional guitarist – his superhero skills mean he can play almost anything. Fortunately, with the Aristocrats, he deploys insane chops in the service of instrumentals that avoid the trappings of shred in favor of breathtaking rock-fusion.

Govan's work can be heard alongside bassist Bryan Beller and drummer Marco Minnemann on the new album, *Freeze! Live in Europe*. He recently gave *VG* the backstage scoop.

This record sounds like the Aristocrats are having fun onstage – as if you're genuinely engaged and *playing* with each other.

Essentially, that's it! We do have a serious side in that we really care about playing as well as possible, but we also have an understanding that it's okay for anyone to veer off on a tangent if inspiration should suddenly strike.

Everyone in the trio gets to be the lead instrument – it's not just shred guitar over a heavy rhythm section.

Thank you, that's precisely what we're trying to achieve. It's heartening to hear the mission statement coming across loud and clear.

"Spanish Eddie" is whimsical, but with dazzling guitarmanship. Does the trio map-out parts?

We never write anything out. Whenever one of us writes a new song, it always takes the form of an audio demo and we send MP3s to each other. In the case of "Spanish Eddie," I wrote a lot of detailed harmonic parts. The jam section in the middle, before the silly pseudo-flamenco breakdown, consists of nothing more elaborate than a basic chord progression. The ostinato guitar section sounds suspiciously like two-handed tapping, but it's a combination of open strings and regular hammer-ons in drop-D tuning.

Who are your influences?

When I started, my musical world revolved around '50s rock-and-roll like Elvis and Chuck Berry, but that morphed into more solo-centric players like Clapton and Hendrix. A big turning point came when I was 13 or 14 years old, and discovered the music of Frank Zappa, Steve Vai, and Yngwie Malmsteen. That was a double-barreled wake-up call, and somehow made the guitar feel new and unfamiliar again. I had a jazz-fusion epiphany in my teenage years, and would single out John Scofield as a player who struck me as a bridge between rock and the esoteric realms of chromaticism. I was also aware of the mighty Steve Morse and always had a particular soft spot for *High Tension Wires*. That record is really eclectic from a stylistic perspective.

What is that unusual effect in "Get It Like That" – a ring modulator?

Indeed it is! In my current live rig, all of the effects are provided by a Fractal FX-8, and its ring modulator has an optional pitch-tracking function. I need to travel relatively light, so my touring rig consists of the FX-8, a Victory V30 MkII head, and two Charvel Guthrie Govan guitars packed into a double Enki case so they could be checked as a single piece of baggage. We rent 2x12 or 4x12 cabinets at each gig. My drop-D guitar for that track was an ash-bodied variant of the Charvel design, whereas its standard-tuning sibling features the original basswood body/maple top construction.

There are a million superstrats on the market. What makes your Charvel different?

My goals with this model came largely from the way I play, which covers a fair amount of stylistic ground. I wanted a solidbody that could sound believable across a wide range of genres rather than serving simply as a "shred machine." I was later happy to learn that John Mayer treated himself to one of my Charvel models and deemed it to have tonal merit. I thought that was quite a compliment, coming as it did from a great player who isn't the target demographic for that guitar.

You have some rabid fans. Do you still get visited by the "guitar jury"?

The guitar-jury concept evokes memories of a group of enthusiasts who used to frequent my hometown jazz-fusion gigs years back. They would begin their evening by imbibing alcohol with commendable enthusiasm. By the end of the second set, it wasn't uncommon to hear them shouting for specific techniques in the middle of my solos; "Do a three-octave sweep arpeggio!" or "More tapping!"

How has your audience evolved?

When we started the Aristocrats a decade ago, people would typically come to a show hoping to witness some kind of shred supergroup, demonstrating death-defying feats of technical wizardry. Nowadays, there's a more-palpable sense of fun in the air. It's great to see an audience absorbing the sheer joy we derive from playing music together, rather than just waiting to be impressed by instrumental trickery. I'm grateful there are people out there who feel so strongly about the way we play. These are the people who enable me to make music for a living. ***– Pete Prown***

Guthrie Govan: Daniel Work.

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GREG KOCH

Making It Work



The latest release from guitar master Greg Koch is *From the Up'Nuh* with his son, Dylan, on drums and B3-whiz Toby Marshall on organ. Collectively, they're the Koch Marshall Trio, and they cover a lot of ground. Koch recently let us in on what he has been doing during the pandemic, and discussed the new version of his Reverend Gristlemaster guitar.

In 2017, the Trio recorded *Toby Arrives*, but delays with a label kept it from being released. By early 2020, Koch opted to release it himself. The timing, he admits, was questionable.

"Our agent asked what was the point of putting out a record when we can't go on the road. I said, 'Well, I'm doing five live streams a week, I think we can reach a sufficient amount of people that might actually purchase the record.' Lo and behold, I was correct. We did a presale and it was more successful than anything we'd done in the past."

We sat with him to dig deeper.

So, independent release seems to be the way for you to go.

Yeah, and now we have almost another whole record done. We'll probably put the spit shine on that over the summer and get it out in the fall.

How do the three of you come up with the tunes?

What usually happens when we get together is we start jamming; Toby and Dylan start playing and I'll join in. Otherwise, it comes in different ways. Some tunes I have pretty much done, then I think, "What if I added this here?" I have tunes in GarageBand or demo on my phone and occasionally they'll sneak out, and I'll think "S**t, I forgot about that one."

The last year has been weird for musicians, but you've been a presence on the internet.

I think there's aspects of the pandemic that will continue to happen. Like live streams. Toby comes down here and he makes better dough than he would playing in whatever bar bands. When we do a live stream, he makes a respectable stipend. We do an hour and a half and he's like, "Why would I play in a hellhole until 2 o'clock in the morning for 100 bucks?" In some aspects, it was horrible for venues and musicians who didn't have ways of generating income, but people who had the opportunity and weren't stifled were able to capitalize on it. For me, it was an easy pivot. A lot of the stuff I was doing with Fishman, they wanted before the pandemic to do even more on the internet. They've really helped us dial-in, visually and audio-wise, for the streams from home. Then I started doing the Wildwood Guitars thing from home. And I started a podcast that's doing very well. All of those different things are going well. I enjoy going places, playing in front of people, and interacting with people, but more than anything I enjoy playing. If I can go downstairs, do some online things, a couple of Skype lessons, and hang out with my fam, it's not a bad way to roll.

How did the latest version of the Gristlemaster come about?

I've always loved P-90s – love the sound, don't like the noise. When I started the relationship with Fishman, I thought it would be nice to do something like that. It took a while because of a supply-and-demand issue. Once we put the first Reverend guitar out, I toyed with the idea of the same shape, but with a Gibson scale, a set neck, a Bigsby, and then maybe collaborate with Fishman and come up with a signature set of P-90s for that. It was a long process, but it all came to fruition. ***– John Heidt***



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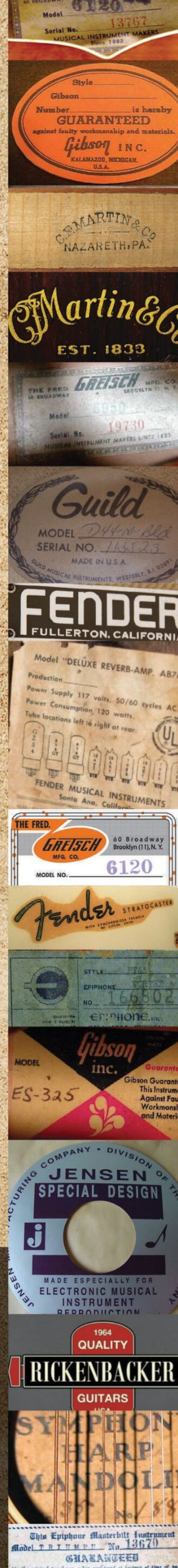
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SUNNY WAR

Art & War

Sunny War's latest album, *Simple Syrup*, digs deep into the complexities of the human experience. As an acoustic fingerstylist who draws inspiration from the world, being quarantined has been a challenge. You'd never know that from her new album, as she shares real stories of injustice and love in a troubled world. The music features cello and electric guitar, which expands War's musical vision with richness and depth.

Patiently waiting for Covid to go away, she shared the realization with other artists who also felt stuck.

"It's hard to play when you don't know if you're going to play again," she said.

Did the pandemic itself or being unable to tour stop you from writing?

No, but I haven't been *as* creative. If you mostly write about stuff that happens or get inspired by living, it's hard. I can't write about the same day every day for a year.

Was *Simple Syrup* written before the pandemic?

It was written in 2019 except for "Its Name Is Fear." It was supposed to come out in 2020, but all the touring got canceled. Some of it was finished during the quarantine.

It's cool to hear your acoustic techniques with other instrumentation.

The band is Aaron Davis on bass and Paul Allen on drums, and we played most of the songs live. The cello and saxophone were added later. The cello player is Niall Taro Ferguson. Also, Milo Gonzalez plays electric guitar on two songs. It was cool because that was the first time I ever played with a band live in the studio. That's Milo on "Like Nina."

Why do you have two versions of "Mamas Milk?"

Because the saxophone player messed up and said, "Oh s**t!" You can barely hear it, but we thought it was funny, so we left it in. They said to make one without it so they could play it on the radio. You can't even hear it. I don't get why you can say "Bitch" on the radio, but you can't say, "S**t."

What's the story behind "Deployed and Destroyed?"

I wrote it after a friend called me from jail. I met him in Venice. He was a busker. He was a veteran, and he started doing drugs and going in and out of jail. The V.A. never really helped him. If they could have helped him, things would have been a lot different. He needed medication and he slowly got worse and worse. There was a lot of stuff they needed him to do with all the paperwork, but it's not set up for someone who has PTSD. A lot of homeless people are veterans. They have mental stuff they didn't have before they were in combat.

Are you still searching for things to express on the guitar?

I have to get an electric. I can't keep playing the same stuff all the time. I gotta change it up. I might fix one of my old guitars that has been broken for a while. I had an Epiphone Les Paul that my mom got me when I was 12, and even though it's a s****y guitar, I think it sounds cool. I'm still playing my '89 Guild True American, which is the same guitar I've been playing for years. I like to use an amp when I can, but sometimes I run it through the board. I've also been thinking about pedals, but I need to play a different guitar – maybe a hollowbody electric.

What are your plans for the summer?

I have some shows, and I want to start on another album. I'm working on a couple of songs now, and while some people are fine meeting up and playing, some aren't, so I haven't had access to the studio. I want to do this as a band. I have to keep writing and have something ready. I make demos on my phone, and I've recorded some things for the band War & Pierce, which is me with Chris Pierce's lyrics. But I don't like [working alone] much because I get stuck doing the same track over and over. Being in a band stops me from being too obsessive. War & Pierce is more commercial and has harmonica and a mixture of drums and programmed beats. It leads me to do creative things that I wouldn't do naturally.

What are your plans to promote *Simple Syrup*?

I'm planning a virtual release show which is as sad as it sounds (laughs). It just sucks. I can't say I'm going to take it on the road or anything. I'm gonna take it on the internet (laughs)! See you on Zoom! – ***Oscar Jordan***

Sunny War: Randi Malkin Steinberger.



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MIKE ZITO

Reemerging with *Resurrection*

It's obvious why guitarist Mike Zito's 2020 album was titled *Quarantine Blues*, but he's compelled to clarify the reasoning behind his new release being dubbed *Resurrection*.

"'Resurrection' was a song I'd been working on for years, and it seemed the perfect (album) title for many reasons," he explained. "Yes, maybe there's light at the end of all this, but I was also making the first album on my own label, Gulf Coast Records. It doesn't really have any songs that are pandemic-inspired at all. The title track is a love song."

The album was produced by Grammy winner David Z, known for his work with Prince. While Zito utilized Z's services on previous albums, they hadn't collaborated in several years.

"David is a genius when it comes to mixing and sound and space and rhythm," he said. "He has a way of taking the song and making it sound three-dimensional. He can take a straight-ahead rhythm part and move it around in a way that gives it a bigger purpose. I know that sounds heady; he just brings it to the front of the mix and the background at the same time. I don't know what the hell he's doing, but the guitars never sound flat or two-dimensional when David mixes them."

Resurrection contains plenty of loud blues riffs, and Zito used instruments intended to garner unique sounds; the opening track, a cover of J.J. Cale's "I'll Make Love to You Anytime," features a Heritage H-157 on the raucous slide licks.

And Zito had a go-to setup for the album.

"I almost always use a Telecaster," he said. "I have several – quite a few that I like from Mike Delaney at Delaney Guitars, and of course some Fenders. Nothing really old.

"Recently, I became aware of K-Line guitars and Chris Kroenlein, in St. Louis. He makes guitars just a few blocks from my childhood home, and made me a Texola, which is a Tele bridge with a mini-humbucker at the neck. The neck and headstock are Tele, but the body is offset like a Jazzmaster. It's a really cool guitar and quickly became my favorite. I used that bridge pickup on 90 percent of the album."

The delicate tones on "In My Blood" and "When It Rains" came from a rarely heard piece.

"It's an old Harmony Stratotone a friend in Missouri sold me a few years back," said Zito. "It has .013-gauge flatwounds on it, and just sounds super dark and awesome."

More than one song employs horns, and Zito's touring band now includes two horn players.

Asked to rank the three covers on the album – the Cale track along with a booming interpretation of Blind Faith's "Presence of the Lord," and "Evil," by Willie Dixon – Zito has to give it some thought.

"I like them *all*," he said, diplomatically. "My version of 'Evil' is actually a cover of a cover done by Luther Allison; I just love the groove. "Presence of the Lord" is one I've always wanted to perform, and now feel the spirit in myself to do so with purpose. But I think the J.J. Cale song is my favorite. I'm so enamored with his songwriting – his ability to tell a deep story with very few words and chords. I turned 50 last year and the song sums up my being these days. I really like playing blues licks over different chord progressions. It's just a different vibe. I am always a fan of blues guitar licks over pop songs – like Clapton in the '90s with *Journeyman*. I hope to work my songwriting in that direction."

In May, Zito and His Big Blues Band finally got to play a small tour.

"That was great!" he enthused. "People were ready to be out again and their enthusiasm was pretty incredible. They were excited to hear new music and we were thrilled to be playing. I think the year off gave me and the band a chance to start over, musically. I had time to think about what I wanted to sound like and what I wanted to play – this album sums up both.

"We've been playing several songs from the new album live and 'Presence of the Lord' is probably the most popular and well-received."

The road still beckons to Zito and associates, and he has vowed to "…tour as much as humanly possible. I miss the people and the loud music." ***– Willie G. Moseley***

Mike Zito: Scott Lukes.



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DAVE WYNDORF

Cover Up

Like most rock bands, the men of Monster Magnet found themselves with a lot of time on their hands once Covid effectively ended tours in 2020. But instead of going into hibernation, Dave Wyndorf and company went to work in the studio, recording an all-covers album, *A Better Dystopia*, which focuses on proto-metal obscurities (only the hardest of hardcore record collectors will be well-versed with Poo-Bah, Table Scraps, the Scientists, etc.). And as with previous Monster Mag offerings, it rocks... ferociously.

How did an all-covers LP come about?

It came about because we were raring to go. We were on a two-pronged Powertrip tour – the first half in Europe, second half in the U.S. We'd finished the European part in early March and just made it out of Europe before all cities started going down with Covid; Italy had all those deaths two days after we were in Milan. We were riding in a bus in Spain, saying, "This thing looks like it's going to get really big." At that point, everybody was guessing. So, we did our gigs in Spain then came home, and we had a three-week wait before the American tour, which we then had to cancel. Then, everybody in the rock business flipped out; "What are we going to do? We're all out of a job!" We looked around, explored options, and then I brought out the cover-record thing. I had the idea in my back pocket for years, and this was the perfect time to do it.

How did you select tracks?

I had these songs in my head for a long time. I'm a big garage-rock fan, big underground-rock fan – that specific time between the end of psychedelia and the beginning of what we call "mainstream rock." Before FM radio got money-smart and started programming, there was this weird time in between – about '68 to '72 – where FM radio was a place for anything. And that's where this stuff would show up. It didn't show up on any charts. It was below the hits, below the Top 100. Under that was just a bunch of leftover freaks – proto-metallers. I'd buy these albums that were on major labels but were basically write-offs. A lot of obscure "What the f**k?" records.

To me, that was the perfect reason to do a covers album. This stuff is really cool, hardly anybody has ever heard it, some of the stuff was [originally] recorded so badly, so I thought, "What if we record better-fidelity versions of these songs, and most important, put them in sequence that sounded like an album by the same band?"

For awhile you were primarily using Gibson SGs. What about now?

This record was done with very few guitars. It was a Les Paul, an SG – I think it's a '64 – with a Bigsby on it, and we used a Strat for one song. I ran a 50-watt Marshall – an older one – and every once in a while we'd switch out a different cabinet, but mostly switched mics.

Do you have any vintage gear in your collection?

I have fuzzboxes galore – Old Echoplexes, original Maestro stuff, Electro-Harmonix, Fuzz Face, a couple of British Tape Echoes.

What's your most obscure stompbox?

I've got this one thing – it has nothing but the name "Columbia" on it. I've never found out what it was. It's square, like a giant sugar cube. It's just the most godawful thing you've ever heard. You step on it, and it's this squeezed out, shredding, almost octavating sound. But I think it's only octavating because it's so distorted.

Do you miss the days of being able to find affordable vintage stompboxes?

I think about it *all* the time. How much fun was that? When stuff was just out there and nobody wanted it. I remember when it started to turn. There was one point in the late '80s, when Monster Magnet first started, when I'd go to my local music shop and they'd look in the basement and come up with old Electro-Harmonix pedals, and they'd be original price – "Oh, that'll be $15." New, in the box! That set me off, so I drove up and down New Jersey to every music store that I could think of, and just cleaned them out.

Out of all Monster Magnet albums, which one are you most proud of guitar-wise?

Spine of God and the last three (*Last Patrol*, *Mindf**ker*, and *A Better Dystopia*). I'm not talking songs here, just guitars – the sounds are better, there are more different sounds, and I experimented a lot. And a variety of different guitars – from Gretsch to Gibson, single-coil, double-coil – to amps and all this stuff. It's a feast. – ***Greg Prato*** VG

Dave Wyndorf: Sonia Goldberg.

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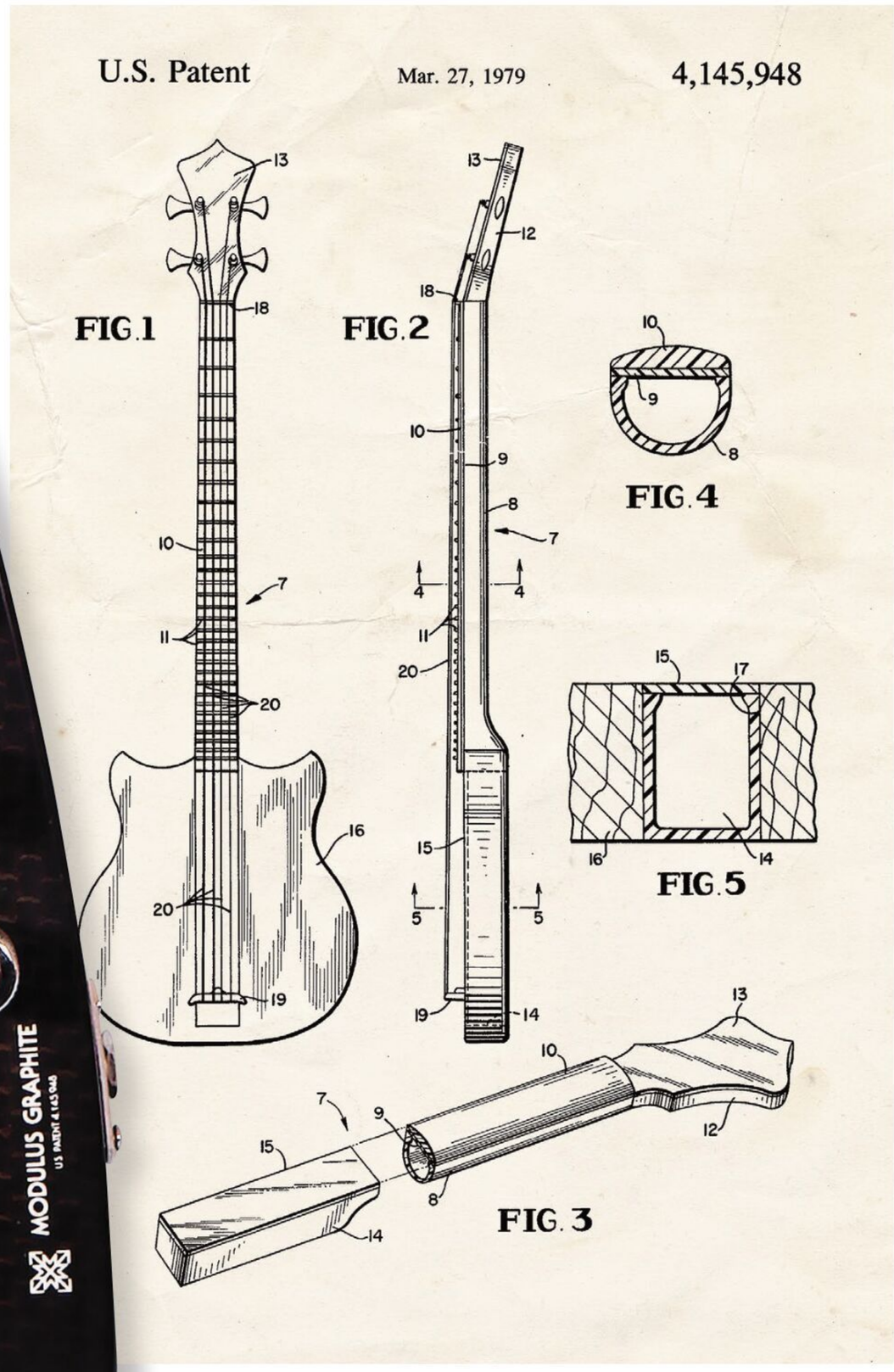
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1983 Modulus Graphite Flight 6 Monocoque



The U.S. Patent granted to Geoff Gould and Rick Turner for a carbon fiber neck.

HIGH-/LOW-TECH

The Modulus Graphite Flight 6 Monocoque

BY MICHAEL WRIGHT

In guitar history, irony is almost always the result of circumstances. The market changes overnight or someone makes a mistake that proves successful, etc. Rarely is the irony planned by a guitar designer, but that's what happened with the Modulus Graphite Flight 6 Monocoque.

While the origins of Modulus Graphite don't qualify as "ironic," they *are* unexpected. The company was conceived in San Francisco by aerospace engineer Geoff Gould, who also played bass. Reportedly, after seeing a Grateful Dead concert in '74 he was particularly impressed by Phil Lesh's hot-rodded Alembic.

Gould's job had him working on a carbon fiber dish antennae for spacecraft including Voyager I. He was struck with the notion that carbon fiber could improve the sustain and stability of electric-bass necks, which had always been a problem. Carbon fiber can be precisely molded, and is strong and stable with excellent, uniform acoustic properties. In its high-strength formulation, in the trade it's known as modulus graphite.

At the time, San Francisco was the home

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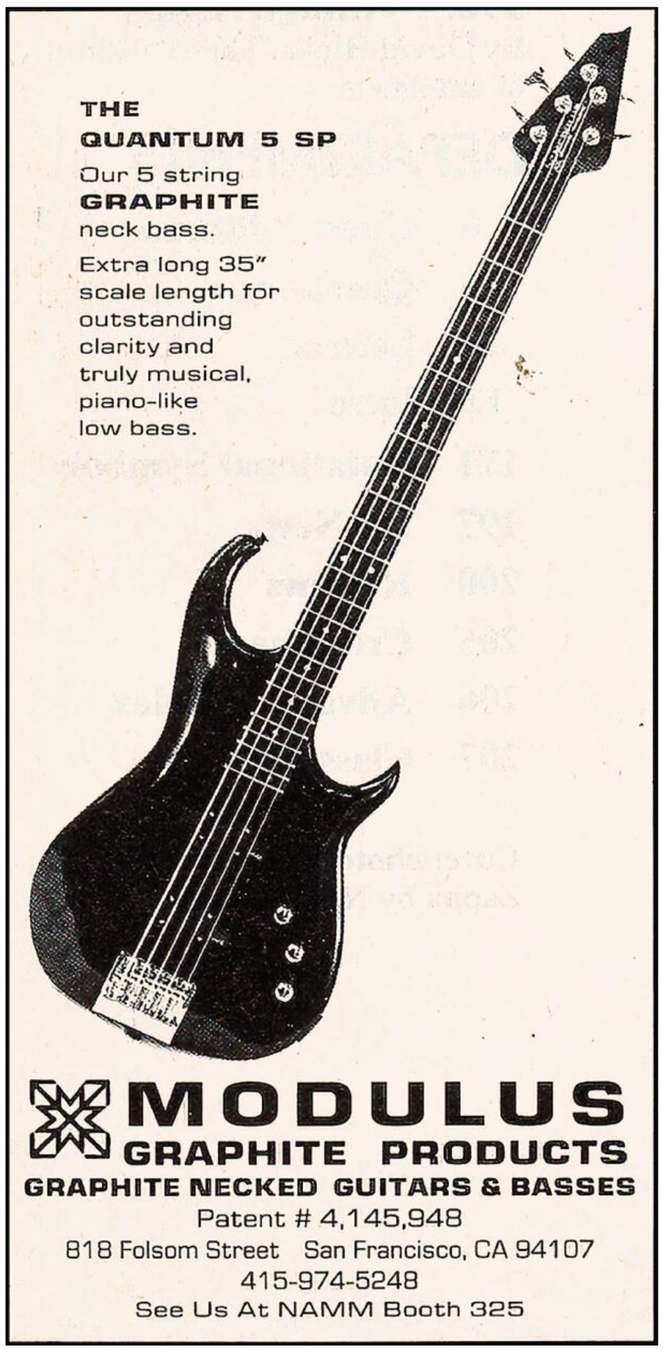
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of Stars, Tobias, and Alembic Guitars, along with Furman Sound and other high-end companies. Gould enlisted the help of Rick Turner, co-founder and luthier at Alembic, which was known as a maker of instruments using exotic timbers with complex electronics and beautiful designs. Together, Gould and Turner figured out how to produce carbon fiber necks. They produced two basses with carbon fiber neck-through construction, selling one to Stanley Clarke, the other to John McVie. They then introduced production prototypes at the January '77 NAMM show, filing a patent application for carbon fiber musical instrument necks the following year (U.S. Patent 4,145,948). Gould opened Modulus Graphite in San Franscisco, initially producing just necks but quickly graduating to complete guitars and basses with highly figured wood bodies.



1987 ad for Modulus Graphite products.

While the inspiration for Modulus Graphite's necks was outer space, the idea that yielded the Flight 6 Monocoque was much more down to Earth; in French, "monocoque" means "single shell." In engineering terms, it refers to replacing the old practice of building an internal frame structure and attaching covering material outside with a method that creates a lightweight form made of a single external skin that has structural properties on its own. In other words, with monocoque, the skin becomes the stress-bearing form, which is far lighter than the old method. Airplane fuselages and certain race cars are monocoque, and the modern "unibody" car is related to the concept.

Well, if you could make an airplane fuselage out of a graphite skin, why not a guitar? And that's just what Modulus Graphite did in 1983, when it introduced the Flight 6 Monocoque; the name becomes self-evident. Flight, because of the airplane inspiration, 6 because it's a six-string, and monocoque because it's made of a single skin of carbon fiber. And headless because some of the most innovative guitars of the time were headless – the Steinberger, Kramer's Duke. Andy Summers played his spare, modern licks on a headless guitar.

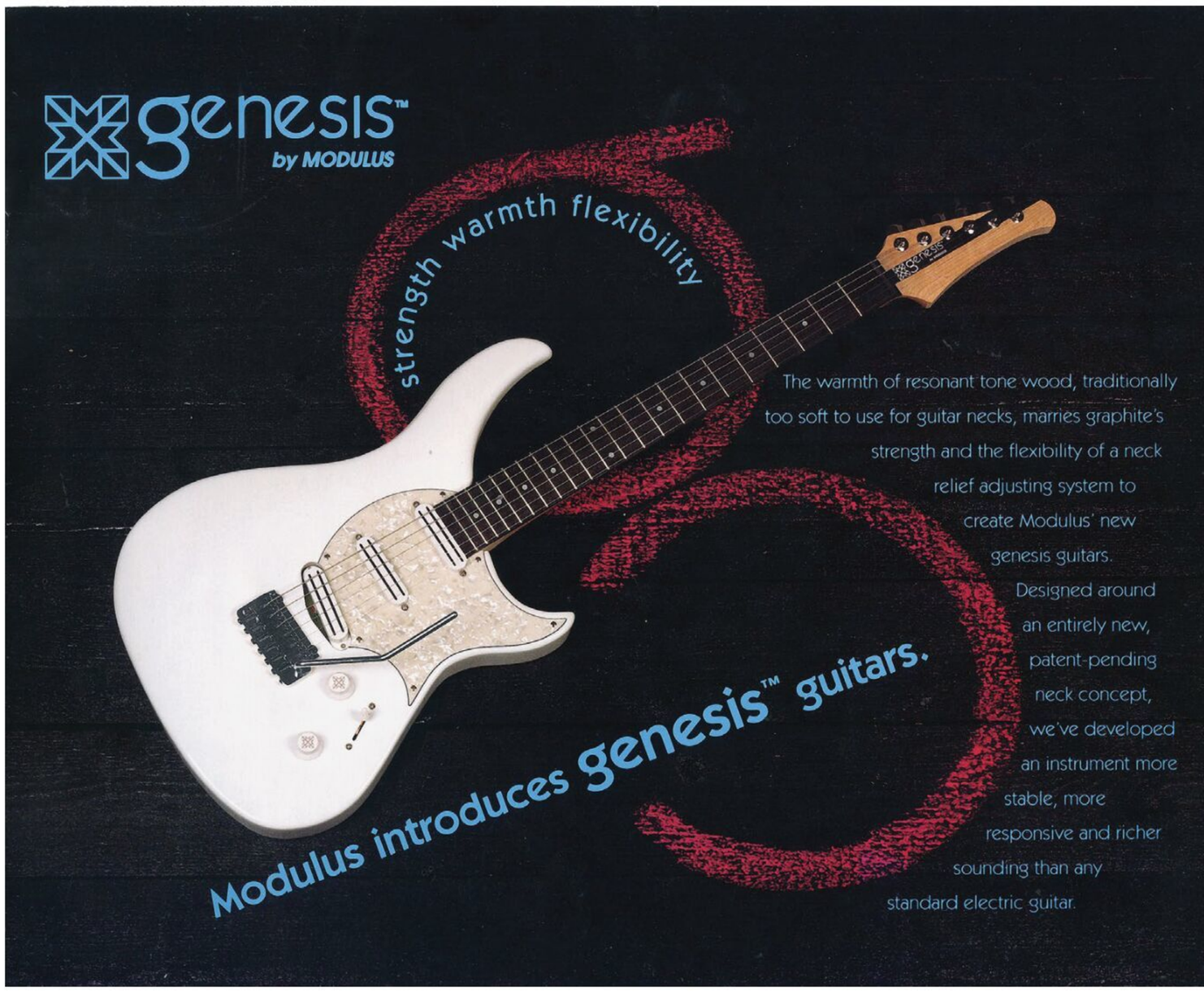
You'd think an ultra-modern construction technique would yield a high-tech guitar concept, with innovative new pickups, fancy electronics, built-in effects, maybe a wireless transmitter. No.

Here's where the deliberate irony comes in. Gould wanted to fuse his way of building a guitar body with retro functionality, so as not to take away from the rest of the guitar (in some ways, the twisted, asymmetrical shape reflects this irony).

Instead, he mounted a pair of simple, old-fashioned humbuckers with a three-way select and one Volume and one Tone control. The bridge pickup is a Seymour Duncan Custom, the neck a Seymour Duncan Jazz. The frets on the integral fingerboard are jumbos. Tuners are sealed Gotohs.

As you might guess, holding this guitar is like holding nothing at all; it's exceptionally light. The pickups are fine, and having tuners on the butt-end is easier than reaching up with your





A 1996 flier for the Modulus Genesis (left) and Modulus' 1989 Blackknife. Graphite guitars.

fretting hand. The guitar sounds and plays great... assuming you're a fan of headless guitars; most of us are so accustomed to navigating the fretboard in relation to a headstock that going headless can be disorienting.

It's not known how many were made, but an online search reveals only images of this very guitar. Interviewed years ago, Gould said "only a few" were ever made, qualifying this for genuine "rare bird" status.

Gould left Modulus Graphite in 1995 to start making his own basses, which he still does. Rick Turner eventually left to start his own guitar company. Modulus Graphite brought in Rich Lasner, who'd had success with Ibanez (Maxxas), Yamaha (Weddington, better Pacificas), and Peavey. Modulus continued to thrive, introducing the successful Genesis guitar line in the late '90s, with graphite core necks surrounded by wood – a concept not unlike Kramer's aluminum necks and Dave Bunker's PBC guitars. However, due in part to the high degree of hand-work, it grew increasingly difficult to stay profitable with labor and the cost of materials. In late 2013, Modulus filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, then emerged under the leadership of Joe Perman, who previously worked for the company. It still exists, making custom high-end basses.

The graphite-neck concept devised by Gould and Turner proved successful, and has periodically turned up on guitars by Ibanez, Westone, Cort, and others. Every once in a while, a builder experiments with bodies made of some synthetic material, as well. However, the Modulus Graphite Flight 6 Monocoque may have been the only time someone used a *single sheet* of carbon fiber to make the whole guitar – ironically, letting players blast off with the most basic of guitar functionality, by design. **VG**





SONIC SATELLITE

Gibson's GA-8 Discoverer

BY DAVE HUNTER

By the end of the 1950s, "space" was the name of the game, and any forward-thrusting gear that hoped to grab a share of the rock-and-roll market was named accordingly.

Fender and Gretsch had gotten into the game early in the decade with the Stratocaster and Duo Jet, and Gibson displayed hipness with the Flying V and Explorer of 1958. By 1960, it was time for amps to begin re-entry.

When it comes to naming rock-intended guitar gear, the suffix "-ette" isn't exactly forceful. That may be enabling outdated gender semantics, but so it was in the late '50s and early '60s. In a world where usherette, bachelorette, and majorette indicate feminine variations; kitchenette, cigarette, and novelette denote diminutives; and leatherette and flannelette imply fakes, it's difficult to squeeze much marketing muscularity out of a name like Gibsonette. Then with the launch of the Discoverer 1 satellite on February 28, 1958, there was a new name ripe for the taking… even if it took Gibson a while to latch on.

Heading into 1960, Gibson finally changed the name of the GA-8 combo from Gibsonette to Discoverer, complete with a bouncy spaceward logo font trailing a cartoonish

1961 GIBSON GA-8 DISCOVERER

- Preamp tube: one 12AX7
- Output tubes: two 6V6GT
- Rectifier: 5Y3
- Controls: Volume, Tone
- Speaker: Single 12" Jensen Special Design Alnico
- Output: approximately 10 watts RMS

Amp courtesy of Retrofret, photos by George Aslaender.

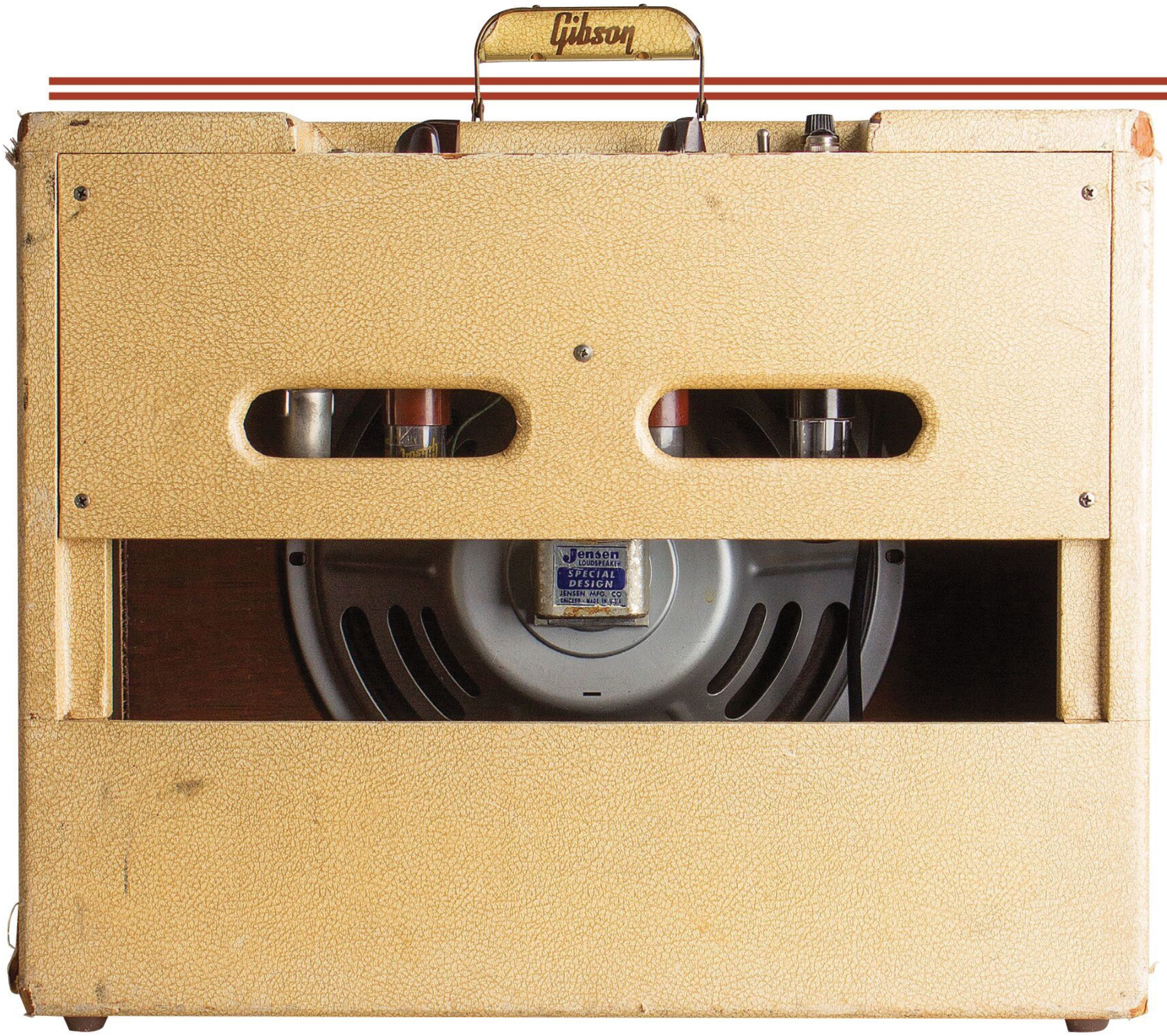
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satellite across the control panel. A far more thrusting go-getter of a moniker, you can imagine it would draw boys of the day to the amp while also making it more acceptable to mature guitarists who's jazz or pop gigs required nothing more than the GA-8's humble 10-watt output. Either way, it boldly leaned into a brave new decade.

While the name was significant in and of itself, alterations to the form and function played an even bigger role in beefing up the GA-8's stature. Through the preceding decade, it had gone from the archaic TV-front look with metal grille to the wide-panel cabinet of many classic Gibson combos of the mid/late '50s, to the minimalist cab with full-frontal baffle and grillecloth. The Discoverer arrived in a similar cabinet in 1960, but received a larger 12" Jensen Special Design Alnico speaker to replace the Gibsonette's 10". And though it's nothing to shout about, Gibson literature gave the Discoverer a one-watt upgrade from the Gibsonette's nine-watt listed rating.

What may be most interesting about the GA-8 throughout its run up to and including this rendition of the Discoverer, though, is its rare and unusual employment of a dual-single-ended output stage. Rather than the common single-ended class-A output stage familiar from amps like the Fender Champ, Vox AC4, and a host of smaller "student" combos offered by virtually all makers of the day, the dual-single-ended stage uses two output tubes wired in parallel, to nominally double the power that one single-ended output tube can produce, while not approaching the capabilities of the same pair configured in push/pull.

Plenty of guitar amps today are marketed as "class A" because of the implications of the term – like "Grade-A beef" – but most are simply cathode-biased push/pull amps with no negative feedback. That arrangement is found in the Fender tweed Deluxe along with the Vox AC15/AC30 and the like, and it's partly responsible for the juicy, harmonically rich tone these amps deliver when pushed to distortion. The thing is, amplification class ratings have nothing to do with the perceived quality of the





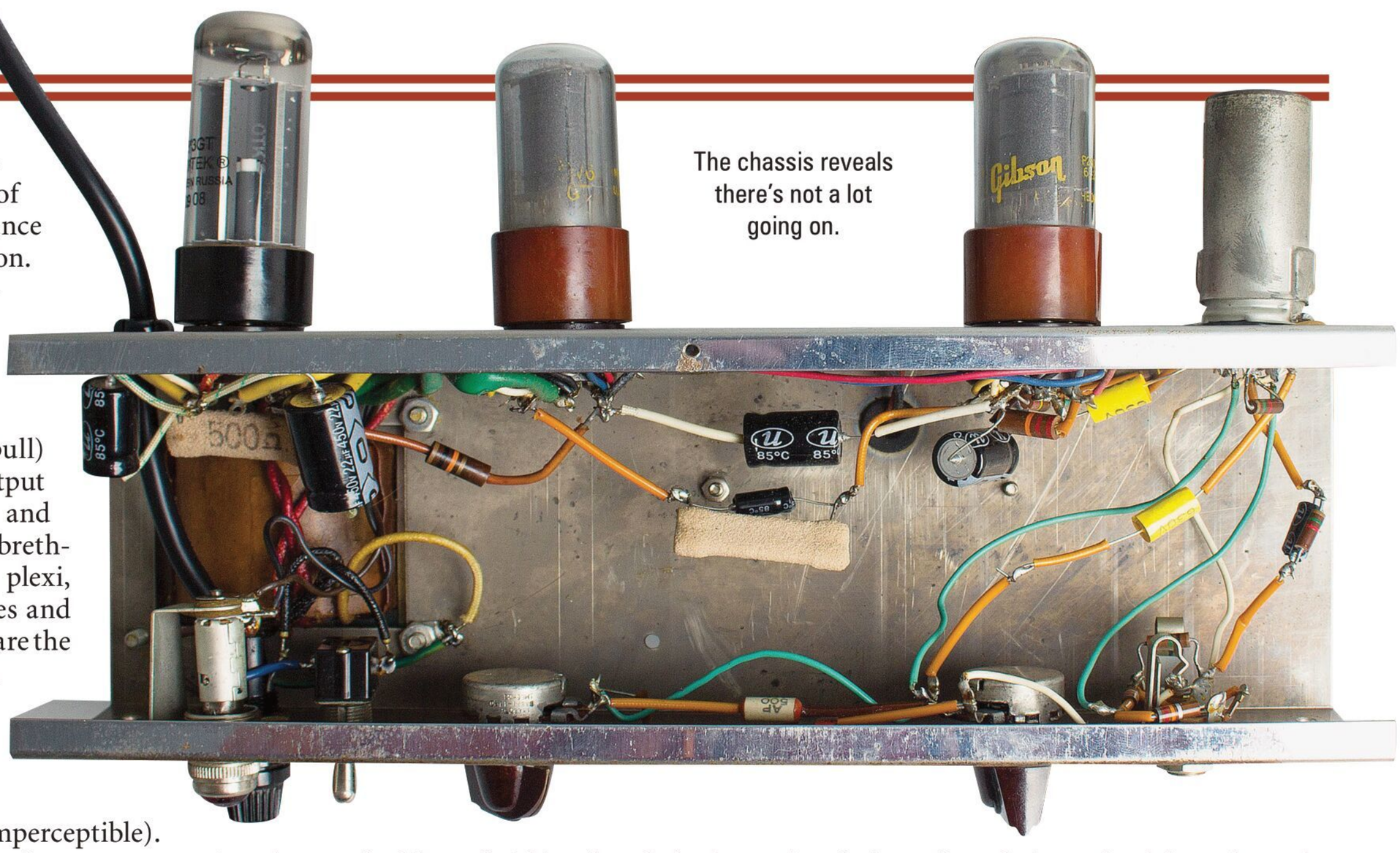
The clear thermoplastic luggage-handle grip reveals the Gibson logo; its embedded swatch of matching Tolex adds a stylish touch. The output transformer date code indicates it could have been shared with another amp in the late '50s.

sound; rather, they indicate a specific measurement of the output tubes' performance before the point of distortion.

One of the definitive elements of a class A output stage, however, is that the tube doesn't shut down during any part of the cycle. In class AB (push/pull) amps with two or more output tubes – the Fender Twin and Deluxe Reverbs and their brethren, Marshall JTM45 and plexi, classic Hiwatts and Oranges and many more – these tubes share the load, each shutting down for a portion of the cycle while the other takes up the task (all of this happens, of course, at a speed that makes the shutdown imperceptible). That's part of what makes such amps more efficient and allows them to create more wattage from any given tube complement relative to a class A amp.

Single-ended amps, on the other hand, are by definition class A since the tube is working on its own and can't shut down during any part of the wave form. Connect two tubes together in parallel in this configuration, as in the GA-8, and each still behaves as a single single-ended tube in that regard, even though they're teaming up to double the amp's wattage.

Given that most irrefutably class A amps are, therefore, single-ended designs, the only way of getting more wattage out of them – if you're looking for that sound and feel in a bigger package – is to double the output tubes in this way (or, of course, to use bigger, more-powerful tubes). For Gibson, however, this likely provided just a simple way of producing a slightly louder amp that could pose as something a bit bigger than, for example, the GA-5 Skylark, the line's challenger to the ubiquitous Champ, while still enabling a simple, affordable amp. For players who like to fetishize the whole class A thing, though, the Discoverer provides a slightly bigger, juicier way of getting there – and that also makes it a real sleeper in the sonic stakes amid other popular vintage amps.



The chassis reveals there's not a lot going on.

Space is the place: Gibson fully capitalizes on the Discoverer image.

Remove the upper panel in back and the GA-8's chassis exhibits rampant simplicity of design. If you ask, "Where's the circuit board?" before you tally the paucity of components, the empty space is partly possible because a single-ended circuit requires no phase inverter since the signal doesn't need to be split and phase-inverted as it would to feed two push/pull tubes. That means elimination of a preamp tube and a handful of related capacitors and resistors. Otherwise, with just a single Volume and Tone control, not much is needed, circuit-wise, so this simple and genuinely point-to-point construction easily suffices.

On the other side of the chassis, the output transformer's code (GA-9-01) seems to tell us it was the same component used on Gibson's GA-9 combo, deleted from the catalog after 1959, unless there was some other form of parts nomenclature. In any case, it's highly possible because the GA-9 was another dual-single-ended design, though it evolved less than the GA-8 and never gained the 12" speaker or the updated cabinet.

Why aren't more amps configured like the GA-8 and lesser-seen GA-9, with genuine class-A dual-single-ended output stages? Possibly because that format has its disadvantages, too. The response is generally spongier, more-compressed overall, and with softer low-end. It also tends to elicit more ambient hum since you don't get the noise-reducing phase cancellation of the push/pull output stage. In addition, because they're working the full cycle, these output stages run their tubes harder and hotter, putting more strain on components.

On the other hand, the same output tubes used in a push/pull circuit (Gibson GA-20/GA-30 or Fender Deluxe) provide more volume and a tighter, crisper, somewhat punchier overall performance. That said, modern makers have used the dual-single-ended approach creatively in amps like Victoria's Regal II, THD's BiValve, and others, so there *are* options for the tone-seekers who feel this could be "their sound." Otherwise, even in very good condition, a vintage GA-8 Discoverer won't break the bank, provided your account holds $900 to $1,250. **VG**



Classics

Kevin Ludwig first became aware of Fenton Robinson in 1975, when he heard Boz Scaggs' version of "Somebody Loan Me a Dime," which spurred him to buy Robinson's 1974 Alligator Records debut album. A few years later, he and a friend traveled from Indianapolis to check out some of Chicago's blues clubs...

"Being young and adventurous, we had *no* plan, and we ended up on Rush Street, then eventually at Wise Fools Pub, where Fenton's name was on the sign out front." Ludwig said. "We popped in to watch, and the first thing I noticed was the beautiful ES-225 he was playing."

A knowledgable player himself, Ludwig was struck by certain details of the guitar, especially the replaced fretboard and a burn mark near the tailpiece.

Twenty years later, a bandmate showed Ludwig a photo of a guitar being sold by local luthier Tom Everett.

"I took one look and said, 'I know that guitar!'

Everett had taken it on trade and was asking $1,200.

"I'd just got a tax refund for about that much, but to make sure, I ordered a Fenton CD that showed the guitar. The burn mark sealed it – Tom had Fenton's guitar!"

Though he worried it might be stolen property, Ludwig also didn't want to let it get away. Researching such things was a challenge in the days before the internet.

"I began by calling Alligator and told the operator I had Fenton's guitar. I asked for his contact information and to speak with Bruce Iglauer (see page 60) to which, the person replied, 'Mr. Iglauer is busy. If you have Fenton Robinson's guitar, you must know how to get in touch with him.' Click."

A bit peeved but undiscouraged, Ludwig then grabbed a copy of *Living Blues* magazine. Editor Jim O'Neal took his call.

"He gave me the name and number of a promoter who booked Fenton, who in turn gave me Fenton's address and explained that Fenton's health was not good. He also warned me that Fenton was suspicious of people because he had been ripped off so many times.

"Along with photos of the guitar, I sent a letter to Fenton asking whether it had been stolen. In short order, I got a reply saying it had indeed been stolen and he'd like to have it back. He included his phone number.

"I called, and Fenton was polite, but guarded. When I told him I'd paid $1,200 for the guitar, he got upset and said I was crazy... the conversation just didn't go well."



Fenton Robinson with his ES-225.

While no less resolute about getting the guitar back to its rightful owner, Ludwig also couldn't afford to simply give it away. He called O'Neal again, recalling the unproductive conversation with Robinson. O'Neal suggested he reach out to Dick Shurman, who produced Robinson's *Nightflight* album.

"When I called Dick to explain the story along with my frustrations, he immediately offered to help. A few days later, he called to say he'd talked to Bruce Iglauer, who wanted to talk to me. So I finally had a conversation with Bruce, who said Alligator would reimburse me for the guitar."

With Robinson's blessing, Alligator bought the 225 on his behalf, and the $1,200 became an advance on his royalties.

"Bruce asked me to ship it to Fenton, but after all this I was *not* going to risk having it damaged or lost in shipment. Plus, I wanted to personally hand it to him."

Ludwig was soon on the road to Rockford, Illinois.

"I was nervous as I rang the bell," Ludwig said. "When Fenton answered, I was a bit shocked – his head was shaved and he had a long scar after surgery for brain cancer."

Robinson offered Ludwig a seat in his small, tidy apartment. When he handed over the guitar, Robinson sat it on a cabinet.

"I was a bit surprised he didn't open the case right away, but he was simply being polite. We made small talk, and I commented on a beautiful Gibson L-5 sitting in a corner. Fenton asked if I'd like to play it. 'Of course!' I told him.

"While I played, Fenton stood up and, with his back to me, opened the 225 case. His voice full of emotion, he said, 'The old warhorse.' He turned with a smile and said, 'Thank you for thinking of me this way.'

"That instantly made it worth every *moment* I'd put into returning the guitar. Fenton sat next to me – I was playing the L-5, he the 225; he talked about how he'd bought it in the '50s and played it with Ike Turner."

Guitar delivered, Ludwig eventually started for the door. Robinson walked him to the car as they exchanged good-byes.

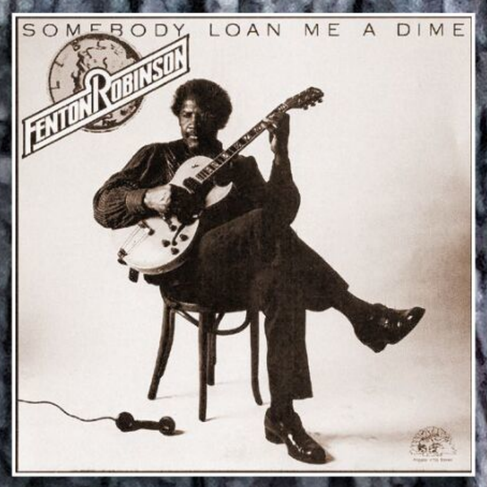
"All the way home, I was stunned by what had just happened," Ludwig said.

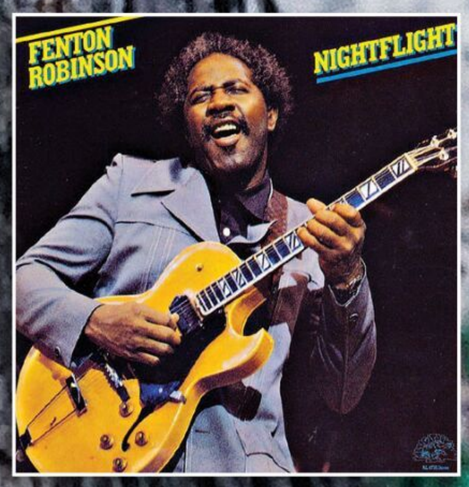
Robinson passed away a few months later, in November of 1997. On a subsequent trip to Everett's shop, Ludwig and the luthier chatted while blues played quietly on the shop radio. One of Robinson's songs came on.

"I said 'Hey, that's Fenton!' Tom said, 'Yeah, that's the guitar – I recognize the tone.' We listened in silence, smiling as its master made it sing." ***– 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.

Fenton Robinson: Paul Natkin.





Robinson and the 225 were featured on the covers of his Alligator albums *Somebody Loan Me a Dime and Nightflight.*

Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Gil Hembree





1968 Fender Telecaster in Blue Floral

NEW & UPDATED LISTINGS

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1979	Acoustic 123 Amp	1x12 combo	$150	$200
1970	Alamo Mid-power Tube Amp		$350	$500
2000	Alembic Stanley Clarke			
	Sig. Stnd. Bass	All scales	$4,300	$5,700
1975	Ampeg B-115 Amp	Solidstate, 1x15	$250	$325
1970	Angelica Electric			
	Solidbodies (various)		$200	$300
1933	Bacon & Day			
	Silver Bell #3 Tenor Banjo		$1,750	$2,300
1969	Baldwin Model 706	Double cut, semi-hollow	$600	$800
1981	BC Rico Eagle Bass		$1,600	$2,000
2003	Carr Hammerhead MK1 Amp	25 watts	$900	$1,200
1994	Charvel Surfcaster	2 singles, hardtail	$1,050	$1,350
1967	Coral Combo/Vincent Bell			
	Combo V1N6	1 pickup	$2,125	$2,775
1996	Crate 50/VC-50 Amp		$250	$325
1961	Da Vinci Model 250 Amp	20 watts, 1x12	$925	$1,250
2008	Dan Armstrong			
	Wood Body AMG 100	Black alder	$325	$425
1966	Danelectro DM-25 Amp	25 watts, 1x12 piggy	$600	$775
1934	D'Angelico D'Angelico			
	(L-5 Snakehead)		$9,500	$12,200
1975	Earth Sound Super			
	Bass/B-2000 Amp	Head only	$195	$260
1932	Epiphone Beverly (Tenor Guitar)		$500	$650
1955	Epiphone Devon	Natural	$1,400	$1,800
1967	Epiphone Embassy Deluxe Bass		$3,900	$5,200
1942	Epiphone FT 30		$1,050	$1,375
1958	Epiphone FT 45 Cortez	Sunburst	$1,275	$1,650
1889	Excelsior Excelsior			
	Model 218 Banjo	5-string, open back	$1,225	$1,600
2018	Fender Acoustasonic 15 Amp	15 watts, 1x6 student amp	$50	$75
1968	Fender Bandmaster Amp	Silverface, 2x12	$650	$900
1958	Fender Bassman Amp	Tweed, 4x10, 4 inputs	$6,700	$8,700
2020	Fender '57 Custom Champ Amp	5 watts, 1x8 hand-wired	$575	$750
1962	Fender Concert Amp	Brown tolex	$1,800	$2,400
1950	Fender Esquire	Blond, black 'guard	$32,000	$42,000
1985	Fender Esquire (Japan)		$875	$1,125
1980	Fender F (Flat Top) Series,			
	Dreadnought, laminated		$60	$135
1975	Fender Jaguar	Sunburst	$2,700	$3,600
1960	Fender Jazz Bass	Sunburst	$18,700	$25,100
2020	Fender Road Worn			
	60th Anniversary Jazz Bass		$700	$925
1972	Fender Jazzmaster	Sunburst	$2,800	$3,700
1996	Fender Jazzmaster '62	Import	$925	$1,200
1970	Fender Precision Bass	Olympic white	$3,050	$6,700
2006	Fender Aerodyne Classic			
	Precision Bass Special	Japan	$575	$750
1976	Fender Stratocaster	Black	$2,000	$2,700



Richard Gellis with a 2005 Gibson Le Grande and a 1957 D'Angelico Double-Electric United Body.

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1994	Fender '50s Stratocaster/ Classic Series '50s	MIJ	$650	$850
1992	Fender '57 Special Stratocaster (Custom Shop)		$2,050	$2,650
1987	Fender American Standard Stratocaster	SSS/HH/HSH/Fat/HSS/+	$800	$1,050
1968	Fender Telecaster	Blue Floral	$14,000	$18,000
2008	Fender Joe Strummer Telecaster	Standard edition	$825	$1,075
2018	Fender Mod Shop Telecaster		$1,525	$2,000
2015	Fender American Deluxe Telecaster	Alder or ash	$975	$1,250
2008	Fender Classic Player Baja Telecaster (Mexico)		$575	$750
2009	Fender American Standard Telecaster		$800	$1,050
2005	Fender Big Block Telecaster		$550	$725
1972	Fender Custom Telecaster	Tele/humbuckers	$2,800	$3,600
2019	Fishman Loudbox Mini LBX-500 Amp	60 watts	$160	$210
1966	Framus Atlantic Bass Model 5/143	Thinline f-hole	$500	$650
1957	Gibson Byrdland	Natural, Alnico pickups	$7,600	$10,000
1957	Gibson C-1 Classical	14.25, bound top and back	$600	$800
1990	Gibson Chet Atkins SST-12		$1,025	$1,350
1998	Gibson CL-50	Brazil rosewood, fancy	$3,100	$4,000
2014	Gibson CS-356F (Custom,figured top)		$2,700	$3,500
1999	Gibson Dove Artist	Sitka, Indian	$1,725	$2,250
2004	Gibson Duane Eddy Signature		$3,650	$4,750
1966	Gibson EB-6 Bass	Cherry, SG-style	$6,600	$8,500
1963	Gibson EBSF - 1250 Double Bass	Various colors	$16,300	$21,200
1960	Gibson EDS-1275 Double 12	Custom order, 7 shipped	$31,200	$40,500
1942	Gibson ES-125	Blade pickups	$2,000	$2,600
1960	Gibson ES-125 TDC / ES-125 TCD		$2,800	$3,650
1965	Gibson F-25 Folk Singer	14 body	$810	$1,050
1991	Gibson Firebird I Custom Shop		$2,125	$2,750
1966	Gibson Firebird III	Frost Blue	$8,500	$11,000
1965	Gibson Flamenco		$1,125	$1,475
1969	Gibson Flying V (Mahogany)	Cherry or sunburst	$17,500	$22,600
2013	Gibson Flying V Custom Shop '59	Natural	$2,600	$3,400
1953	Gibson GA-40 Les Paul Amp	Brown, 2-tone, LP grille	$1,300	$1,700
2010	Gibson '54 Les Paul Goldtop		$2,300	$3,000
2020	Gibson Custom Shop 1960 Les Paul Standard Reissue	Flamed brown sunburst	$3,600	$4,700
1991	Gibson M III Series	Deluxe	$1,225	$1,575
1930	Gibson MB-2 Mandolin Banjo		$750	$976
1955	Gibson RB-100 5-String Banjo		$1,450	$1,875
1965	Gibson RB-180 5-String Banjo	Longneck	$1,550	$2,000
1955	Gibson TB-150 Tenor Banjo		$1,250	$1,625

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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1925	Gibson TB-3 Tenor Banjo		$1,500	$2,000
1964	Gibson Titan V Amp	2x15 piggy	$485	$630
1981	Gibson Victory Standard Bass	1 pickup	$675	$875
1990	Gilchrist Model 4 Mandolin		$12,500	$16,500
1959	Gretsch Anniversary (6124/6125)	Sunburst 6125 Filter-tron	$1,550	$2,025
1976	Gretsch Broadkaster (Hollowbody)7608	Bigsby, sunburst	$750	$1,000
1961	Gretsch Chet Atkins (6120)	Double-cut	$2,800	$3,600
1968	Guild Mark I		$375	$475
2002	Guild Peregrine	Standard	$775	$1,025
1987	Guild SB-604 Pilot Bass		$500	$675
2004	Hamer Chaparral 12-String Bass (Import only)		$200	$400
1971	Harmony Baroque H835 Elec. Mando.		$325	$425
1950	Harmony H-200 Amp		$375	$475
1965	Hilgen Champion R-2523 Amp	Piggyback 2x12	$500	$650
1995	HiWatt Bulldog SA112 Amp	50 watts, 1x12 combo	$1,100	$1,475
1968	Hofner Model 185 Solid Bass		$725	$950
1975	Ibanez Model 2353 Bass	Tele bass copy era	$500	$700
1966	Kalamazoo Bass Amp	2x10, black	$500	$650
1937	Kay Kraft Mandola		$400	$700
1966	Kent Model 1475 Amp		$55	$80
1987	Kramer Stagemaster Series	Imperial	$600	$800
1971	Kustom K100-7 SC Amp	Black	$200	$275
1967	Magnatone Model 120B Cougar Bass Amp	Solidstate 2x12	$325	$425
1967	Marshall Model 1958 18-Watt Lead Amp	18 watts, 2x10, black	$4,700	$6,100
1970	Marshall Model 1958 20-Watt Lead Amp	20 watts, 2x10 black	$3,600	$4,700
1939	Martin C-1P	Plectrum, F-hole	$1,525	$1,975
2020	Martin Custom Shop 18 Style OM	14-fret, Adirondack	$2,300	$2,975
1990	Martin D12-28		$1,625	$2,100
1989	Martin D-18	363 made	$1,700	$2,225
1994	Martin D-1E	476 made	$725	$925
1934	Martin D-2	Brazilian	$191,000	$250,000
1997	Matchless Chieftan 212 Amp	40 watts, 2x12	$1,950	$2,500
1998	Mesa-Boogie DC-3 Amp	Combo 1x12, 35 watts	$550	$750
1974	Microfrets Swinger		$1,400	$1,850
1982	Music Man 110 RD Fifty Amp	50 watts, 1x10	$400	$525
1973	Ovation Legend Electric 1617	Acou.Elec. Deep Bowl	$400	$550
1921	Paramount Style A 5-String Banjo		$1,350	$1,750
2006	Peavey Windsor 300 Head Amp	300 watts, all tube	$250	$325
2008	Pignose G60VR	60 watts, 1x12 tubes	$225	$300
1965	Rickenbacker Model 4001 Bass	Mapleglo	$6,500	$8,500
1969	Rickenbacker Transonic TS-100 Amp	Solidstate, 100 watts	$2,400	$3,100
2000	Soldano Astroverb 16 Combo Amp		$675	$875
1973	Standel C-24 Custom 24 Amp	Solidstate, 100 watts, 2x12	$325	$450
2006	Stelling Crusader 5-String Banjo		$3,000	$3,900
1968	Sunn Sonic I Amp	125 watts, 1x15, tubes	$900	$1,200
2020	Supro Black Magick 1695TJ Amp	25 watts, 1x12 trem combo	$775	$1,025
2009	Taylor T3 (Thinline)	T-3/B 9 (flamed maple)	$1,425	$1,850
1965	Teisco Checkmate CM-25 Amp	25 watts, tubes	$275	$350
1970	Vega V.I.P. Tenor Banjo		$1,050	$1,400
1968	Vox AC30 Twin/AC30 Twin Top Boost	Combo, black	$1,750	$2,300
1925	Wurlitzer Mandolin		$325	$500

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FORMICA PICKGUARD ON AN EARLY LES PAUL?

And Not-So-Strange Variations on an '87 LP Standard



The back and front of a mysterious Les Paul pickguard made from Formica.

I've just completed restoring a very early Les Paul that was horribly damaged and poorly repaired, then painted black! I'm about to put it together, and am wondering if what I thought were a home-made replacement pickguard and jack plate could have been from the factory on the early models? They're made from white Formica, and are so well-made I doubt an inexperienced person could have done the work; certainly, a router template would have been made for the pickguard.

The International Resistive Company (IRC) pot codes in the guitar date to the 18th week of 1952, so they were made in late April or early May. Les debuted the guitar live that June, so I wonder if Gibson used Formica, as they might not have yet been producing the cream guards. Have you ever seen an early Les Paul with a Formica pickguard and jack plate? – *Dan Erlewine*

We have not seen this before. However, being an early example of the Les Paul, it is certainly possible. To the best of our knowledge, Gibson was not using cream-colored plastic parts on any other model at that time, so perhaps they sent someone to a Kalamazoo hardware store to purchase Formica for a pickguard and jack plate as a temporary stop-gap.

I have a black '87 Gibson Les Paul Standard with no dot over the letter "i" in the Gibson logo. The tulip tuners have a green tinge, the strap buttons are black, and the jack plate is metal. Are these normal for its era, or maybe variances due to Norlin selling Gibson at that time? – *Tom Hord*

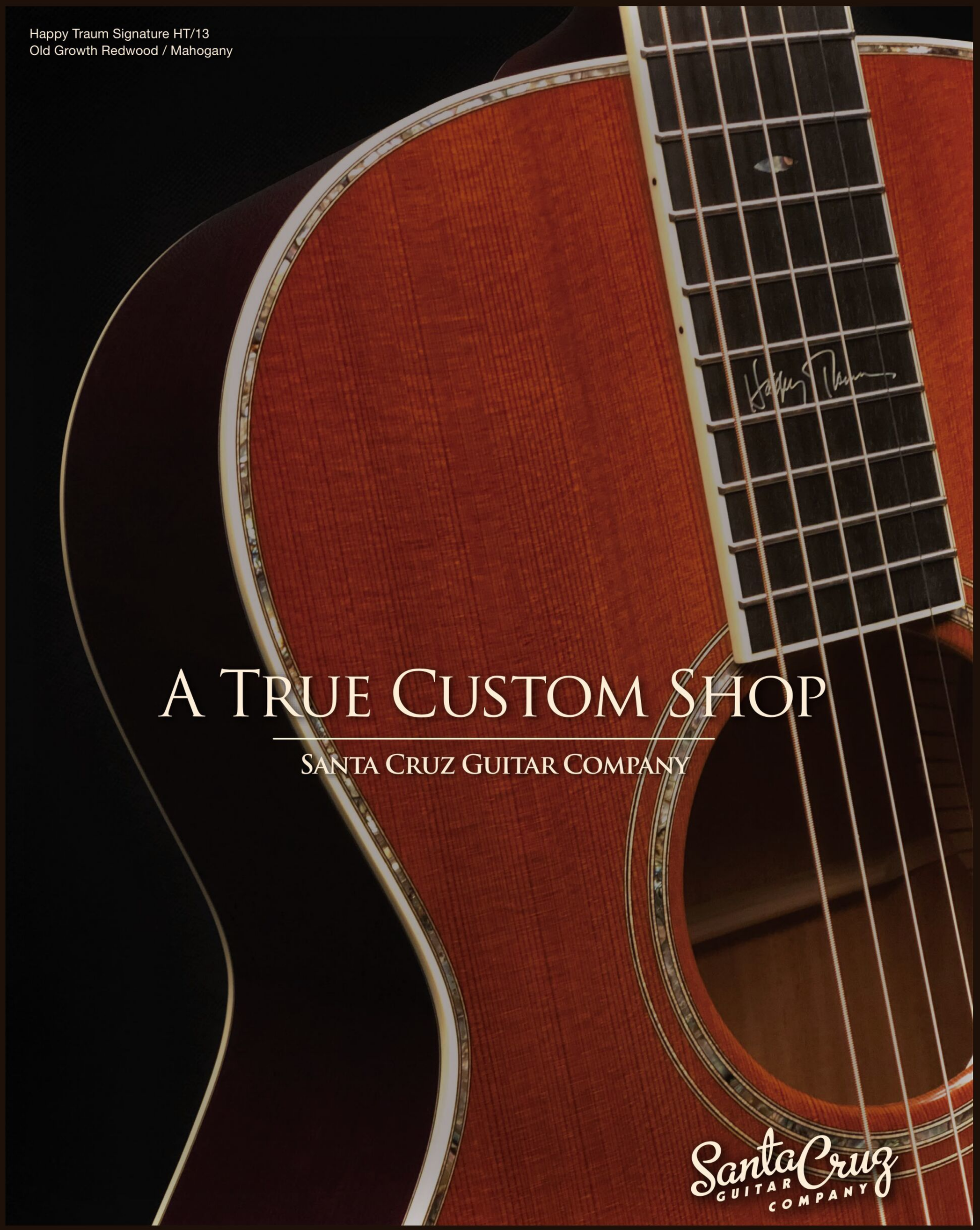
The missing dot occurs from time to time, likely because of a production error. The mother-of-pearl inlay is installed prior to the peghead overlay being painted black. It was then standard procedure to scrape the black paint off of the pearl, but sometimes this step was missed. We've seen examples of unscraped peghead inlay as far back as the 1920s and '30s.

The green tinge on the tuner buttons and the metal output-jack plate are normal for that model and time period. The black strap buttons are likely aftermarket replacements.

This column addresses questions about features and model changes on stringed instruments, information on manufacturers, driving forces in the marketplace, the effects of technology on music, and any other related subject. Questions can be sent to vguitar@vintageguitar.com with "Gruhn Q&A" in the subject line.

George Gruhn has been part of the Nashville music scene for more than 50 years. He moved to Nashville in 1969 after getting his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Chicago and doing graduate work at Duke University and the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. In 1970, he established Gruhn Guitars, Inc., one of the largest dealers of vintage and used instruments in the world. **VG**





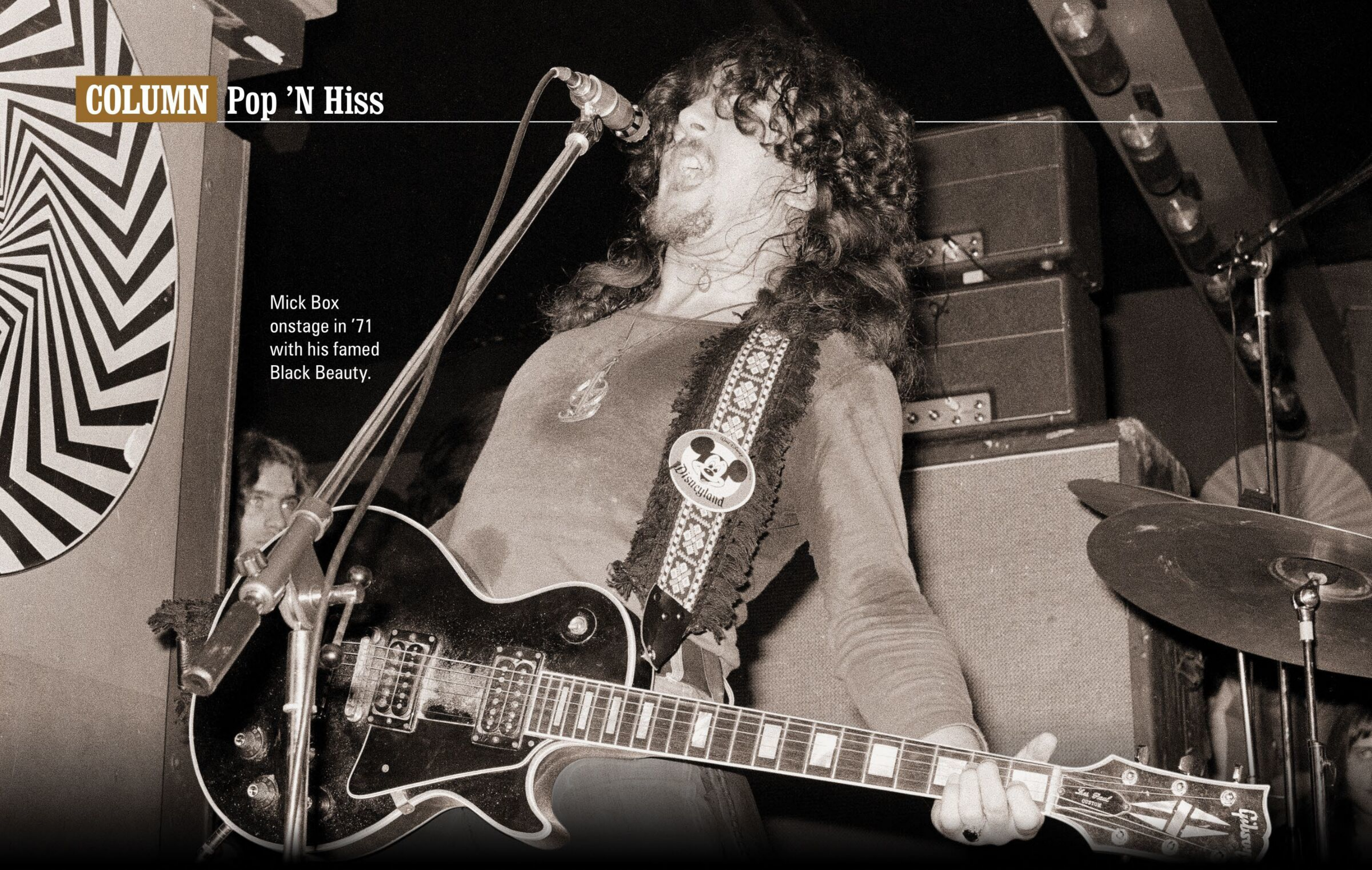
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Mick Box onstage in '71 with his famed Black Beauty.

UNDER ITS SPELL

Uriah Heep's *Demons and Wizards*

By Bret Adams

Hard rock/heavy metal and progressive rock were burgeoning genres in the early '70s, and music fans by the millions eagerly snapped up albums in both styles. While snobbish "tastemaker" critics despised bands making music in either genre, one band consciously combined them.

Uriah Heep's definitive 1972 album, *Demons and Wizards*, was their fourth. It hit #23 on the *Billboard* Top 200 album chart in the U.S., and the powerhouse single "Easy Livin'" shockingly cracked the *Billboard* Top 40 at #39.

Having already endured personnel changes, the lineup of guitarist Mick Box, vocalist David Byron (1947-'85), keyboardist Ken Hensley (1945-2020), bassists Gary Thain (1948-'75) and Mark Clarke, and drummer Lee Kerslake (1947-2020) perfected the Uriah Heep sound. As the album title suggests, fantasy and mystical elements permeated the music, though Hensley, who eventually became the band's main songwriter, said in the original liner notes that the album was simply a collection of songs.

Now, though, Box acknowledges that *Demons and Wizards* was distinct hard rock/heavy metal with progressive-rock musical traits, and it directly influenced the emergence and development of those styles.

"Yes indeed, and it certainly caught everyone's imagination, lyrically, for sure," he said. "Writing fantasy lyrics really made a massive impact, and a lot of bands since have picked up that particular baton and carried it on further. 'Easy Livin'' has quite a unique shuffle played by Lee; over the years, I've heard it played by other bands and always the shuffle beat is wrong. But it's a catchy, high-energy song that took us to the world stage and could easily be put under the banner of early metal.

"On the progressive side, we had two really cool songs linked by some studio phasing called 'Paradise' and 'The Spell.' And the song 'The Wizard,' played on acoustic guitar with a drop-D tuning, was another musical element that proved very successful. Then, with the unique Roger Dean cover art, it seemed like the music and cover were intrinsically linked for the first time. We had touched on the heavy-metal side of things on earlier albums with songs like 'Gypsy' and 'Look at Yourself' and, of course, the 20-minute title track off of our second album, *Salisbury*, with a 27-piece brass section. This was most definitely in the progressive-rock field, and this track has been cited many times to be the start of progressive rock by other musicians."

Did *Demons and Wizards* seem special to Box during writing and recording sessions?

"I think the rhythm section of Lee and Gary Thain played an important part in what we felt as a band," he remembered. "We had the engine room firing at full tilt. Then this particular album, I felt, was the pinnacle of our creative output as a team. We were very excited by the songs, the playing, the performances, and the production. So, yes, it did start to feel special."

The new lineup was gelling quickly, as Thain and Kerslake had joined the tour prior to work starting on the album (Clarke played on only

Mick Box: Michael Putland.

"The Wizard," which he co-wrote with Hensley). There was an eagerness to create new music.

"That gave us momentum when we entered rehearsals and started recording," said Box. "We felt the band had at last found the chemistry we were looking for. Lee was the powerhouse and Gary brought wonderful, melodic bass lines that did not interfere with the melodies, but enhanced them. Everyone was on top of their game at that point."

Given the frantic pace of recording and touring in those days, the songwriting was rushed.

"You did feel the pressure because, as always, record companies get success with one thing and then all they say is that 'We want another so and so track like the last one.' But, of course, that is impossible," said Box. "We were heavily touring and sometimes recording two albums in a year. It all comes down to business in the end, as when someone invests in you, they want their money back as quickly as possible. The problem being they get that back tenfold and then want more, driving you too hard rather than looking at the big picture."

Does Box have any idea on how "Easy Livin'" managed to break on U.S. radio and become



a mainstream hit when it was very heavy-sounding for the time?

"If I had the answer, I'd write another one tonight," he laughed. "There is no rhyme or reason, but sometimes a piece of music takes on a life of its own and has worldly appeal. 'Easy Livin" took us on to the world stage and is partly responsible for why, even to this day, we play concerts in 61 countries," Box said. "We are very grateful for the success that song had in the U.S., and, of course, with it being played on the radio everywhere, along with the overall success of *Demons and Wizards*, it took us into stadiums throughout the country."

Box created his classic guitar tones on *Demons* using great gear.

"All electric parts were played on my Les Paul Black Beauty, and all the acoustic parts I played on my Martin D-28. I used a Marshall 100-watt head through two 4x12 cabinets, and a Jim Dunlop Cry Baby wah."

Uriah Heep has had many members and recorded 24 studio albums in its 52-year history, and Box has been the sole member there for it all. Does he think *Demons* is the band's best album?

"Certainly, for that era. It's difficult to say, as the world was a different place in those days and those successes were possible, as there was only really music, fashion, and sports for people to get interested in," said Box. "Nowadays, there are so many diversions."

Demons has been reissued a few times through the years with B-sides, bonus tracks, and even updated cover art by Dean. Nearly five decades since its release, its bloodline continues. **VG**

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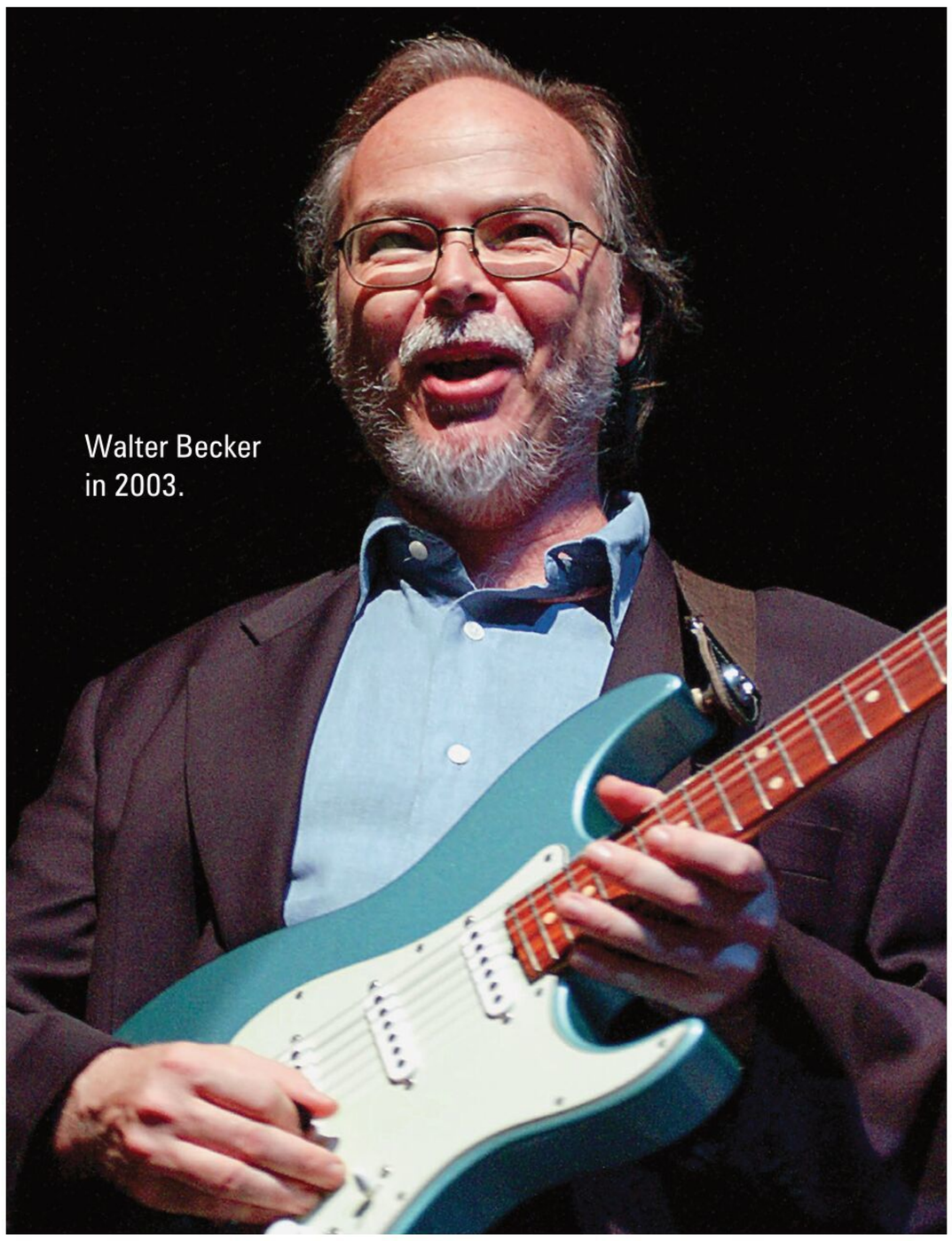
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Walter Becker in 2003.

WALTER BECKER

Steely Dan's Unsung Guitar Great

By Wolf Marshall

Steely Dan to this day occupies a unique place in music history. Laying claim to an unexplored intersection of jazz, R&B, pop, rock, blues, and world sounds, they redefined fusion – or more accurately, reimagined what fusion could be, and acted upon it.

That reimagining was the brainchild of counterculture misfits Walter Becker and Donald Fagen, who met in 1967 while attending Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, and nurtured an uncommon symbiosis as a songwriting team based on their of love of blues, jazz, rock and avant-garde music. They lived a Bohemian hipster lifestyle and performed in bands like the Bad Rock Group, Leather Canary and Don Fagen Jazz Trio. They moved to New York City to ply their wares at the Brill Building, where they gained the interest of Kenny Vance, producer and founder of Jay and the Americans. Vance arranged for them to tour with the group, provide music for a low-budget Richard Pryor film, and record several largely ignored demos. More importantly, they connected with Vance associate Gary Katz, who encouraged them to relocate in Los Angeles and offered work as staff songwriters for ABC. Katz, realizing their compositions were of extremely high quality but too complex and unwieldy for the label's artist roster, suggested they assemble their own band. Signed to ABC, the duo tapped William Burroughs for the group name, gathered guitarists Denny Dias and Jeff Baxter, drummer Jim Hodder and temporary second vocalist David Palmer, and entered the studio in August '72 to create *Can't Buy a Thrill* with Becker on bass, Fagen on keyboards, Katz as producer, and engineer Roger Nichols. The Katz/Nichols team proved a perfect foil for Becker/Fagen, one of few constants in their sojourn responsible for documenting the studio perfection heard on every Steely Dan record in the '70s.

Much of Steely Dan's guitar cachet was established by sidemen like Larry Carlton, Jay Graydon, Elliot Randall, Rick Derringer, and Steve Khan as well as original members Dias and Baxter. On their first two albums, the sound relied heavily on these contributions while Becker played bass. That changed in '74 with *Pretzel Logic*, the last with the Dias/Baxter/Hodder lineup and first to feature Becker as lead guitarist. His solo on the title track was an auspicious outing that demonstrated the balance of quirky blues and jazz allusions that first caught Fagen's ear.

Like its predecessor, *Katy Lied* ('75) contained shorter, tighter arrangements with less jamming that led some to believe Becker/Fagen were going pop – they weren't. The harmonic acumen, deeper lyrical imagery, adventurous rhythmic twists, particularly in "Your Gold Teeth II," and overall craftsmanship indicated their fusion was simply undergoing refinement. Fagen likened their strategy to the changing personnel on certain classic jazz albums. In any case, Steely Dan had become a duo augmented by a constellation of studio specialists. They gained a reputation among session players as the dream call, underscored by the presence of Jeff Porcaro, Michael McDonald, Michael Omartian, Chuck Rainey, Victor Feldman, and Phil Woods. The guitar work was correspondingly exemplary with contributions by Derringer, Dias, Randall, Dean Parks, Hugh McCracken and Larry Carlton, and boasted two notable Becker solos on "Bad Sneakers" and "Black Friday," the first single from *Katy*. The *Royal Scam* ('76) is seen as Steely Dan's most guitar-centric album, owing largely to the prominence of Larry Carlton, who conducted the rhythm section and turned in landmark performances on "Kid Charlemagne," "Don't Take Me Alive," "Everything You Did," and the title track. Dias, Randall, and Parks were also recruited for key moments. Becker's guitar work was confined to punctuating rhythm parts and exotic lead lines on "The Fez," a twisted parody of the era's disco sound that personified Steely Dan's travelog concept of placing characters in exotic locations – an approach gleaned from Duke Ellington. With this album, Steely Dan expanded their studio strategies and began the practice of recording the same song with different players (and as many as seven rhythm sections) to capture the best take.

In terms of artistry, notoriety, and chart success, *Aja* ('77) represents the high-water mark for Steely Dan. Reaching #3 in the U.S. and #5 in the U.K., the album was distinguished by three notable singles ("Peg," "Deacon Blues," and "Josie"), a Grammy for Best Engineered Recording, and the participation of esteemed jazz musicians Wayne Shorter, Tom Scott, Victor Feldman, and Pete Christlieb. Guitarists included Carlton, Dias, Parks, Graydon, Khan, and Lee Ritenour, who supplied his phaser noodling to "Deacon Blues" for a period-correct L.A. touch in the coda.

The evolution of the *Royal Scam* guitar sound was manifested in Graydon's idiosyncratic solo on "Peg," the three-lead-guitar interplay on "Aja" by Carlton, Dias, and Becker (who supplies blues licks to the interlude between Dias' solos), intertwined rhythm parts via Carlton and Parks on "Josie" and Becker solos on "Home At Last," "I Got the News" and "Josie." The perception that Steely Dan was a band again – albeit a large one with numerous key players they'd

Walter Becker: Steven Tackeff/Zuma.

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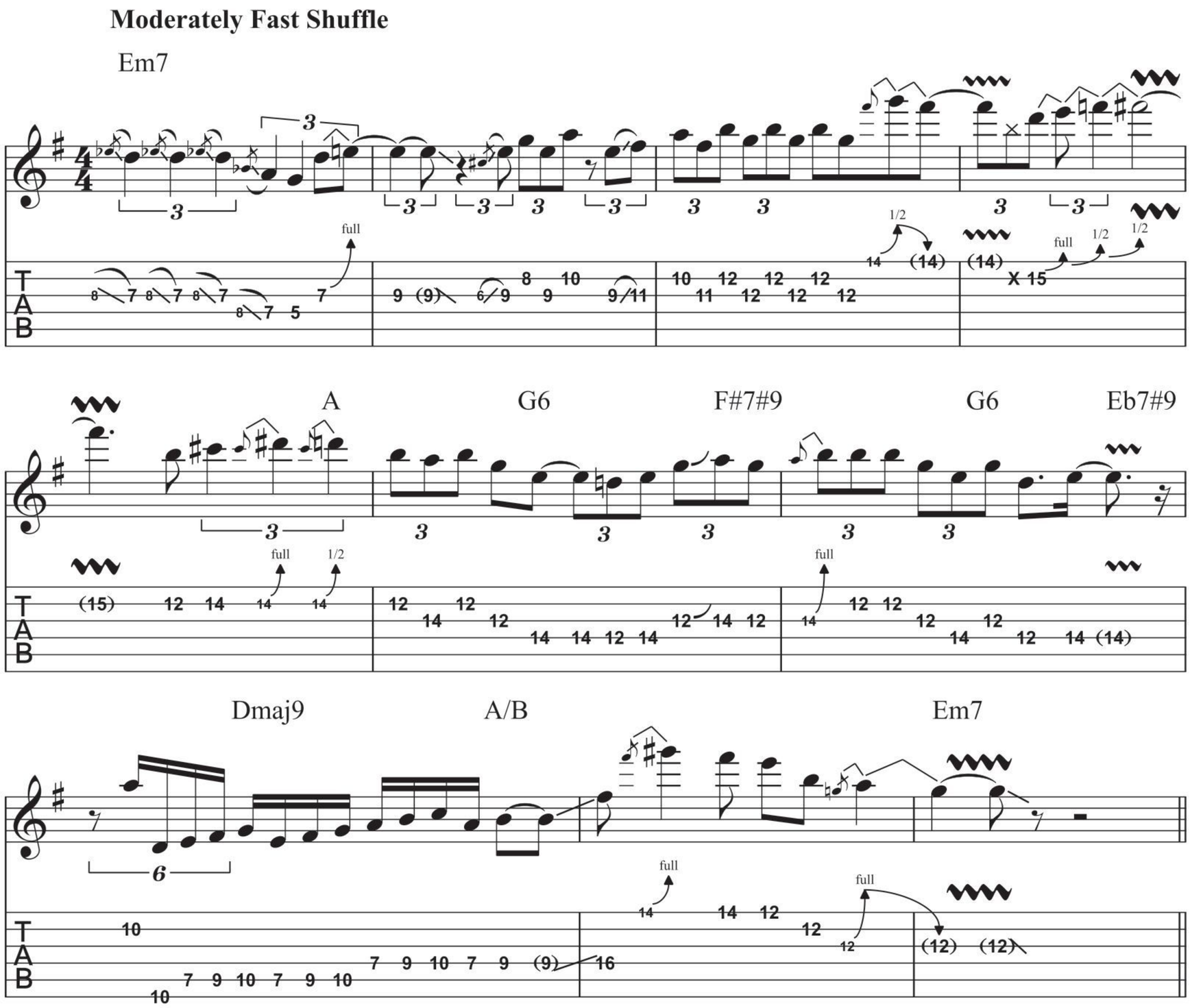
cultivated – holds up under scrutiny and was validated by the album's overall cohesiveness. Fagen and Becker returned to New York after *Aja* and became involved in local music activities, championed Root Boy Slim, wrote a tune for Dr. Strut's debut album, and planned a move to Warner Brothers.

Where *Aja* was a sprawling, quintessentially L.A. album, *Gaucho* ('80) was minimal and less complex, a decidedly NYC affair with emphasis on groove and atmosphere that still employed 40 studio players. It featured satellite guitarists Derringer, Khan, and McCracken, as well as newcomers Hiram Bullock and Mark Knopfler. Struck by a taxi as pedestrian, Becker suffered a shattered leg and was unavailable for much of the recording. He soloed on "Gaucho" and lent guitar parts to "Hey Nineteen" and "Time Out of Mind," but much of his intended playing went to Khan. Though Carlton is listed, "Third World Man" was a reworked outtake (built around existing Carlton parts) from *Aja* sessions substituted for the accidentally erased "The Second Arrangement." *Gaucho* was further delayed by other technical challenges, personal problems, and legal entanglements. It proved to be Steely Dan's last studio opus, beginning a 20-year absence that closed the book on its golden years.



"Pretzel Logic," the third album's title track, was pieced together at the rate of one hour per bar. It remained a favorite with Fagen, who sang it often in his post-Dan soul band of the '80s and '90s. Like many tunes in their repertoire, it's an altered blues with additional chords. Becker's solo begins with a characteristic syncopated line that shadows the A-minor ensemble figure. This is punctuated with blues flurries in measures 4 and 6. The latter finds him applying Am pentatonic/blues sounds expanded with fourth intervals over Fmaj7. Note the Albert-King-inspired pre-bends in 7-9. The change to Dm has a modal quality, emphasized by the B-Dorian-mode note in the melody, which alludes to his modal jazz influences.

In June of '81, the duo began pursuing solo careers. Becker moved to Maui, conquered substance abuse, and became an avocado farmer, record producer, and "self-styled critic." He produced China Crisis, Fra Lippo Lippi, Michael Franks, Rickie Lee Jones, and Fagen's *Kamakiriad* in '93, on which he played all bass and lead-guitar parts. Their first collaboration since '86, *Kamakiriad* precipitated a reunion tour and live album *Alive in America*, culled from '93-94 concerts. In '94, he released the aptly titled solo album *Eleven Tracks of Whack*, co-produced with Fagen. Steely Dan officially returned with *Two Against Nature*, recorded from '97 to '99 with guitar comrades Parks, McCracken, and future member Jon Herington. Becker handled guitar throughout and soloed on "Two Against Nature" and "West of Hollywood." The album earned four Grammys, reached #6, and sold more than a million copies. But it also alienated the band with younger listeners, who favored Radiohead and Eminem over babyboomer "yacht rock." The follow-up *Everything Must Go* employed fewer studio musicians and was their final album. Becker exerted a greater presence in the sessions, playing bass on every track and lead on five of nine songs. A high point was



"Black Friday" was part of Steely Dan's (and Fagen's) set for years. The opening track of *Katy Lied*, it's a shuffling blues-dominated piece enlarged with interesting jazz chords. Note Becker's opening line in this excerpt; rhythm is a governing factor in his playing and here he accentuates a hemiola (wide triplet) often found in his solos, with defining slides. His ascending triplet sequence in measures 2-3 is stylistic as is the dramatic gradual string-bend in 4. Notice his navigation of the changes in 6-10. Here, he finds a middle ground between pentatonic and diatonic melody, resorting to Em pentatonic over A-G6-F#7#9-G6-Eb7#9 chords and switching to a D Mixolydian modal sound over Dmaj9 and A/B. He closes with an offhand quote of Duke Ellington's "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" in 9-10.

"Green Book," which featured Becker and Fagen trading guitar/synth solos. In '08, he recorded a second solo album, *Circus Money*. He died of esophageal cancer in 2017 and was honored by luminaries Rickie Lee Jones, Steve Lukather, Julian Lennon, and many others.

INFLUENCES

Inspired by Charlie Parker, Becker studied saxophone before switching to guitar in '66. He received lessons in blues guitar from neighbor Randy California (of Spirit) and also listened to '60s pop and soul music. Other favorites included Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Jimi Hendrix, Sonny Rollins, Thelonius Monk, Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Bobby "Blue" Bland, and Charles Mingus.

STYLE

Fagen first heard 17-year-old Becker practicing electric guitar in a local cafe and was struck by his professional, contemporary approach, adding it "sounded like a black person."

"A lot of Steely Dan's attitude was Walter's," Fagen said in Brian Sweet's Steely Dan bio, *Reelin' in the Years*. "His playing, stylistically, is best suited to what we were trying to do. He's very inventive and his touch is fantastic; his solos were really my favorites, even though we were using the best players in the country."

Becker's reflection was, by contrast, dismissive.

"My guitar playing is to be used 'as necessary,' 'taken as directed,'" he demurred. "If someone else can do it better, we get him first."

Often, though, his deep connection with the musical intent necessitated participation. Fagen explained the intent: "Pop songs with a structure that's interesting and can be developed... with more-interesting chords than most rock."

Their take is further exemplified by songs with hooks that exploit jazz changes and an underlying R&B ethic. They gravitated to traditional song forms with bridges, reflecting years of listening to popular and jazz standards from the '30s, '40s and '50s, and prized "freedom within structure."

As half of the composing team, Becker's guitar presence in a song was tied to its mood or theme, acting as a contrasting color or extension of the arrangement. His style was as inscrutable as Steely Dan itself and just as elusive, characterized by mercurial juxtaposing of edgy blues with funky rhythmic episodes, modal extensions, and bop-inspired chord outlining. It's personified in "Pretzel Logic, "Black Friday" and "Josie," where blues/rock guitar tinged with jazz references is subjected to more abstract intervallic decisions and jagged rhythmic delivery. Many solos functioned as parts of the arrangement wrapped around rhythmic figures, locking in with prominent accents and patterns as part of the melody line. In the blues vein, he applied familiar pentatonic phrases with idiomatic and atypical string bends interspersed with brief double-timed flurries laced with unpredictable chromaticism, modal extensions, and metric twists emphasizing hemiola and syncopation.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

Citizen Steely Dan remains the definitive collection. Serious fans are further directed to *Two Against Nature*, *Everything Must Go*, and *Alive in America*. Becker's two solo albums are also recommended.

ESSENTIAL VIEWING

Classic Albums: Aja offers an illuminating behind-the-scenes look at the creation of their masterwork.

SOUND

Becker owned a Les Paul early on and played a dot-neck ES-330 with a Bigsby. At Bard, he used a Telecaster. He later favored a '54 Strat deified in "Things I Miss the Most," and a Candy Apple rosewood-board Strat, but on *Aja* was pictured with a '57 Fender Duo-Sonic. He also played custom guitars made by Chihoe Hahn, Ian Anderson, Steve Burns, and Roger Sadowsky, who in the '90s created his signature model with Lollar P-90s. He also played Steve Grimes guitars including a blond archtop, koa chambered double-cut, and a half-sized model. His main basses were a '58 Precision, a Bass VI, and a custom by Jim Crawford. Others included various Fender, Epiphone, Guild, RetroFret and PRS acoustics.

In the studio, he used a number of amps including a Fender Super-Reverb, Marshall, and Peavey heads, vintage Magnatone and Fender combos, and Dumbles. Onstage, he favored a custom 300-watt Adam Grimm Satellite head and Cuda models running KT66 tubes, along with a Suhr Badger 18, Bogner Ecstasy, Retro Channel RR1, and a 3 Monkeys Virgil. His '90s stage rig was controlled by a Bradshaw system and contained rackmounted processors and Mesa-Boogie and Pearce preamps. He later built a pedalboard with ever-changing stompboxes including a Barber Tone Press compressor, Pigtronix Envelope Phaser, MXR Carbon Copy, Eventide Space (reverb), and a Lehie amp switcher.



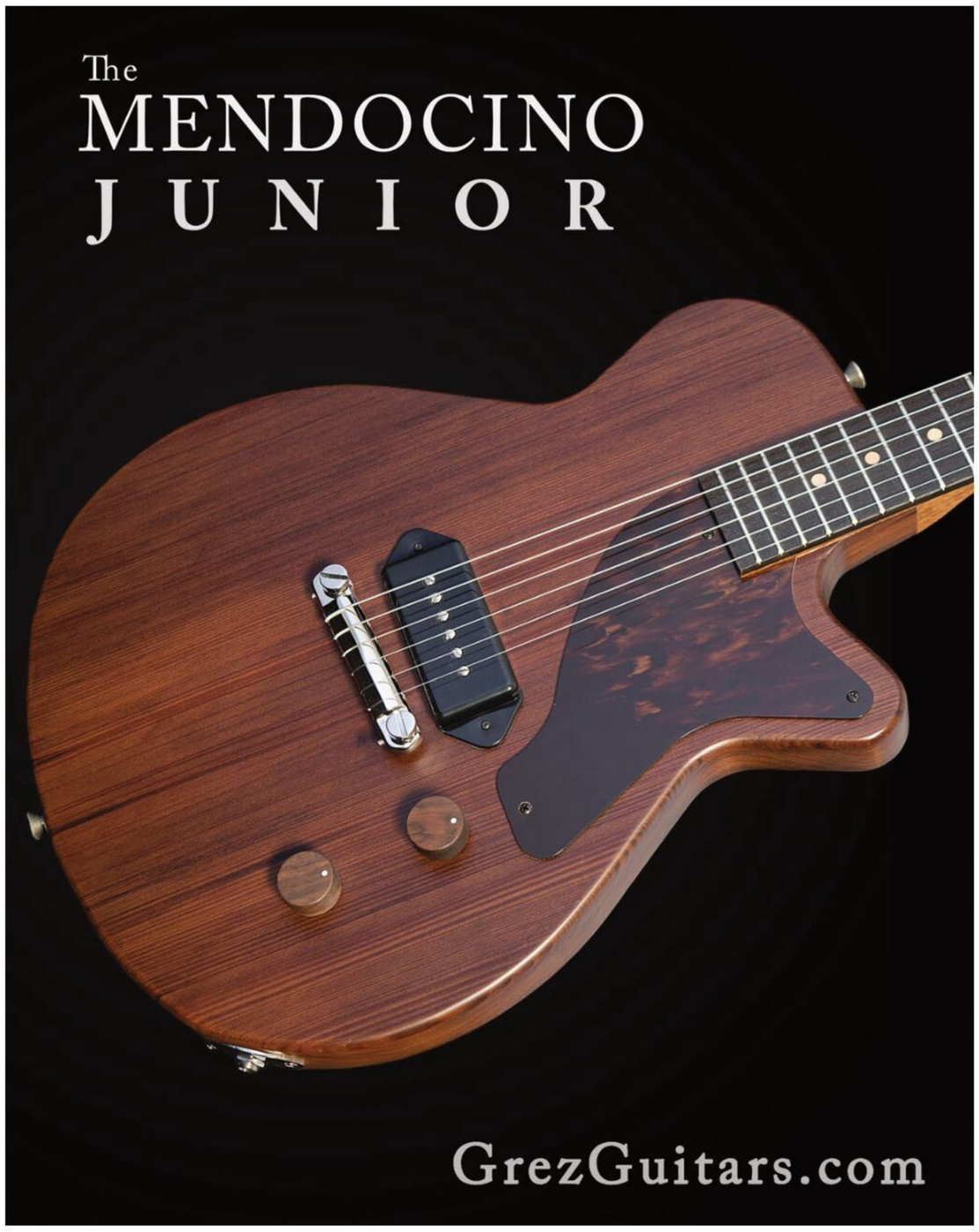
"Josie" was a highlight of the *Aja* sessions, and Becker's solo does not disappoint. He cultivates a rhythmically guided approach and favors a blues/modal color in the funky blues-based groove. His trademark interval leaps, often delivered as syncopated two-note figures, are a recurring sub-theme of the solo, played prominently in measures 3-4, 7-8, 10-11 and 16-17; he stresses the jazzy F# note, which adds a sophisticated ninth to the pentatonic in 2, 14-15 then adds atypical string bends in 9 and 12, the latter having a slightly country inference.

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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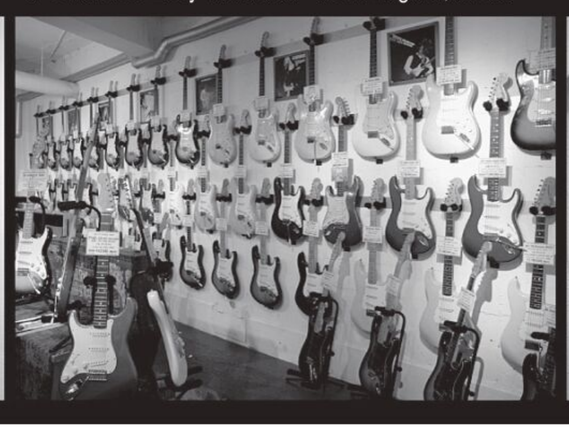
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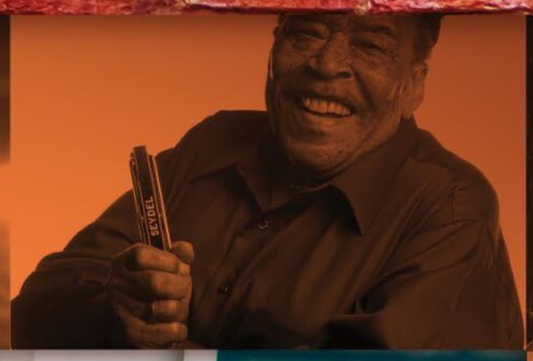
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Alligator Records founder Bruce Iglauer.









ALLIGATOR GREATS

Bruce Iglauer Recalls 50 Years of Blues Guitar

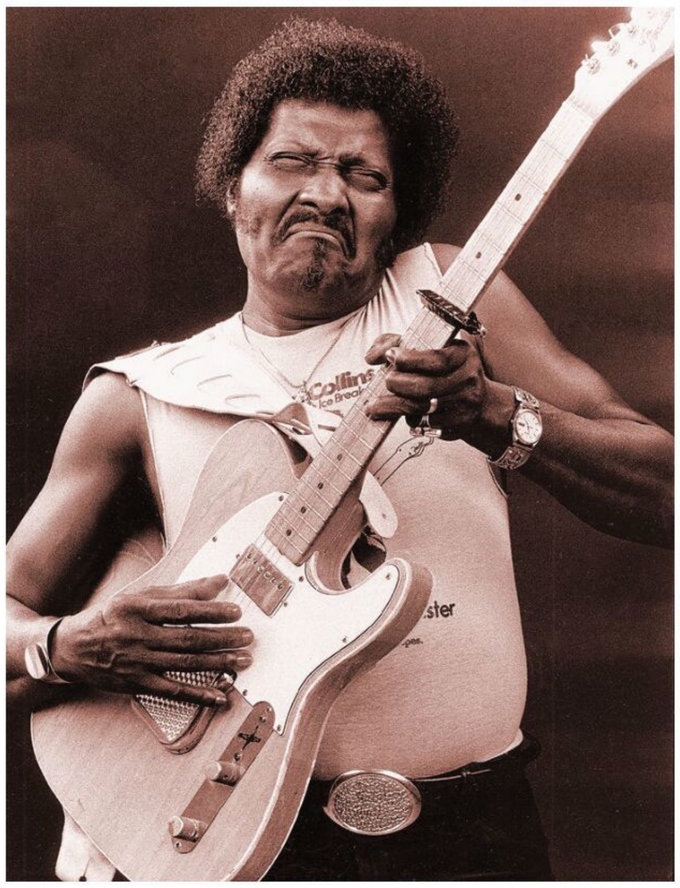
Anyone wondering why a young Bruce Iglauer was so impassioned about recording the raw, high-energy blues of Theodore Roosevelt "Hound Dog" Taylor can find context in the artists that captivated him in the years before he founded Alligator Records.

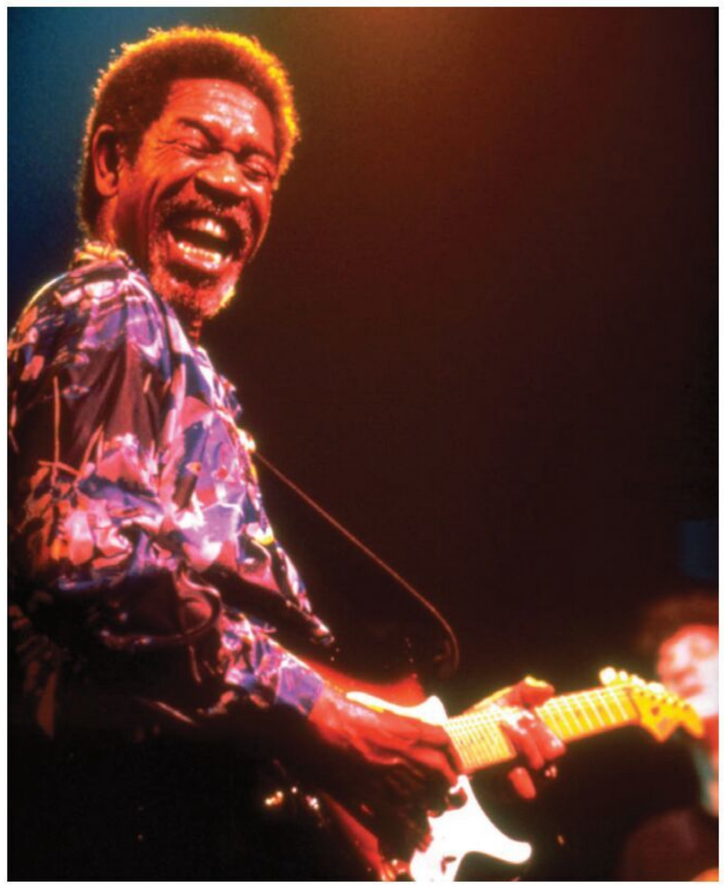
BY SEAN McDEVITT

"I first was turned on to the blues by Mississippi Fred McDowell, who played mostly inexpensive guitars, almost always with a slide," recalls Iglauer. "And I consider Elmore James one of the greatest singers and easily the most influential slide player in blues or rock. I am fascinated by slide players. The

Bruce Iglauer: Chris Monaghan.







Hound Dog Taylor: Diane Allmen. Albert Collins: Paul Natkin. Luther Allison: Steve Cooke.

Bruce Iglauer established Alligator Records specifically to make Hound Dog Taylor's (left) first album. Albert Collins was Alligator's biggest early act; his 1978 album, *Ice Pickin'*, gave the label a national profile and earned a Grammy nomination. Luther Allison (right) cut three studio albums for Alligator in the '90s before being stricken with cancer.

sound of steel on steel is such a bedrock of the blues, and it always attracts me."

It sure attracted Iglauer to Taylor, a tall, rail-thin Mississippian who smoked Pall Malls and famously had a sixth finger on his left hand; Iglauer first heard Taylor at Florence's Lounge, a no-frills joint on the South Side of Chicago.

Captivated by what he calls "the most joyous music I had ever heard," Iglauer, 22 years old in 1970, began pestering his boss, the late Delmark Records founder Bob Koester – for whom Iglauer was working as a $30-per-week shipping clerk – to cut an album with Taylor. When Koester resisted, Iglauer (with Koester's blessing) took Taylor into the studio in the spring of '71. After two nights, no overdubs, and $900 in costs, *Hound Dog Taylor and the HouseRockers* was in the can – and Alligator Records was born.

In the ensuing 50 years, Iglauer would record scores of guitarists, many among the elite in modern blues, each with their own sound, style, and technique.

'PASSION, ORIGINALITY, AND EMOTIONAL HONESTY'

Iglauer's adventures with Taylor not only marked the beginning of Iglauer's five decades as a label boss, they were the beginning of a decades-long master class on all things guitar, from the world of open tunings to gear to the glorious, time-honored process of "tension and release" that gives the blues its cathartic emotional energy.

"In choosing artists, I listen for passion, originality, and emotional honesty," Iglauer explains. "Over the years, Alligator has released close to 200 albums featuring guitar players, and only a handful with no guitar at all. Though I can only play a few chords, I've heard so many immortal blues guitarists I can hear and feel when a player is in a class by themselves."

Frank "Son" Seals was one. The son of a juke joint operator, Seals was also pivotal in Alligator's early days; the Arkansas native played a slashing, stinging blues punctuated by a furious attack and stinging single-note volleys.

Taylor and Seals had a few things in common. Both worked clubs and taverns on the city's South Side and West Side in the early '70s, and neither spent much time worrying about gear; Taylor played a heavy Japanese-made Kingston-branded Kawai electric ("... built when 'Made in Japan' was the mark of cheapness, not quality," Iglauer says). Taylor actually had two Kingstons, both with action so high that fingerstyle playing would have been all but impossible. Seals, meanwhile, went with a Fender-knockoff Norma, also made in Japan.

For many Chicago bluesmen in those days, guitars were simply tools of the trade that served a crucial purpose – to help them make a living.

"A lot of blues musicians didn't make much money, so they played whatever they could afford," Iglauer remembers. "Son was living in a basement when I met him. He played the Norma on his first album (*The Son Seals Blues Band*), but for the follow-up, *Midnight Son*, he'd moved up to a Silvertone modeled after a Gibson 335 or 345. Then he got his first quality guitar – a dark-green custom Guild Starfire IV with a whammy bar he never used. It played great and we cut a number of his albums with that guitar."

As it turned out, the absence of expensive guitars wasn't necessarily a bad thing. If anything, it enhanced the authenticity of the art.

"Sometimes cheap instruments sound great, especially if they have attractive distortion," Iglauer explains. "Hound Dog's two Kingstons were like that. A lot of his sound was in his hands. I once heard him play a Les Paul through a Fender Twin Reverb and it sounded like he was playing a Kingston through a battered Silvertone amp. I'm sure Son Seals didn't want to play a Norma or Silvertone, but that's what he could afford. Magic Sam often borrowed a guitar because his was in the pawn shop."

Another notable early release was Fenton Robinson's 1974 label debut, *Somebody Loan Me a Dime* – a classic that remains something of a departure from Alligator's '70s output, thanks to its musical sophistication.

"Fenton was the first very musically knowledgeable guitar player I recorded," Iglauer says. "He started under the influence of T-Bone Walker, who crossed between blues and swinging jazz then studied under Reggie Boyd (a highly regarded guitar teacher in Chicago who gave lessons to Otis Rush and Howlin' Wolf, among others). Fenton loved to build solos by stacking chords rather than doing dramatic string bending. He got tons of respect from fellow musicians."

And no account of Alligator's initial decade would be complete without mentioning Albert Collins, Master of the Telecaster and arguably the most significant signing in the



Bruce Iglauer and Lonnie Brooks circa 2012.

label's history. By the time of Collins' 1978 Alligator debut, the Grammy nominated *Ice Pickin'*, Iglauer had recorded only Chicago-based artists; Collins, a Texas native and already a star, helped give the label a national profile.

Collins, Iglauer says, is one of the three most-exciting guitarists he has seen live, the other two being Luther Allison and Freddie King.

"They were all incredibly physical players who played from the feet up," he recalls. "I don't think any blues guitarist could create more pure intensity."

As the '70s gave way to the '80s, Alligator's roster grew to include Phillip Walker, Lonnie Brooks, and Magic Slim. But until '84, there was one thing it didn't include – an album featuring a white blues man. That changed when Johnny Winter headed to Chicago.

WHITE GUYS PLAY THE BLUES?

The 74-year-old Iglauer has evolved when it comes to white musicians playing blues, but as a younger man he was an uncompromising purist and the idea of recording white guys bordered on sacrilege.

"I figured that Black people *created* this music – and there were plenty of great Black blues musicians who hadn't been recorded, hadn't been recorded right, or hadn't been recognized," he explains. "My attitude was that people who grew up with this music all around them would make more soulful, honest records than people – like me – who had learned about the blues from recordings."

A blues devotee who spent most of the '70s playing rock, Winter's career had fallen on



Rick Estrin and Kid Andersen.

'GATOR BITES

Bruce Iglauer's Favorite Guitar Moments

Brewer Phillips (1924-1999) – "Phillips' Theme," *Hound Dog Taylor & The HouseRockers* (1971). "Mostly, he played ever-changing bass lines on a Telecaster, but when he was unleashed on lead, his playing was searing. His playing was sloppy as hell and he only played in a few keys, but his attack was ferocious and he had a beautifully distorted tone. He played with a thumb pick and bare fingers, but often used the thumb pick as a straight pick."

Wendell Holmes (1943-2015 with The Holmes Brothers) – "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," *Simple Truths* (2004); "Pledging My Love," *Feed My Soul* (2010). "He combined blues, R&B, gospel and country licks. I'd normally see him with a Telecaster. He could get down and dirty and distorted."

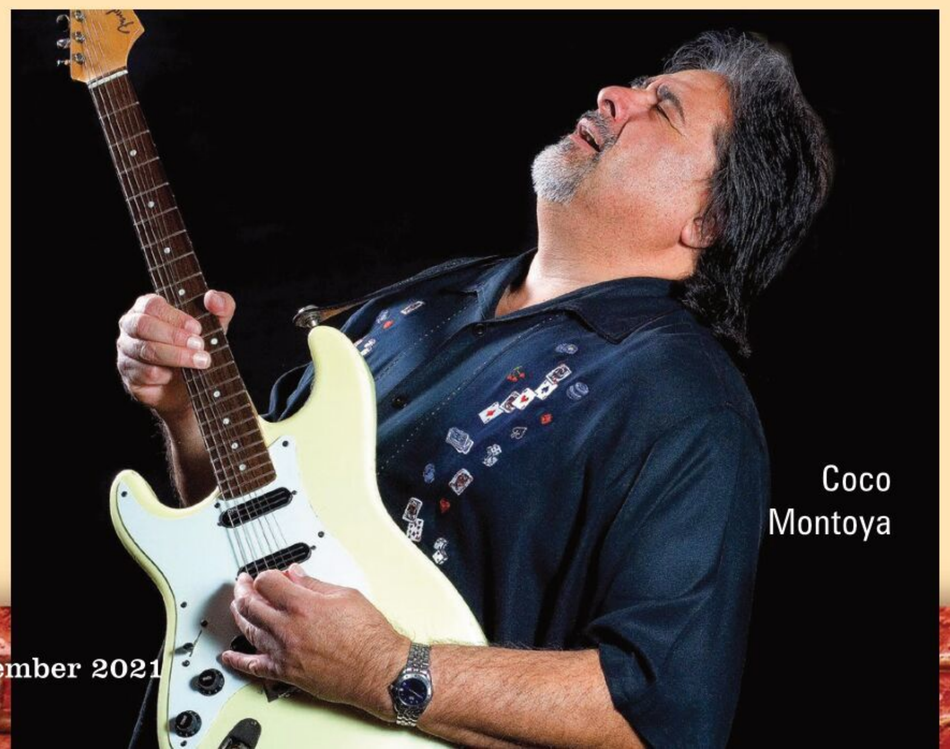
Michael Hill – "Heading Home," Bloodlines (1994); "Rest in Peace," *Have Mercy!* (1996); "I Always Get My Man" from Shemekia Copeland's *Turn the Heat Up!* (1998). "His vocabulary includes Albert King, Hendrix, various reggae players, funk, and some jazz. He executes with great precision."

Little Charlie Baty (1953-2020) – "I'll Take You Back," *All the Way Crazy* (1987); "Jump Start," *The Big Break* (1989). "His playing sometimes went to Mars without warning. Charlie could sear you with one blue note or swing like a madman."

Coco Montoya – "It's My Own Tears," *Dirty Deal* (2007). "One of the most melodic and stinging of blues-rockers and a disciple of Albert Collins. He has beautiful tone and plays just the right number of notes to tell the story of the song."

Michael "Iron Man" Burks (1957-2012) – "Empty Promises," *Iron Man* (2008); "Count On You," *Show of Strength* (2012). "He was a bluesman but liked rock, too, and used to play [Hall & Oates'] 'Sara Smile' regularly. He played with tremendous intensity and confidence, doing super-long sets and working his solos up to soaring climaxes. His attack reminded me a lot of Freddie King's."

Kid Andersen (with Rick Estrin and the Nightcats) – "Broke and Lonesome" and "The Legend of Taco Cobbler," both from *One Wrong Turn* (2012). "He's unbelievably talented. He has a huge vocabulary of blues, rock, and other genres, and a completely wild musical imagination. He can play great straight blues or present a musical commentary on a fictitious western." ***– Sean McDevitt***



Coco Montoya

Estrin/Andersen: John Alcala. Coco Montoya: Frank Vigil. Iglauer/Brooks: Chris Monaghan.

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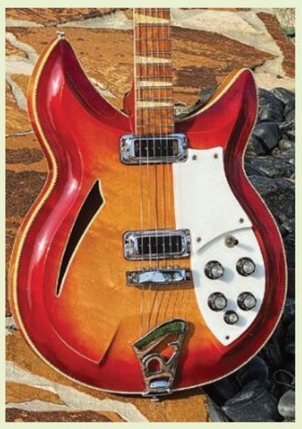
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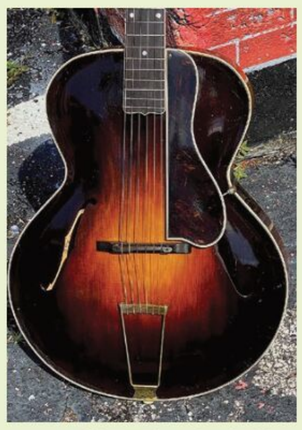

1965 Gibson ES-330TDC 1 11/16" nut & nickel parts.


1967 Gibson ES-345TDCSV we have 2 clean examples.


1961 Gretsch 6113 1st year Tennessean

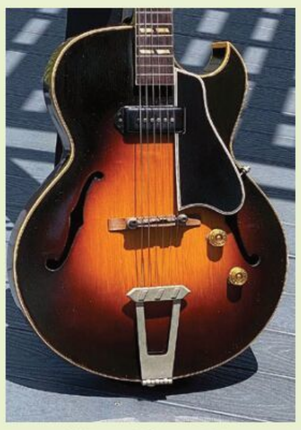

1964 Hofner 5122 President Brunette Thinline Clean!


1969 Rickenbacker 381 "Prototype" w/a Deeper Body.

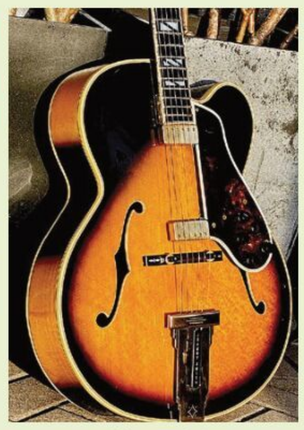

1929 Gibson L-5 desirable 1st type Museum Quality.


1940 Gibson Super 400N documented 1-off Special.


1939 National New Yorker Blonde Electric Spanish.


1953 Gibson ES-175 Museum Quality Joe Pass model.


1968 Gibson ES-175 crazy rare fact. Black 1 pickup.

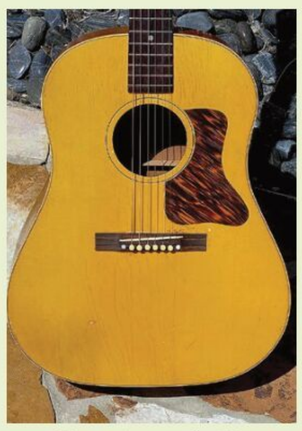

1974 Gibson Johnny Smith 2 pickup model

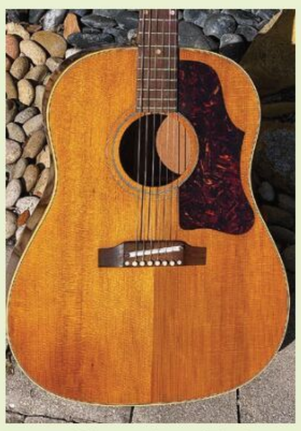

1969 Gibson L-5CES fact. See-Thru Cherry Special.

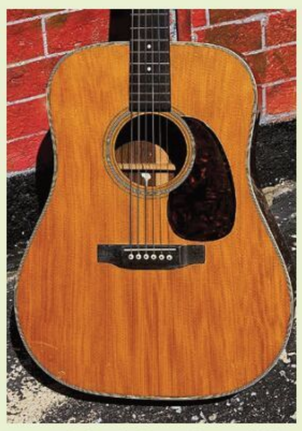

1990 D'Angelico New Yorker # 10 by Heritage

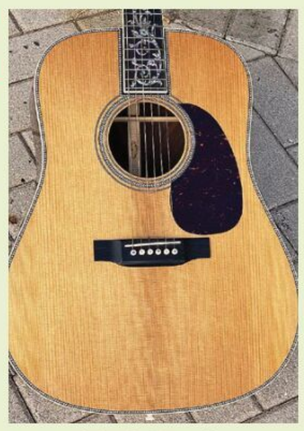

1900 No Name Parlor Guitar super ornate Museum Piece.

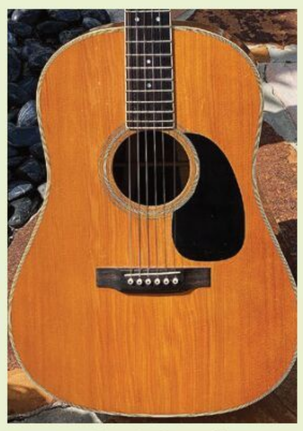

1925 Stromberg Voisinet very fancy w/celluloid fingerboard.

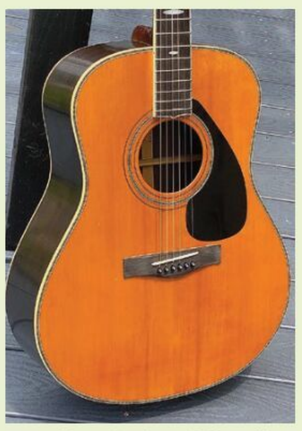

1942 Gibson J-35 1 of 2 "Opaque Blonde" Museum Piece.


1963 Gibson J-50 fabulous tone & a very clean example.


1965 Martin D-28 incredible Brazilian Rosewood example.


2016 Martin D-28 Custom Shop its Insane!

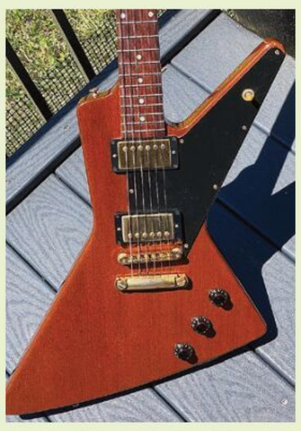

1971 Martin D-35 S rare 12-Fret 1 7/8" nut.

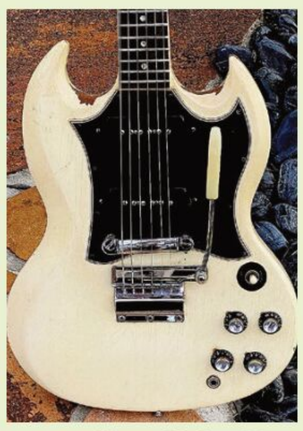

1981 Yamaha L-25AT Brazilian Rosewood "Tommy Tedesco"


1962 Epiphone SB-432 Wilshire near mint Museum Quality.


1963 Guild S-100 Polara 1st issue rare w/built-in Kickstand.


1976 Gibson Explorer Reissue rare mint factory Black finish.


1999 Gibson Futura Reissue Historic Reissue w/Certificate.

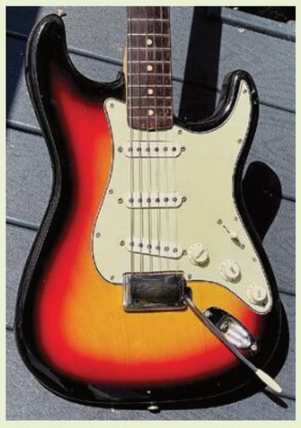

1967 Gibson SG Special rare Polaris White


1971 Gibson Les Paul Custom 1-off Factory w/3-pickups

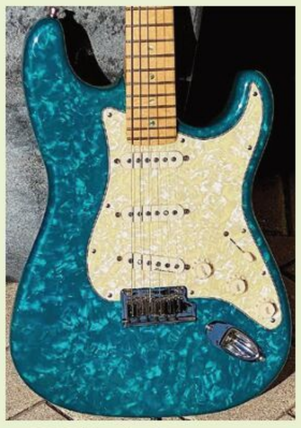

1985 Gibson Les Paul Std. '59 Reissue early in Ice Tea'burst.


2016 Gibson Les Paul Std. R9 Ocean Blue

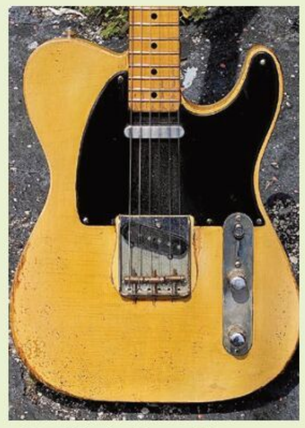

1956 Fender Stratocaster V neck & Bakelite

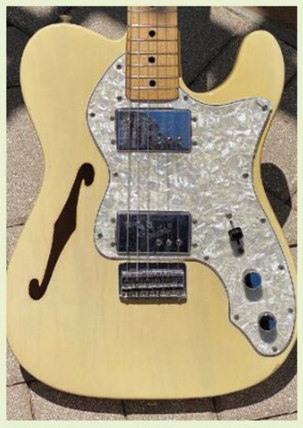

1964 Fender Stratocaster Spagetti Logo Green'gard like SRV's !


1980 Fender The Strat Lake Placid Blue Minty


2000 Fender Stratocaster Blue Moto # 36 of 60


1971 Fender Telecaster Custom exceptional


2016 Nacho Banos Telecaster '52 Relic the best replica made.


1972 Fender Telecaster Thinline rare See-Thru Blonde Minty!

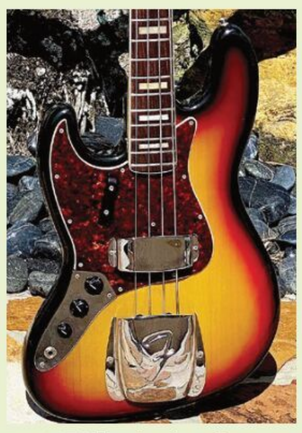

2004 Gretsch G6134 White Penguin mint w/plastic still on it.

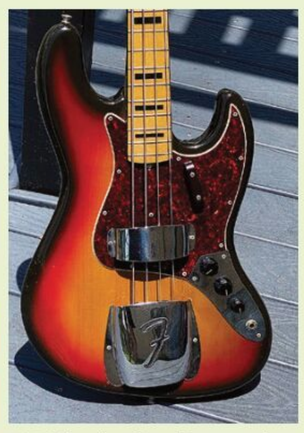

1969 Fender Precision Bass 1 owner exceptionally clean.


1971 Fender Precision Bass Lefty crazy rare & all original.

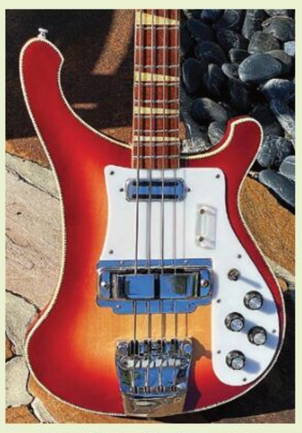

1962 Fender Jazz Bass its Mint & Untouched!


1966 Fender Jazz Bass the last Unbound Neck


1970 Fender Jazz Bass "Lefty" original & Mint!


1973 Fender Jazz Bass a minty lightweight w/orig. bill of sale.


1988 Guild B-30 Acoustic Bass its rare & clean


1969 Rickenbacker 4001 "Mono" restored beautifully.

hard times by the early '80s. Signing with Alligator marked a decisive return to his roots.

"Johnny sang in his own voice, played his own style, and loved the blues," Iglauer remembers. "We met when he showed up backstage at a Son Seals show in New York, eager to meet Son because he was a fan. Johnny came to Alligator to record with real Chicago bluesmen and get back to the music he loved. From that point on, Alligator was open to white artists, but they had to have their own statements to make. No imitators allowed!"

Two other iconic white players joined the fold the following year – Lonnie Mack (who famously played a '58 Gibson Flying V) and Roy Buchanan. For Mack, 1985's *Strike Like Lightning* marked a major re-emergence for an artist who had been toiling in obscurity for nearly a decade.

"Lonnie was the first blues-rock guitar hero," Iglauer says, citing classic instrumentals like "Wham!" "He was a truly American musician who wasn't hampered by genre classifications. To him, blues, country, and rock and roll were all a piece of the same pie. He was a very emotional player, and his leaps into the upper register were exhilarating. Very few people play like him."



Bruce Iglauer listened for passion, originality, and emotional honesty in the artists he signed. Frank "Son" Seals, son of a juke-joint operator, was a pivotal early example. Here, he's backing Koko Taylor with Lonnie Brooks (right).

Buchanan, who Iglauer considers perhaps the greatest all-around player he ever recorded, cut three LPs for Alligator. His first, *When a Guitar Plays the Blues*, was also released in '85.

"Roy was amazingly creative and seemed to pull licks and melodic ideas out of thin air," Iglauer said, citing his chops, knowledge, and technical proficiency. "He was famous for wild string bending, melodic ballads, and his harmonics. Roy told me how he practiced without amplification because he figured that



Pat Faherty and Matt Stubbs with the gear used to pay tribute to Hound Dog Taylor, including a Teisco Kingston and Silvertone 1454 along with a Silvertone 1482 amp (right).

Stubbs and Faherty: Fancey Pancen.

DOG TRACKS

GA-20's Hound Dog Taylor Tribute

Beyond being the first artist to release an album on the Alligator label, Hound Dog Taylor was an ebullient, full-steam-ahead guitarist and performer with an influential approach.

Two players today who best exhibit its impact are Matt Stubbs and Pat Faherty of the guitars-and-drums three-piece GA-20, whose music (like Taylors) bypasses a bass instrument.

In ode to Alligator Records' 50th anniversary, Stubbs conceived *GA-20 Does Hound Dog Taylor: Try It...You Might Like It!* for the Colemine label. The album – 10 songs written or performed by Taylor for his self-titled 1971 debut and '74 follow-up *Natural Boogie* – are set for release in cooperation with and distributed by Alligator, and it's a study in the HouseRockers' approach to blues and the interplay between Taylor and co-guitarist Brewer Phillips.

"I'd listened to them for years, but until we started this album never really sat down and dissected what they were doing," said Stubbs. "But Brewer Phillips was playing all kinds of bass-line stuff, and re-creating some of that was tougher than I expected. It was unique, and fun to learn. If you listen closely to the verses in 'Give Me Back My Wig,' he plays these blazing-fast fills. It's low in the mix, but if you have headphones and really hone in, you'll hear how cool it is."

Stubbs shared the details of his band's approach on the tribute album.

Which blues artists do you first remember having an impact on you?

Jimi Hendrix. As a kid, though, I first heard Lenny Kravitz's "Are You Going To Go My Way?" and I

was like, "Man, this is cool." My father said, "If you like that, you'll like Jimi Hendrix." So I got into Jimi then within a year or two I'd gone back to Buddy Guy and Albert King. From there, I dug deeper and deeper into earlier blues and by 16 I had blinders on; I loved Johnny "Guitar" Watson, Earl Hooker, Guitar Slim, Gatemouth. I didn't have many friends listening with me, but I was hanging out with older musicians, trying to find people playing traditional blues.

When did you first hear Hound Dog?

I don't remember exactly, but he's always been in my album collection. I love Chicago blues, and "Give Me Back My Wig" was the first song I remember hearing by him.

Whose idea was *Try It... You Might Like It!*?

Last July, Bruce saw GA-20 when he came through Chicago, and he later reached out to see if we were interested in doing a record with Alligator. He didn't realize we were with Colemine



Records, but I had an idea that maybe Colemine could work in partnership with Alligator to do something for the 50th anniversary of Hound Dog's first record. I proposed the idea to Terry Cole, who owns Colemine, and he loved it. Then Bruce called, so I pitched the idea to him and he seemed to really like it, and his whole staff and team are doing a great job getting behind it.

How did Taylor and the House Rockers affect the music you make in GA-20?

I think all three of us – myself, Pat, and our drummer, Tim Carman – connect heavily with *a lot* of Chicago acts from the '50s through the '70s. There were a lot that didn't have bass – just two guitar players. I wasn't walking around thinking about doing a tribute record, but with Bruce reaching out I thought it could educate people. Plenty who hear our music might not be blues fans or not listen to blues of that era. But there has always been a connection between GA-20 and the House-Rockers; GA-20 has been around for a couple of years but we still get a lot of "Where's your bass player?" And we didn't start super heavily influenced by Hound Dog's band. It was more about Little Walter records and even earlier Chicago stuff – the Meyers Brothers and Robert "Junior" Lockwood. That's where it started, and Pat and I were just doing local gigs without a drummer. We first had a harmonica player, then realized we wanted drums, so we morphed into what we are now.



Pat Faherty with one of the Teiscos used to re-create Hound Dog Taylor's sound for *GA-20 Does Hound Dog Taylor: Try It...You Might Like It!*.

Do you ever miss having bass in the mix?

I don't, and I don't think Pat does, either. One of us was always playing a bass-like part, and we arrange our music that way. When we've had bass players sit in from time to time, it always feels kind of awkward.

What's the most profound thing about Hound Dog's music?

When Hound Dog digs into a slide solo or even plays just *one note*, man, I get goosebumps! It's just so raw and captivating.

As a trio, they really played off of each other; it's not just drums doing a straight beat or Brewer Phillips playing rhythm with maybe a walking bass line, then Hound Dog soloing. They didn't sound like "just" a front man with people behind him. *Everything* was an interaction with that band; Ted Harvey was like a jazz drummer going off the rails half the time. When Hound Dog leans into a solo and starts going crazy, it's *totally* off the rails. *That* is what speaks to me about Hound Dog. Unfortunately, I never saw him live. I've seen videos and it's easy to imagine his stage presence.

To re-create the Hound Dog sound, you needed old Teisco guitars. Where did you find them?

Neither Pat nor I owned a Teisco – we're into old Harmonys and Silvertones. But yeah, right away we said, "We've got to at least get in the ballpark with the gear." I didn't want to exactly copy Hound Dog, but I wanted to do our best to capture the spirit. So, we started researching the guitars, and I wanted to get the right drum sizes – *all* of it. So I talked to Bruce a few times and he sent me pictures. He still has one of Hound Dog's guitars, so I asked him about models, then Pat and I went down that rabbit hole, looking online and locally. I think Pat ended up buying six of them – different models with different pickups. A few are the exact model Hound Dog had. Then we tried them through different amps, playing the record, listening to different songs. From there, we searched out what sounded as close as possible to our ears.

Did you already have Silvertone amps like Hound Dog played?

I had a few, but the amp Pat used, I found two or three weeks before the record. It's not the exact model Hound Dog used on those recordings – he had a big piggyback one with a 6x10 cabinet that was a really loud; Bruce told me Hound Dog cranked the thing and one or more of the speakers was probably blown. Anyway, I have a 1482 from the early '60s. We recorded in my studio and wanted to all be in the room together so I could use room mics and the guitar wouldn't overpower drums or vocals. It's a five-watt amp. Pat plugged in and we turned it all the way up and put the Treble all the way up, and it was in the ballpark.

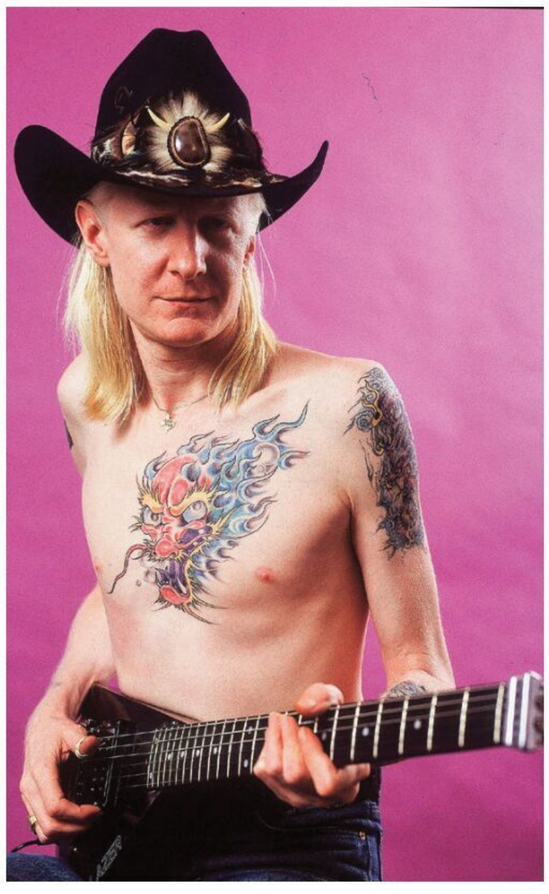
It was important to be in the same room like Hound Dog and the band were?

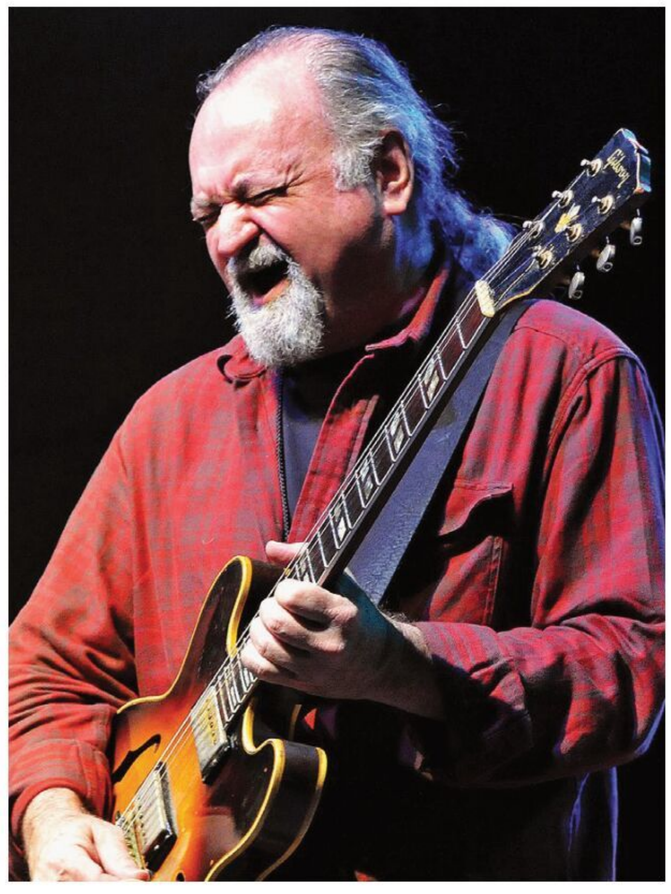
Yeah, Bruce told me when they went in for both the first album and the second, *Natural Boogie*, they were in a room with no headphones or anything and recorded to a two-track with minimal mics. So that was the idea for us. The only difference was we did use headphones so we could hear vocals, just because my recording room is so small and the drums were pretty loud.

A lot of the songs were one or two takes. We just came in, spent time working on arrangements, and did the whole record in a day and a half.

It's exciting to bring Hound Dog's music to a bunch of new people. Hopefully, they check out his catalog. ***- Ward Meeker***

Matt Stubbs: Fancey Pancen.







Johnny Winter (left) signed to Alligator in 1984, becoming the label's first white bluesman. Tinsley Ellis earns Bruce Iglauer's praise for his intensity and interpretation of Freddie King songs. Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials (right) have been with Alligator since 1986.

if he could execute his signature style that way, it would only be easier when he plugged in. He also told me that he was a lazy player. He didn't like to move his hand up and down the neck a lot, so he learned finger stretches and figured out ways to find unusual note choices without undue physical effort. Roy loved to accompany other artists. He was a reluctant front man."

The year 1985 also produced *Showdown!*, with Collins, Johnny Copeland, and a young Robert Cray. It eventually sold more than 300,000 copies, making it one of the biggest sellers in the Alligator discography. And the involvement of Stevie Ray Vaughan (who co-produced Mack's *Strike Like Lightning*) and Cray in key releases is now ironic given that Iglauer passed on the chance to record both.

"To my everlasting embarrassment, in 1979 I turned Stevie down for a one-record deal that probably would have made a pile of money," Iglauer writes in *Bitten by the Blues: The Alligator Records Story*, published last year. "Stevie just didn't impress me; I thought he was the world's loudest Albert King imitator and couldn't hear what made him special."

Cray, he thought at the time, was a work in progress – shy onstage and not fully realized as an artist, plus his music was more soul and R&B than straight blues.

THE IMPORTANT NOTES

The resurgence of Luther Allison unquestionably stands as one of Alligator's greatest successes. A veteran Chicago blueser who first recorded in the '60s, he found his greatest creative and commercial success near the end of his life, cutting four albums that appeared on Alligator in the U.S. and on Ruf Records in Europe – *Soul Fixin' Man*, *Blue Streak*, *Reckless*, and the posthumous *Live In Chicago*.

"He was one of the most exciting, most physical players ever," Iglauer recalls of Allison, whose career revival was upended by his death from cancer in 1997, just days before his 58th birthday. "He played with such intensity, such confidence, and a very aggressive attitude toward the groove, playing blues more like a rocker than a bluesman. Plus, he was a great Memphis soul-style singer. There are so many great songs and guitar performances."

One of the most satisfying aspects of the last 50 years for Iglauer is bringing world-class (but lesser known) players to a wider audience, Atlanta-based Tinsley Ellis among them. Iglauer was sold the first time he heard Ellis perform Freddie King's "Double Eyed Whammy."

"He has one foot in the blues, one foot in Southern rock," Iglauer said. "He also has great intensity, and he's maybe the best interpreter of Freddie King's songs. Tinsley has a lot of guitars, but he sounds best to my ear on his ES-345. When he plays slide on a Moderne, guitar collectors in the audience drool."

Ellis is one of the most-recorded artists in Alligator's history, along with Lil' Ed (Williams) & the Blues Imperials, who have been with the label since 1986. Williams, a fiery slide player who tunes to open D, prizes his Gibson Firebrand and Airline 59. Both were played by his greatest influence (and uncle), Chicago bluesman J.B. Hutto.

Iglauer also has high praise for New York bluesman Michael Hill, who cut three albums between '94 and '98 with a Steinberger GL4-TA.

"Michael has really big ears and a very broad definition of blues," Iglauer noted. "He was a source of constant musical surprises to me. He liked creating an intro that grabbed your attention, then he'd startle you by going in a different direction after the intro was over."

If there's a single artist today who embodies the spirit – and future – of the label, it could be 22-year-old Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, a Mississippi native Iglauer likens to "Buddy Guy on steroids." Ingram's debut, Kingfish, was released in 2019 while the follow-up, *662*, dropped in July.

Iglauer says a positively blistering set delivered by the then-19-year-old at the 2018 Chicago Blues Festival sealed the deal.

"I'd seen him when he was much younger, on a tiny stage at the King Biscuit Festival in Arkansas," said Iglauer. "At that time, his technique was dazzling but he played way too many notes for me. In Chicago, he delivered the music, playing and singing, with remarkable maturity and emotional effectiveness. He plays with youthful attack and energy, but with the subtlety and dynamics of a top-rank veteran.

"When I describe the players I like, I often say, 'He knows what the important notes are.' With Kingfish, that was the performance that showed me he knew those notes, because it was soul-to-soul communication. He didn't play like a teenager; he played like a grown man. I knew then that he had to become an Alligator artist." VG



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Brian Setzer

Return to Rumble

Like any guitarist at his level, Brian Setzer lives life answering the call of music. Grateful for the gift, he's able to instantly convert thoughts to riffs and songs, as effortlessly as inhaling. His new album, *Gotta Have The Rumble*, revisits the tried-and-true rockabilly themes that have spurred him for decades – motorcycles, hot rods, girls, and guitars – but also meets his self-imposed challenge to make music that sounds fresh.

BY WARD MEEKER

For the recording sessions, Setzer relied mostly on one of his signature Gretsches that had proven so roadworthy it only made sense to reward it with studio time. A vintage 6120 carried the remainder of the load. The same, though, couldn't be said for his recent touring amps.

"All of the amps I'd taken on the road were toast," he said. "Luckily, I had a couple of good vintage Bassmans laying around; one of them nobody had seen before because I had put it away a while ago."

Recording during the pandemic forced him to work without other musicians in the studio, which was a first. He tracked guitar and vocal parts in his adopted home state of Minnesota and sent them to players in Memphis and Nashville, who added bass and drums. If the scenario presented any challenges, you won't know it by listening, and Setzer is genuinely pleased with the results.

"I think this is one album I'll keep going back to," he said. "All the tones were captured, they're really good songs, and it doesn't sound like an old record, which is the hardest thing to do – that's the trick."

Brian Setzer: Russ Harrington.

Setzer's 6120T-BSNSH signature Nashville model (left) did the lion's share of recording for *Gotta Have The Rumble,* with this '59 6120 handling the rest.

One of Setzer's vintage pieces is this '58 6128 Duo-Jet in original blue-sparkle finish, now faded to a green hue.

How did you choose guitars for these sessions?

I lined up four or five of my signature guitars, and one was the winner. And it's not from the Gretsch custom shop – it's an off-the-line 6136 Black Phoenix with TV Jones Classic pickups. I tried some of the vintage 6120s, too, but when it comes down to it, a guitar's got to work *and* have the tone. That one had the whole deal – played in tune and sounded amazing through the Bassman. Once you nail a sound in the studio, you don't want to change anything, so that guitar is on three-quarters of the album. For the rest, I used a '59 6120 that T.V. Jones worked on for me. He's a master scientist.

Did the Bassman make it all the way through?

Yeah, except for the first track, "Checkered Flag," which is a really clean '64 Bandmaster I used because it has vibrato. That amp's trick is its original Oxford speakers, which sound fantastic. Over the years I'd swap them out so I could turn it up; I was basically using a Marshall by the end, it got so loud (laughs). Then I tried it again with the original speakers and thought, "Oh, this is *sweet.*"

Did working without other players in the studio affect the way you played?

Well, I had to imagine a band was backing me because with a band, you lay into it more

in certain spots and you lay out in certain spots. We used software to create drum sounds instead of just a click track – we chose Ringo's drums (laughs) – and it really locked me in. Playing to a click track is like the old pong video game – beep, beep, beep, beep – but with an actual drum sound it was very comfortable, and when the first track came back from Julian [Raymond, his co-producer], I was really blown away.

The positives about doing it this way was it's less cluttered – you're not tripping over cords in the studio and if there's a mistake, it's *you* making it. I'd do it again.

When did you first connect with Julian?

Julian, I met in Nashville when I played on a Glen Campbell tribute album he was making. For this record, I told him I wasn't expecting much, but he said, "I've got [bassist] Dave Roe in Memphis and [drummer] Victor Indrizzo here in Nashville. Send down the parts and we'll get back to you." I'd never made a record this way, and I was really, really surprised by how well it worked. It was so easy.



"This is the place to do it," Setzer says of riding his '57 Triumph Tiger 650 in his adopted home state of Minnesota. "It's wide open, beautiful, and has good roads. It's a piece of paradise, kind of like where I grew up 40 years ago."

Brian Setzer: Russ Harrington.

How about Jason Orris?

Jason is an engineer who owns Terrarium, a studio in Minneapolis. I met him a couple of years ago. He works really quick, which is good because in the studio I get that quick New York thing going. So, we had that connection and once we're in there, we just want to work. We don't want to stop and have lunch, we don't want to talk on the phone. We love getting the job done.

Did you have guitar rhythms or leads worked out in advance, or did you want to be spontaneous?

Well, the solos are half and half. I get a really cool idea for a guitar solo and I'll base it on that then let it take off. On "Cat With Nine Wives" I came up with a couple of cool almost-bebop solos, like starting with something Cliff Gallup might do then taking it somewhere else. I said, "Let's come up with a cool, jazzy kind of thing."

With *all* of my songs, I come up with a riff out of nowhere. It always works that way for me – they're gifts I receive from the songbird. It's funny when people say, "That's one quarter Les Paul, one quarter Jimmy Bryant, one quarter...[someone else]." But it's *not*. It's just these little ideas that come, and once I turn the faucet on and get rolling, it really snowballs. The first song I wrote this time was "One Bad Habit," with its crazy augmented-triplet thing. I don't know where that came from and it has no business being in a rockabilly song... or *any* song (laughs). It's something I made up while sitting around, noodling.

Another one that started with a different sort of riff was "Smashup on Highway One," and I don't know what that is – some kind of Middle Eastern riff. It came from playing "Miserlou" with the Stray Cats one night. I started on it, and it just sounded so cool and brought the house down. So I came up with that riff and stuck it in a rockabilly song, and it's very different in that context. I like to take that music out of the '50s and move it forward.

Is that a real Coral Sitar we hear on that?

It's not. It was a Coral copy I had laying around the studio, and it was hard to work with because the intonation was terrible. I had to re-tune it every time I did the riff (laughs). It's blended with my Gretsch.

Which banjo do we hear on "Rockabilly Banjo?"

That's my Gibson Earl Scruggs. It's 10 or 15 years old.

You collaborated on most of the songwriting, especially with Mike Himelstein. What did he bring?

Mike wrote quite a few lyrics. With him, it's the chemistry. I like the way he puts words together; he's not flowery. I only ever had that with one other guy, and that was Joe Strummer. When Mike sends lyrics, I get lit up and basically write the rest on the spot. I did that with "The Cat With Nine Wives," and it was so clever and fun; I loved its story and how the words played out. He told me, "Most songs are about the guy that doesn't want to get married, but I've got one about a guy that loves getting married so much he's done it nine times." I had this bebop rockabilly riff laying around, and when he handed me those

lyrics, I said, "We've got to go through the wives... (sings) I've got one, two..." And then instead of a turnaround, I played that F6/9, B^{b}6/9, to the D. It was a jazz thing. And that's what really flipped it in my head. That would *not* have been done in rockabilly, but it's valid in my world because it's different. And I was blown away by what Dave and Victor came up with to follow my guitar.

You wrote two songs on your own – "Drip Drop," which has a cool Buddy Holly vibe, and "Turn You On, Turn Me On," which is an ode to a motorcycle and hints at Bo Diddley.

"Drip Drop" started when winter was finally over and I saw icicles dripping. But you can't sing, "Drip drop, the icicles go dripity drop." That's not poetic (laughs). So, what else goes drip drop? It has to have a ring to it; "My tears go dripity drop... I don't know why my tears won't stop." And then it snowballs quickly to become a song.

"Turn You On, Turn Me On" came to me one day when I started humming, "High compression, low compression..." It was train-of-thought; "All gas, no brakes, adrenaline, head rush, no shimmy, no shakes." It was catchy.

The outro to "Off Your Rocker" is hilarious, with the conversation where a girl is asking questions and the guy she's addressing is trying to answer.

Oh yeah, that's my wife and her friend; they were in the studio that day, so I said, "I'll come up with some lines and cue you with my hand." They had no problem doing the interruptions (laughs). It was just a fun outro bit that was easy to catch.

If it weren't for the pandemic, might this have been a Stray Cats record?

That could have happened, but Lee [Rocker] kind of beat me to the punch when he put a record out. So I sat around and wrote songs just to see what would happen, then it was simple enough to think "I'll just go demo them."

Do you play guitar every day?

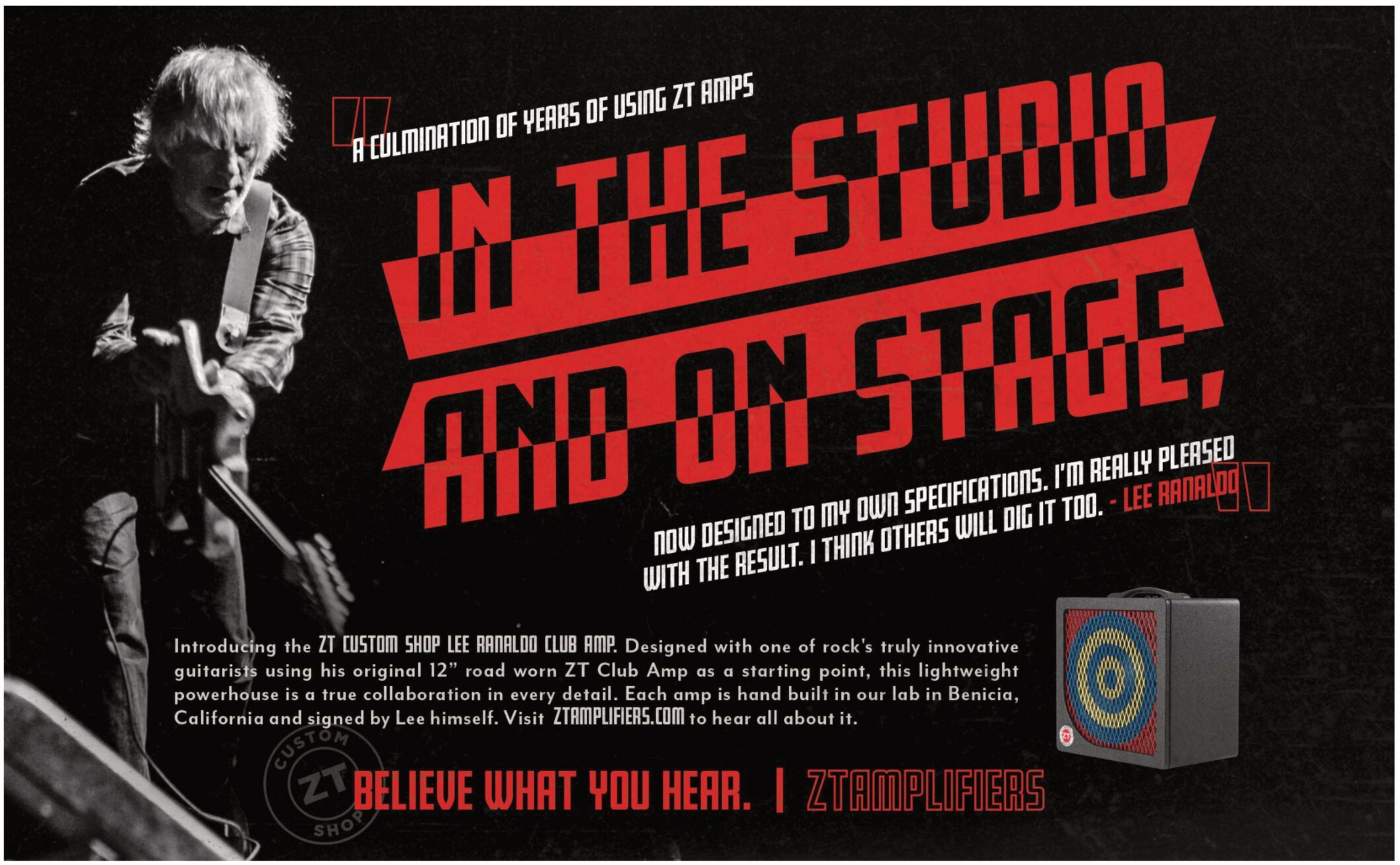
Oh, yeah. I roam around the house and pick up a guitar all the time. Then I might ride my motorcycle to the hardware store, come back, and pick up a different guitar. That's how I get ideas. I might get one on a long motorcycle ride; I'll think "I've always wanted to try that B^{b} with a different key," then I'll come back and fiddle on a different 6120. I'm always twanging on them.

Do you still buy a vintage guitar or amp when you see one or hear about one you want to try?

I still buy, yeah. It's funny, I have some things... there's a group of guitars that I won't sell, and they're all Gretsches and they're part of me. But I do get smitten with other guitars – I still have the bug (laughs). I bought a beautiful '56 Les Paul with the Tune-O-Matic, and it plays similar to a Duo-Jet, but those P-90s give it a sound I really like. I *love* that guitar with flatwound .011s. I also just bought an acoustic Super 400. I love those big old jazz boxes, and what a *sound* out of that thing!

Where did you find them?

I got the Les Paul from Dave Davidson at Well Strung Guitars. He's got the craziest things and he's a straight shooter. It's weird to buy something sight-unseen, and I *have* been ripped off in the past – I've spent my life learning how to *play*, not really caring what bridge should be on a guitar or if someone changed the Tone knob. I don't look at instruments like that. I pick them up and feel them. I don't look to see if something has been changed. So, I have to get a feel for a dealer. A couple other good ones are Elliot Rubinson from Rumbleseat Music and Gary Dick, from Gary's Classic Guitars. There are very few guys I buy from. **VG**



Upcoming Events

KEEP UPDATED AT WWW.VINTAGEGUITAR.COM

*Denotes a new or updated listing.

Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, September 12, November 14, February 13, 202, May 8, 2022, at Renninger's Florida Twin Markets, 20651 Hwy 441 Mt. Dora FL. Hours 8-3 For more info contact Allen at info@lcmsm.com, (352)735-0025 or visit www. lcmsm.com

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

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday, August 22nd at the Holiday Inn Elk Grove, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. For more information contact Beverly Bakes at bakesguitar@aol.com or 847-931-0707

Amigo, SoCAL Guitar Show, August 28-29, 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.

Cincinnati Guitar Show, August 29 at the Sharonville Convention Center 11355 Chester Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45246 just off I-75 Sharon Rd exit. Hours 10am - 4pm. For more info contact Denny Melchers at 513-503-1072 or cincyguitarshow.com.

SEPTEMBER

Butler Music Musician's Swap Meet, September 18 at Butler Music 2205 Rt 291, Harrisonville, MO 64701. Hours 9-6. Free admission. Live entertainment all day. Call 816-925-4686 or email jeff@butlermusic.com (**See Advertisement on page 72.**)

Shreveport/Bossier Vintage Guitar, Musical Gear Show and Battle of the Bands September 18-19 at Harrah's Louisiana Downs Casino and Racetrack, 8000 E Texas St, Bossier City, LA 71111. Hours 10-6 Saturday, 11-4 Sunday. Contact John at 318-507-5096 or jandwmusiccompany@gmail.com

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, Sept 18th & 19th, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, Pa. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com.

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. (**See Advertisement on page 72.**)

Guitarfest Guitar Show, September 19th at the Summit County Fairgrounds Arena, 229 E Howe Rd. Tallmadge, OH 44278. Hrs 10am -6pm. For more info visit www.guitarfestguitarshow.com

OCTOBER

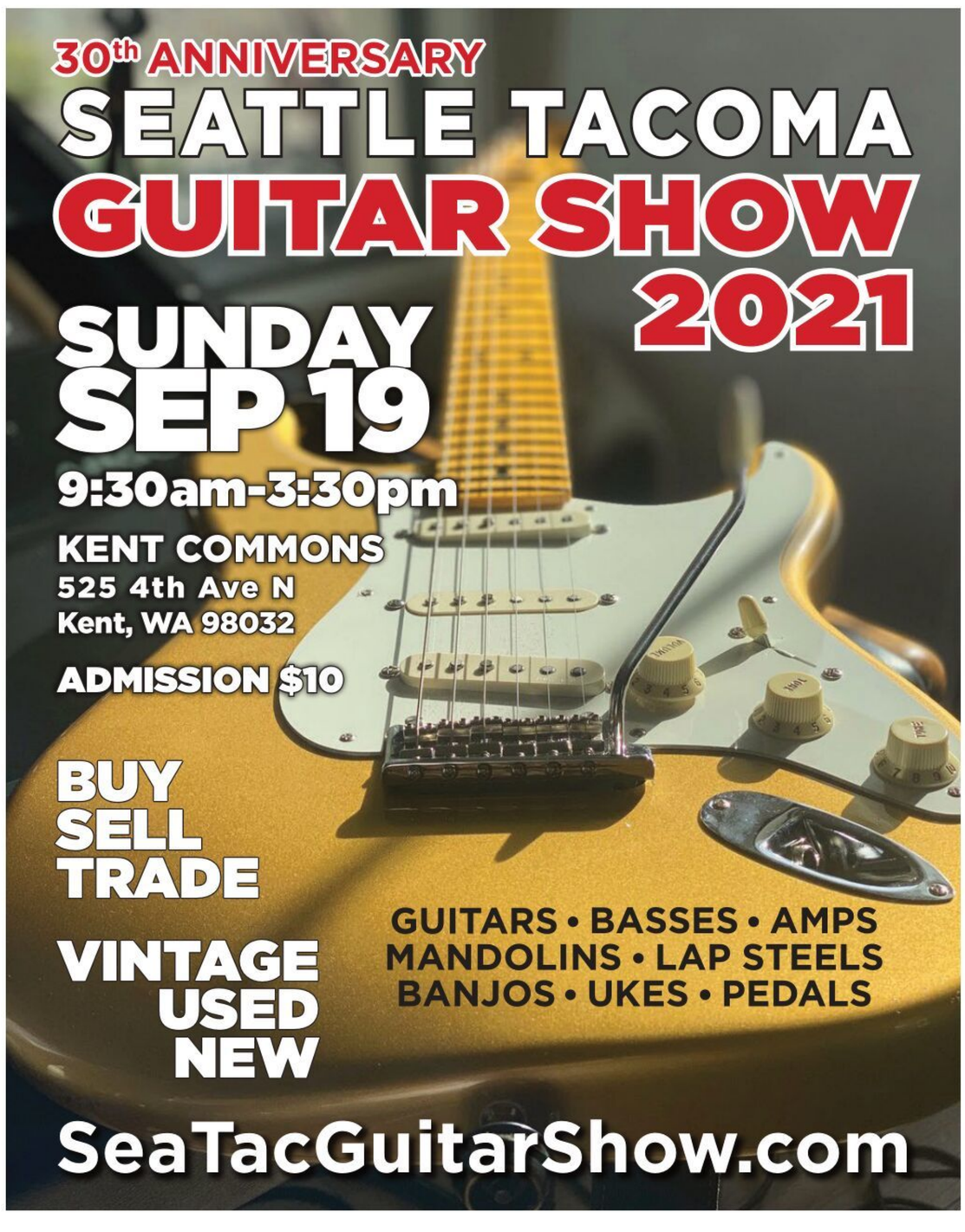
Guitar Show, October 2 at the Lenawee County Fairgrounds, Adrian, MI. 11am -6pm. $5 admission. Contact dougonvacation@yahoo.com

Northeast Guitar Expo, October 3 at the Hartford/Windsor Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, 28 Dayhill Road, Windsor, CT. Hours 11-4. For more info call Peter Occhineri (860) 983-6774, email – NortheastGuitarExpo@gmail.com website – www.NortheastGuitarExpo.com

The Indiana Guitar Show, October 10 – one day only, at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E Main St, Danville, Indiana. For more info visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com

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*. (**See Advertisement on page 73.**)

Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, October 24, Printscape Arena, 114 Southpointe Blvd., Canonsburg, PA. For more info contact Scott at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net or visit www.guitarshowusa.com.





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Upcoming Events

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NOVEMBER

Great American Guitar Show (Fall Philly), November 6 & 7 at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, Rt. 422, Exit at Oaks, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA 19456. For more info, contact Bee 3 Vintage at 828-298-2197 or www.bee3vintage.com

Rose Quarter Guitar Festival, Sunday November 21 at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum Portland, OR. For more info Bruce@AdolphAgency.com, 253-445-1973 or visit www.rosequarterguitarfestival.com

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 (**See Advertisement on page 74.**)

DECEMBER

Atlanta Guitar Show at the Infinite Energy Forum, 6400 Sugarloaf Pkwy, Duluth, GA 30097. Hours Saturday 10-5 Sunday 10-4. Contact Ray at 404-895-3459 or Ray@grinningelk.com



2022

JANUARY

2022 Winter Ohio Guitar Show, January 9, 2022, at the Makoy Center, 5462 Center St, Hillard, OH 43026. Hours 11:30am – 5pm. For more information call Marc at 740-797-3351 or visit www.ohioguitarshow.com

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, January 28-30, 2022 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

FEBRUARY

Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, February 27, 2022 Printscape Arena, 114 Southpointe Blvd., Canonsburg, PA. For more info contact Scott at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net or visit www.guitarshowusa.com.

MARCH

Carolina Guitar Show – Asheville, March 12-13, 2022 at the WNC Ag Center I-26, Exit 40, 1301 Fanning Bridge Rd., Fletcher/Asheville, NC 28732. For more info, call Bee 3 Vintage at 828-298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com

The Indiana Guitar Show, March 26-27, 2022 at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E Main St, Danville, Indiana. For more info visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com

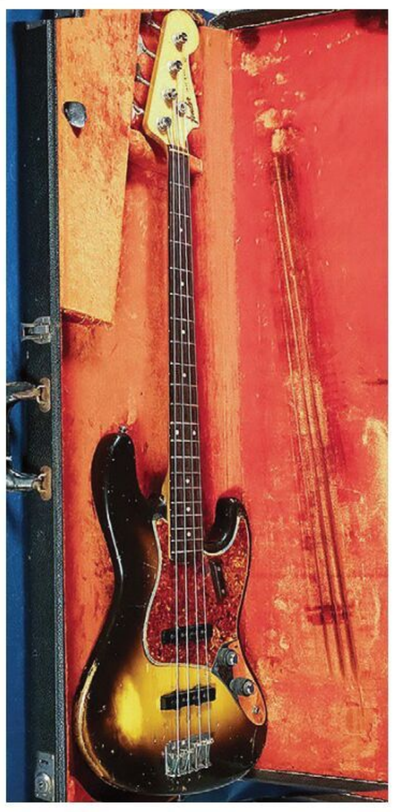
APRIL

Northeast Guitar Expo, April 3, 2022 at The Verve Hotel & 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

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.

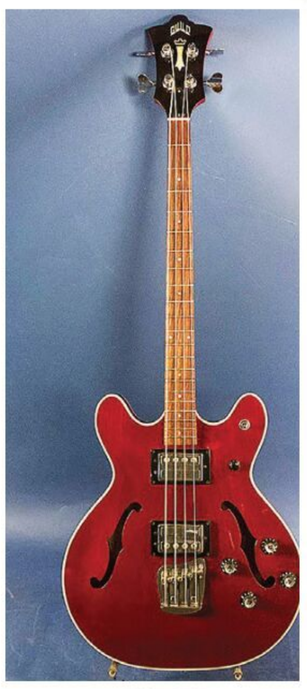
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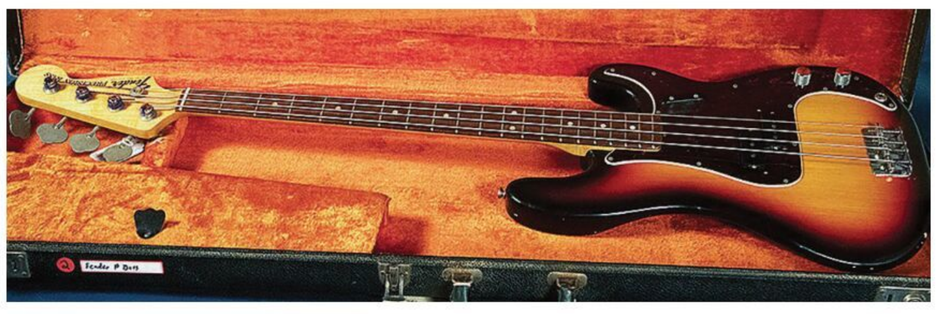


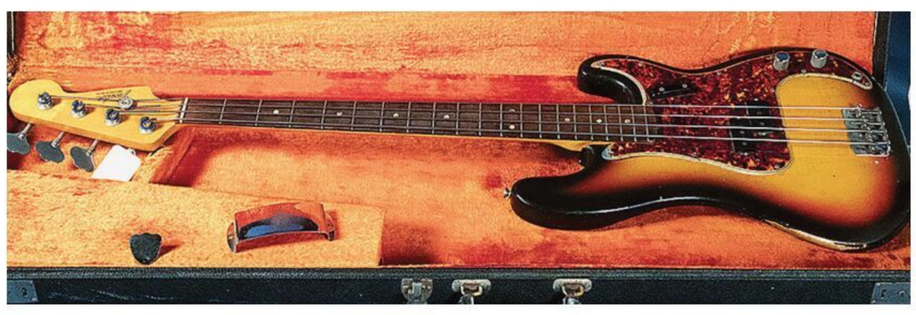
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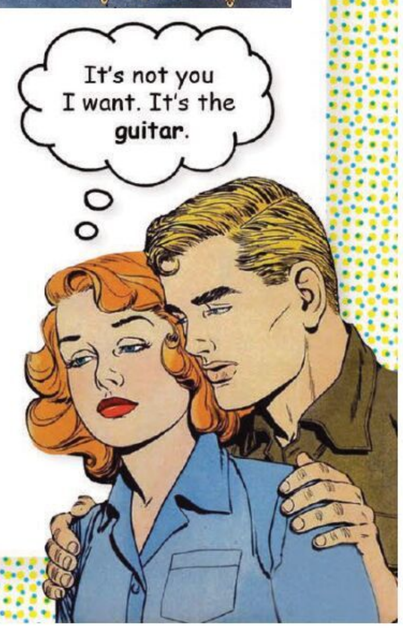


1968 Fender Precision Bass
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Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi.

LAYLA LIVES



Tedeschi Trucks Band feat. Trey Anastasio

Layla Revisited

Alive recording of Derek & the Dominos' masterpiece? Featuring Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi – plus Doyle Bramhall, II and Trey Anastasio on guitars? Did Christmas come early? The answer is, resoundingly, *yes*. Taped at the Lockn' Festival in 2019, *Layla Revisited* recaptures Clapton's finest hour by musicians who instinctively understand the music. Not only have Trucks and Bramhall toured extensively with Slowhand, but Derek's parents actually named him after Eric's iconic band. *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs* was released the day Susan Tedeschi was born, November 9, 1970. These veterans have been listening to the Dominos and Allman-infused music their whole lives.

Channeling Duane Allman's spirit, Derek tears up a '57 Les Paul goldtop on "Why Does Love Have to Be So Sad," sharing explosive solos with the Phish frontman. Anastasio sings lead on a nuanced "Bell Bottom Blues," while Doyle offers a powerful break in "Little Wing." Trucks unleashes serious non-slide chops on "Layla," while Tedeschi jams on an LP flametop.

While Clapton's original Dominos imploded recording their second album, *Layla Revisited* delivers their soul-quaking debut with fresh conviction. If you're already looking for the best guitar album of 2021... hold my beer. ***– Pete Prown***



Lukas Nelson & the Promise of the Real

A Few Stars Apart

Lukas Nelson established his identity long ago. Yes, he's Willie's son; bits of his dad's vocal phrasing occasionally surface, but he and this quintet also serve as Neil Young's band, and their musical identity tilts more to Americana than outlaw country, amply manifested here. Inspired by the pandemic and return to normalcy, the songs blend both optimism and homecoming typified by the guitar-drenched "We'll Be Alright."

Nelson, the sole guitarist, proves a model of economy throughout. He sometimes downplays his work in the larger ensemble as he does on "A Few Stars Apart" and "More Than We Can Handle." In other instances, he creates more prominent backing. Draping the stark "Leave 'em Behind" in multiple overdubbed acoustics, he injects keening, echo-drenched, upper register amplified leads near the end.

Terse amplified intros and outros bookend the ballad "No Reason" and layers of Petty-style jangling guitar drive the rocking "Wildest Dream." For "Giving You Away" and "Hand Me a Light," the most overtly country performance, he lays in carefully placed amplified punctuations alongside Logan Metz's keyboard. The songs on this triumphant effort stand on their own and to his credit, Lukas Nelson, like Willie, knows exactly when *not* to play. ***– Rich Kienzle***



Mike Zito

Resurrection

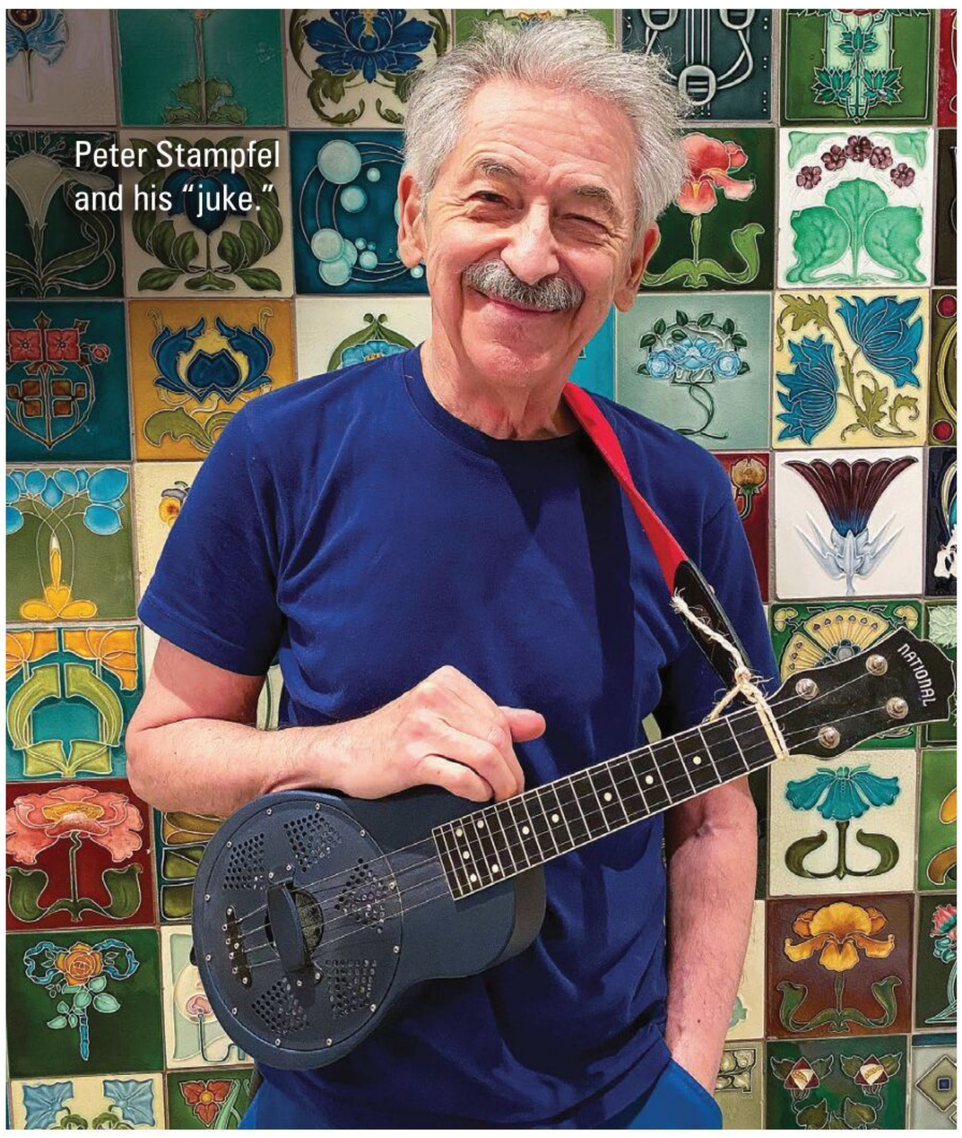
The very title of bluesman Mike Zito's new album – and the fact it's the follow-up to 2020's *Quarantine Blues* – strongly suggests the arrival of songs celebrating post-pandemic life.

There's indeed a sense of revival here, but this isn't a release celebrating the reopening of restaurants and bars. Instead, it's a deeply personal story of relationships and raw emotion, told by two voices – Zito's yearning vocals and the evocative, omnipresent lines he coaxes from his guitars (including a K-Line Del Mar, Music Man Axis, and PRS McCarty).

Zito states his case via originals like "Dreaming of You," a guitar-drenched track of unambiguous subject matter; the restrained "In My Blood," which more than hints at commitment issues; and "Damned If I Do," a searing slow blues. The title track, meanwhile, is a clear statement of love lost and love found.

Even Zito's covers – including J.J. Cale's "I'll Make Love to You Anytime" and Willie Dixon's "Evil" – fit seamlessly into the overall tapestry. Another, Blind Faith's "Presence of the Lord," easily stands as a

Tedeschi Trucks: Stuart Levine.



Peter Stampfel and his "juke."

TIME CAPSULES & TRAVELOGS

By Dan Forte

At the start of the new millennium, *Playboy* asked various musicians to list their favorite songs of the 20th century. Richard Thompson took the assignment further, beginning with "Sumer Is Icumen In," dating from 13th-century England. Unfortunately, the magazine didn't print his selections, but he launched a tour and live album titled *1,000 Years Of Popular Music*.

Twenty years later, **Peter Stampfel** had a similar notion. He didn't go back hundreds of years, but he covered the 20th century – literally. His ambitious project includes 100 songs, his favorite song from each year, 1901 to 2020.

Only an iconoclast like Stampfel could tackle such a task with such panache and eclecticism, belting out everything from "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" to "She Drives Me Crazy" with his familiar croak. The 82-year-old is best known as a member of what was called a "psychedelic folk" band, the Holy Modal Rounders. Multi-instrumentalist Stampfel and guitarist Steve Weber formed the duo in the early '60s, eventually adding additional members (including playwright Sam Shepard). The pair also enjoyed a brief stint with the Fugs' countercultural rock band.

On *20th Century*, Stampfel plays banjo, fiddle, electric mandolin, and mainly "Juke," his National steel-bodied ukulele strung with steel strings and tuned like a banjo. He explains, "J from banjo, plus uke from ukulele, equals juke."

Jonathan Freilich, Michael Cerveris, and producer Mark Bingham handle most of the electric and acoustic guitar parts, with dB's guitarist Peter Holsapple joining on an avant-garde-ballad version of the Ramones' "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend." Other twists include 1960s "Running Bear" borrowing the "ooga-chaka" intro from Blue Swede's "Hooked On A Feeling" and a blistering surf-punk take on "I Sold My Heart To The Junkman."

Stampfel's voice sometimes gets *near* a high note or two ("Goodbye Yellow Brick Road"), and for other selections, the singing and arrangement juxtapositions exhibit his sense of humor – satire never descending into caricature. But for one instance, the strange-bedfellows take on the Association's "Along Comes Mary," with solo clawhammer banjo backing, comes off unexpected but totally legit. And I'd take his version of Jimmy Jones' "Handy Man" over James Taylor's insipid cover any day.

The set's insightful booklet includes the history of each song and Peter's feelings and experiences with them. Without clobbering you over the head with it, the overriding message seems to be "Remember when music was *fun*." For that, *20th Century* succeeds admirably.

A different kind of trip is piloted by former postal worker **Pat Conte**. More than a mere record collector, Conte is an excellent folk musician and one of the foremost authorities on world music. He was one-half of the Otis Brothers, a roots-music duo with the late Bob Guida.

With bluegrass musician Randy Shulberg, a.k.a. "Citizen Kafka," he co-hosted the radio show "The Secret Museum of the Air," which ran on WBAI in New York from 1990 to '96, then moved to WFMU – no longer running, but archived as a podcast. His basement of 78s and other ephemera is legendary and his collection has been used to compile albums including *Anthology Of American Folk Music, Vol, 1-3*, and the influential Harry Smith Archives.

Conte has also produced a series of CDs under the banner *The Secret Museum of Mankind*, and his vinyl installment *Guitars, Vol. 1: Prologue To Modern Styles* is the first new release since 1998. His expertise is evinced in both his selection of material and his extensive liner notes, contained in "Descriptive notes inside," à la Folkways platters from the '50s and '60s, which include information about the artists as well as the instruments played.

The 78s (remastered with care by Don Fierro), rare instruments (depicted in spot-on drawings by Jeff Tocci), gatefold images of a woman with a parlor guitar, a Moroccan saz player, and Gypsy dancers – all come from Conte's collection.

The tracks range from the harp-guitar of Italy's Giuseppe Cammarato to a 1933 solo bouzouki piece by Jack Halkias and a home-recorded duet of Pierre Borel and Polo Quince, who appeared in the 1954 short *Corsican Holiday*. The Aguilar family play laud and bandurria on "Festa Mora," while bowed dilruba and steel guitar are featured from India. Geographically, the program travels from Spain (flamenco guitarist Jeronimo Villarino) to Africa (the "Zulu guitar" of Moses Zwe-Zwe) to Quebec (the 1950 rock and roll of Les Freres Joyal's "Petit Boogie").

Perhaps appropriately, the set closes with a field recording of unknown guitar players from Papua, New Guinea, illustrating how so much important music is still unheard. As Conte writes, "It had the necessary charm to bid us farewell – until the gates swing open again for another installment of the SMM." Here's hoping the Museum of Mankind won't be *too* Secret.

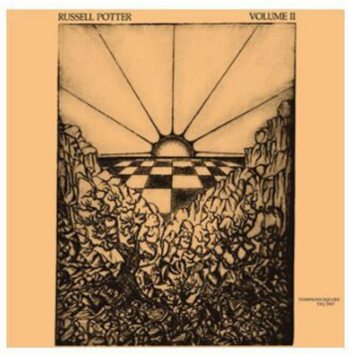
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Peter Stampfel: Lily Dean Stampfel.

highlight, with Zito injecting bluesy guitar fire into a rock classic.

A recovering addict, Zito knows about living in darkness. With *Resurrection*, it's clear he's seeing a lot more light. **– *Sean McDevitt***





Russell Potter

A Stone's Throw and Volume II: Neither Here Nor There

Few artists are void of forebears and influences, though in some cases the connection is indiscernible. Albert King cited T-Bone Walker as his main influence, though his style bears no resemblance to the blues pioneer's. Russell Potter was inspired by the three leaders of the fingerpicked steel-string "American primitive" school; John Fahey, Robbie Basho, and Leo Kottke. But while using them as touchstones, his resultant style is homage rather than caricature.

One listen to Potter's lone albums, from 1979 and '81, will make you wish the guitarist's recording career hadn't ended so abruptly. His playing is articulate but warm, proficient yet soulful – impressive considering that *A Stone's Throw* was recorded when he was just a freshman in college.

Potter displays chutzpah when he pays tribute to Fahey, twisting the acoustic icon's "Dance of the Inhabitants of the Palace of King Philip XIV of Spain" into an electric bottleneck showpiece – which makes total sense (and is played with perfect intonation). He also explores traditional Irish melodies, on the lovely "Planxty Irwin" and "The Flowers Of Edinburgh."

Recorded just as American primitive was being co-opted into new age (but years before the idiom's rebirth), this missing link sounds all the more contemporary for its time away. **– *Dan Forte***


Dumpstaphunk's Nick Daniels, Ian Neville, and Tony Hall.

soul, ripping guitar, and New Orleans swagger. The NOLA natives consist of Ivan Neville on keys, Tony Hall (bass, guitar, and vocals), Nick Daniels III (bass and vocals), Devin Trusclair on drums, and Ian Neville on guitar. This next-generation ensemble continues to blend the New Orleans tradition of the Neville Brothers and Meters with a fresh approach and vibrant, groove-fusion musicality.

Highlights include an engaging cover of Sly & the Family Stone's "In Time." Syncopated counterpoint between drums, bass, and horns are offset by in-the-pocket guitar work and wah stabs. Ian lets loose with rockin' tastiness on "Let's Get at It," while Hall switches to a Strat for some psychedelic blues-rock soloing on the mesmerizing "Make It After All."

Fans would appreciate more extended guitar soloing like in their live shows, but guest blues-rocker Marcus King keeps things interesting on the Buddy Miles cover, "United Nations Stomp." King goes industrial-strength ballistic on the outro solo, merging aggression, talent, and strong fretboard craft. Trombone Shorty appears on the powerfully addictive "Justice 2020."

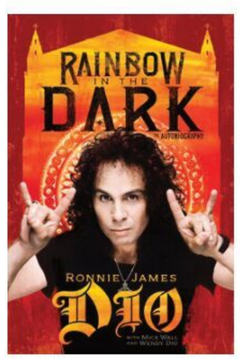
The funk is deep, the guitars are sweltering, and Dumpstaphunk's message of peace and unity is right on time. **– *Oscar Jordan***



Dumpstaphunk

Where Do We Go From Here

Dumpstaphunk's fourth studio album combines earthy '70s funk, vintage



Rainbow in the Dark

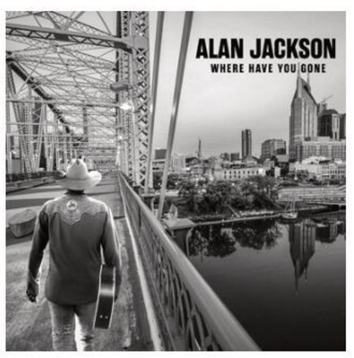
Ronnie James Dio, with Mick Wall & Wendy Dio

When Dio died of stomach cancer in 2010, he was arguably metal's greatest-ever singer and had worked with two of the most enigmatic guitar heroes in rock history – Ritchie Blackmore and Tony Iommi. His solo band even included '80s shredder Vivian Campbell.

In this biography, Dio proves conversational, yet blunt when defending professional decisions. In Rainbow, he worked well with Deep Purple alumnus Blackmore initially despite business frustrations and discomfort when he'd casually fire a band member. The electrifying songwriting dynamic with Iommi for Black Sabbath's 1980 album *Heaven and Hell* changed when bassist/lyricist Geezer Butler worked on '81's *Mob Rules*. Various pressures eventually led to the singer's departure.

Ronnie praises Campbell's well-rounded guitarmanship, but gradually, Viv and bassist Jimmy Bain demanded more money and credits. Dio writes, "If they thought I was moody and stubborn, man, try working with Ritchie Blackmore. Try Tony Iommi, if you think I'm a tough guy."

The book ends in '86, but hints at a possible sequel. Much is left to cover, like Rainbow reunion odds and the Black Sabbath/Heaven & Hell reformations. Still, this is a tantalizing start. **– *Bret Adams***



Alan Jackson

Where Have You Gone

Few have so done more to maintain the sound and spirit of classic country in the face of ever-changing fads than Alan Jackson. Fiddles and pedal steel still frame his warm, earthy voice. His original com-

Dumpstaphunk: Jim Mimna.

extra EXTRA



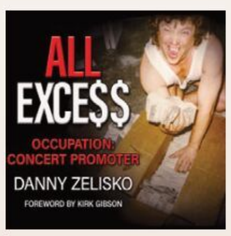
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Chicago/The Blues/Today!

In 1965, author and historian Samuel Charters recorded some of Chicago's top bluesmen for a Vanguard Records sampler. Released in 1966, this compilation – featuring Junior Wells (with Buddy Guy on guitar), Otis Rush, Johnny Shines, and others – was a revelation, inspiring a generation of rockers. Charters' goal was to showcase the city's electric blues scene; instead, he made history. **– *SM***



MIRANDA LAMBERT, JON RANDALL, JACK INGRAM
The Marfa Tapes

Lambert and fellow singer/songwriters Randall and Ingram traveled to Marfa, Texas, to write and record an album's worth of new songs on the spot. On these live, raw performances, Randall or Lambert add simple, yet effective, acoustic accompaniments to elemental tunes like "Homegrown Tomatoes." In going back to stark, unvarnished minimalism, the trio achieves the *ultimate* classic country sound. **– *RK***



DANNY ZELISKO
All Exce$$ – Occupation: Concert Promoter

This photo-laden autobiography features concert promoter Zelisko recounting his backstage adventures. There are tales of Chuck Berry firing a guitarist who "stole" too many solos, or Danny working a 1973 gig for Led Zeppelin, the band earning $1,000 per minute onstage ("Do the math!"). Or a naked Slash fleeing a hotel room, thinking he's about to be murdered. And cash – lots of *cash*, baby. **– *BA***



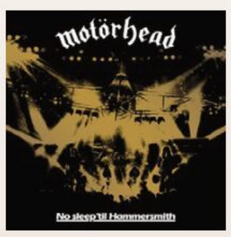
DIRTY HONEY
Dirty Honey

There's a Led Zep resurgence going on, and Dirty Honey stands out thanks to John Notto's whiplash guitar. His solo on "California Dreamin'" is more Angus than Jimmy, as Notto delivers greasy pentatonic runs galore. "The Wire" builds to a Les Paul face-melter, though "Take My Hand" treads perilously close to "The Ocean." Still, this L.A. quartet rocks mightily. **– *PP***



CHICAGO
At Carnegie Hall Deluxe Edition

From April 5-10, 1971, Chicago played eight shows at Carnegie Hall, capturing the band at its early peak. This 16-CD deluxe edition has posters, 28-page photo booklet, and the magnificent Terry Kath on guitar. It's jazz-rock with pop hooks, horns, hip chord voicings, and ever-feisty guitar from Kath. Check out the wicked blues-wah work on "I'm a Man." **– *OJ***



MOTÖRHEAD
No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith

A 40th anniversary box set celebrating Motörhead's pummeling live platter and only U.K. #1 – appropriate since Lemmy, "Fast" Eddie Clarke, and Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor were built to be experienced live. Highlights include unreleased soundcheck recordings and three full concerts from the *Ace of Spades* tour used on the original album, with several run-throughs of "Iron Horse." **– *BA***



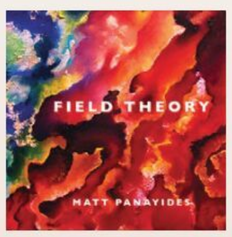
NICO
Drama of Exile

Long after Velvet Underground and now addicted to heroin, singer Nico somehow found a great band for this post-punk 1982 gem, just reissued. With French-Algerian guitarist Mahamad Hadi – whose jagged riffing echoes Adrian Belew – Nico caterwauls through David Bowie's "Heroes" and Lou Reed's "I'm Waiting For the Man." Dig Hadi's stunning Goth-guitar in "Purple Lips." *Highly* recommended. **– *PP***



NIGHT RANGER
ATBPO

Brad Gillis – employing his '57 Strat and '52 Les Paul – and co-guitarman Keri Kelli run free, spitting leads on "Bring it All Home to Me" while harmonies and riffs dominate "Breakout." Intense lead bursts puncture "Dance" and furious soloing wraps up "Monkey." *ATBPO* is guitar-heavy; there are a few ballads, but the '80s production gloss is long gone. **– *BA***



MATT PANAYIDES
Field Theory

Jazz guitarist Matt Panayides plays refreshing post-bop that's fearless, captivating, and unconcerned with those who don't get it. His *Field Theory* displays exuberant harmonic sophistication, dynamics, and Whammy pedal freedom. The music swings and turns on a dime as Panayides' guitar navigates eloquent lines with a tremendous combo, as in "Energy Mover." **– *OJ***



JOHN MCLAUGHLIN
Liberation Time

The age-defying fusioneer is now 79, but that's hardly slowed him down. Alternating between a PRS and guit-synth, McLaughlin is on-point in "As the Spirit Sings" and gorgeous "Singing Our Secrets." For uptempo thrills, "Lockdown Blues" is a jazz-rock shredfest, featuring John's unbridled improv. Fifty years after Mahavishnu's *Inner Mounting Flame*, Johnny Mac remains the most-celebrated fusion player in history. **– *PP***



BLACK MIDI
Cavalcade

The sophomore LP from these British indie rockers is a many-layered, challenging, and rewarding listen. Unclassifiable in terms of genre, the outfit veers from rock to jazz to prog, and beyond. "John L" evokes Primus, while "Diamond Stuff" is a percussive masterpiece that recalls Pink Floyd. The highlight is "Dethroned," with guitarist/frontman Geordie Greep leading a glorious buildup. **– *DP***



STEVE HACKETT
Surrender of Silence

Opening with "The Obliterati," Steve reminds us he helped invent two-handed tapping with blinding runs galore. He imbues "Natalia" with creepy choirs and violent shredding – not bad for a 70-year-old ace. As if his own film soundtrack, "Relaxation Music for Sharks" is a fret-fest of dark harmonies with an incredible solo. Fifty years on, Hackett is playing better than ever. **– *PP***

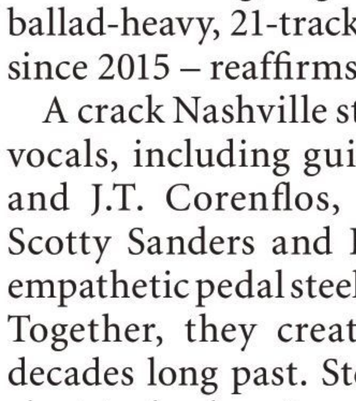


A stage full of all-star guitarists honor Peter Green.

positions, most written without collaborators, range from subtle and sentimental to hard-hitting, regardless of topic. This ballad-heavy, 21-track collection – his first since 2015 – reaffirms those strengths.

A crack Nashville studio band backs his vocals, including guitarists Brent Mason and J.T. Corenflos, resophonic players Scotty Sanders and Rob McNelley, with empathetic pedal steel from Paul Franklin. Together, they create a sound echoing decades long past. Steel, resophonic, and electric lead guitars enhance Jackson's performance on "Where the Cottonwood Grows" with varying, yet appropriate interludes of twang.

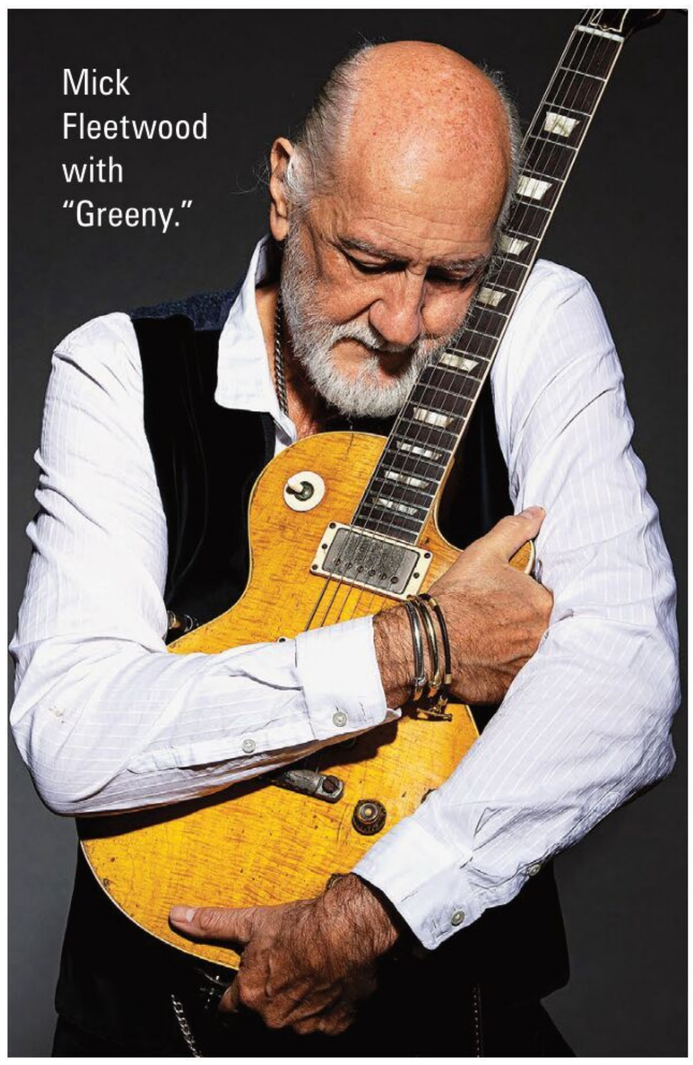
The tempo jumps on "Livin' on Empty" as incandescent amplified and resophonic guitars overlap breaks, followed by white-hot slide guitar shredding. The rocking "Back" crackles with similar aggressive fretwork. An austere acoustic texture frames "This Heart of Mine," a ballad in the George Jones tradition. On the nostalgic "So Late So Soon," expressive guitar breaks match every shading of Jackson's vocal. Once more, he provides a powerful lesson in the enduring joys of the traditional; Alan's musicians do likewise. **– *RK***



Mick Fleetwood & Friends

Celebrate the Music of Peter Green & Early Years of Fleetwood Mac

British blues icon Peter Green passed away July 25, 2020, at the age of 73. As one of the founding members of the original Fleetwood Mac with Mick Fleetwood and John McVie, Green influenced a generation of guitarists. His exquisite phrasing and tone were his hallmark as he interpreted



Mick Fleetwood with "Greeny."

American blues for a switched-on generation.

Six months earlier, Fleetwood had organized a concert at the Palladium, in London, to pay tribute to the Mac founder. This sold-out show featured a huge cast, all marked by the supernatural magic of Green. The event bristles with energy, superb playing, and great songs. Jonny Lang's powerful performance of "Need Your Love So Bad" counterbalances Steven Tyler's rousing "Rattlesnake Shake," featuring Billy Gibbons. Pete Townsend, Jeremy Spencer, and David Gilmour also deliver visceral performances.

Rick Vito is the glue that holds things together, with the icing on the cake being an appearance by "Greeny," the guitar previously owned by Green and later, Gary Moore. It's now owned by Kirk Hammett, who wails on a mighty version of "The Green Manalishi (with the Two Prong Crown)." **– *Oscar Jordan***



Various artists

Alligator Records: 50 Years of Genuine Houserockin' Music

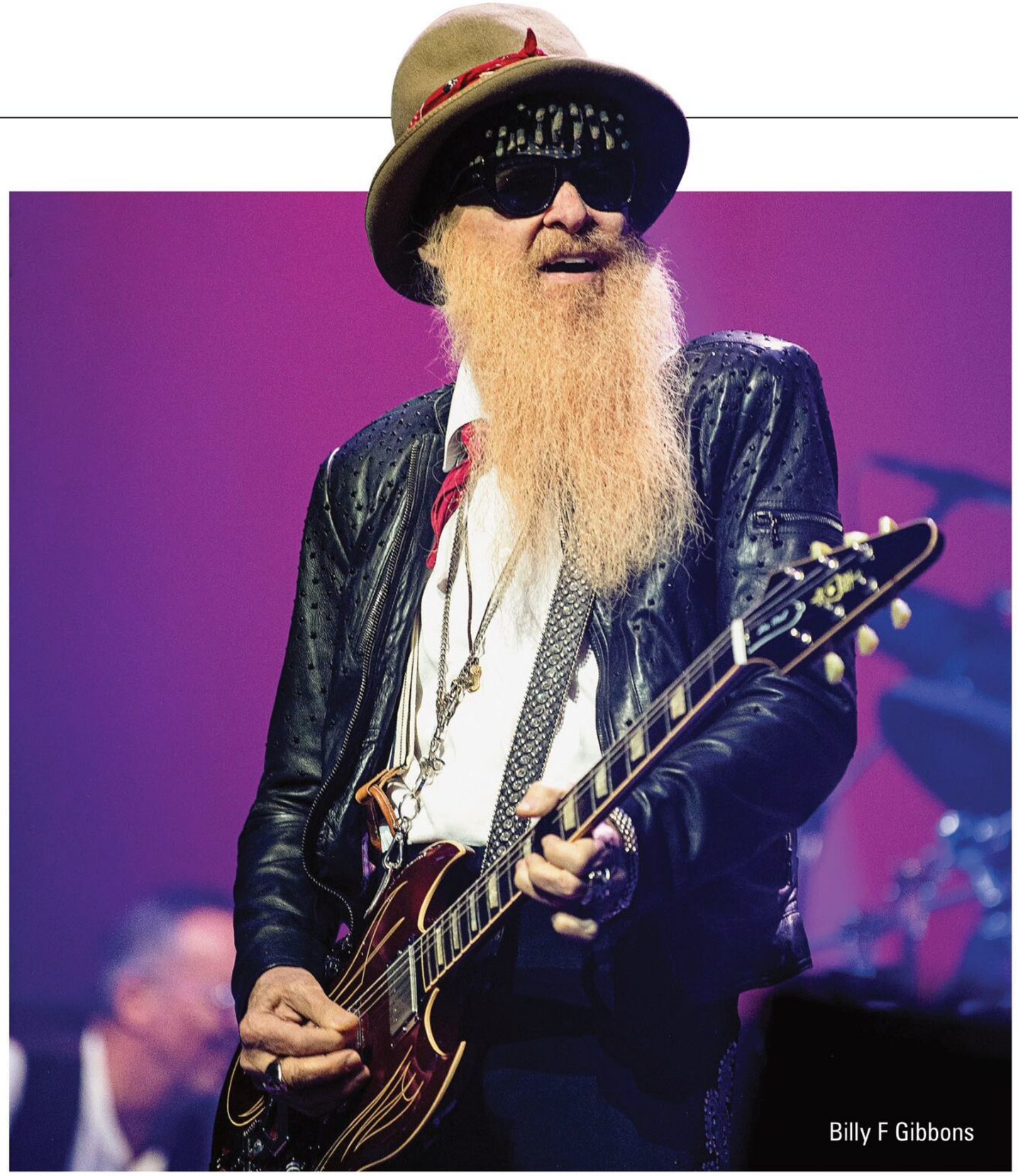
The genesis of Alligator Records – founder Bruce Iglauer's desire to cut an LP with his favorite band, Hound Dog Taylor & the House Rockers – is one of modern blues' most-told stories. But while Taylor's 1971 debut LP dominates the narrative, Alligator's endurance comes courtesy of the other artists that followed.

Together, they tell an impressive story on *50 Years of Genuine Houserockin' Music*, a triple-disc, 58-track collection ignited by '70s classics like Taylor's "Give Me Back My Wig," Son Seals' searing "Telephone Angel," and Albert Collins' stinging "Blue Monday Hangover." And don't miss efforts by top-shelf axemen like Johnny Copeland, Lonnie Brooks, Luther Allison, Johnny Winter, Lonnie Mack, Roy Buchanan, and many others.

To be clear, this set is no museum piece. Contemporary masters like Joe Louis Walker, Tinsley Ellis, and Toronzo Cannon also shine alongside young guns like Selwyn Birchwood and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram. Their sounds and styles collectively chart the label's evolution from Chicago's taverns to the 21st century and beyond.

Fifty years ago, Iglauer (see our interview with him in this issue) realized his dream of recording Taylor. Yet in the bargain he got so much more, releasing another 350 albums and launching one of the world's most consequential blues labels. **– *SM***

Mick Fleetwood: RossHalfin.



Billy F Gibbons



Guy King
Joy Is Coming

On his fifth solo album, King offers 10 originals – cool soul grooves peppered with tasty blues guitar.

Israeli-born and Chicago-based, the 43-year-old earned his blues stripes during his six-year stint with the late Willie Kent. Obviously influenced by two "other" Kings – B.B. and Albert – he picks his ES-335 with his thumb, much like the latter.

The minor-key "Devil's Toy" features a friendly but lively battle between King's sweet tone and guest Joe Bonamassa's edge. Guy's economic licks perfectly suit the Southern soul of the ballad "Choices." And "Sanity" reeks of Robben Ford, with Albert Collins bite thrown in.

King admirably exhibits jazzier playing on "Looking For You," although its arrangement sounds the smooth-jazz alarm. "Up, Up, Up," an upbeat duet with gospel singer Vanessa Bell Armstrong, hearkens back to the sound of Memphis, the first American city King made home, in '99.

"Oh, Sarah" has a '50s rock-radio sound, and "Hole In My Soul" tightropes between the two Alberts' styles. But influences aside, King carves out an individual style in terms of singing, playing, and songwriting – and the repertoire is a refreshing departure from all the 12-bar blues floating in the ether. ***– DF***



Frank Zappa
Zappa '88: The Last U.S. Show

This high-energy gig took place on Long Island; sadly, it turned out to be Frank Zappa's final American performance. Despite incredible musicianship, personality clashes doomed this lineup and Zappa ended the tour early (he died in '93). Fortunately, this recording documents a killer band at the top of its game.

Playing a custom Performance superstrat, Zappa was joined onstage by guitar ace Mike Keneally and mega-bassist Scott Thunes. In "The Black Page," we can hear FZ's trademark Lydian runs and blitzkrieg picking; while never credited as a proto-shred pioneer, the rock visionary unquestionably *was*. "Inca Roads" is mandatory Zappa, riding on Thunes' powerhouse bass and a chorus-drenched guitar solo. Covers include the TV theme from "Bonanza" and a Beatles medley modified with PG-13 lyrics. Would we expect anything less?

Look for guitar insanity on "City of Tiny Lites" and a bold cover of "Whipping Post." On the straight-faced "Stairway to Heaven," Keneally plays Jimmy Page's arpeggios note-for-note while FZ soars via Floyd whammy.

Of course, you can't have a Zappa show without "Peaches En Regalia," presented here in all its intricate, horn-driven glory. *Zappa '88* is the perfect excuse to spank some Frank. ***– PP***



Billy F Gibbons
Hardware

The ZZ Top guitarist once again stretches his Texas legs on this, his third solo LP. While most of *Hardware*'s predecessors – *Perfectamundo* and *Big Bad Blues* – were comprised of covers, this time, Gibbons and his main collaborators, drummer Matt Sorum and guitarist Austin Hanks, dish 11 originals and one cover (Augie Meyers' "Hey Baby, Que Paso").

There's plenty of Top tone here, notably on "S-G-L-M-B-B-R" and "I Was a Highway," the latter complete with the sort of extended metaphor Gibbons has perfected over the years.

Where it gets really interesting, however, is with the other genre-hopping tracks. That Gibbons uncorks a wicked slide on "My Lucky Card" and "More-More-More" will come as no surprise, but the true standouts are surf-drenched "West Coast Junkie" and the cowpunk-ish "She's On Fire." The prowling "Stackin' Bones," presumably a nod to Gibbons' fascination with the dice he collects, jumps nicely with background vox from duo Larkin Poe. The closer, "Desert High" is a spaghetti-flavored, spoken word ode to the recording locale outside Palm Springs.

Hardware is a must-listen even for the most rigid of ZZ Top fans. Its breadth is a glimpse into the mind of the record-collecting kid from Houston who never lost his curiosity. ***– Dennis Pernu*** VG

Billy F Gibbons: RossHalfin.

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Left handed 1984 Fender Stratocaster MIJ. I think it's a reissue, which are more rare. Custom shop pickups by previous owner. Refret done by Southpaw luthier Hewitt a few years back. Great player.

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1965 or 66 Silvertone Twin Twelve (1464) amp head. Has had new tranny put in back in 1990s. Still plays good. Original owner. My first, and last, big rig. Make a good offer. I am retired, and fighting cancer. 574-702-0702. Pictures available from: guitrailer@gmail.com

Fender Vibroverb 1963 "Reissue", 1990s. In Excellent Condition. This is one superb sounding 35 Watt amplifier with 2 x 6L6s and 2- 10 inch speakers. $2,000.00 Free Shipping in USA lower 48 states. Email: bluesfingers@earthlink.net

Marshall 4X10 cab. Fair shape. Mid 80s or older. Have original Gold Label Celestions, but installed 4 different Weber VST 10 inch speakers. Over $800 invested. Retired from the road, make a good offer. Pictures available from: guitrailer@gmail.com

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Crooked Bones - the new album by WARREN APPLEBY is out now! Warren's 16th release contains 10 powerful instrumental rock tracks full of big riffs, memorable solos, and cool synths. Search Warren Appleby on Spotify, Apple Music, iTunes, Amazon, & Pandora. Also, take a break from the cat videos on YouTube and check out Warren's video single, "Yes, It Is Nice" instead.

I have two stand up NY Guitar Show Banners promoting Arlen Roth's appearance from our 2018 NY Guitar Show. Has Arlen's Pic, info and he hand signed both of them. $300 each o.b.o.

Guitar Pickups for sale. Brand new in box. Dimarzio One pair, dark matter humbuckers. Neck and bridge. $220 For inquires Text or call and leave message 352-270-1421

Charlie Apicella Plays Guild Guitars! Remember the May 2021 VGM ad? The new record "Classic Guitar" available now on 180 gram audiophile vinyl and CD. #1 on the RMR Top 50 Classic Jazz radio chart! Free autographed CD of your choice with LP purchase: www.IronCity.nyc

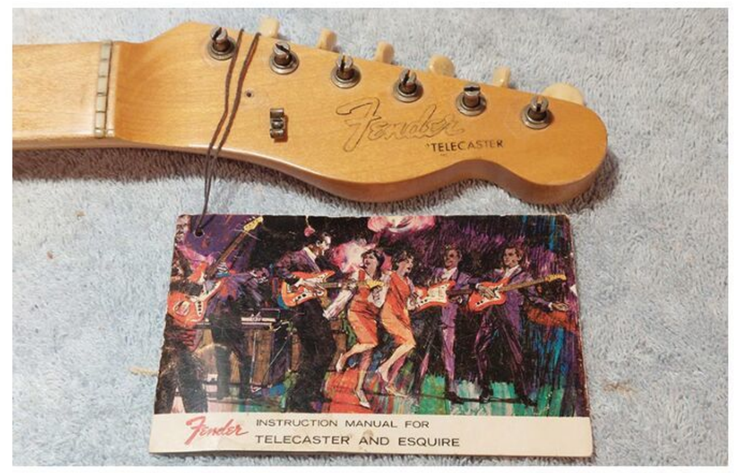
Fender Pre CBS Stratocaster & Telecaster, Vintage Gibson & Their Related Parts. Check out our website.(218) 879-3796, ed@eddievegas.com (MN)

Check out the latest CD release by Glen Anderson - RENEGADE. Joining his prior CDs including THE BIG SHOW and LET'S PRETEND on itunes. Also, see his book - Classic Performances (from the Golden Age of Rock & Roll) at www.Houndogrecords.com

Ivory Guitar Picks - Handmade Alaskan fossilized walrus ivory & mastodon ivory, great tone, beautiful, cool, lasts forever, $25. You won't play w/ plastic again. Guaranteed. Send check to: Mark Kostreba, 7661 Delridge, Anchorage, AK 99507-3015. mark-kostreba@gci.net (AK)

MISC WANTED

Supro Gold Foil Pickup set wanted. Neck and bridge, as on Supro Westbury from the 2010's. Full humbucker size, chrome mounting rings, chrome cover with stylized Supro "S" and cutouts revealing gold foil underneath. Wiring harness with pots, switch, capacitor etcetera desirable but not essential, so pickups alone or with harness will do fine. Thank you most kindly. Email allenhears@gmail.com



1966 Telecaster maple neck, will trade for Telecaster neck with rosewood fingerboard. 971-716-0696

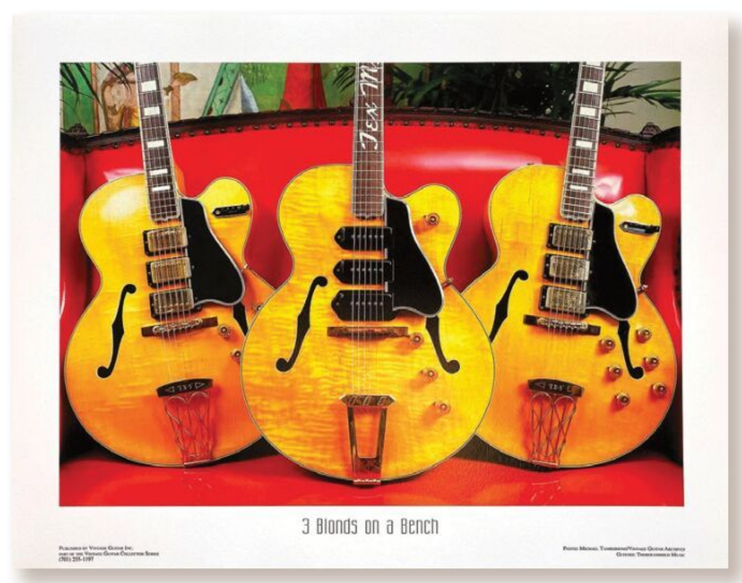
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Shoals Guitar Boutique, Custom & Vintage, serves North Alabama, Southern Tennessee, and NE Miss. with quality guitars, amps, and effects. We gladly consign & sell your vintage, custom shop, & boutique gear. Please "like" us on FaceBook. (AL) www.shoalsguitarboutique.com

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BUILDERS

JCA Circuits is now performing vintage amp repairs, custom amp builds and custom pedalboards. We are accepting orders for a VERY limited run of GR 1.6 "Golden Ratio" Amplifiers. Contact Jason to get on the build list-no deposit required. Please viWsit us at: JCA Circuits PO Box 477 Saint Peters, PA 19470 www.jcacircuits.net



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DOWN TO THE CROSSROADS

The Supro Delta King 10

With the increasing popularity of compact, low-wattage combo amps has come an overwhelming variety of choices. Supro has entered the fray with its new Delta King series, ranging from a one-watter with an 8" speaker perfect for practicing next to your grumpy roommate's bedroom, to a 15-watter with a 12" speaker that could hold its own with a fairly aggressive drummer.

Price: $549
www.suprousa.com

The momma bear of the bunch is the Delta King 10. Its dead-simple layout pairs a single 12AX7 preamp tube with a 6V6 bottle for a Class A five-watt maximum output through a custom DK 10 speaker. Volume, Treble, Bass, Reverb, and Master controls make nailing a tone exceptionally easy, while toggles for a FET-driven boost and a Pigtronix FAT high-gain mode push things way over the top. The back panel hosts jacks for line out and an optional Boost/Drive footswitch, and a Standby switch should help prolong the life of the power tube. Modeled after the made-in-Chicago Supros from the 1950s, the poplar cabinet comes covered in tweed with black stripes or black with cream stripes. The amp weighs just 23 pounds.

The most prominent feature of the Delta King 10 is its touch-sensitivity. Whatever the guitarist wants as far as tone, it's in their hands. The overall tone is very sweet while maintaining highs and lows. The swampy-sounding genuine analog spring reverb contributes a great deal to the pleasant personality of the Delta King. For classic and blues-rock, the Volume and Master knobs will provide all the gain most guitarists need. For more-aggressive players, the Boost switch is step one into distortion land, with Drive being step two to unlimited buzz and sustain.

A great little amp at a great price. ***– Bob Dragich***





Price: $279
www.cicognani.eu

TOP-TIER DRIVER

The Cicognani SexyBoost2

Italy's Cicognani Engineering makes amplifiers, pedals, and nifty accessories. With a client list that includes Robben Ford, Richard Fortus, and Kee Marcello, Cicognani is the real deal when it comes to effects technology.

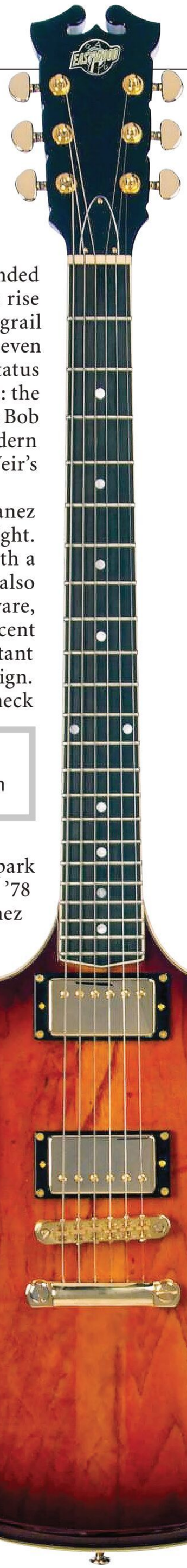
One example of their top-tier wares is the analog Cicognani SexyBoost2, which combines a transparent clean boost with a midrange boost and can be used in front of an amp or in the effects loop. Combining top-notch materials and intuitive functionality, the true-bypass SexyBoost2 allows the user to switch between two flexible sounds. With a 12U7/ECC83 preamp tube housed inside, the Clean Boost control offers -30 dB to +10db gain. The Mid Boost knob delivers -30 dB to +8 dB of gain, and the Cut knob is a global treble/bass cut for dialing in sounds with precision.

The SexyBoost2 not only adds clean volume, it allows the user to sculpt tone from ultra-clean boost to a midrange-packed note thickener. It can also add low-end beef – perfect for pumping up frail tones – and it sounds outstanding with single-coils or humbuckers *and* has the flexibility for exquisite high-mids or quack.

The SexyBoost2 is excellent for rhythm or lead and provides unique options for tone-shaping. It will also add a new level of upscale sounds to a pedalboard. ***– Oscar Jordan***

DEAD AGAIN

The Eastwood BW Artist



Thanks to über-tonemeister Carlos Santana, extended jamming, and the rise of overdrive, the ’70s gave rise to a solidbody trend that sought to achieve the holy grail of “sustain.” Using natural finishes, dense bodies, and even brass hardware, West Coast custom builds became a status symbol. But one notable axe in this wave was an import: the Ibanez Professional endorsed by Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir. Eastwood Guitars, having previously released a modern version of Jerry Garcia’s “Wolf” guitar, has resurrected Weir’s dot-neck version as the BW Artist.

In a side-by-side comparison with an actual 1978 Ibanez Professional, the BW Artist gets a lot of the details right. Like the original, it has a double-cutaway ash body with a beveled “German cut” edge and set maple neck. There’s also a 22-fret/24.75"-scale rosewood fretboard, gold hardware, and fancy headstock cut. Both the Natural and translucent Amber Sunburst finishes reveal the woodgrain, an important aesthetic of this earthy, back-to-nature epoch of guitar design.

While the original was a heavy plank with a big neck to grab, the Eastwood is more user-friendly – you still have a dense slab of wood and a large but (in this case) comfy D neck. Our tester weighed in the neighborhood of 8 pounds, 5 ounces – a walk in the park compared to chiropractor-ready ’70s Les Pauls or that ’78 Professional (another backbreaker was the $8,000 Ibanez BWM1 “Cowboy Fancy,” a Bob Weir reissue *VG* reviewed in the November ’16 issue).

Price: $799
www.eastwoodguitars.com

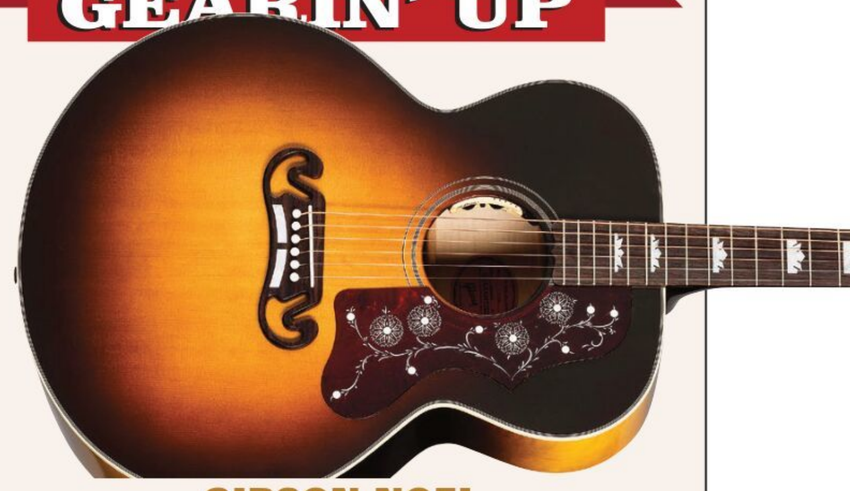
Like so many solidbodies of yore, the electronics of the BW Artist offer few bells and whistles: two Dual Custom ’59 humbuckers with a Tone and Volume for each. The ash body and maple neck interact with humbuckers differently than a mahogany solidbody, resulting in a brighter tone than you might expect (a similar principle to ash or alder Telecasters with Fender’s WR humbuckers). Keep that in mind if you are expecting the mellow Les Paul warmth of mahogany tonewood.

Plugged in, the BW Artist plays well, with low action and a beefy, but quite likable neck. Don’t be surprised if you start chooglin’ out the chords to “Dark Star” or “Franklin’s Tower.”

With a friendly street price, the Eastwood is significantly cheaper than vintage Weir models, as well as being a modernized, highly playable reissue. Truly, the music never stopped.

– Pete Prown

GEARIN’ UP



GIBSON NOEL GALLAGHER J-150

The Gibson Noel Gallagher J-150 has maple back and sides and an X-braced spruce-laminate top with Historic Thin finish. Its two-piece maple neck has a Walnut stringer and a rosewood fretboard with 12" radius, 25.5" scale, and 1.69" nut.



BERGANTINO B|AMP MK2

Bergantino Audio Systems’ B|Amp Mk2 bass amp offers 800 watts RMS output with four-band EQ, Bright switch, variable high- and low-pass filter, feedback filter, compressor, and built-in Overdrive, Distortion 1, and Distortion 2 (fuzz). Other features include Aux input and headphone jacks, effects send and return, dual Speakon outputs, and DI.



BOSS MT-2 METAL ZONE

Boss’ anniversary MT-2 Metal Zone reissue has controls for Distortion, four-band Equalizier, and Level. Nominal input/output level is -20 dB. It can run on AC or battery power (with check light), and is wired with buffered bypass.

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

18+

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STATELY SHIMMER

The Universal Audio Astra Modulation Machine

Famous for well-regarded interfaces, plug-ins, and vintage-gear emulations, Universal Audio has entered the pedal business with the Astra Modulation Machine, Starlight Echo Station, and Golden Reverberator. Each has an array of effect types modeled after a specific piece of gear, has a global control for each mode, and offers a variety of sounds that can be accessed via toggle switch.

Price: $399
www.uaudio.com

The dual-processing engine housed inside a rock-solid box endeavors to replicate period-correct sonics. The Starlight Echo Station offers tape delay, modulation bucket-brigade analog delay, and digital delay, while the Golden Reverberator dials up classic amp-style spring, plate, hall, and chamber reverb.



The third in the line-up is the Astra Modulation Machine with its warm bucket-brigade chorus, flanging, and tremolo. The Astra Modulation Machine is a trip back in time to the cool studio flanger sounds of the ’70s. It’s lush, warm, and gritty, offering Boss Chorus, MXR phasing, and tube-style tremolo with additional modes for vibrato and a doubler effect. All three UA pedals have stereo inputs and outputs with buffered and true-bypass selections, optional trails, and silent switching. It even allows storage for presets and has a USB input for downloading additional effects from Universal Audio. In stereo, you can use the Mode knob to switch between classic routing and stereo separation.

When set up in stereo, the Flanger-Doubler mimics the sound of the old MXR studio flangers. Dial-in anything from whooshing jet plane sounds to guitar presets for a Police reunion concert. It nails the tones of the ’80s but warms up nicely for ’70s sounds. And the Trem 65 toggle setting yields classic Fender blackface tremolo tones but with more control.

The Astra Modulation Machine shimmers, stutters, and returns notes like a boomerang. Universal Audio’s pedals ain’t cheap, but if you want rack-mount gear in pedal form, this is state-of-the-art.

– Oscar Jordan



Price: $210 each
www.mcgregorpedals.com

TRANSPARENT PAIR

McGregor Pedals’ Crunch and Crunch Plus

McGregor Pedals founder and self-proclaimed “Chief Mad Scientist” Garth McGregor Heslop hand-wires pedals in his Vancouver shop. Two of them – the Crunch and Crunch Plus – are overdrives that offer transparent, low-gain effect with minimal tone coloration.

Both feature traditional control layouts with Volume, Tone, and Gain knobs alongside true-bypass footswitches, 1/4" jacks, and 9-volt DC power.

Head to head, the Crunch has a slightly brighter overall tone with smooth sparkle on the top end, while the Crunch Plus exhibits a darker, fatter tone with slightly more overdrive. Both function well as standalone low-gain “bluesy” overdrives through an amp’s clean channel. Where they *excel*, however, is as boosts in front of an amp’s overdrive channel, adding touch-sensitive crunch, clarity, and sustain without muddy overtones or buzzy top-end.

Both tested well with single-coils and humbuckers, retaining their inherent tones. One especially noteworthy feature is a small adjustable internal control for dimming the on/off LED, allowing adjustment to stage conditions.

If you’re wanting to add overdrive and/or sustain to your guitar’s signal without color and noise, the McGregor Crunch and Crunch Plus are worth a close look.

– Phil Feser

LITTLE DEVIL

The Eastman SB55

When re-creating a classic, it's all too easy to feel hide-bound to the original – especially if it's an icon. In launching its first single-pickup solidbody, Eastman felt few restrictions and its SB55 both pays tribute and builds on legend.

Dutch guitar designer Pepijn't Hart went searching for a holy grail among collectors and vintage dealers. When he found his fave, he set about duplicating its finest points while also improving on the original.

The SB55 is the result. And if you get butterflies in your stomach at the thought of springing for a vintage example, the handmade-in-China Eastman is a glorious option.

Hart began by seeking a lightweight, resonant wood. The original's mahogany body can vary in sound quality, so Eastman chose Okume, an African tonewood reminiscent of Korina. The body and neck are each one-piece, crowned by an ebony fretboard.

Price: $1,538
www.eastmanguitars.com

Intonation on originals was never ideal, so Hart sought to remedy that with a compensated aged aluminum bridge from German maker Faber. With locking studs, the bridge stands firm and provides improved sustain and tone. Faber also supplied the tuners. For the pickup, Hart worked with maestro Jason Lollar and spec'd an underwound/medium-output P-90. Gold speed knobs and a gorgeous Bakelite-like pickguard from British maker Rothko and Frost finish things right.

Finally, there's the amazing finish. Eastman began as a violin maker, and applied a hand-rubbed clear antique violin finish atop the sunburst with slight relic'ing. Hart says the varnish lets the wood breathe. Plus, first time out, the guitar already looks and feels decades old.

But does it live up to the legend?

The SB55 is light and easy to play, with a supple, smooth 12" fretboard radius. And it's born to rock. Controls include a no-load Tone pot, giving it the sound of a three-way/two-pickup guitar with a twist of the knob. At 5, it rolls out a nice neck pickup sound; at 9, it's a perfect middle-position sound. And when you want that last nudge over the cliff, you turn to 10, at which point the tone is disconnected and it's straight volume to pickup. The sound is suitably devilish.

The SB55 offers a heck of a bang for the buck. The specs are killer, finish is fantastic, feel is ideal, the design is hard-working, and the tone is hard-rocking. ***– Michael Dregni***



GEARIN' UP



GRETSCH G6118T PLAYERS EDITION ANNIVERSARY

The Gretsch G6118T Players Edition Anniversary has a 16" maple body with modern ladder bracing and a set maple U-shaped neck with 24.6" scale, pearloid thumbnail inlays, and pearloid side dots. Other features include FT-67 Filter'Tron pickups, nickel hardware including Gotoh locking tuning machines and G-arrow control knobs, and binding on the body and sound holes.



PRS HX AMPS

PRS HX 50- and 100-watt amps use a circuit inspired by a late-'60s British amp used by Jimi Hendrix with bridged channels and individual Volume controls. The design dials in distortion level and tone by blending the Lead and Bass channels. Matching 2x12 and 4x12 cabs use modified Celestion G12H-75 Creamback speakers.



PEAVEY DELTA WOODS

Peavey's Delta Woods guitars have spruce tops with mahogany backs and sides, hand-carved bracing, and bound-rosewood fretboards with pearloid inlays. Other details include a compensated saddle, wood truss cover, and satin finishes. The DW-2 CE has three-band EQ, Presence control, and a chromatic tuner.

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

FRESH-SQUEEZED JANGLE

Orangewood Guitars' Echo 12 Live

Twelve-string sales ebb and flow in part with the popularity of a song featuring one. Orangewood Guitars aims to change such fickle trends with an affordable 12 that plays and sounds great in any situation.

The Echo 12 Live has a dreadnought body with a solid Sitka spruce top and layered back and sides made of Pau Ferro, a South American wood that looks and sounds like rosewood. It's finished in a very high-gloss UV-cured poly. The two-piece mahogany neck has a headstock attached after the bend under the nut to prevent breakage. Both the fretboard and bridge are made of Ovangkol, a wood from tropical West Africa closely related to rosewood.

Price: $495
www.orangewoodguitars.com

The neck has a moderate C shape with a 25.5" scale topped with a bone nut and gold diecast tuners. Three Orangewood guitars have come through the door so far, and the Echo shares perfect fit and finish with its predecessors.

The 48mm nut is just nine percent wider than Orangewood's six-string models, yet the string spacing avoids that cramped feeling common with 12-strings. The bass E string clears the 12th fret by just 0.066", identical to the six-string Orangewood Mason Live, making barre chords no problem at the 10th fret.

Boominess can be an issue with 12-strings, too, but the Echo is remarkably balanced. Every string comes through loud and clear; the treble strings even have a shimmer usually reserved for much more expensive instruments. The Fishman Flex Plus-T EQ pickup system with a built-in tuner and controls for Volume, Bass, and Treble accurately reproduces every nuance.

The Live 12's quality-to-value ratio is remarkable. If you're looking to add a 12-string to your arsenal without breaking the bank, it could be a contender. ***– Bob Dragich***





Price: $119.99
www.jimdunlop.com

BARK AND BITE

The MXR Eric Gales EG74 Raw Dawg

During a recording career that spans three decades and includes 19 albums, blues guitarist Eric Gales has achieved a reputation for solos that are a deluge of precise notes delivered with passion. When pedal and accessory manufacturer Jim Dunlop asked Gales what he would like in a pedal, the guitarist was quick to respond, "A Tube Screamer with more bite!"

Dunlop got Gales in touch with Jeorge Tripps, of Way Huge pedals, and in a few months Gales had exactly what he wanted.

The MXR Eric Gales EG74 Raw Dog overdrive is a mini pedal with controls for Output, Tone, and Drive housed in an attractive box sporting an image of Gales' beloved pitbull, Little Bud.

Tested side by side with a recent TS808 reissue, the Raw Dawg showed subtle (but significant) differences. Though voiced similarly, the Raw Dawg is harmonically richer, with greater texture. It also has more low-end, mitigating the mid bump common in Tube Screamers. And, used as a clean boost with the Drive set low and Output high, the Dawg hits the front end of the amp harder and earlier.

The MXR Raw Dawg is an excellent, pedalboard-friendly, economical choice for those wanting to sink their teeth down to the bone of tone. ***– Bob Dragich***

ALL-PURPOSE ACCESSORIES



CABLE PORTER

Much of a musician's setup time is relegated to detangling cable thought to be wrapped pristinely at the previous gig. Even if you use Velcro to wrap the cable neatly, the end can slip through the windings, causing a spaghetti mess. The Cable Porter tool solves that by keeping the windings parallel, one right next to the last. The result? Even if you have a twisted mess loaded onto the Cable Porter, it comes out straight with no knots. – ***Julian Burtell***



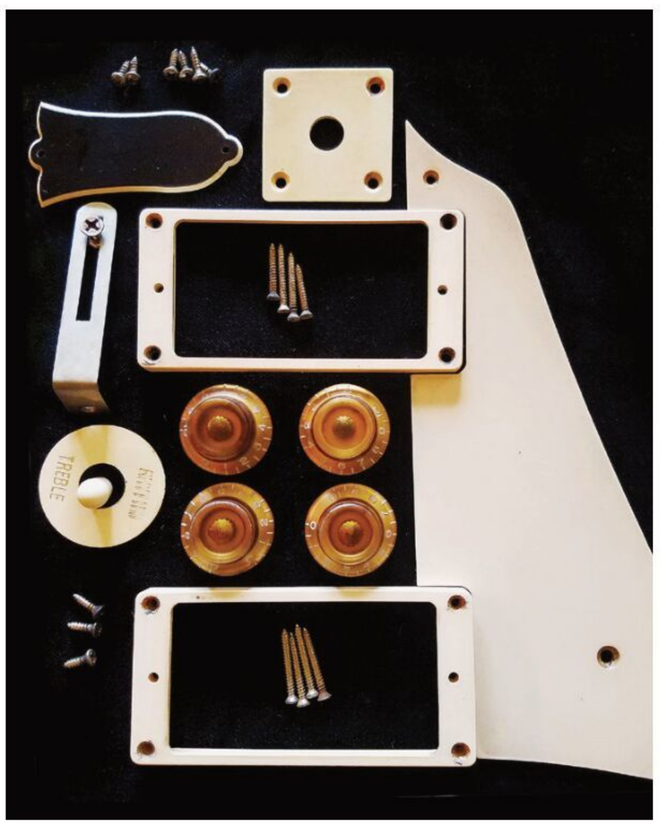
AXE-CALIBUR GUITAR STAND

While guitar stands are a dime a dozen, few bring a sense of style nice enough for the living room. Axe-Calibur's stand combines functionality with good looks. U.S.-made from oak and available in natural finish or Mid-Knight (black) gloss, their proprietary swivel head is designed to fit any guitar. Assembly is easy and the finished product is sturdy. – ***Julian Burtell***



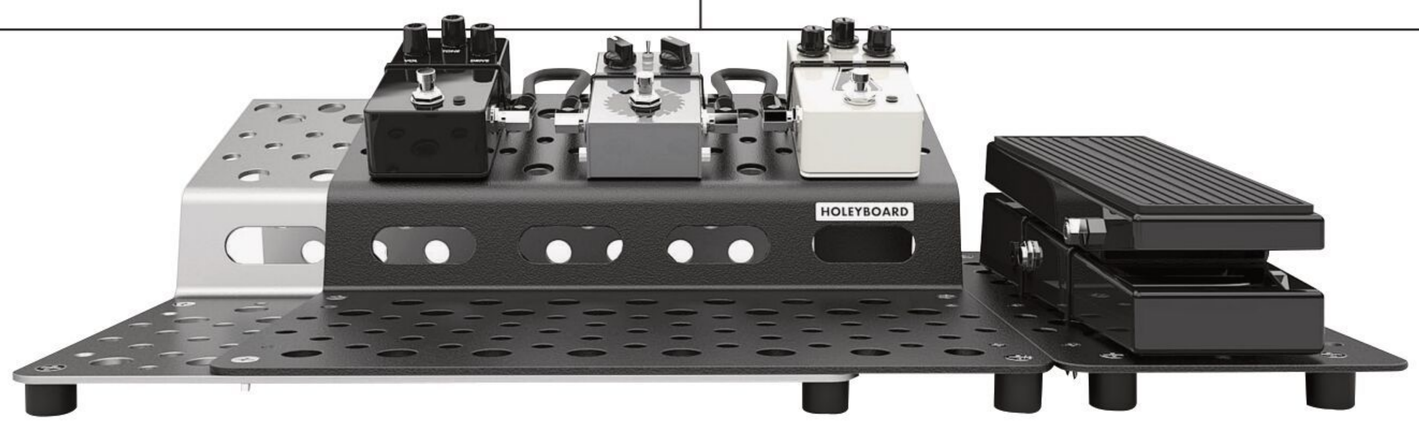
FENDER MICRO MUSTANG

Fender's Micro Mustang is a pocket-sized contraption offering 12 amplifier models including classic Fender, "British," and "American," along with 12 time-based effects. It uses color-coded LEDs instead of an LCD screen, so there's a bit of learning involved, but it's useful for laying down practice riffs and song ideas, and can interface with digital recording software. – ***Dennis Pernu***



BAYOU GUITARWORKS HARDWARE

Players often buy a factory aged guitar and swap the plastics and hardware to more accurately represent the overall aesthetic. Bayou Guitarworks' custom relic'd hardware fits the bill. Artist Denise Livaudais views photos of your guitar and, using factory parts from Gibson, Fender, etc., applies just the right amount of "voo-doo" to match the patina. – ***Johnny Zapp***



CHEMISTRY DESIGN WERKS' HOLEYBOARD 123

Chemistry Design Werks' Holeyboard 123 is made of 1/8" aluminum with overlapping surfaces that can be adjusted from 13" to 30" at 1.5" increments using one or both panels and the expression-pedal pad. Everything bolts together with supplied fasteners to produce a rigid platform on solid rubber feet to anchor pedals with the included zip ties or Velcro. – ***Julian Burtell***

ACOUSTIK ATTAK PICKS

Each of Acoustik Attak's three guitar picks has a different raised formation that alters the way it interacts with strings; the intent is to provide enhanced upper-midrange and distinct snap. The Ambush has the most effect, the Blade is more subtle, and the Attak fits squarely in-between. There's a bit of an adjustment curve, but they're a groovy alternative to the standard flatpick. – ***Julian Burtell***

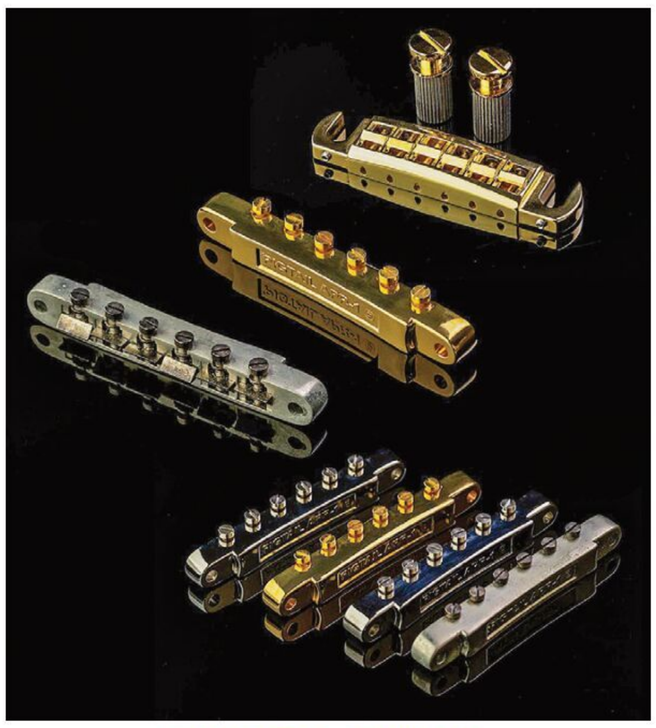


ALL-PURPOSE ACCESSORIES



MUSIC NOMAD KEEP IT SIMPLE SETUP

Music Nomad's Keep It Simple Setup kit includes three tool kits. The 26-piece premium guitar tech screwdriver-and-wrench set has a suede-backed spanner wrench that fits under most knobs. There's also an 11-piece truss-rod wrench set and precision gauges. All are of excellent quality and housed in sturdy cases. ***– Julian Burtell***



PIGTAIL MUSIC

Pigtail music makes ABR-style and wraparound bridges (in the U.S.) with vintage-style appearance and materials, but to tighter tolerances. Their bridges hold saddles in place by friction (not with a retaining wire) when a string breaks, and the posts fit snugly to their bridge. The result is a higher transfer of vibration, resulting in better sustain. ***– Julian Burtell***



ZEPPELIN DESIGN LABS CORTADO MKIII

Zeppelin Design Labs Cortado MkIII contact microphone can record everything from acoustic guitars to a train bridge with a frequency range of 23 hertz to 40 kilohertz. It combines a piezo transducer with phantom-powered preamp and attaches to nearly anything with available clips and adhesives. DIP switches control a 10db pad and bass boost circuit. ***– Julian Burtell*** VG

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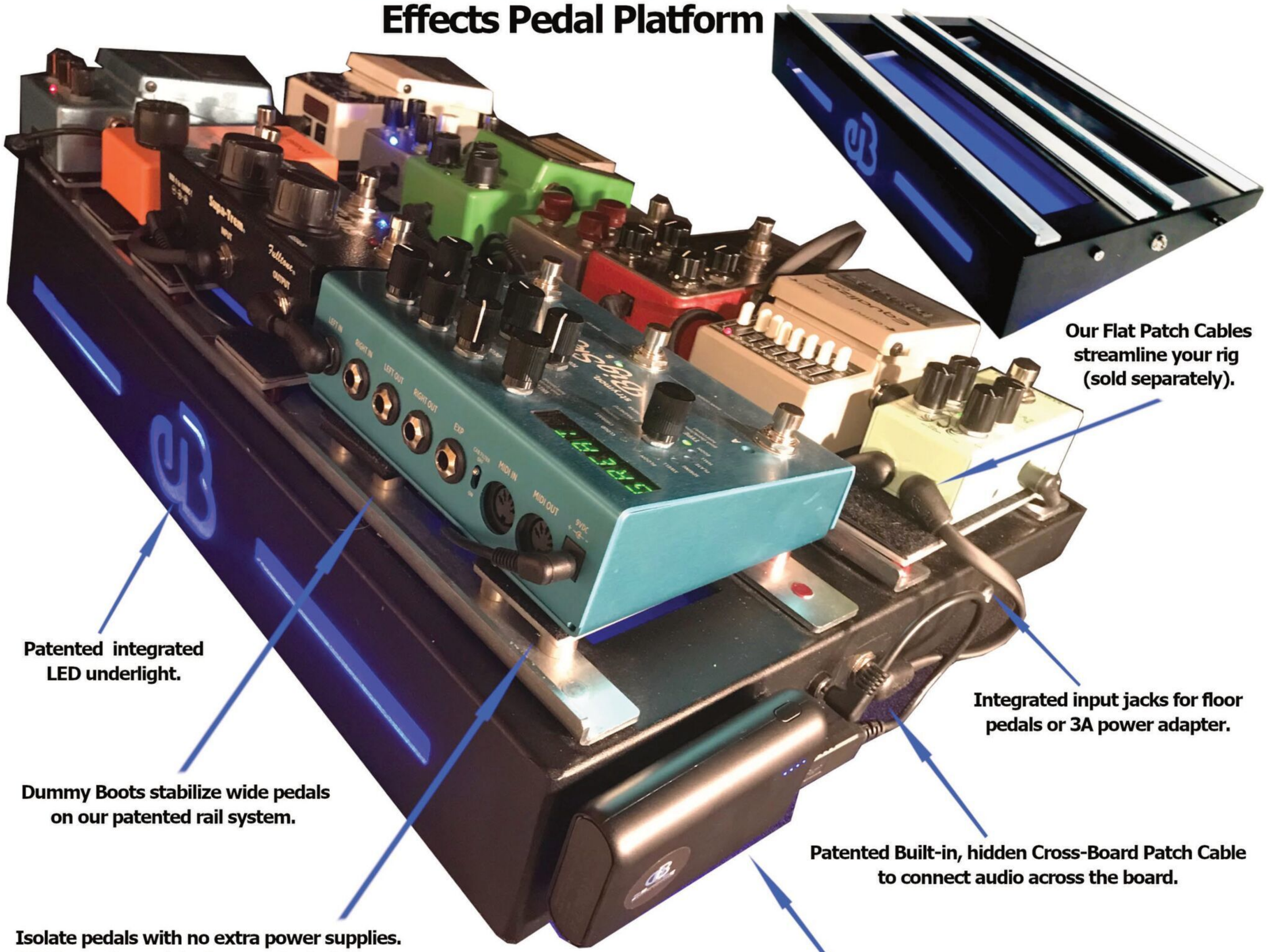
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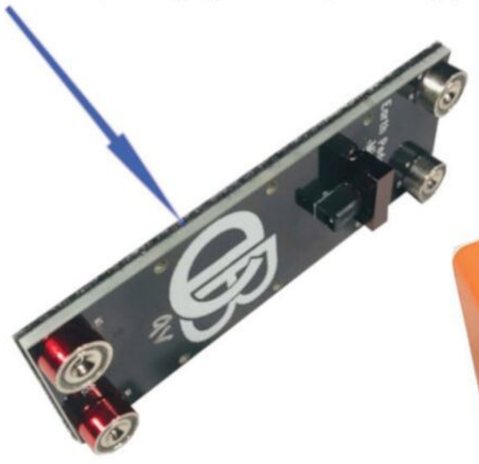
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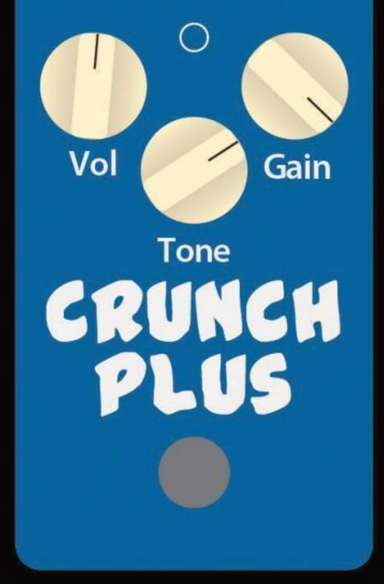
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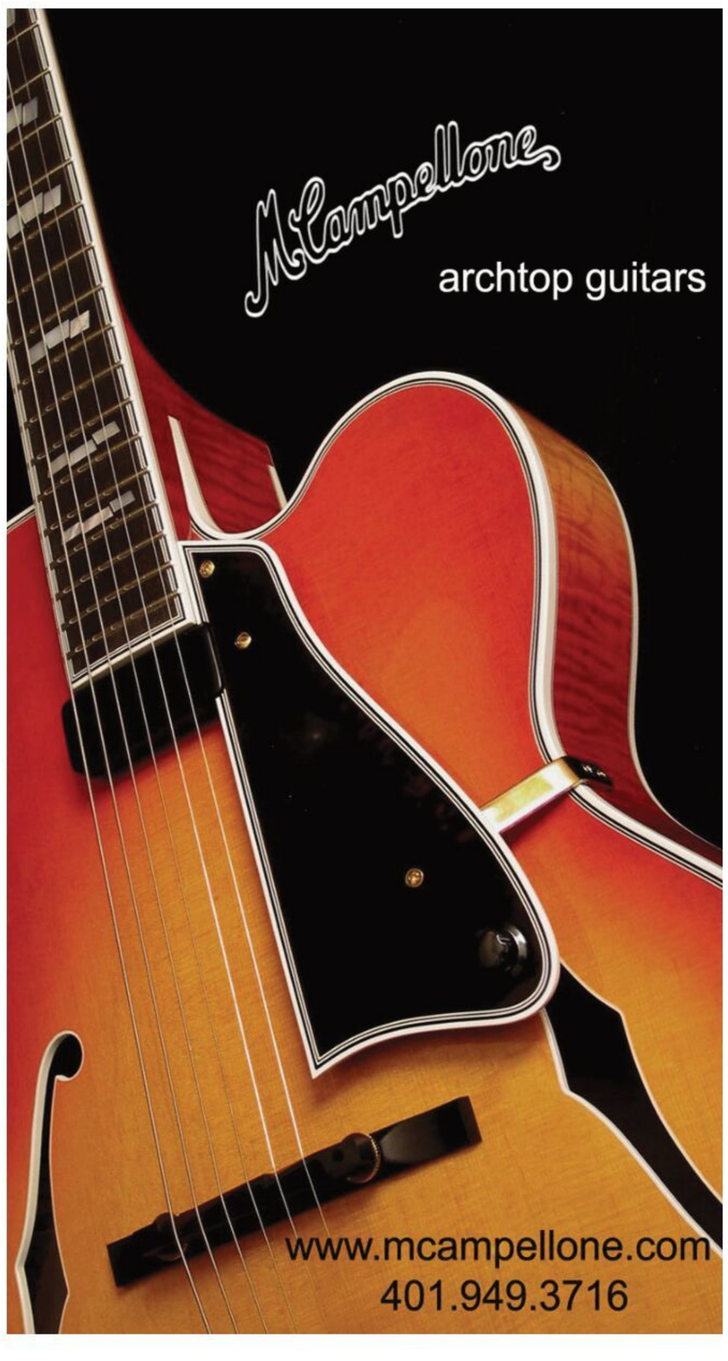
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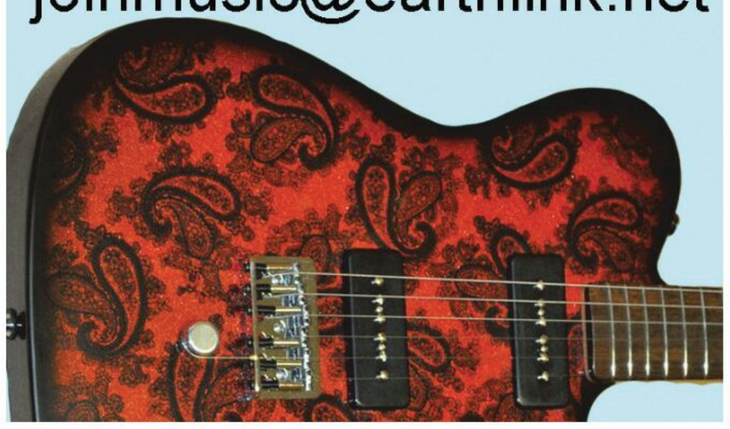
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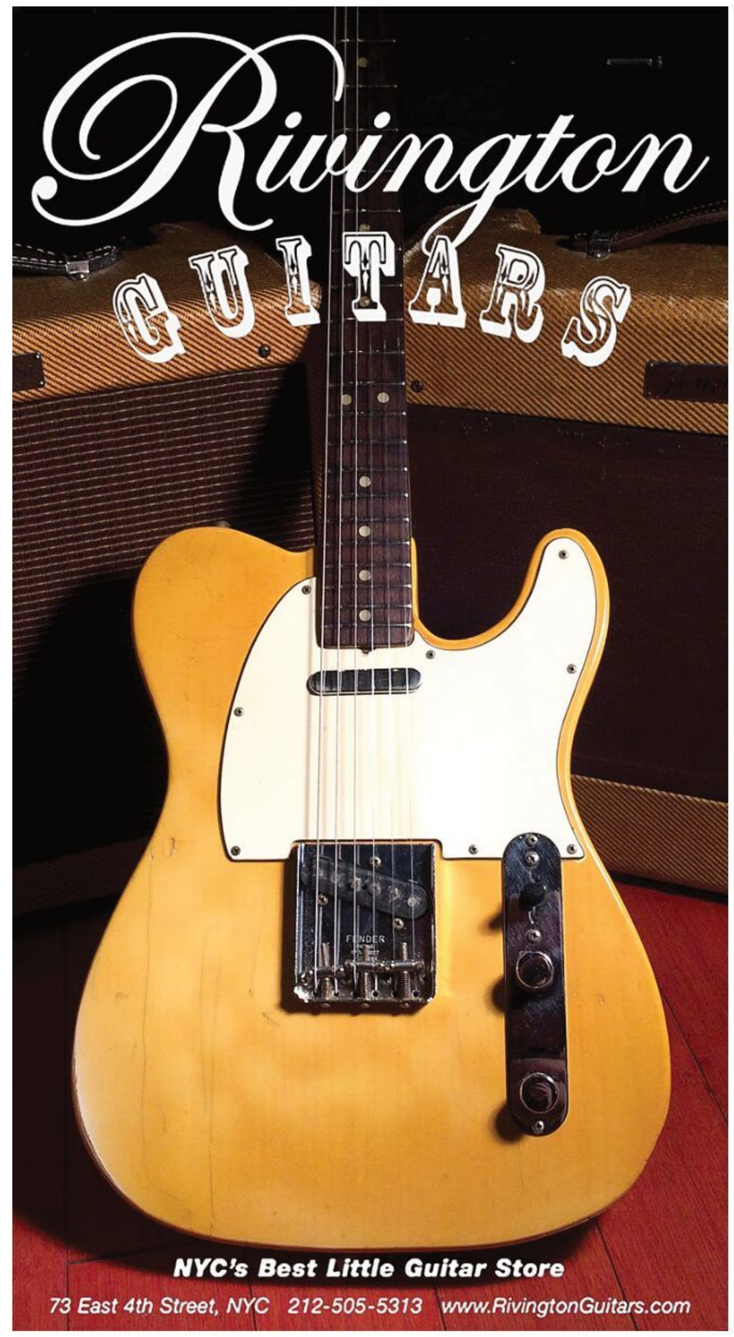
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1) John Wesley Dickson's collection includes (from left) this 2016 Rickenbacker 360/12W, '83 Epiphone Emperor, '66 Guild Starfire III, Line 6 Classical, and a Godin Grand Concert SA.

2) Karen McDonald is a longtime subscriber from Ohio who sent this shot of her (in back) '53 Tele, '58 Gibson ES-355, '63 Melody Maker, and '78 ES-175T. In front are her '89 Strat and '95 Gibson Howard Roberts Fusion 2.

3) David Ebersole rightfully calls these two '62 Guilds "The Siblings." On the left is an X350 Stratford, on the right a T100 Slim Jim. Both have later Guild HB-1 humbuckers replacing the originals.

4) Steve Pirie bought a Squier Strat several years ago "to hack around on." He changed the pickups, filed the fret ends, deleted a Volume pot/knob and recently painted some favorite rock icons on its body.

5) James DePietro makes the cut this month thanks to his (in back) '64 Hagstrom Futurama III, '91 Stratocaster, modern Gretsch lap steel, and Cordova uke, along with his (front) Takamine Hirade, '76 GuildD-55, '88 Martin D28-12, and Collins Waterloo WL-12.

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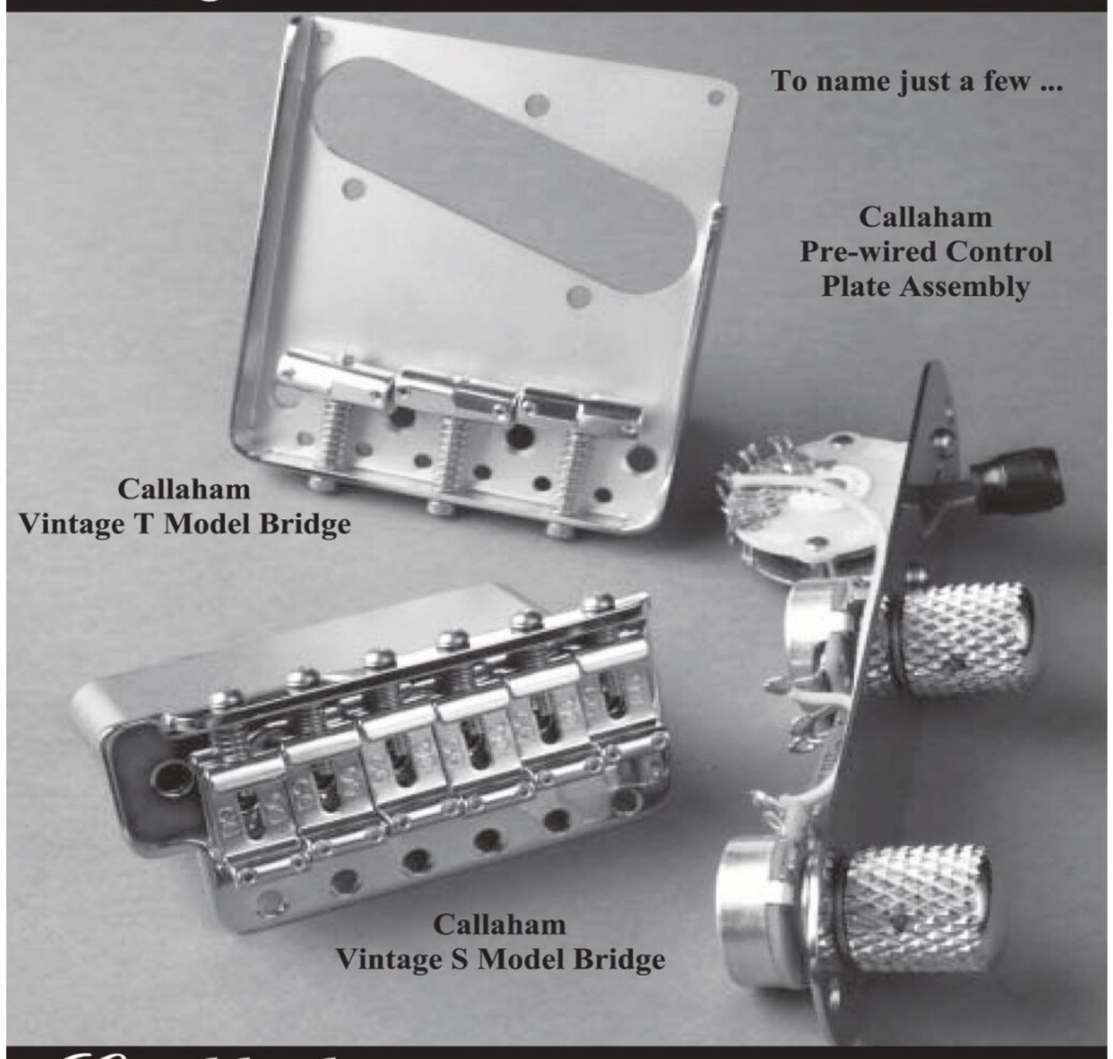

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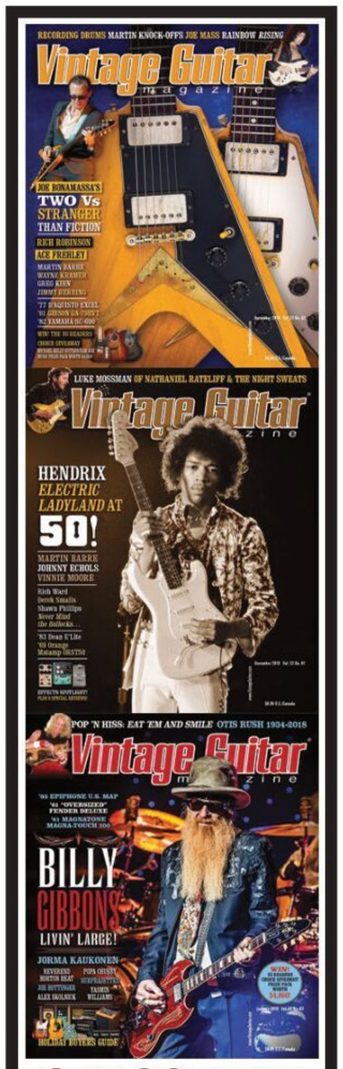
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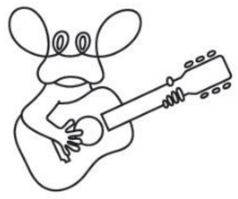
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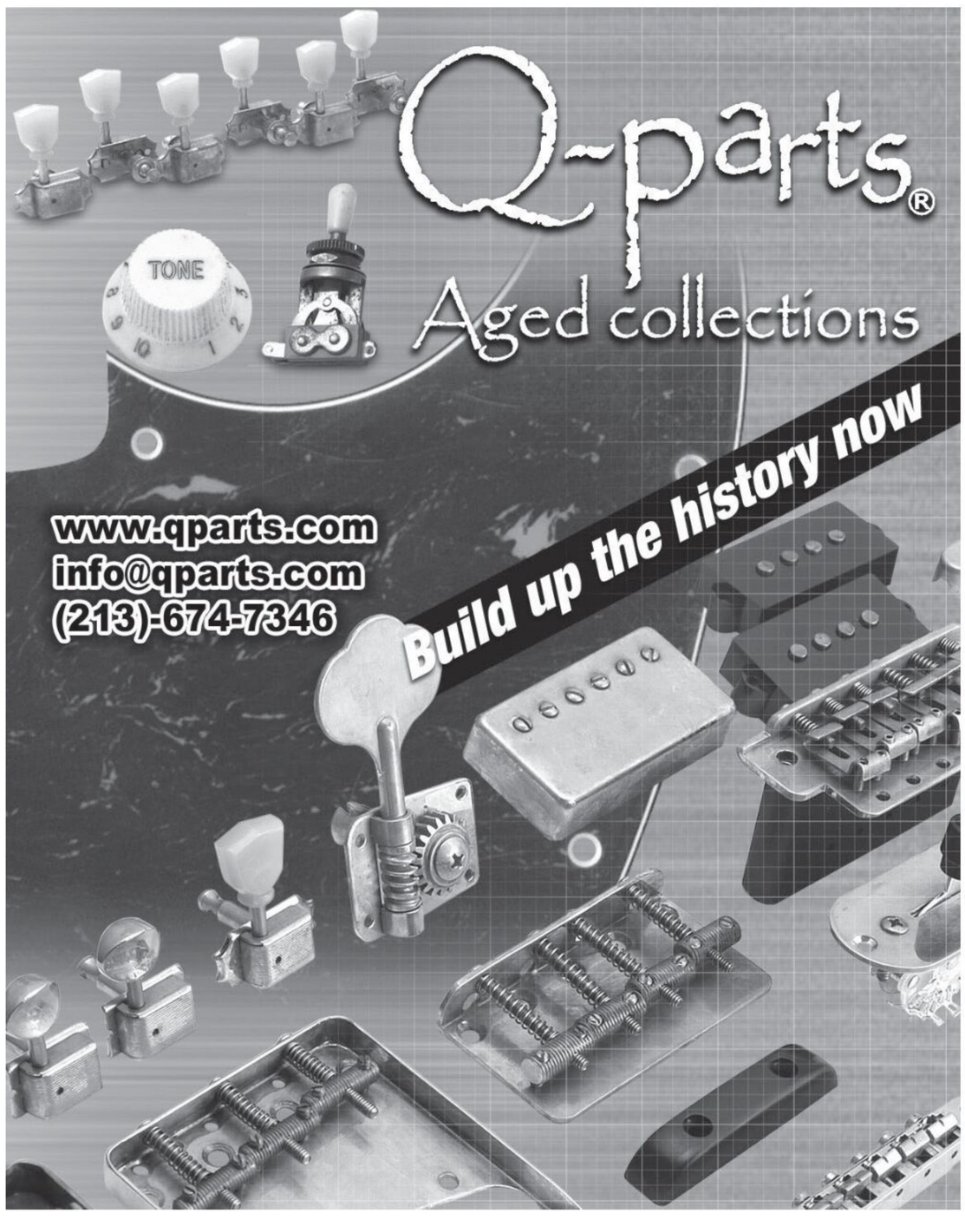


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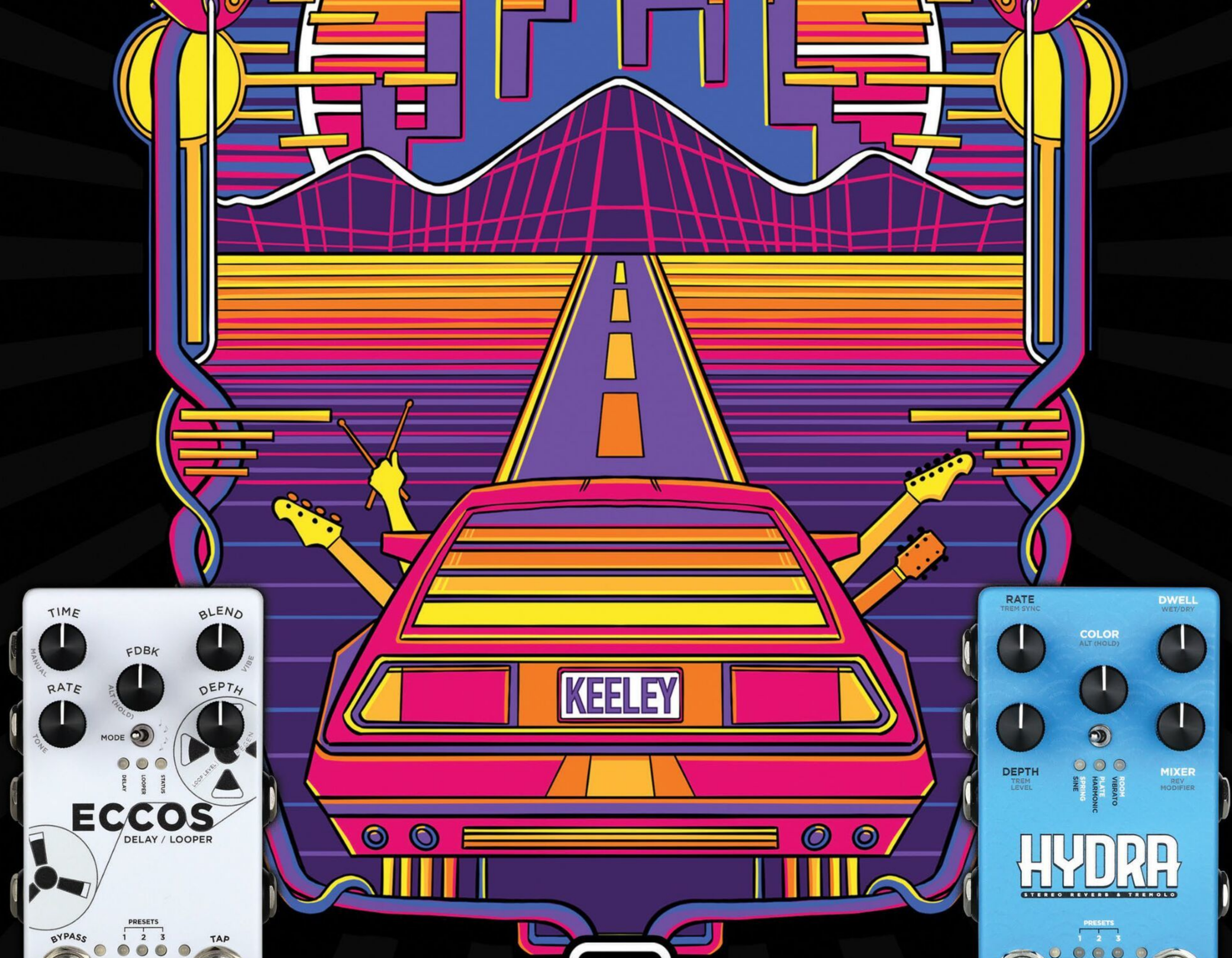
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SansAmp Bass Driver DI (1994)

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