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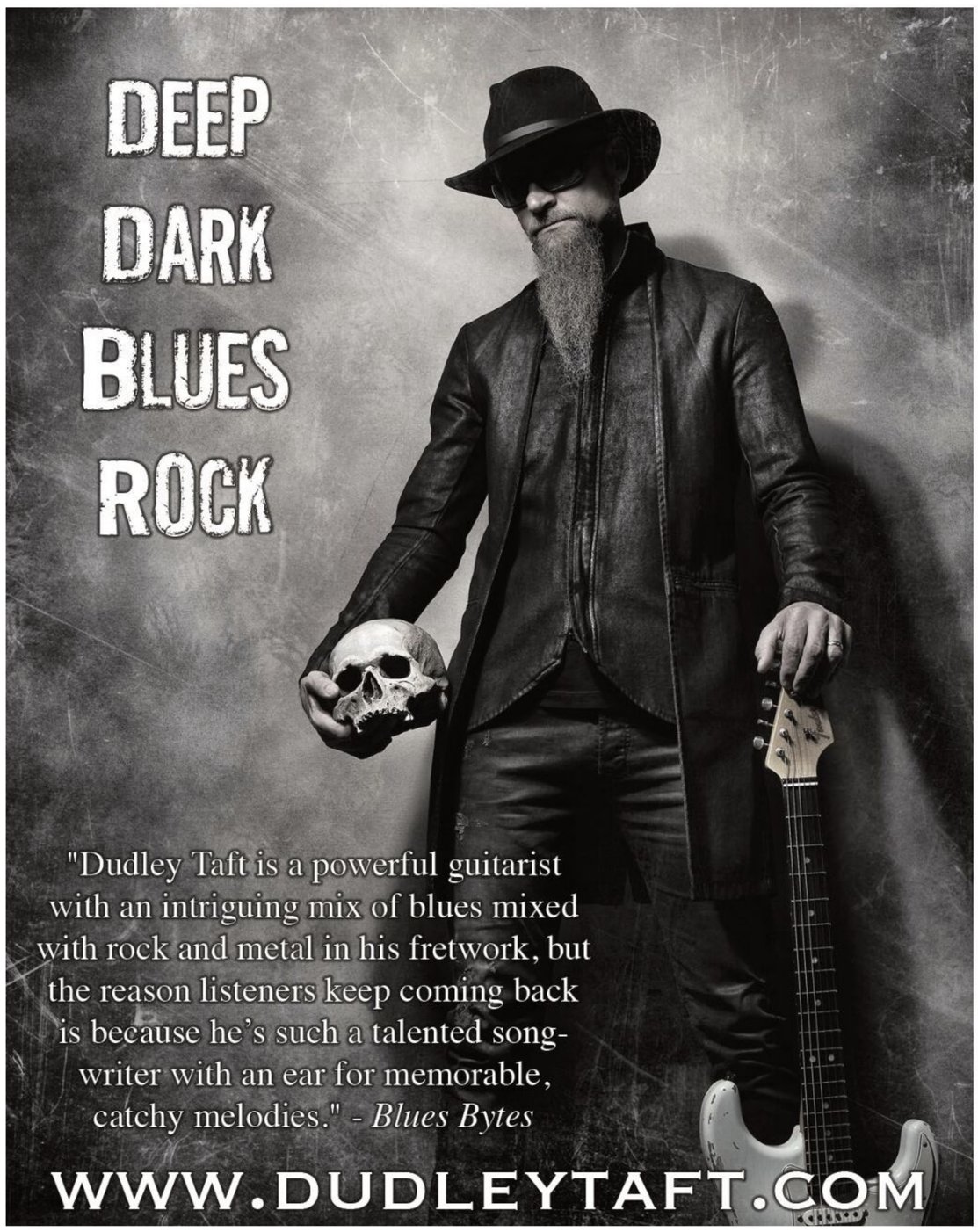
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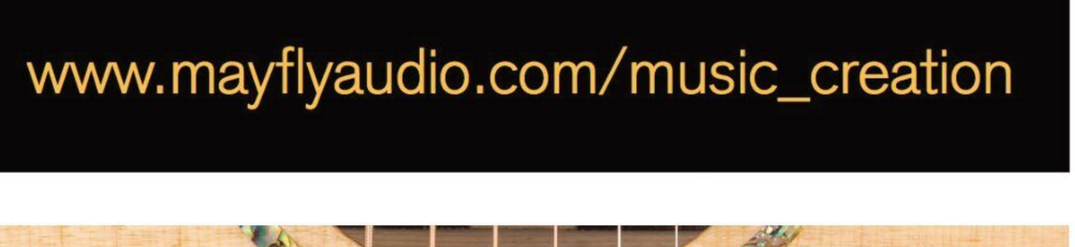
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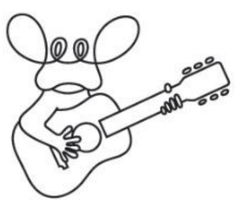
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Co-founder and last remaining member of The Ventures' "classic" lineup, he influenced the way rock-and-roll rhythm guitar is perceived and played. Fans and friends help us honor him. | ***By Willie G. Moseley***

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Working amidst a pandemic, Slash, Myles Kennedy, and their friends in The Conspirators went to extraordinary lengths to work with Dave Cobb on their new album. The end result was well worth a head-on collision with Covid. | ***By Ward Meeker***

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From Chris Stapleton and Brandi Carlile to John Prine and Jason Isbell, many top-tier musicians have relied on his expertise. After Slash became the third *VG* cover subject within a year to hit his resumé, it was time to find out what makes him such a go-to.
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Recalling an Eccentric Genius
The son of an engineer, at 12 he sold built-from-scratch transistor radios to classmates. In high school, he modded guitar amps, taking the first steps in becoming a legend in the field whose name now ranks among the truly elite. With help from some of his most-renowned clients and friends, we pay tribute.
| ***By Ward Meeker***

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Photos: COVER: Slash: Austin Nelson. Joe Satriani: Ebet Roberts/Sony-BMG.
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"CLASSICS" COMBO

Thank you for the great read about a young boy and his 1960 Gibson ES-125TC ("Classics," February '22). The story has lived in my mind a very long time, and I appreciate John, Kathy, and Ward helping tell it. The article is framed and mounted for friends, fans, and lovers of music to read, and the guitar is mounted on a wall close to some Styx hits.

Chuck Panozzo

Thanks for featuring my '67 Rickenbacker 12-string on the "Classics" page in the December '21 issue. Keep up the great articles, especially those of the older players from the past to show some of the younger players where their roots came from. Kudos!

Craig Ball
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

My copy of the March issue came today and I'm totally blown away. Thank you so much for such a nice profile on me, and the "Classics" page on my Les Paul.

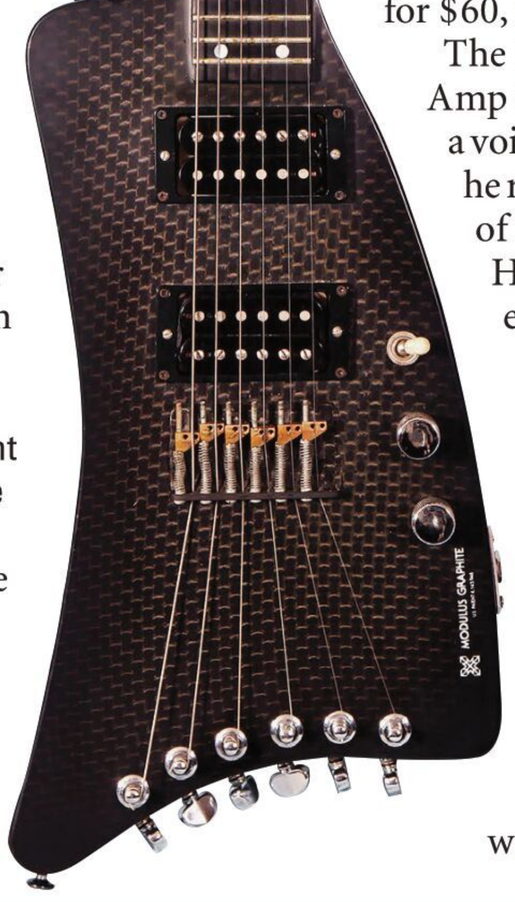
I've been reading *VG* for a long time and am humbled and honored that you were interested in my story. And I love the pictures – all my favorite guitars look wonderful.

Chris Leuzinger
Franklin, Tennessee

(*Ed. Note: Chuck, Craig, and Chris, the "Classics" feature has become a reader – and editor – favorite. It's a treat to reveal the stories lived by the instruments and their players.*)

ZAKK IMPACT

I am a longtime subscriber and always get nervous when I see the latest issue is released and it's not in my mail the same day!



Modulus Graphite Flight 6 Monocoque

I really liked the Zakk Wylde feature (February '22). I remember seeing him for the first time, on video. Living in a small village in West Germany, we didn't have cable TV, but a friend got hold of a VHS tape with a recording of the 1989 Moscow Peace Festival. Besides the great guitars (now vintage) played by Tom Keifer and the mirror guitar of Mick Mars, I was most impressed by young Zakk and his EMG-equipped Les Pauls.

After disassembling – and accidentally destroying – the bridge pickup in my own Les Paul (I wanted to get rid of the covers but didn't realize they were stuck to the top), I got some EMG humbuckers because I'd seen them in Zakk's guitar.

Michael Hauck
Hamburg, Germany

GRATEFUL GREENE

I read *VG* from cover to cover every month, and was surprised at the January "Fretprints" featuring Ted Greene. I was a student and friend of Ted's in the late '60s, when he was teaching many of the top guitarists in the San Fernando Valley.

Ted introduced me to the Mayall Bluesbreaker's LP with Clapton, and changed the musical course of my life. He taught me string bending, pull-offs, hammer-ons, and vibrato. Knowing I was looking for my first real amplifier, he told me about a '55 Deluxe at Ernie Ball's store. Using $50 my dad gave me for the prom, I instead bought the amp for $60, and still have it.

The last time I saw Ted was at The Amp Shop, in Reseda, when I heard a voice call my name. I was amazed he remembered me. Ted had a way of making people feel special. He was a gracious, kind, and extremely gifted man.

John Wiley
Sherman Oaks, California

MAD FOR MODULUS

I really appreciated Michael Wright's feature on the Modulus Graphite Flight 6 Monocoque (September '21). Modulus also made several Flight 4 Monocoque basses with the same hardware and control layout. They also had no need for preamps and batteries, as the passive Bartolini P/J pickup configuration did the job just fine. Legendary Hot Tuna bassist Jack Casady cooked a sonic stew of tones from his Flight 4 in Vermillion Red, a color derived from a bag of Capricorn Coffee, in San Francisco.

Paul G. Stenko
Benton, Pennsylvania



AFFLICTION ATTENTION

I've been in prison for 17 years and watched the print magazine all but go away – most are just advertisements for websites. But, *VG* somehow manages to produce vivid articles with wonderful photo layouts, and great advertising, every month. I especially enjoy the "Readers Gallery," and will send a photo of my three acoustics, which don't look like much but have changed my life with the gift of music. I dream of one day owning a Martin D-18 and Gretsch 6120.

Also, *VG*'s subscription department should be nominated for an award. Every time I've been transferred to a new facility, they're on top of it, sending copies if I miss an issue in the process; since 2013, I've never missed an article. So, thank you much for your attention to my instrument affliction.

Jerry Blair
Cañon City, Colorado

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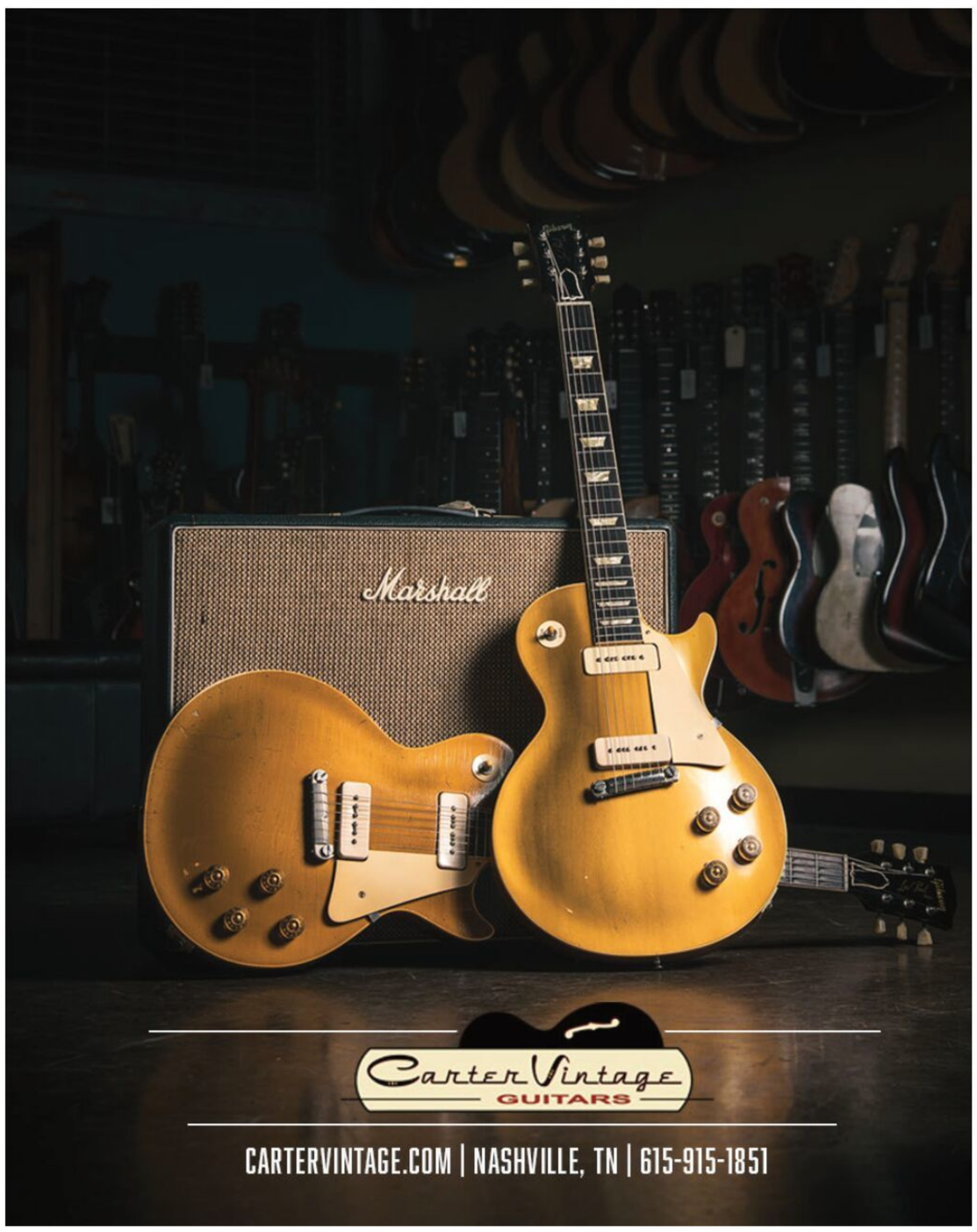
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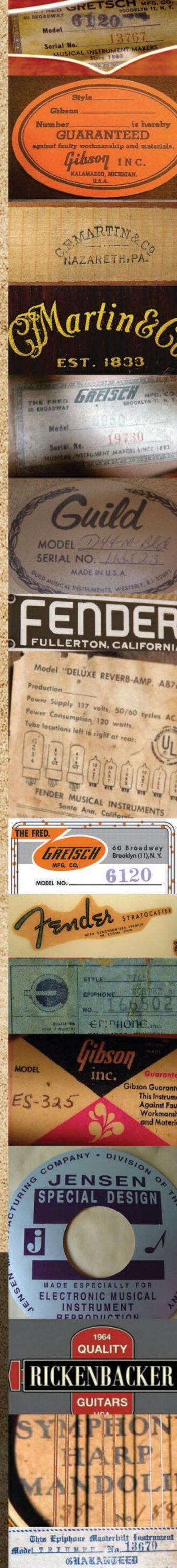
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FOLEY EARNS THREE BLUES MUSIC AWARD NOMINATIONS

Sue Foley (January '22) and her latest album, *Pinky's Blues*, have earned nominations for Album of the Year, Traditional Blues Album, and Traditional Blues Female Artist at this year's Blues Music Awards.

BMA winners are chosen by members of the Blues Foundation, a Memphis-based organization that preserves the heritage of the art form and promotes its artists worldwide. The group held its first National Blues Awards in 1980. In 1995, it became the W.C. Handy Blues Awards, then was given its current name in 2006.

"I'm over the moon about the nominations," said Foley. "What an incredible honor to be acknowledged. Speaking for everyone who helped create *Pinky's Blues*, we're proud to have made a real blues album and thrilled that folks are loving it."

Winners will be announced during a ceremony May 5 in Memphis.

WOODSONGS TORNADO RELIEF DONATES GUITARS

With help from music stores across four states, WoodSongs Tornado Relief, a 501c(3) non-profit founded by folk musician Michael Johnathon, collected and restored nearly 1,000 guitars, banjos, mandolins, and other instruments to replace those lost by victims of tornadoes that struck Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Illinois on December 11. On March 18 and 19, the program will distribute instruments in Mayfield, Dawson Springs, and Owensboro, Kentucky. For more details including eligibility requirements, visit www.woodsongs.com/Tornado.

OOPS! DEPT.

The February interview with Jay Jay French incorrectly credited the accompanying photo. It was taken by Rudy de Doncker.



J.D. SIMO

Psychedelia and Satan

Psychedelic bluesman J.D. Simo deploys impressive wah skill, blistering fuzz tones, and hypnotic grooves that will expand your consciousness. His latest album, *Mind Control*, is the perfect retro, echo-drenched, escapist blues prescription for these trying times. With a nod to Northern Mississippi blues and '60s San Francisco hippie rock, Simo's power trio morphs these sounds into something fresh, relevant, and extremely potent.

Does a Covid lockdown make you more creative?

I think it's easier to be calm and not

Sue Foley: Danny Clinch. J.D. Simo: Johnny Tokarczyk.

distracted. I'm a classic over-thinker, so the very nature of getting together with friends to mess around and come up with something that we think is cool makes it easier not to be affected by your own preconceived plans. There's a reason great writers go off to write. They're not distracted by the hustle and bustle of life. I never knew I could be so content with just getting up and going down to my studio to work on stuff with my friends, without any idea of what it was for. We were just having fun. Hell, I'll take that from here on out (laughs).

Is that how *Mind Control* came together?

Yeah, we started getting together every Wednesday and Thursday. We got tested on Monday and did that every day from April, 2020, to February of '21. Every one of those sessions yielded at least a song or two. It was all types of stuff. What became *Mind Control* was the stuff we liked the best, but we recorded all kinds of afro-beat, weird sci-fi, '60s soundtrack stuff, and funk instrumentals like The Meters. Not having a plan is a great way to work.

The songs you chose fit together exceptionally well.

It was purely by happenstance. The songs were clearly all the ones we dug the most. We didn't try to get too microscopic. I really tried to be the best engineer I could become, and I had a lot of help. I had a lot of friends mentor me and help me out. I got my room dialed in pretty quickly. I wound up getting a funky old eight-track console from the '60s that most people wouldn't piss on if it was on fire, but it actually has a great sound. I used a bunch of Dynamic and EV mics from the '50 and '60s. We all self-mixed in the room while we were playing, didn't play too loud, and the sound of the record became what the room sounded like. It's a groovy, inspiring place to work every day, and I'm lucky to have it.

What combinations of gear are you using on "F*ed Up?"**

That's an old Kay Fuzz with my Gibson 335 and an old wah pedal. Pretty much the entire record was recorded with an old Ampeg Gemini amp. I have a Gemini I, which is the most favorite amp I've ever owned. It's everything. Most of the record is that with a couple of exceptions where I used an Alamo from the '40s. I used an old Unidyne microphone placed about a foot away.

The groove on "I'm In Love" is mind-altering.

"I'm In Love" is the only cover on the album, and it has a lot of that Junior Kimbrough, Fred McDowell, and R.L. Burnside influence. It also has a lot of afro-beat influence on the groove. I can play that "I'm In Love" groove for an hour and be totally satiated. There are probably hours of us playing that kind of stuff. I'm singing live right next to the drums.

Did you play any other guitars?

I have a '40s L-50 that has one pickup, and used it on "That's When You Know That You're Down" and "Want What I Don't Have." I also have a brand-new Echo Park guitar with Teisco pickups that I used on "The Devil Is Always Watchin'." I also have an old Jazzmaster built from parts that's tuned down to B like a baritone guitar. I used that on "Recovery" and a couple of other things. I play slide on all of them. They're all set up to play.

Anything new your fans can expect?

We're finishing up a long U.S. tour with 40 dates. So far, we've gotten through it without anyone getting sick. I'm in the middle of a couple movie-score projects I'm trying to wrap up. That's dominating a bigger portion of my life, which is awesome. I'm also producing a band in March, so I'll be very busy. We're doing another run in April and May and a support tour that hasn't been announced. Lord knows how much of this I will actually be able to do with the present state of the world (laughs), but that's the plan. Otherwise, I'm eating M&Ms and hanging with the family. ***– Oscar Jordan***







BOB MOORE

1932-2021

Bob Moore, a charter member of Nashville's "A-Team" of session musicians and Nashville's most recorded upright and electric bassist, died September 22. He was 88.

For decades, country bassists doubled as onstage comedians, playing basic, rudimentary accompaniment on records. Moore drastically raised that bar. He made the bass an integral part of the music, particularly on the late-'50s and early-'60s "Nashville Sound" recordings that broadened country's audience, as well as on many pop and rock hits.

Born in Nashville and raised by his grandmother, a young Moore shined shoes downtown and at the backstage door of the Ryman Auditorium, where he got to know the performers and sidemen.

Playing music with guitarist friends Billy and Floyd Robinson, he borrowed an upright bass from his school and got informal pointers from Jack Drake, bassist for Opry star Ernest Tubb's Texas Troubadours. Moore and the Robinsons performed as a cowboy act called the Eagle Rangers.

He was still in his teens when he joined Paul Howard's Western-swing band the Arkansas Cotton Pickers in the late '40s. When Howard's guitarist, Jabo Arrington, returned to Nashville to organize a band for new Opry singer Little Jimmy Dickens, Moore became its bassist. Dickens' buoyant 1950 single "A-Sleepin' at the Foot of the Bed" was the first hit to include Moore's playing.

Moore's early-'50s freelancing involved backing Opry singers on their morning WSM radio shows and touring with others. When he joined WSM music director Owen Bradley's 15-piece Nashville orchestra, playing dance music and swing, he found a friend and mentor.

Bradley not only educated him on the technical sides of music and nuances of recording, when he became Nashville producer for Decca Records, Moore was his bassist of choice. He'd also earn that stature with producers Chet Atkins, Don Law, Ken Nelson and Billy Sherrill.

As Nashville's recording industry mushroomed, he and his fellow studio players earned their legendary "A-Team" status through their ability to craft distinctive arrangements on the fly – arrangements that often enhanced a record's appeal.

His skill on the upright bass became an integral part of "Nashville sound" classics such as Ferlin Husky's "Gone," Jim Reeves' "Four Walls" and Bobby Helms' "Jingle Bell Rock." He likewise enhanced the Patsy Cline standards "Walkin' After Midnight," "I Fall to Pieces," "Crazy" and "Sweet Dreams" and created the memorable solo-bass intro to Roger Miller's "King of the Road."

Equally at ease with rockers, he accompanied Elvis Presley on his late-'50s Nashville sessions and many more in the '60s, he did Brenda Lee, Johnny Burnette and others. Moore's sole hit came in 1961 with the Top 10, Mariachi-flavored instrumental "Mexico" on Nashville's Monument Records, a label he co-owned for a time. As Monument's session leader, he shaped Roy Orbison standards such as "Only the Lonely (Know the Way I Feel)," "Blue Bayou" and "It's Over."

A-Team guitarist Jerry Kennedy, who became Mercury's top Nashville producer, held Moore in the highest esteem.

"I met Bob when I first started doing sessions in 1960," said Kennedy. "I was in charge of hiring on Mercury sessions and always called Bob first. He was one of the greatest musicians who ever played upright bass. As a friend, I could not have had better."

Marty Stuart cites Moore's pulsating shuffle bass on Faron Young's 1969 hit "Wine Me Up" as, "No less than a thunderous event. Perfection. The bedrock of A-Team greatness and a pure reflection of the man himself." It was, he adds, "Only one in a countless stream of songs that Bob played on that helped build – as well as define – the genres of what is now classic country and early rock and roll."

While he preferred upright, Moore excelled on electric bass, first using it on a Jim Reeves session and later playing it on the 1978 Kenny Rogers megahit "The Gambler."

He took particular pride in his ability to support and guide singers during sessions. "I got to listenin' during a song to how they would react to different things," he said in a 2009 interview. "Elvis would always look around [at] me and wink. It helped them to get back in comfortably without even knowin' it."

Retiring from regular studio work in 1980, he did occasional sessions but returned to the stage, backing Crystal Gayle, Jerry Lee Lewis, and others, and produced Johnny Cash's Mercury album *Boom Chicka Boom*. Nashville's Musicians Hall of Fame inducted him in 2007.

"Bob Moore was truly one of the godfathers of the low note who laid it down solid, all while setting the standard for bass players to follow for generations to come," Stuart said. ***– Rich Kienzle***

Bob Moore: Bill Forshee, courtesy Country Music Hall of Fame.

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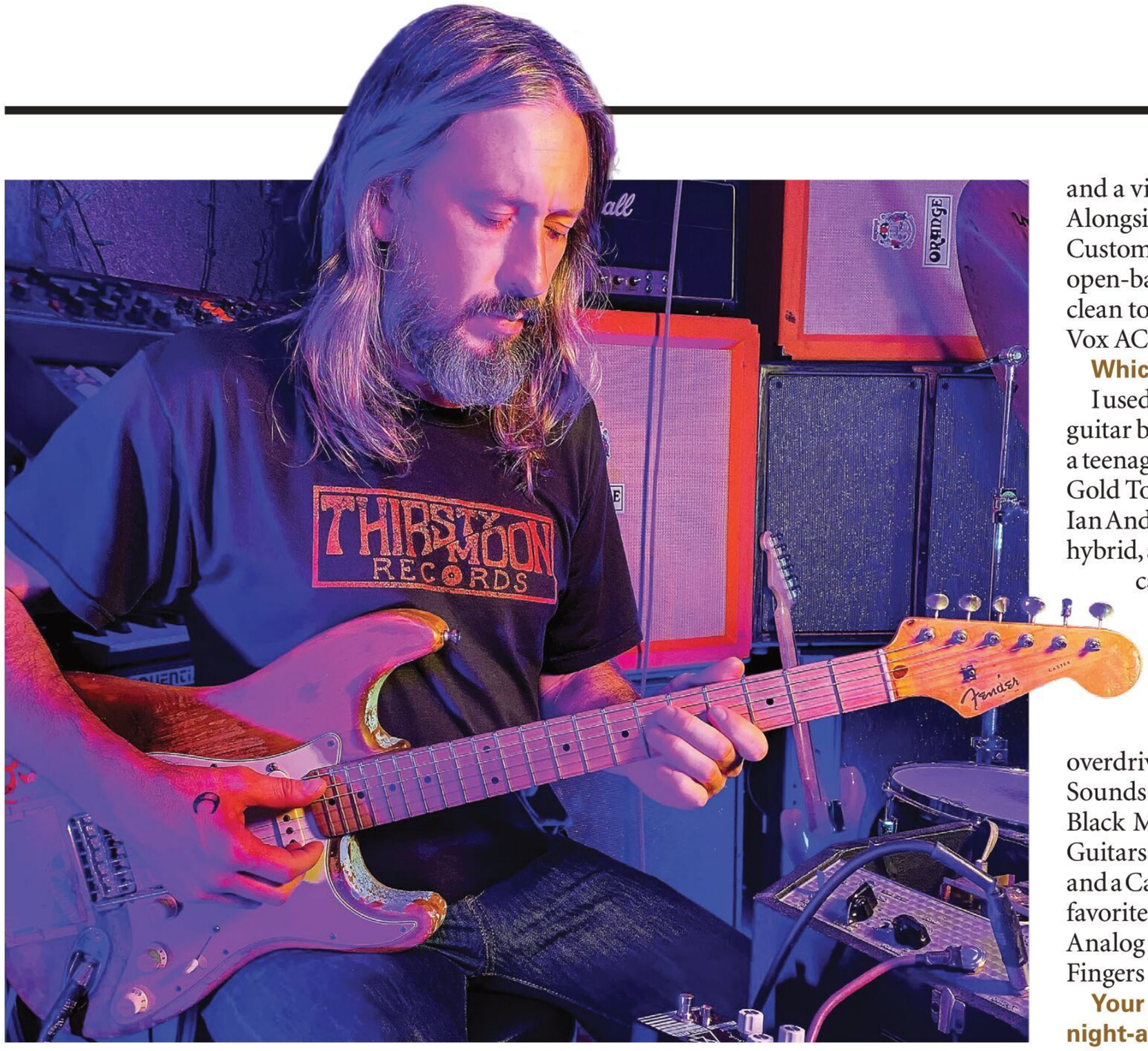
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ISAIAH MITCHELL

Crowe's Feat

When not playing with the Black Crowes, guitarist Isaiah Mitchell works with Earthless, a power trio that just released *Night Parade of One Hundred Demons*. With just three tracks – each running about 20 minutes – the band delves into every nook and cranny of molten psychedelia, leaving room for Mitchell to blaze.

It's great to hear a band opening the throttle.

Thanks. These songs are mapped-out in our own way; the title track has different themes that we give an open space for improvisation. It's important for us as a band to have the freedom to express and compose in the moment, but also orchestrate little musical signals to bring us into the next sections. It'll never be played the same way twice.

Do you start composing with a preconceived theme – or just see what happens?

The theme started developing once the title track came together. The riffs have a vibe of Japanese bands that we love like Flower Travellin' Band or Blues Creation, and songs naturally drifted more into the territory of our Japanese influences. We used the idea of the Japanese folklore tale *Hyakki Yagyo* ("Night Parade of 100 Demons") as a guide to create the music.

One hears traces of Steve Hillage, Black Sabbath, early Rush, and Ozric Tentacles.

Those artists can be put into our basket, for sure. Earthless is influenced by the Velvet Underground, Shuggie Otis, Black Flag, Bad Brains, ZZ Top, John and Alice Coltrane, Iggy Pop, Lee "Scratch" Perry, Flamin' Groovies, the Meters, Led Zeppelin, Can, Free, and Freddie King. My guitar influences are similarly all over the place, but some off the top of my head are Neil Young, Mark Knopfler, Peter Green, David Hidalgo, Frank Zappa, Reine Fiske, John McLaughlin, Hubert Sumlin, Ry Cooder, Hendrix... it's a never-ending list.

Which amps did you use?

For the basic tracking, I used a stereo setup with my '71 Marshall Super Lead going into a Satellite Amps 2x12 cab. I blew up both the head and cabinet halfway through the session, so I borrowed a buddy's late-'70s 100 watt JMP, and a vintage Marshall 4x12 with Vintage 30s. Alongside the Marshall, I used the Orange Custom Shop 50 head with the vertical 2x12 open-back cabinet with Creambacks. For the clean tones I used a late-'60s Super Reverb and Vox AC15 head through the Marshall 4x12.

Which guitars?

I used my main Strat, which is a bit of a mystery guitar but has been my number one since I was a teenager. I also had a Gibson Custom Shop '56 Gold Top with P-90s, a Gibson Les Paul R9, an Ian Anderson Blackguard tele, a Prisma Guitars hybrid, and a guitar my uncle, Jerry, built for me called the UJ, which has P-90s. All of my guitars except the Ian Anderson have pickups hand-made by Mick Brierley, in Australia.

What about effects?

There's a Maestro EP-3 Echoplex, overdrive and fuzzes and delays from Make Sounds Loudly, Jim Dunlop wahs, Don Poniz Black Magic Fuzz, my signature fuzz by Tym Guitars called the Seaweed Fuzz, Strymon Flint, and a Carlin compressor. Always at hand are my favorite treble boosters – the Diaz Texas Ranger, Analog Man Beano Boost, and the Creepy Fingers Sugar Boost.

Your playing in the Black Crowes must be night-and-day from Earthless.

It's a totally different approach. Earthless is a one-guitar band in a three-piece format, so that gives me the freedom and responsibility to paint the moods, while (bassist) Mike Eginton and (drummer) Mario Rubalcaba hold down the groove.

With the Black Crowes, I'm with another guitarist and a keyboardist, as well as a powerful front man, so I have to think about their placement and all the sound they're creating – and being complementary to all of them. It's a different set of ears.

Do you play Black Crowes' more-famous solos note for note? What kind of direction do you get from Chris and Rich, as far as where to play – or not play.

I don't play leads note-for-note unless I feel it's absolutely integral to the song. I grew up listening to the Crowes, so some of those songs and solos are so engrained in my psyche that I want to honor them. Chris and Rich [Robinson] want me to be *me* and not be a mimic, which I'm very grateful for. I love Marc Ford's and Luther Dickinson's playing on those Black Crowes records, and I want to always honor their spirit, but be myself. At the end of the day, it's about the song and Chris' vocals, so my job is to serve the song and complement what everyone is playing, to make it sound whole. When it's my time to take a solo, that's when I step out and open it up. – ***Pete Prown***

Isaiah Mitchell: Marta Estellés Martín.

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Cody and Luther Dickinson

LUTHER DICKINSON

Smooth Sailing

The North Mississippi Allstars have always moved forward. With an expanded lineup and fresh songwriting, guitarist Luther Dickinson is in musical heaven. *Set Sail* displays Dickinson's penchant for building atmosphere with lush tremolo, ping-pong slapback, and masterful slide. Strong chemistry heightens the album's crafty songs, but Dickinson is forever steady rollin'.

What are your thoughts on *Set Sail*?

It was the first record since our debut where we had the time to experiment and tinker. The flipside of that is you get burned out. The songs always come to life, live. We burn them down and build them back up. We never try to faithfully re-create the record. Any song we play is just a foundation and framework for reinterpretation and improvisation. It drives some of our fans crazy. We have to tell them, "Hey, that's the record." (laughs) People like learning an arrangement and sticking to it, but my brother, Cody, and I are stream-of-consciousness to a fault; we're always reinterpreting everything.

Having Lamar Williams, Jr. on the record was a great idea.

Man! I've sung with a lot of great singers over the last 10 years, but I've never had a singing partner like Lamar. It's such a treat. I'd send songs, and he would flesh them out. He added so much to the record. We're such good friends, and we're like-minded. He's a superstar. We're all second-generation musicians – his father was a bassist for the Allman Brothers, and his musicality is so blue. I feel deep blues from Lamar. We all grew up watching our fathers and following in their footsteps. We see the path, and we know what to do as musicians.

How did you get William Bell on the record?

I was involved with the movie *Take Me To The River*, and Cody was one of the producers. We made tracks with Booker T., Mavis Staples, and Charlie Musselwhite. Cody produced some William Bell and Snoop Dogg tracks, and they've been friends ever since. We wrote that song at William's studio – came out with a voice memo I put to a grid, and we started overdubbing on it. The memo is on the final track. William had the whole plot, and the story's synopsis worked out when we got there. He had the setting and the characters for "Never Want To Be Kissed." We shaped it into a song with chords using his freestyling words, phrases, and melody. His phrasing is insane on the record because every chorus is different. We took it to a studio and did the horns Al Green style.

What guitar are you using for slide?

I've become hooked on Fender Wide Range humbuckers. They changed my whole life. I have been forever trying to electrify an open-tuned acoustic, finger-picked, slide guitar. I was thinking Fred McDowell meets Jimi Hendrix. That led me down the road with my relationship with Gibson and hollowbody guitars.

Now, I have a Strat with Lollar Regal pickups, which are the Wide Range style – pure and clear-sounding. You can hear every note, and they're quiet. I love single-coil pickups, but they're noisy. Most of the record was made with guitars a friend and I are making, called Vibratone. They're Tele Thinline-style with Lollar Regal pickups.

What are you playing on "Bumpin'"?

I'm using a Gibson ES-390. It's part of that series of small 335s. They always looked funny to me. The 390 is fully hollow and has P90s. It's beautiful. It looks and plays so perfectly. Gibson nailed it. It's fantastic for feedback and sustain.

You're playing against yourself with slap back.

Yep. Anytime I'm playing solo, in a duo, or as a trio, I like to have a stereo delay. My preferred setting is a clean amp with tremolo and reverb and a dirty amp. That's my favorite tone. I like to be mono if it's a full band, but if it's solo, duo, or trio, I like to go stereo. I used a Boss DD-7 Digital Delay, but I have to have tap-tempo. I can't stand for the delay to be out of time. I love hearing delay bouncing back and forth. It helps keep me in time.

You're composing music for film.

I'm doing my first film score about Eric Robert Rudolph, who is an American terrorist. It's so foreign and inspiring. I'm so jazzed. I get to use the whole collection of weirdo sounds that my father and I collected all these years. I got guitars and keyboards all sprawled out in different tunings. I don't write to picture. I'm inspired by keys and tempos. So I write, write, and write, then throw it all to picture and see what sticks. Then I move it around, adjust it, and play to the picture. It's pretty cool. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Cody and Luther Dickinson: Wyatt McSpadden.

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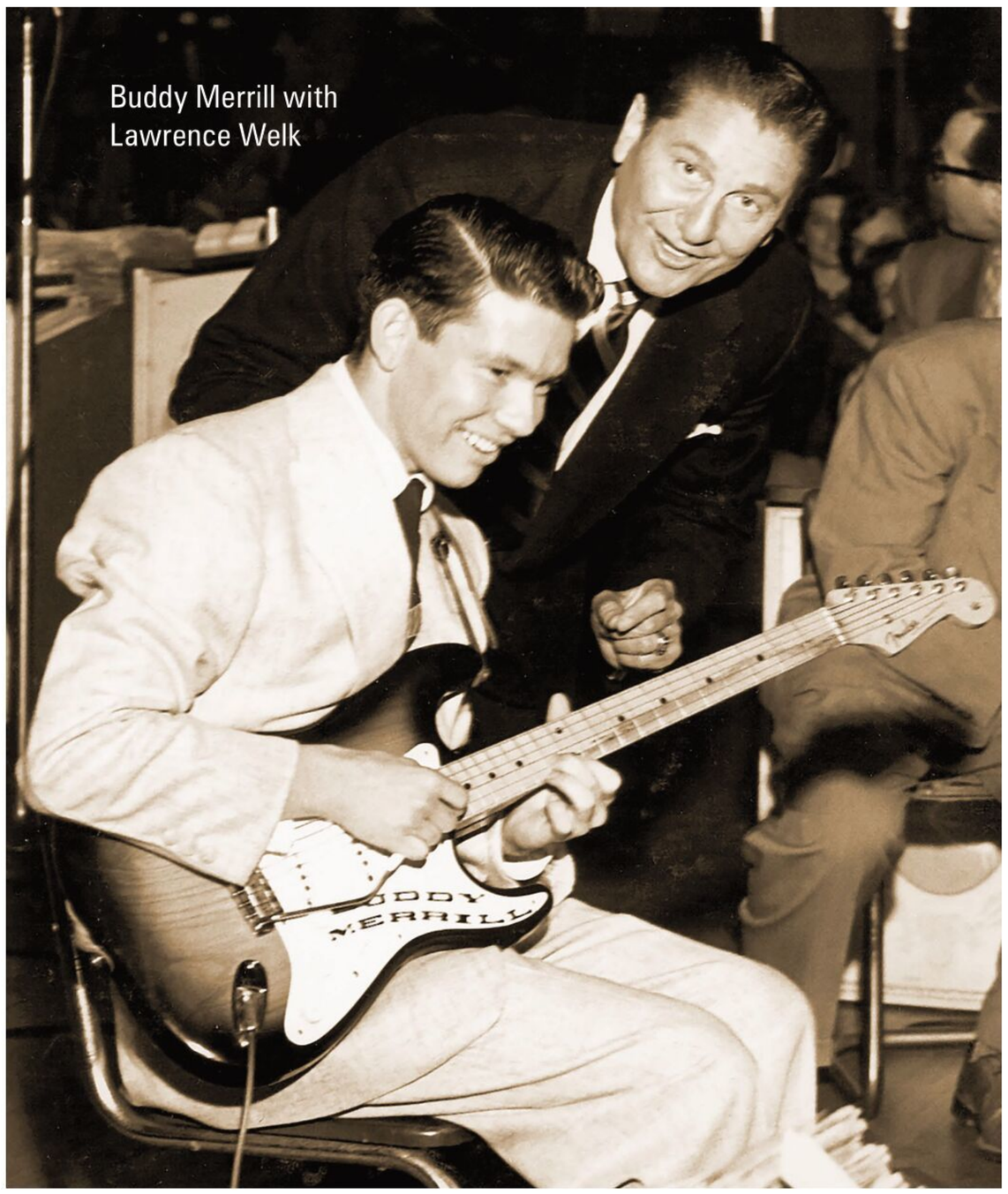
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Buddy Merrill with Lawrence Welk

BUDDY MERRILL

1936-2021

Buddy Merrill, guitarist, steel-guitarist, composer, arranger, recording artist, and occasional vocalist, died December 5. He was 85.

A seasoned musician by age 18, Merrill became a member of Lawrence Welk's orchestra, featured on Welk's weekly ABC-TV program from 1955 until '74. Welk's program targeted older adults, yet Merrill's playing inspired countless babyboomers to take up the guitar.

A native of Torrey, Utah, Leslie Merrill Behunin, Jr. was the son of country singer/guitarist Les Merrill. At six, he converted an acoustic guitar into a steel guitar and began teaching himself. By age 11, he'd upgraded to a single-neck Gibson lap steel after joining his dad's band, the Fremont River Rangers, which played Utah venues and on Salt Lake City's KDYL-TV. He later upgraded to a doubleneck.

Merrill's earliest steel-guitar heroes included Noel Boggs and Jerry Byrd. Hearing records by Chet Atkins and Les Paul's multi-tracked masterpieces fueled his interest in electric guitar. When the family moved to L.A. in 1950, he discovered Speedy West's explosive pedal-steel stylings.

The Welk connection began in '54, when the accordion-playing bandleader, nationally renowned for his danceable "champagne music," hosted a local TV show each Saturday night from the Santa Monica Ballroom.

Merrill's mother entered a disc recording of his playing in Welk's "All American" music contest. He won, sat in with Welk and the band and in 1955, then became their youngest member.

In a 2011 interview for NAMM's Oral History Program, Merrill said he'd "stepped into a big bunch of luck" when ABC launched "The Lawrence Welk Show" nationally on July 2, 1955. Playing a Strat, he was prominent as a sideman and showcased on the pop hit "Mister Sandman."

Welk, who initially saw country music as a niche, emphasized Merrill playing pop tunes on guitar and Hawaiian songs on steel. Slightly more open to Western swing, he permitted Buddy to perform "Steel Guitar Rag," Noel Boggs' "Steelin' Home" and "South."

Welk also was no rock fan, but he grudgingly acknowledged its growing influence on a 1956 episode presenting Merrill playing a subdued "Blue Suede Shoes" on a Strat, blending fluid flatpicking and Atkins-style fingerpicking. At Welk's behest, Merrill recorded a vocal single of rockabilly singer Warren Smith's "Rock 'N Roll Ruby" that same year.

Welk's show became a Saturday night institution for older audiences, yet Merrill's prominence had an unexpected impact; he and James Burton (with Rick Nelson on "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet") were the only young electric guitarists featured regularly on network TV.

Merrill's fluent picking captivated countless younger viewers watching Welk with their parents. Pickup designer/manufacturer Seymour Duncan was among them.

"I couldn't wait to see the show each week," he said. "Buddy had a natural gift for playing guitar. He was a clean-sounding player."

Though early seasons were broadcast in black and white, the young Duncan immediately noted the gear used by Merrill, who was a Fender endorser.

"I loved his blond Strat and the two-tone sunburst," he added. "He played early anodized-guard Jazzmasters and some Strats with black pickguards."

Duly impressed, Duncan, who played a Silvertone Jupiter guitar and amp, sold a rare coin to buy his first Strat in '63.

When Merrill left for the Army in '59, Welk filled the gap with Hollywood studio veteran Neil LeVang (*VG*, December '09), who remained after Buddy's 1961 return. Welk highlighted them as soloists and as a team; once, LeVang played a Bass VI as Merrill, picking a Jaguar, twanged away on a Duane Eddy-inspired "Deep in the Heart of Texas."

As country's popularity grew in the '60s, Welk added more to the lineup. Merrill and LeVang would tackle "Panhandle Rag" or "New San Antonio Rose" instrumentally. On a later broadcast, Merrill, strumming an L-5, sang Little Jimmy Dickens' "A-Sleepin' at the Foot of the Bed" as LeVang added wah licks on an Epi Sheraton.

When his Fender endorsement ended in the '60s, Merrill endorsed Emmons pedal steels and Micro-Frets guitars, and played their Huntington model, an instrument he later gifted to Deke Dickerson.

During his years with Welk and beyond, Merrill recorded numerous instrumental guitar and steel albums for Accent Records and other labels, many incorporating the multi-tracking he'd always loved. Today, collectors of "Space-Age Pop" instrumentals treasure some of this work.

Anxious to pursue solo projects, Merrill left Welk in '74 and settled into composing and recording guitar instrumentals for use as background music. He briefly re-joined Welk for the bandleader's final programs before he retired in '82.

Welk's show, which continues to thrive in syndication, has long been satirized for its hackneyed presentations and bland music. But it's beyond dispute that Buddy Merrill left an enduring impact on American guitar, in ways Welk probably never envisioned. ***–Rich Kienzle*** **VG**

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$100 COWBOY FLAT-TOP

The 1939-'42 Gibson SJ-100

BY PETER STUART KOHMAN

Through the 1910s and early '20s, Gibson catalogs denigrated flat-top guitars as inferior, unworthy of the company name. But that tune changed in 1926, when it introduced the L-1 and L-0 alongside its unique archtops.

Perched at the bottom of the line, one feature set them apart from traditional flat-tops – a narrow waist and more-rounded lower bout. This became a Gibson trait that found its way onto some of the most-celebrated guitars. Standing as the prime example is the J-200.

When introduced in 1937, Gibson's fancy "King of the Flat-Tops" was called the SJ-200 Super Jumbo. Originating from guitars custom-made for singing-cowboy stars, notably Ray Whitley, that narrow-waisted body set it apart from its main competitor, Martin's dreadnought. Like the '20s L-1, the SJ-200 was built with archtop body lines, in this case similar to the "advanced" L-5.

Spectacularly clean for being 80 years old, this guitar's original finish shines. Many SJ-100s saw heavy use, since most were bought as working tools, not baubles to be coddled. Mahogany back of the '41 SJ-100.

At a whopping $200, the 17" rosewood-bodied SJ-200 was aimed at Western-style entertainers and, in the Depression, affordable only to highly paid pros. Production was limited and Gibson logically concluded a cheaper version might appeal to less-well-heeled cowboy players.

The result was the Super Jumbo 100, which first appeared in Gibson's 1939 *AA* catalog, with the blurb, "In creating this fine flat-top... not a single Gibson innovation for tone projection has been slighted in any way. It is an instrument that never fails to bring forth superlative praise from those desiring a deep, brilliant toned guitar at a price considerably below the top."

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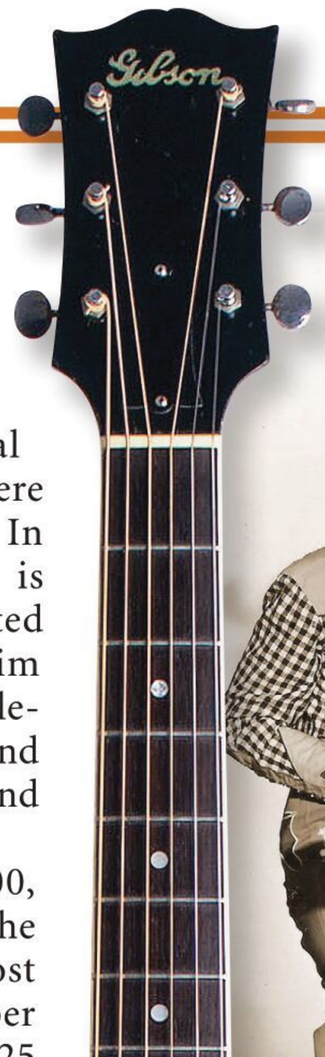
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Little Jimmy Dickens and his band in the mid '50s; drummer/fiddler Louie Dunn, bassist Joel Price on a Precision, Dickens with his SJ-100, Jimmy "Spider" Wilson on a Gretsch Duo-Jet, and Walter Haynes with his Bigsby pedal-steel.

For once, Gibson didn't oversell, as the SJ-100 really is a superb design, sharing the 200's narrow-waisted 17" jumbo body and long scale, but with restrained cosmetics and one major material difference – the back and sides were mahogany instead of rosewood. In common with the 200, the top is spruce and the neck is laminated two-piece figured maple. The trim was plainer all around with a triple-bound top, single-bound back and fretboard, unbound headstock, and plain pickguard.

The original list price was $100, which, in Gibson fashion, gave the guitar its name. It was raised almost immediately to $110 on the October '39 price list and crept up to $131.25 by late '41, as the run-up to World War II sparked rapid increases. It could be paired with a silk-lined Faultless Case #600 SP in lacquered tweed with red and black stripes that added $32.50 to the cost – almost enough to buy an L-00! A flannel-lined version was $24.50.

The initial SJ-100 included several unusual features, most novel being a peghead with stair-stepped sides, shared with two other mid-line models introduced in '39 – the 16" round-shouldered J-55 and the ES-250 electric archtop. This design no doubt proved awkward to produce and was quickly supplanted on all three with a standard Gibson head.

The first SJ-100s also had a simplified version of the "moustache" bridge used on the 200. This was still an elaborately carved affair using adjustable bearings under each string in place of a conventional saddle. This was also short-lived and soon gave way to a smaller, simpler two-tiered rosewood piece. This distinctive (if whimsical) bridge was also shared with the J-55 and a pair of budget 16" Jumbos built under the Recording King brand for Montgomery Ward. Inlaid pearl dots discreetly covered three bolts used to secure it to the top.

A feature common to all SJ-100's is thick triple binding around the top edge. The extended stepped-edge pickguard on the treble side of the top was another new element, again shared with the J-55. Made of the flashy "firestripe" celluloid seen only on pre-war Gibsons, the oversize guard is unusual in how it completely covers the soundhole rings. This was not an accident; Gibson applied it to guitars aimed at hard-strumming cowboy players who quickly wore away finish in that area.

The '41, SJ-100 shown here has its curly maple neck topped with a bound Brazilian-rosewood fretboard. Ebony was specified in the catalogs, but deviations like this are common. The headstock is ornamented only with a thick pearl script Gibson logo and fitted with early open-back metal-

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FEATURES

SIZE: 17" wide, 21" long, and 4½" deep.

WOODS: Selected spruce top; mahogany back and rim; curly maple neck; ebony fingerboard.

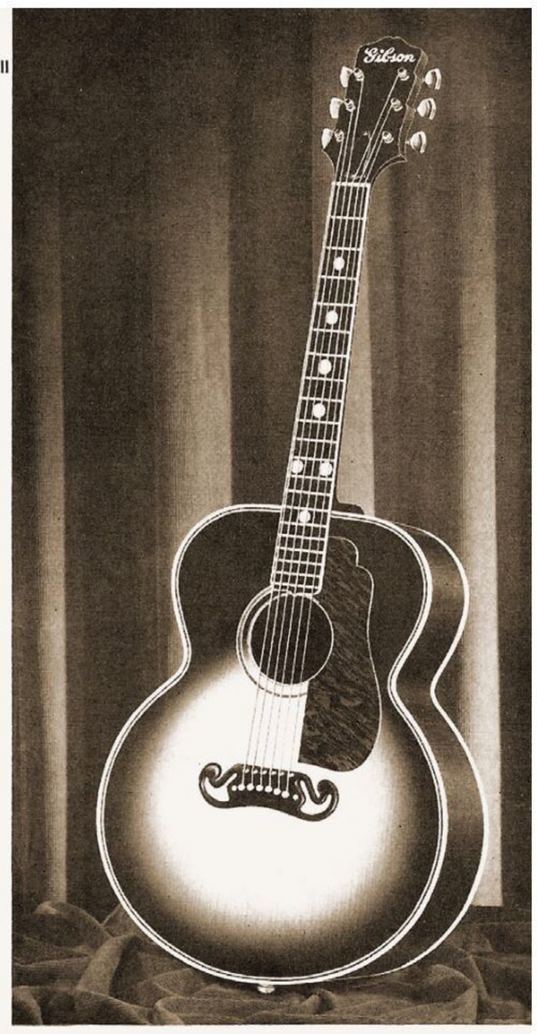
FINISH: Dark brown mahogany with golden sunburst shading on top.

TRIMMINGS: Top of body bound with white, black and white celluloid; bottom of body and fingerboard bound with white celluloid; graceful new peghead design, inlaid with pearl; pearl fingerboard inlays; sound hole bound with white, black and white celluloid; seven-ply alternating white and black purfling around sound hole; beautiful strip of marquetry inlaid the entire length of the back.

FITTINGS: Nickel individual Kluson "Seal-Fast" machine heads; beautiful new design ebony bridge with individual adjustment bearing for each string, white bridge pins and two pearl inlays; new brown celluloid inlaid fingerrest; white bone nut; side position marks; white end pin.

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Lots of "stage presence" is in this beautiful Super Jumbo—plus the playing qualities that make "big time" popularity.

The SJ-100, as introduced in Gibson's 1939 *AA* catalog.

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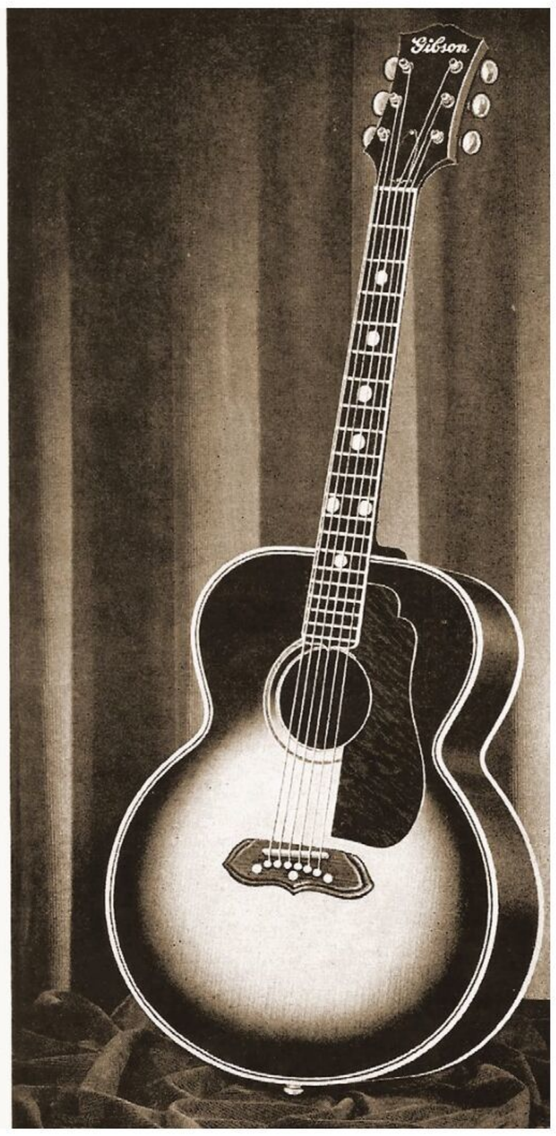
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FITTINGS: Nickel individual machine heads; beautiful new design rosewood bridge; white bridge pins and three pearl inlays; new brown celluloid inlaid fingerrest; white bone nut; side position marks; white end pin.

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The second-generation SJ-100 in the 1941 *BB* catalog.

button Kluson tuners. The first SJ-100's used more-expensive cast Kluson Sealfast machines with fluted-metal buttons, but those were discontinued with the original headstock.

The SJ-100 was not designed for the fancy flatpicking many players today associate with pre-war flat-tops, but as a strummed rhythm tool to accompany crooning cowboys. The sound is big, rich and powerful, ringing with volume and enough punch to drive a band along, if required. The combination of mahogany back and sides with the jumbo shape was a seldom-used recipe, as standard J-200s were rosewood before World War II, maple afterward. That mahogany results in a tone that's less-boomy than rosewood and with more air than maple. It's an interesting formula, ripe for reinvention.

With its short, limited production history, the SJ-100 is a rare guitar in any form – 59 were shipped in 1941 and the total is well under 200; just 138 are accounted for in extant shipping records.

Though forgotten except by hardcore Gibson flat-top enthusiasts, the SJ-100 did garner prominent users, starting just as it was discontinued. The most influential was blues master Lonnie Johnson, whose work with Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Eddie Lang, and

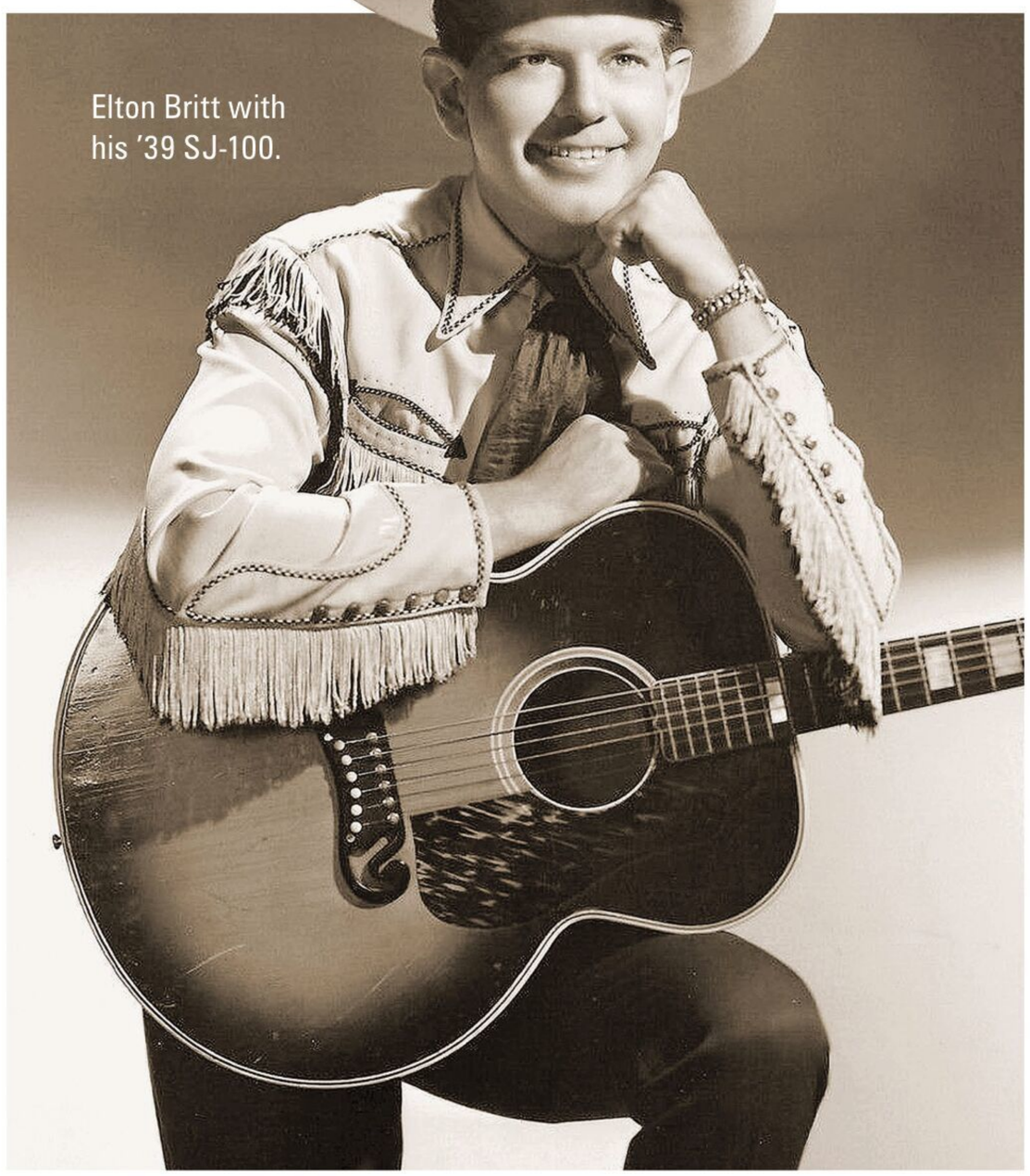


Lonnie Johnson in the '40s with his SJ-100.

many more from the '20s through the '60s blurred the boundaries of blues and jazz. He was featured on hundreds of vocal and instrumental blues records, under his own name and as a side man. If that weren't enough, in the '20s, Johnson was the first to record single-string guitar solos with a pick, influencing everyone who has played non-classical guitar since. Next time you're bending strings in the pentatonic box, give a nod to Lonnie.

Johnson used many guitars throughout his career, including an unusual early jumbo 12-string, various Martin flat-tops, and, near the end, a cheap Kay electric. From the '40s into the early '50s, he favored an SJ-100 identical to our featured guitar, acoustically at first, then later fitted with a DeArmond RHC-B soundhole pickup. This is likely the instrument heard on many of his Victor recordings from that period, cut with pianist Blind John Davis among others.

An earlier SJ-100 was the longtime companion of WWII-era yodeling Western star Elton Britt, whose name might not mean much to modern country fans, but was a crossover success in the '40s. His signature song, "There's a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere" may seem maudlin today, but the patriotic anthem was a huge hit in the



Elton Britt with his '39 SJ-100.



Yodeling Slim Clark in the '40s.

war-time U.S., selling over a million copies in an era when that was a rare accomplishment. He enjoyed lesser country hits into the early '50s; his novelty recording "Uranium Fever" has been making the rounds of internet popularity. Britt's SJ-100 was a 1939-pattern version with stair-stepped peghead and adjustable mustache bridge. It had an unusual block-inlaid fretboard that appears factory, though it's impossible to know for sure. Britt played his SJ-100 for years, posing with it in publicity photos well into the '50s.

Working in a similar vein was Yodeling Slim Clark, who was friendly with Britt and eventually joined him in the Yodeler's Hall Of Fame. Slim proudly displays his '41-style SJ-100 in numerous publicity pictures with the then-standard tassel strap. The name "Slim" was added to the guitar's top in small letters under the pickguard.

Slim and Britt represent the audience Gibson intended for its Jumbo flat-tops, as singing/yodeling Western performers were all the rage in the '30s and '40s, so there was enough work for them to fund a fairly expensive guitar. In the early '50s, even more long-lived Nashville star Little Jimmy Dickens was often seen with a first-gen SJ-100. A real fireball onstage, Dickens was one of the era's most-colorful country performers even though he stood all of 4' 11". Credited with introducing rhinestone-studded Nudie outfits to the Opry stage, he loved to hang flashy, oversized guitars on his diminutive frame.

Dickens also led one of the hottest bands in Nashville, The Country Boys, with world-class pickers including Grady Martin and Thumbs Carllile, and steel-guitar legend Buddy Emmons passing through the ranks. Some Dickens records include sophisticated twin-guitar harmony picking from Martin and Jabo Arrington (*VG*, January '22), succeeded by Spider Wilson and Howard Rhoton. And he was the first Opry performer to have his bassist, Joel Price, appear with the newfangled Fender Precision.

Dickens' hot band suited his sometimes-raucous persona, and in the mid '50s he cut a few sides verging on rockabilly. Still, his most-remembered song is the left-field 1965 novelty hit "May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose."

Dickens was not a technical player, but hammered out solid rhythms on his SJ-100. The guitar was gradually modified through the '50s, going back to Gibson for a J-200 bridge early in the decade, then later for a larger pickguard that covered the upper side emblazoned with the artist's name. It looks like Paul Bigsby's work, though may have been done by his rejected apprentice, Semie Moseley. In '57, Dickens got a new J-200 and apparently retired his 100 from live work. It was still part of his collection when the guitars were listed for sale in 2015, by which time it had been refinished and heavily modified with a new bridge, pickguard, and Super 400 headstock.

Gibson stopped making the SJ-100 in 1942, as most instrument production was put aside for war work. The J-200 returned to the catalog in '48, but the 100 was not revived after the war. In the '50s, Gibson tried a junior version with the J-185 – a 16" maple guitar with mahogany neck – another superlative instrument that essentially failed, sales-wise, but has since become highly desired. Over the ensuing decades, the J-200 maintained its status as Gibson's "King of the Flat-Tops," while various princes have come and gone. The J-100 name was revived in the '70s, but the instrument was hardly comparable.

The pre-war SJ-100 holds a place in Gibson history as one of their best obscure ideas, suited to its market and a victim of war-time circumstance rather than any inherent flaws.

Special thanks to Rich Kienzle.

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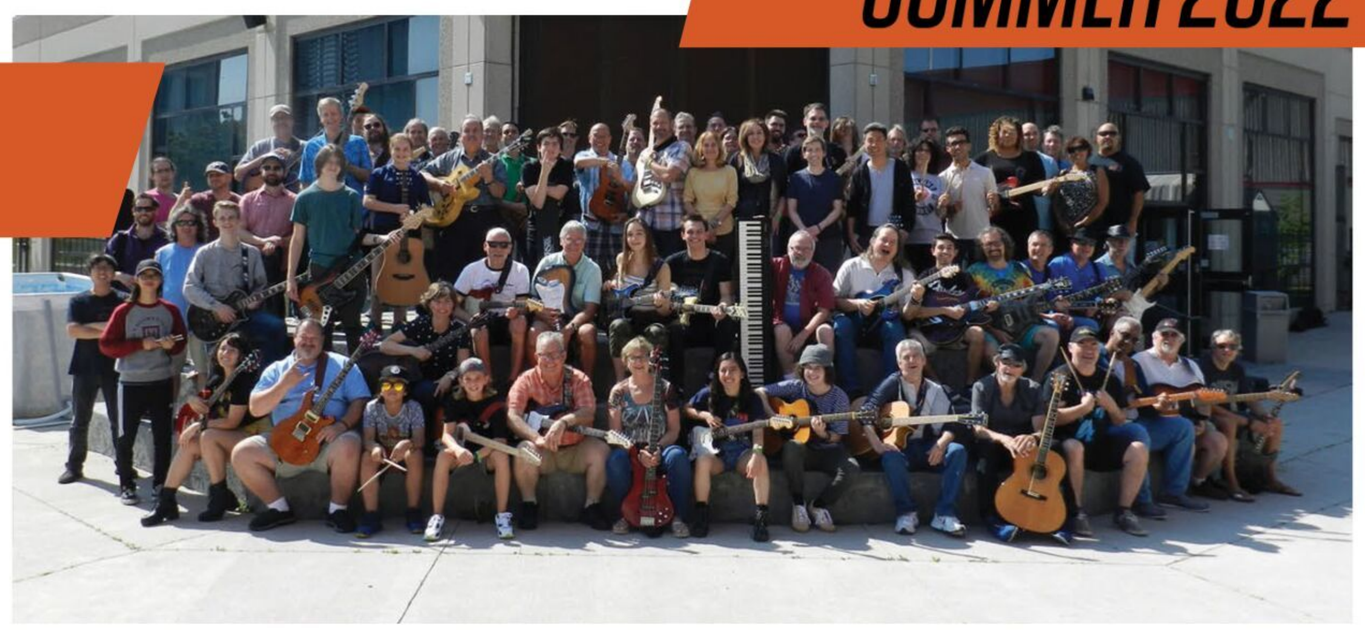
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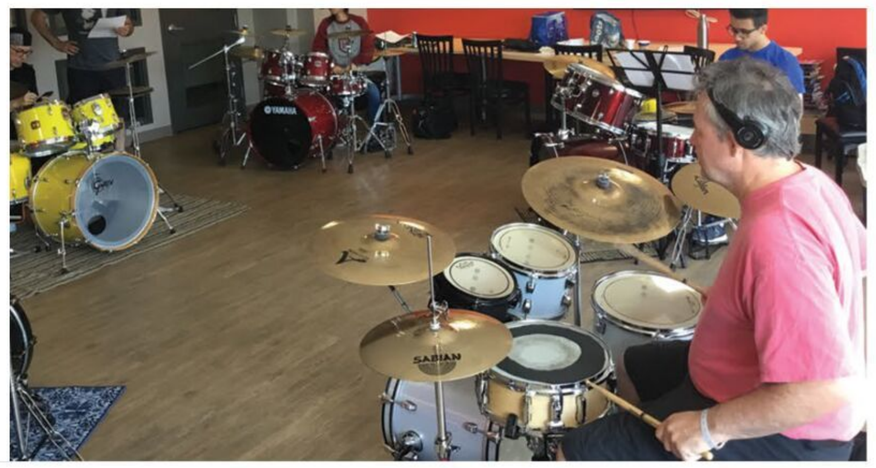
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PREHISTORIC BEAST

1971 Dumble Special 16 #0001

BY DAVE HUNTER

For all the vintage guitar amplifiers that have attained top-level collectibility – the '50s tweed Fenders, copper-panel Vox combos, and early Marshall JTM45 and "plexi" heads – nothing has equaled the creations of Howard Alexander Dumble.

The amps designed and made by Dumble (see our memorial in this issue) were elaborately crafted one-offs, and a veritable case study in supply-and-demand on the used market. But they've attained five- and even six-figure prices because they sound uncommonly wonderful. As artists like Robben Ford, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Larry Carlton, Carlos Santana and others attest, Dumbles don't just make you sound good, they *inspire you* to be a better player. And while his Overdrive Special and a few other notable models have drawn all the attention over the years, earlier, more-obscure creations like our featured amp this month are a timely reminder of the occasional diversions along his path to greatness.

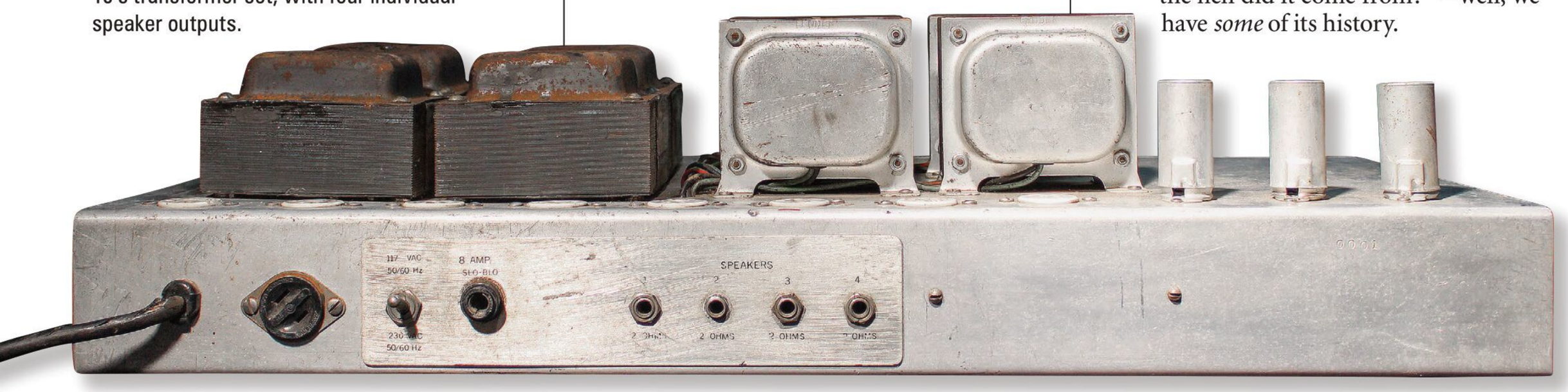
This unusual monster, a Special 16 built in 1971, was birthed after Dumble accumulated several years of experience at the solder gun, but before his flagship design began to make him *the* go-to tone guru. And "unusual" is an understatement; the simplest answer to the question "What the hell is it?" is, well, it's four 50-watt Fender output stages cobbled into one massive 200-watt head, joined by a preamp section with classic roots but rendered in the inimitable Dumble style. Beyond that, it's Special 16 number 0001 – the first ever made – and for all we know, the *only* one. For the second big question – "Where the hell did it come from?" – well, we have *some* of its history.

A fascinating subject by any measure, this Special 16 has the same control complement as a tweed Bassman, with a few Dumble-esque additions.

1971 DUMBLE SUPER 16

- Preamp tubes: three 12AX7
- Output tubes: eight 6L6GC (most likely)
- Rectifier: solid-state
- Controls: Volume 1, Volume 2, Treble, Middle, Bass, Accent; Bright and Deep switches
- Output: approximately 200 watts RMS

The huge chunks of iron comprising the Special 16's transformer set, with four individual speaker outputs.



Amp and photos courtesy Michael "Miko" Malinao, Sr.

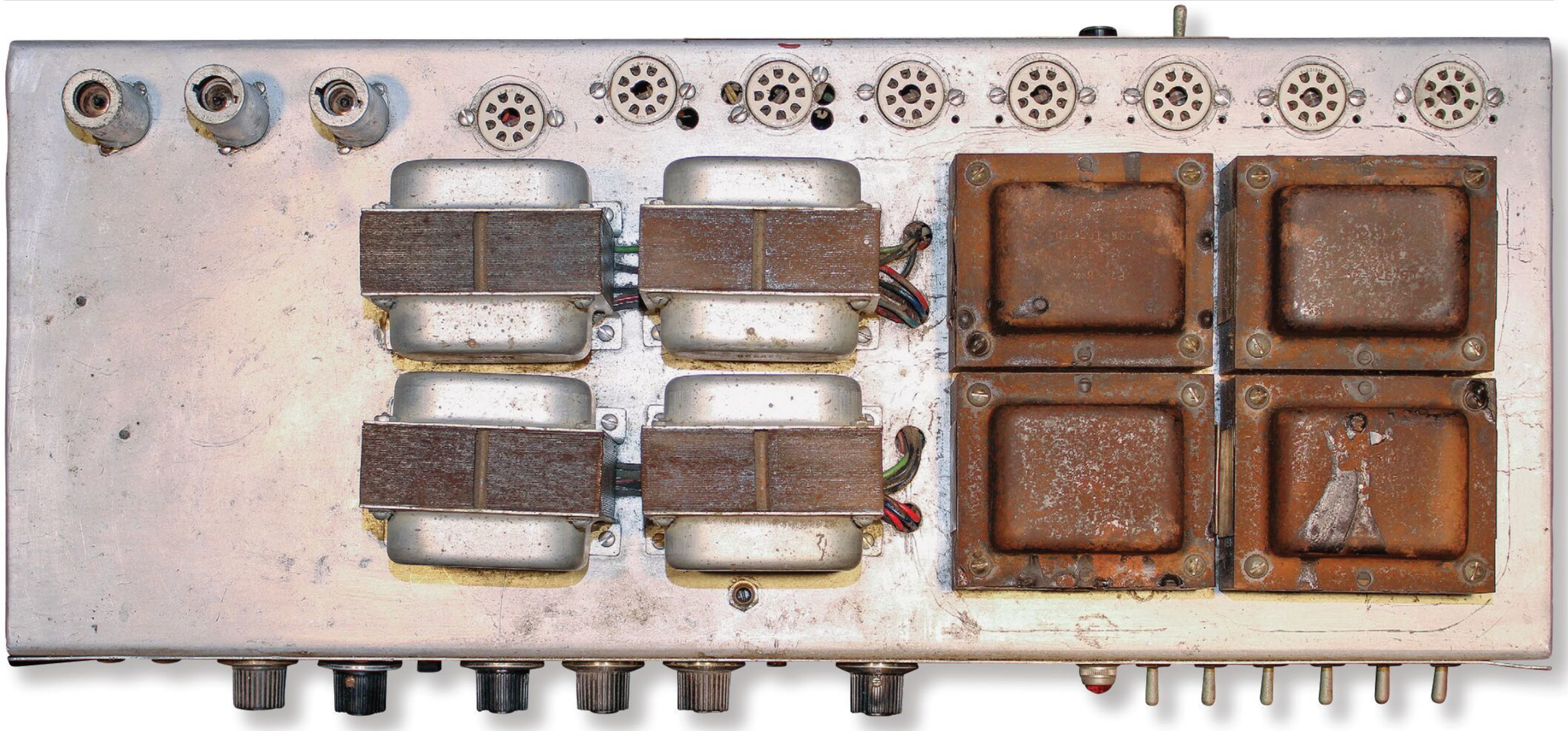
What Flavor would you...



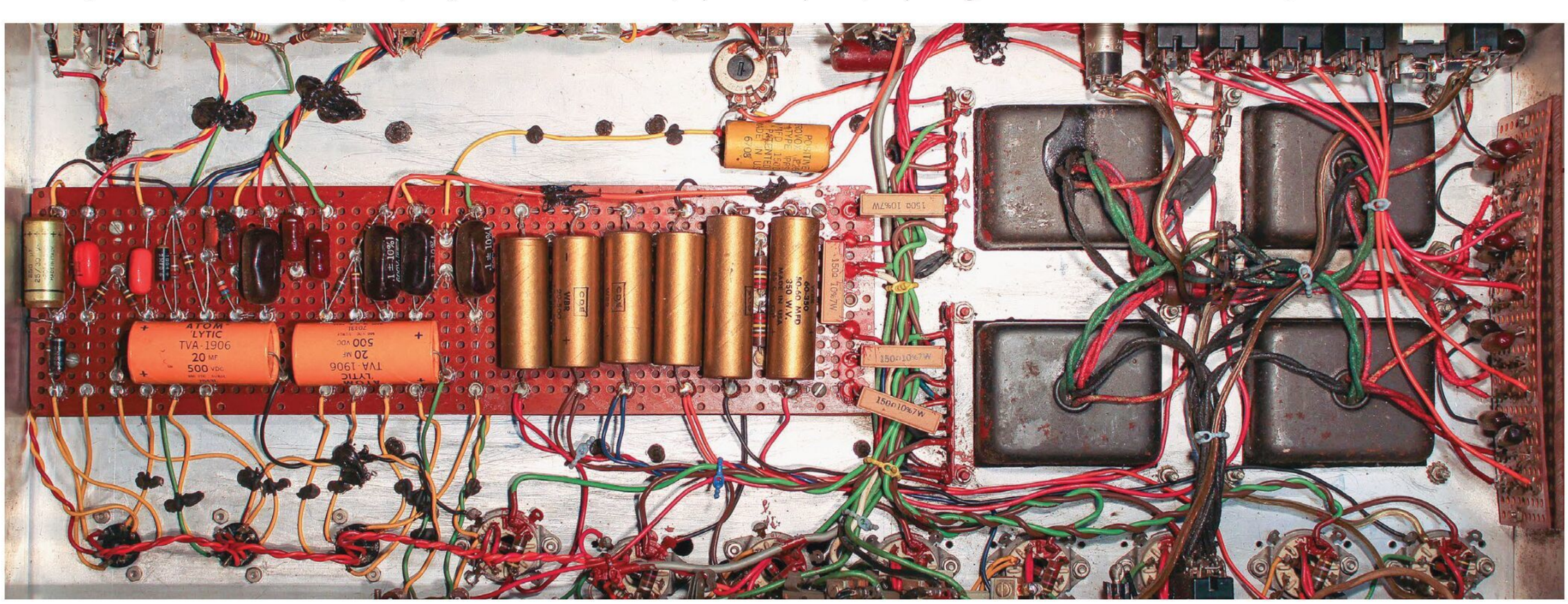
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Four times four equals Special 16. The hulking power and output transformers, with heat-related tarnish on the former.



Cobbling four discrete power and output stages demands a lot of wiring; note Dumble's distinctive rendering of a tweed-Bassman-like preamp stage.

"In the mid '80s, I was in bands and jammed with a lot of local musicians from Gilroy, Morgan Hill, Hollister, Salinas, Monterey and San Jose," said the amp's current owner, California native Michael "Miko" Malinao. "I bought the amp as-is from a local musician for $100 or $150. I can't remember his name, but the power tubes were missing and something had shorted-out, as there is a cluster of burnt wires coming from the transformers. Being an 80-pound beast, I figured it *must* have some wicked power."

Malinao was born in Gilroy and lived there until 2019, when he moved to Oregon. Until then, he'd been a fixture on the regional music scene; he formed the band Mild Storm in the '80s and enjoyed a 21-year run with the popular local outfit.

"When I bought the amp, I had no idea who Howard Alexander Dumble was, or that he had a shop in Santa Cruz," Malinao tells us. "I *did* know who Randall Smith was, thanks to Carlos Santana, and I ordered an '83 Mesa/Boogie Mark IIC combo, which I had upgraded to a C+ by Mike Bendinelli. I'd planned to have the Dumble refurbished, but life happened; I got married, had three kids and a full-time job, plus I was gigging every week. So, it went into my garage and hasn't been fired up since."

Though plenty of stars were knocking on his door, by the early '80s, anything out of Dumble's ODS spectrum was, to some extent, just another custom order built to a local musician's requirements. Given its quadruple-Fender-like appearance, massive wattage, and general austerity, we might deduce this one was built as a bass amp. *But*, mega-watt guitar amps were also all the rage in the early '70s, and appeared the natural way forward for many players; in '83, studio/touring guitarist/solo artist Todd Sharp, now a respected amp maker in his own right, commissioned two 150-watt custom OD models and used them on the road with Rod Stewart and others. Also, Robben Ford has said

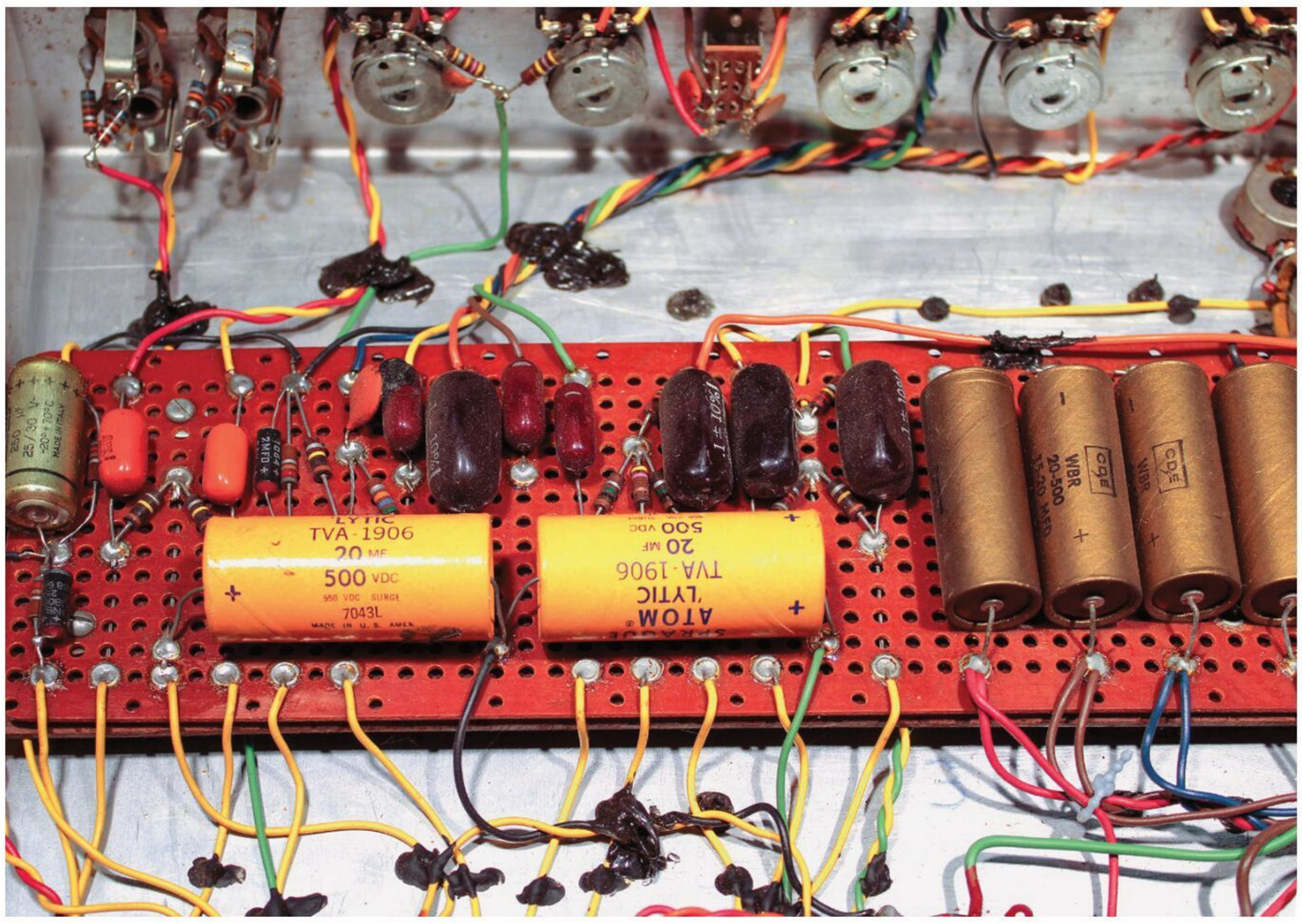
Dumble personally told him the original ODS was inspired by hearing Ford play through a cranked blackface Bassman head and cab in the late '60s. Put the pieces together and this amp makes sense as a Dumble "prequel."

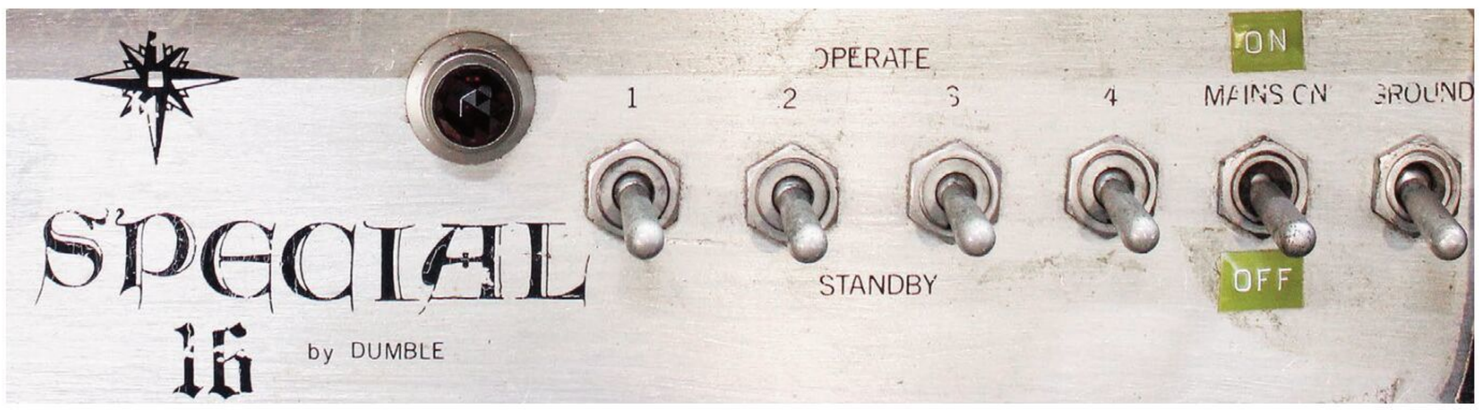
Rather than a four-stage bass amp, a closer look reveals the Special 16 employs certain components specific to Fender's Super Reverb of the day, with four power and output stages loaded into one massive chassis, and a shared preamp in front of them. We have no way of knowing why Dumble named it Special 16, but if that's some kind of sum of the equation 4x4, it makes sense – even more so if you consider attaching four 4x10" cabs to it. The output transformers are all stamped with matching codes; 606004 tells us they were made by Schumacher in the fourth week of 1970, while 022855 tells us each was a 2-ohm OT intended for a Fender Super Reverb. In addition, each is stamped "Fender," not surprising considering Dumble often used certain off-the-shelf Fender parts.

So, does that mean we've got a Super Reverb preamp minus reverb and tremolo in front of this crazy output stage? One might guess so, but a little more digging reveals that's not the case. Yes, the Super Reverb had two independent channels with Treble, Middle, and Bass controls on its second channel, but this is a two-channel amp with *shared* three-knob tone stack, and a look at the circuit reveals it appears to be driven by a cathode-follower stage – as used in the tweed Bassman of 1957-'60, which also had Treble, Bass, and Middle controls. Prior to the EQ, each of two Volume controls taps its own triode gain stage in the shared first preamp tube, as did Fender's tweed amps.

All of this forces us to look at that quad of Super Reverb OTs from a new perspective. Schumacher took over supplying transformers to Fender around 1960, with gradual introduction of new parts happening as existing supplies were used up. The OT that evolved into the 022855 would, in late 1963/early '64, become standard equipment in the Super Reverb (stamped with a different code in the pre-CBS years) and was used on the 4x10" Concert before that. Prior to *that*, though, it was also used on some of the last tweed Bassman combos ever made, into mid 1960.

Ta-da! The Super 16 is a quadruple tweed 5F6A Bassman – *made by Alexander Dumble.* Which is to say, a heavily modified tweed Bassman circuit with a lot of originality, to the extent we can barely call it that. It's something to consider regardless; perhaps *the* seminal guitar amp of all time, rendered anew by the most revered amp maker in history. Modifications the tweed Bassman never had are found in the Bright and Deep switches, though the former merely lifts the bright cap positioned on the 5F6A's potentiometer (and makes it bypassable), while the latter offers a selection between two capacitors that voice the Bass control. The Accent control is Dumble's renaming of the traditional Presence, and rectification is solid-state rather than tube.





Dumble fanatics will recognize the small gobs of epoxy used to anchor the wires (top). Later, Dumble would use the stuff to cover the entire circuit. Perhaps the only time the "Special 16" logo (above) was used, alongside four standby switches.

Built to be very stage-able in regard to function and power, this elaborate monster has four independent Standby switches to engage each of the output segments, and each of the OTs is connected to a dedicated speaker-out. Which is to say, the amp was never intended to pump 200 watts into one or two extension cabs, but 50 watts each into four individual cabs, or perhaps the user's own reduction in 50-watt increments.

Anyone familiar with the insides of a Dumble will recognize the black epoxy goop he used in later years to mask circuits from would-be cloners. Here, though, said goop is used simply to hold wires in place, and doesn't cover anything – making this a rare example of a Dumble circuit left fully on display.

In addition to frying something in one of the power transformers, the heat generated from these four hulking units mounted side by side (with no help from the eight 6L6s arrayed at the back edge of the chassis) appears to have played havoc with their condition. The rust and tarnish on the bell covers indicates their enamel finish had overheated and deteriorated, and we'd bet that caused even more damage to other functional components.

Any contemporary amp tech will tell you the entire thing is kind of… *insane.* Especially coming from the hand of the most revered guitar-amp maker of all time. It's all cleverly put together, but when you consider other ways the end result might have been achieved – fewer transformers, fewer tubes, less heat, less weight, and far fewer wires – it almost forces you to conclude that someone just wanted it this way: "Alexander, build





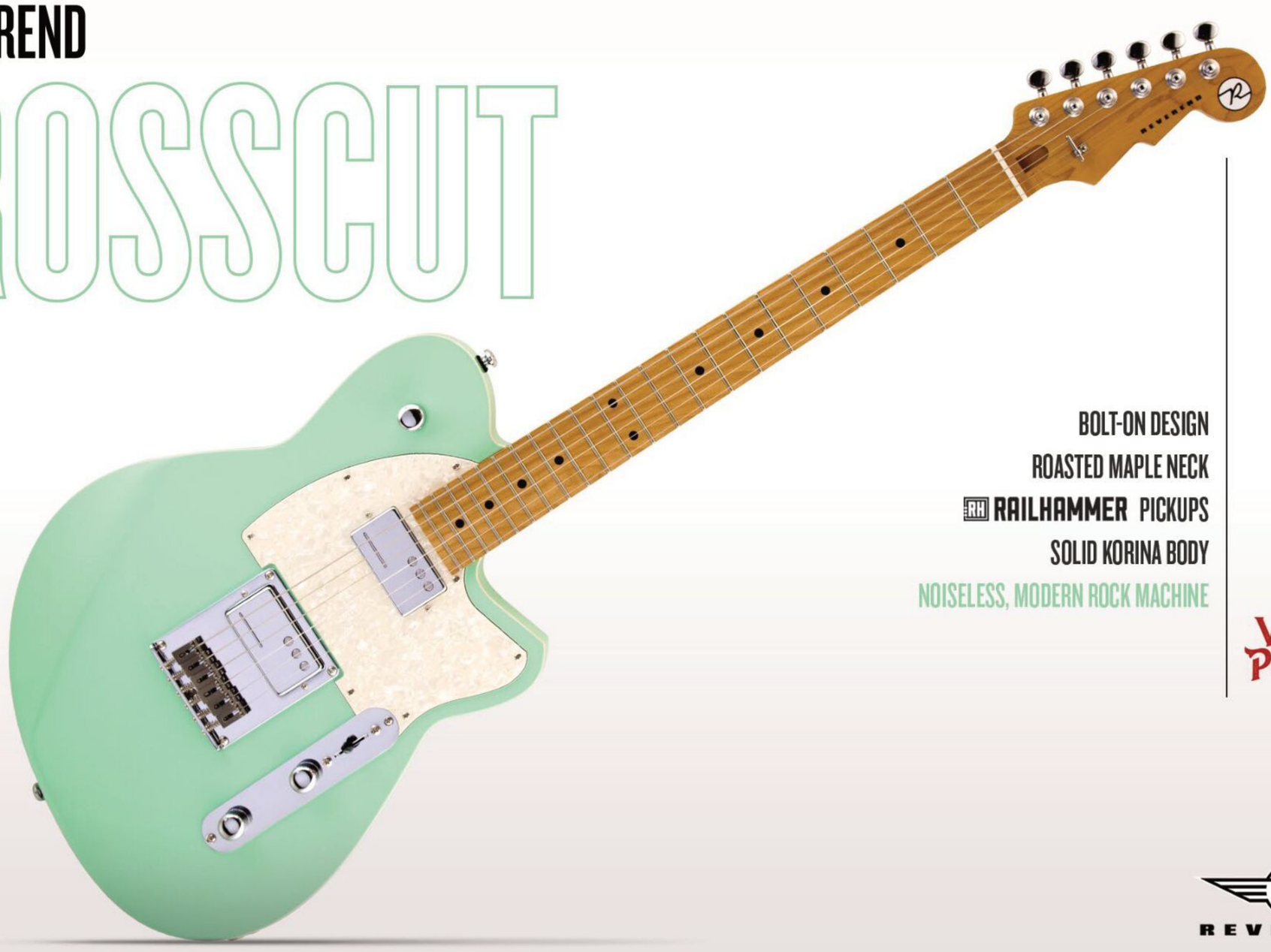
All three preamp tubes (left), above the Special 16's serial number. One of the coded output transformers, with "Fender" stamped near the top.

me four Bassmans in one!" Regardless, Dumble was never one to take the easy road with a circuit, and the beast likely sounded phenomenal. We can speculate, but unless someone with knowledge comes forward, we'll never know how and why it came to be. We'd hoped to get word to Alexander Dumble himself to see if he had any recollection of what inspired this amp and for whom it was made, but his passing the very week this article was being written robbed us of that opportunity. If any reader familiar with the mid-coast California music scene of the early '70s knows something, please get in touch and we'll put a satisfying cap on one of Dumble's most enigmatic creations.

As for Malinao's plans for the amp, much depends on the world's reaction to his find.

"It was only when my friend, John Eblen, mentioned that his friend, Steve Zakel, was having his Bassman featured in *Vintage Guitar* (March '22), that I remembered this amp. I started researching and realized it was a slice of Dumble history, and that someone might provide more information." **VG**

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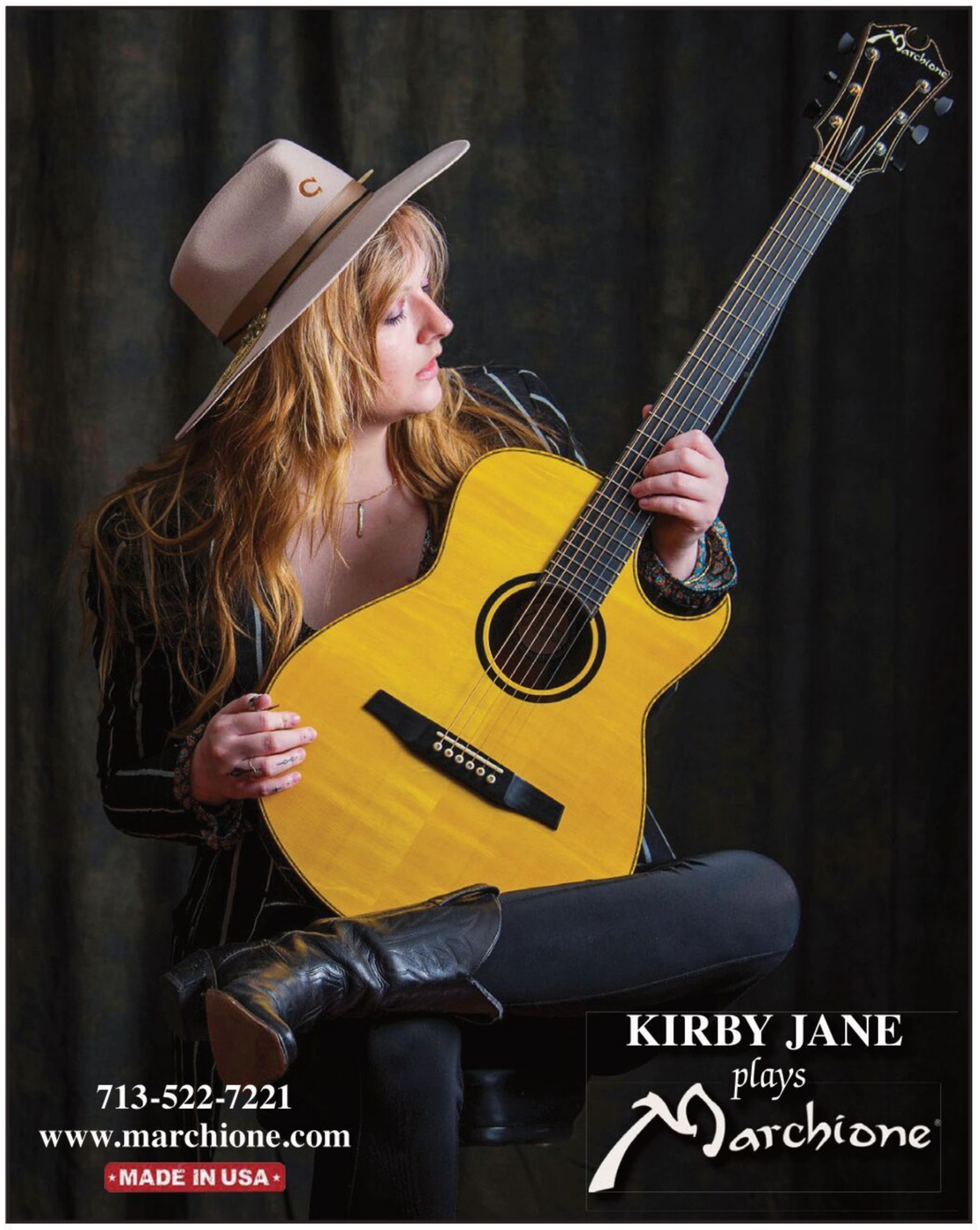
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Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Gil Hembree



1965 Fender Jazz Bass

NEW & UPDATED LISTINGS

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1975	Alamo Twin Speaker Combo Amp	Tube hybrid	$275	$375
1975	Aria Five-String Banjo	Resonator back	$450	$600
1930	Bacon & Day Blue Bell Tenor Banjo		$725	$950
1930	Bacon & Day Silver Bell #1 Tenor Banjo		$1,700	$2,200
1995	Casio DG1		$75	$110
1995	Collings C10	Mahogany, Sitka	$2,700	$3,600
1968	Coral Firefly 2N	Sunburst	$750	$1,025
1967	Danelectro Dane C Series Bass	4-string	$1,000	$1,300
1979	Deering Basic 5-String Banjo	Resonator back	$775	$1,025
1968	Elk Guitar Man EB 105 (Super Reverb) Amp		$300	$425
1934	Epiphone Blackstone	Masterbilt	$875	$1,125
1962	Epiphone Casino (2 Pickups)	Various colors	$5,700	$7,900
2018	Epiphone Johnny A Signature Limited Edition		$900	$1,200
1967	Epiphone Newport EBD Bass		$1,325	$1,800
1998	Fender Collector's Edition Telecaster	1,998 made	$1,150	$1,600
2019	Fender Deluxe Reverb '65 Reissue Amp	22 watts, 1x12, Blackface	$750	$1,000
1965	Fender Jazz Bass	Candy Apple Red	$10,500	$13,500
1998	Fender Jazzmaster '69	Japan	$1,100	$1,400
1991	Fender Montara (California Series)	Black	$400	$525
1981	Fender Mustang	Various colors	$1,200	$1,525
1954	Fender Stratocaster	Very early '54, very rare features	$133,000	$173,000
1972	Fender Stratocaster	Olympic White 3-bolt	$5,300	$7,100
1986	Fender '60s Stratocaster/ Classic Series '60s	MIJ	$700	$925
1959	Fender Telecaster	Sunburst, maple	$20,200	$26,800
2020	Fender American Professional II Telecaster	Alder, SS	$900	$1,150
1965	Fender Vibrolux Reverb Amp	Blackface	$2,850	$3,800
1997	G & L ASAT Classic	3-bolt neck	$825	$1,100
1964	Gibson Firebird III	Sunburst, reverse	$8,500	$11,400
1957	Gibson GA-85 Bass Reflex Amp	25 watts, 1x12	$1,175	$1,575
2014	Gibson J-29 Rosewood		$1,400	$1,800
2007	Gibson L-4 CES	Solid mahogany	$2,700	$3,700
1980	Gibson Les Paul Recording	Black, Natural, Sunburst	$2,400	$3,200
1984	Gibson Les Paul Standard	Black, Natural, Wine	$2,400	$3,100
2007	Gibson Les Paul Standard Plus	Figured maple	$2,000	$2,625
2005	Gibson Les Paul Studio Faded	Satin finish	$700	$925
1957	Gibson Les Paul TV	Single-cut	$10,800	$14,000
1999	Gibson Working Man J-45 (J-45)	Gloss top satin sides back	$1,025	$1,325
1980	Goya Banjo/ Goya-Martin	5-String (student) Banjo	$275	$350
1980	Gretsch BST 1000 Beast	1 pickup	$600	$800
1962	Gretsch Country Club	Natural	$3,000	$4,000
2010	Gretsch Reverend Horton Heat (6120RHH)		$1,900	$2,500
1956	Guild CA-100 Capri	Acoustic archtop	$1,700	$2,200



Kennard Machol with a recent Saga Gitane.

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
2008	Guild GAD Series (various models)		$375	$850
1967	Hagstrom Concord II Deluxe Bass		$1,350	$1,800
1955	Harmony Grand Concert H165		$325	$425
1965	Harmony H1270 12-String Flat Top		$450	$600
1999	Hofner '62 Model 500/1 Beatle Bass reissue		$1,500	$2,050
1969	Hofner G5000/1 Super Beatle (G500/1)	Right hand	$1,500	$2,050
1967	Kingston Cat P-1 Amp		$60	$85
1926	Ludwig Bellevue Tenor Banjo		$600	$800
1995	Marshall Model 1710 Bass Cab	1x15	$275	$360
1970	Marshall Model 1930 Popular Combo Amp	10 watts, 1x12	$1,900	$2,450
1966	Martin D-28		$5,700	$7,600
2021	Martin D-35 Standard		$2,300	$3,000
1987	Martin D-45		$5,600	$7,300
1972	Microfrets Signature Bass		$1,400	$1,900
1956	National Model 1124 Avalon	Sunburst	$1,150	$1,500
1935	Oahu Style 52K		$325	$425
1935	Old Kraftsman Archtops (various)	17" Stauffer-style	$365	$475
1954	Orpheum Auditorium Archtop 835 & 837		$325	$425
1984	Orville by Gibson Dove	Dove	$1,600	$2,100
1968	Ovation Balladeer Artist 1121	Early production	$525	$675
1997	Peavey Axcelerator/AX		$400	$525
1997	Peavey Detonator AX		$210	$275
1985	Peavey Mega Bass Amp		$190	$250
1985	Peavey Special 112 Amp		$165	$215
2004	Ramirez AE Estudio		$1,525	$2,050
1980	Rickenbacker Model 320		$2,150	$2,800
1963	Rickenbacker Model 4001 Bass	Fireglo	$7,800	$10,500
1996	Roland Blues Cube BC60 3x10 Amp		$255	$327
1978	Sho-Bud Pro 1 Steel	Square front	$1,925	$2,500
1948	Silvertone Model 1300 Amp		$450	$600
1939	Stromberg Master 300	2 braces, Natural, non-cut	$5,050	$10,300
1955	Supro Belmont	Black or white No-Mar	$1,025	$1,325
1962	Supro Kingston		$850	$1,150
2020	Supro Silverwood		$750	$1,000
1999	Tacoma JR-50CE4 Jumbo Koa		$850	$1,150
2014	Taylor 916ce		$2,700	$3,550
1985	Tokai ATE 52		$675	$900
1970	Traynor YBA1 Bass Master Amp Head	45 watts	$600	$800
1935	Vega C-20	Mahogany	$800	$1,050
1960	Wandre Electric Guitar (common version models)		$1,050	$3,100
2016	Waterloo WS-S Deluxe	Slotted headstock	$1,725	$2,275

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The following guitar dealers take part in the *Vintage Guitar* price survey. Their input is one of the research tools used by *Vintage Guitar*.

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Gibson Les Paul Jr '58, Cherry, exc cond, $8950
Fender CS Clapton Journeyman Strat, exc++, $3500
Fender CS Thinline Tele Relic, '10, exc++, $3500
Anderson Hollow T Classic '12, Red, exc cond, $2250
Suhr Classic '14, Surf Green exc+, $2395
Artinger Venetian Hollow '06, exc cond, $3500
National Resolectric, '05, sbst, exc++, $2850

VINTAGE/USED ACOUSTIC

Ray Kraut OM 2011, Koa back & sides, $11,500
James White '43 Hauser Model, '11, exc, $4500
Paul Jacobson '88, #57 Brazilian, exc, $7950
Dobro/Regal Model 25R '30's vgd cond, $1850
Bourgeois Soloist '03, Brazilian RW, $3500 as-is

ARCHTOPS

Gibson L-5 Premiere '47, Sbst, exc cond, $12,500
Gibson Style U Harp Guitar '19, exc cond, $7850
Stromberg G-3 '32, Sunburst, exc. cond, $7500

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MG 4.0XP, Engelmann/Macassar Ebony, new $11,900
MG 4.0XP '16, Brazilian/Sitka, exc++ cond, $11,500
Carbon Sable new, $3199 / Carbon Touring new, $2699

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Collings MF '11, sbst, p/g, near mint, $4500
Collings MT '18 blonde, gloss top, near mint, $2995
Vega Pete Seeger Long Neck, '68, exc cond, $2795
Stiver A Model '82, good cond, $1695
Martin Style 1-T Tenor Ukulele, '50's exc cond, $1250
Hilo Model 625, very good cond, $950
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SPACEY HANG TEN

Joe Satriani's *Surfing With The Alien*

By Oscar Jordan

The '80s were teeming with music ranging from pop-metal to new wave, thrash metal, blues revivals, and the New Romantic movement. Mid-decade, an instrumental rock-guitar album improbably rode the tide.

Joe Satriani was a road warrior, studio player, and guitar teacher who schooled students like Alex Skolnick, Charlie Hunter, Kirk Hammett, and Steve Vai. His 1986 album *Not Of This Earth* whet his ambition, but he was determined to go bigger and better using melody, imagination, and inspiration.

"I spent a year playing with the Greg Kihn Band," recalled Satriani. "In hotel rooms across the country, I wrote what would become *Surfing With The Alien*. I was hoping Relativity Records, who had just signed me to a P&D (pressing and distribution) deal for *Not Of This Earth*, would sign me to do albums they would pay for; my first album, in 1984, was funded by me. Then I met Barry Kobrin, president of Relativity, and did a showcase at the China Club, in Manhattan, with Danny Gottlieb on drums and Mark Egan on bass – two guys who should have never played with me (laughs). I'm such a rocker, and those guys are elegant jazz musicians. But they were great, and in an afternoon they learned 10 songs including "Satch Boogie," which was new and hadn't been recorded. We set up in the corner of a little basement club and it was a make-or-break moment.

"I didn't look right – not like my friend, Steve Vai, the rock god (laughs)! I had no pedigree, and they couldn't figure me out. I remember playing the set, and they were all excited. Barry said, 'What do you want to do?' I said, 'I want to celebrate everything I like about electric guitar. It's going to be Chuck Berry, Hendrix, everybody. I'm going to let my influences be obvious. Some of the music is happy, so you better be ready for that.'" (laughs)

"Satch Boogie" led to Satriani being signed, and with the help of producer John Cuniberti, they focused on making an upbeat guitar record, doing everything Satriani's session clients never needed or asked for. Cuniberti wanted the record to sound beautiful, but its making was fraught with misfortune.

"We had to master it twice and re-mix half of it because the studio screwed up the stereo buss," said Satriani. "The label didn't give me enough money to do that, so there was a lot of turmoil. I wound up finishing the album by trading guitar services to Sandy Pearlman so he could finish *Imaginos* for Blue Öyster Cult. I'd do that from midnight until eight in the morning. Next day,

Joe Satriani: Ebet Roberts, courtesy of J. Satriani/Sony-BMG.

I'd show up and he'd give me eight hours at Hyde Street Studios. The label wound up giving us $13,000, and we burned through it. In the end, it cost $29,000 of their money, and another $10,000 or $15,000 I collected in credit from Sandy and the owner of Hyde Street."

While crafting the whole of *Surfing with the Alien* was stressful, recording "Satch Boogie" went quickly.

"I remember breezing through the tracks," Satriani recalled. "John came up with the idea of using a shotgun mic for the main riff, then switching to a close mic for the high-energy boogie solo. I remember Jeff Campitelli coming in and tearing it up on drums, which were done last."

Satriani's guitar was one he assembled in 1978 with a maple Boogie body, ESP neck, and small-fretted ebony board.

"Leo Knapp or Gary Brawer put together one of the pickguards for me," Satriani remembered. "I had three – one with two Seymour Duncan humbuckers, another had DiMarzio single-coils, and one had Strat single-coils."

Then there was his Kramer Pacer.

"It was a beautiful piece of crap that I bought at a Guitar Center midnight madness sale for



$500 (laughs). It had a white body with Schaller chrome hardware and a neck with gold hardware. It also had the first style of Floyd Rose, without mini-tuners. The thing was just awful; not only would it never stay in tune, but the wood was so soft that the bridge posts carved-out their holes, and the whole thing would pop right out. All the whammy bar stuff on *Surfing* was done on that guitar.

"I bought another crappy Pacer that was so bad and trebly that I specifically used it for the ching-ching parts on "Ice 9" (laughs). I'd record the section where I needed humbuckers, then when I needed a Strat sound, I'd install the other pickguard. That's how I got around my financial situation."

Inspired by the technology of the time and not having the budget to record drums, Satriani tracked using an Oberheim drum machine, and the parts were re-done during mixing by Bongo Bob Smith on an E-mu Systems SP-12, which added a unique Machine-like quality Satriani and Cuniberti stuck with even after recording real drums. "Satch Boogie" has the album's only live drum track.

"It was mainly just John and I in the studio, bringing in Jeff and Bongo to do certain things," said Satriani. "John and I were two very different people who met and made sure we captured the beautiful moments, melodic arrangements, and things that made sense."

Next month, read our review of Joe Satriani's new album, *The Elephants of Mars*, and an interview discussing it.

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'59 Sunburst/Slab Rose neck Early '59 9Hole pickguard.
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'59 Red/Slab Rose neck Original custom color, 100% original.
'59 Blond/Slab Rose neck "Mint" condition, Perfect collector's piece
'60 Sunburst/Slab Rose neck We have 2 in stock.
'61 Black/Slab Rose neck 100% original. Super rare!!
'61 Blond "Tortoise Shell Pickguard"/Slab Rose neck
'62 Olympic White/Slab Rose neck 100% original, Amazing flamed neck!!
'62 Olympic White/Slab Rose neck 100% original, in Near mint condition.
'63 Candy Apple Red 100% original
'64 Sunburst (Spaghetti logo) Perfect collector's piece!!
'65 Dakota Red (Transition logo) 100% original in Near Mint!!
'65 Olympic White Only refret and changed nut, Mint-Green pickguard.
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'65 Ice Blue Metallic 100% original in Near Mint condition
'66 Sunburst We have 7 in stock
'67 Sunburst "Lefty & Hardtail" 100% original, Near Mint condition.
'67 Sonic Blue 100% original in Near Mint condition
'67 Charcoal Frost Metallic 100% original in Near Mint condition
'68 Sunburst 100% original, "Brand-New" condition.
'69 Blond/Rose neck 100% original, Amazing tone!!
'69 Olympic White/Rose neck 100% original Clean!!
'69 Olympic White/Rose neck 100% original Clean!!
'70 Candy Apple Red/Rose neck 100% original.
'70 Olympic White/Rose neck
'70 Sunburst/Rose neck 100%original in Excellent condition
'71 Sunburst/Rose neck 100%original in Excellent condition
'71 Sunburst "Lefty" Maple Cap neck
'71 Sunburst "Lefty" 4Bolt, 1-Piece Maple neck
'71 Lake Placid Blue/Rose neck 100% original!!
'73 Lake Placid Blue "Lefty"/Rose neck 100% original in Mint condition,
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Earl Hooker in 1968, with his Gibson EDS-1275.

EARL HOOKER

Unsung Blues-Guitar Legend

By Wolf Marshall

Chicago, 1959. Ask any blues musician where to go, and the answer was likely, "Wherever Earl Hooker is playing."

Earl was the blues-guitarist's guitarist, a commanding presence on the city's scene who captivated countless listeners, but remained an enigma even though his skill reduced B.B. King to tears. His instrumentals rival Freddie King's ditties and he affected players across the spectrum – the short list includes George Harrison, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, and anyone else purveying standard-tuned slide guitar. Listening to *Two Bugs and a Roach* or his work as side man leaves the impression one has heard a dozen players in his spot. Maybe his lack of a formula is one reason he didn't ignite the greater public.

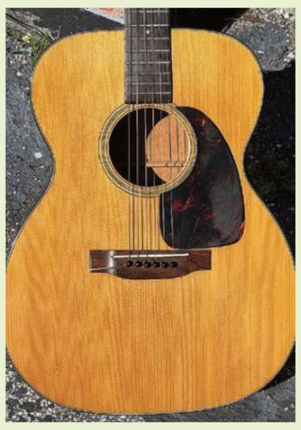
Earl Zebedee Hooker was born January 15, 1930, in Clarksdale, Mississippi, home of the Delta blues, and moved to Chicago with his parents as a toddler. His family was musical – father played harmonica, guitar and sang, mother sang, sister, Earlene, played organ and sang. The family circle also included cousins John Lee Hooker and vocalist Joe Hinton ("Funny How Time Slips Away"). By age 12, Earl had taught himself fundamentals on a Sears acoustic and was soon performing on street corners with Bo Diddley. Initially drawn to jump blues and T-Bone Walker's jazz/swing sounds, he learned slide guitar from Robert Nighthawk, with whom he toured the South in the mid '40s, making stops in Helena, Arkansas, where he was heard on radio's "King Biscuit Time." After a tour with Ike Turner, Earl relocated to Memphis in '49 and became part of the Beale Street crew that included B.B. King, Johnny Ace, and Bobby Blue Bland. The paragon of an itinerate bluesman, he formed his own band, began touring, and developed a regional reputation. After impressing a talent scout in Bradenton, Florida, he made his debut recording, "Race Track" on King, then recorded for numerous labels in the '50s (including "The Hucklebuck" for Sun). He became a valued sideman with Junior Wells, Bobby Bland, Sonny Boy Williamson, and many others, appearing prominently on Williamson's "Baby, Please Don't Go." Plagued by tuberculosis, he recorded few vocals after 1953's "Black Angel Blues," but became admired for his instrumental prowess.

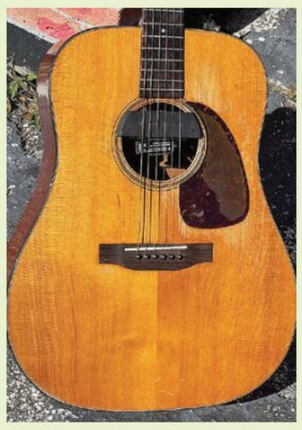
In '56, Earl returned to Chicago to play clubs and continued touring. From '59 to '63, he was prolific as house guitarist for the Chief, Mel-Lon, and Age labels, recording more than 40 albums with Wells, Magic

Earl Hooker: Chris Strachwitz, courtesy of the Arhoolie Foundation.

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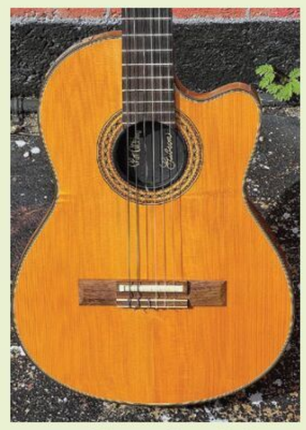
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1951 Martin 000-18 a super clean all original.


1955 Martin D-18 an affordable great player.


1962 Martin 000-18 very clean w/great tone.


1972 Martin D-28S cool 12-Fret its Fabulous.

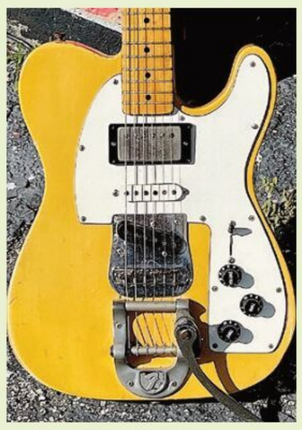

1982 Gibson Chet Atkins CE 12 more available.


1959 Fender Jazzmaster 1st full year produced.

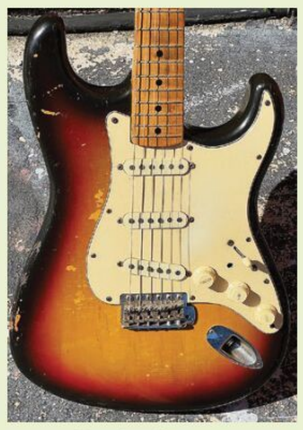

1959 Fender Stratocaster clean & all original.


1962 Fender Stratocaster Refin & affordable.


1966 Fender Telecaster a cool Maple Cap.


1968 Fender Telecaster added PAF & Strat pu.

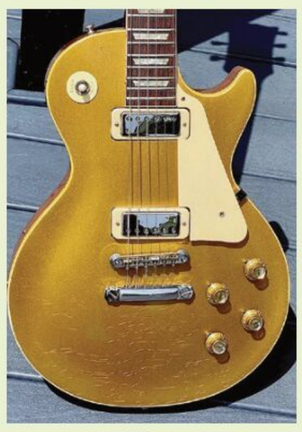

1968 Fender Telecaster Thinline added PAF.

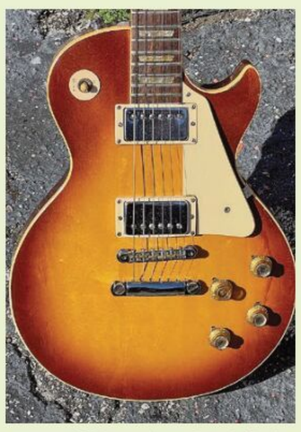

1971 Fender Stratocaster 4-bolt Maple neck.

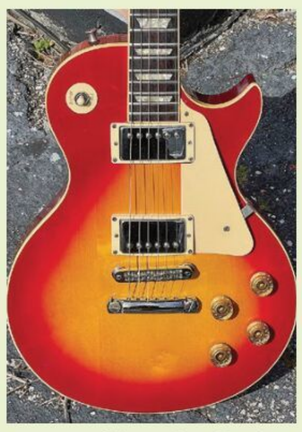

1972 Fender Stratocaster 4-Bolt R'wood neck.


1959 Gibson Les Paul TV Special affordable.

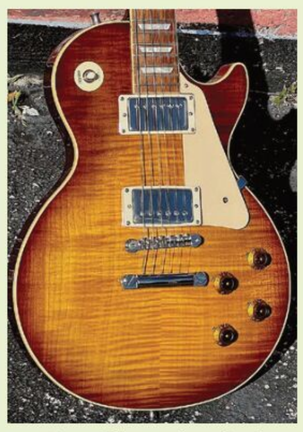

1961 Gibson Les Paul SG TV Special RARE.


1970 Gibson Les Paul Deluxe clean Gold Top.

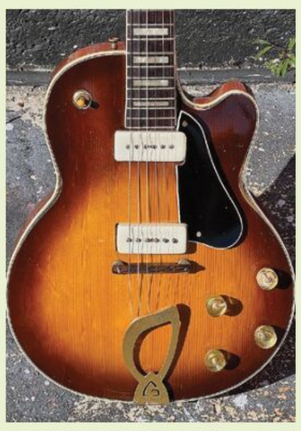

1973 Gibson Les Paul Std. early clean example.


1981 Gibson Les Paul Std. a very tidy original.

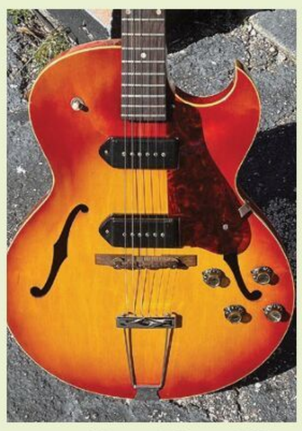

1984 Gibson Les Paul Custom factory Kahler.

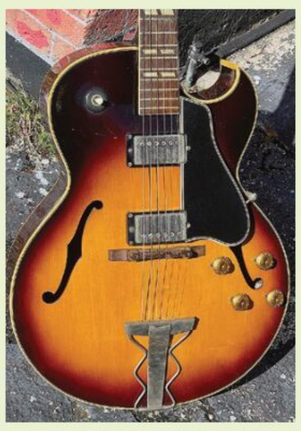

1988 Gibson Les Paul Std. '59 Reissue RARE.

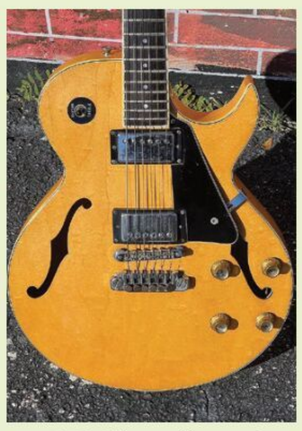

1985 PRS Standard 24 1st year & Clean # 304.


1953 Guild M-75 Aristocrat super clean original.


1959 Gibson ES-330TD insane Minty original.

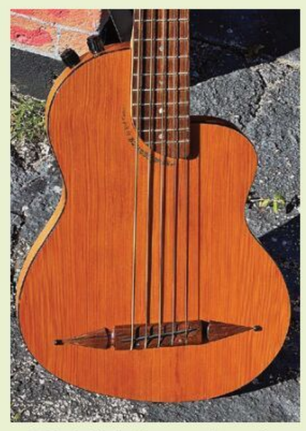

1960 Gibson ES-125TCD 1st year & very Minty.

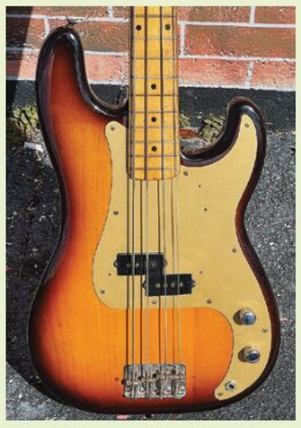

1961 Gibson ES-175D affordable great player.


1979 Gibson Howard Roberts Fusion Prototype


2005 Rick Turner Lyndsey Buckingham Model 1


1996 Rick Turner Renaissance RS6 Std.Fabulous.


2000 Rick Turner Renaissance RS5 5 String Bass.


1957 Fender Precision Bass Refin w/original parts.

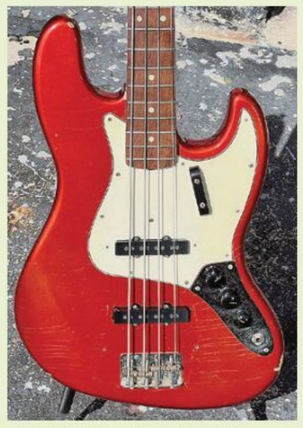

1959 Fender Precision Bass cool original Player.


1959 Fender Precision Bass rare 100% original.


1960 Fender Jazz Bass all original "Stack Knob".


1962 Fender Jazz Bass beat sweet "Stack Knob".


1963 Fender Jazz Bass early veneer 3-knobber.


1965 Fender Jazz Bass original Candy Apple Red.


1968 Fender Telecaster Paisley Bass rare & insane.


1976 Music Man Stingray Bass 1st year & desirable.


1980 Kramer DMZ 6000 Bass Top Line really fancy.


1983 Fender Precision Elite II Bass 10 more available.


1983 Fender Precision Walnut Elite II Bass very Rare.

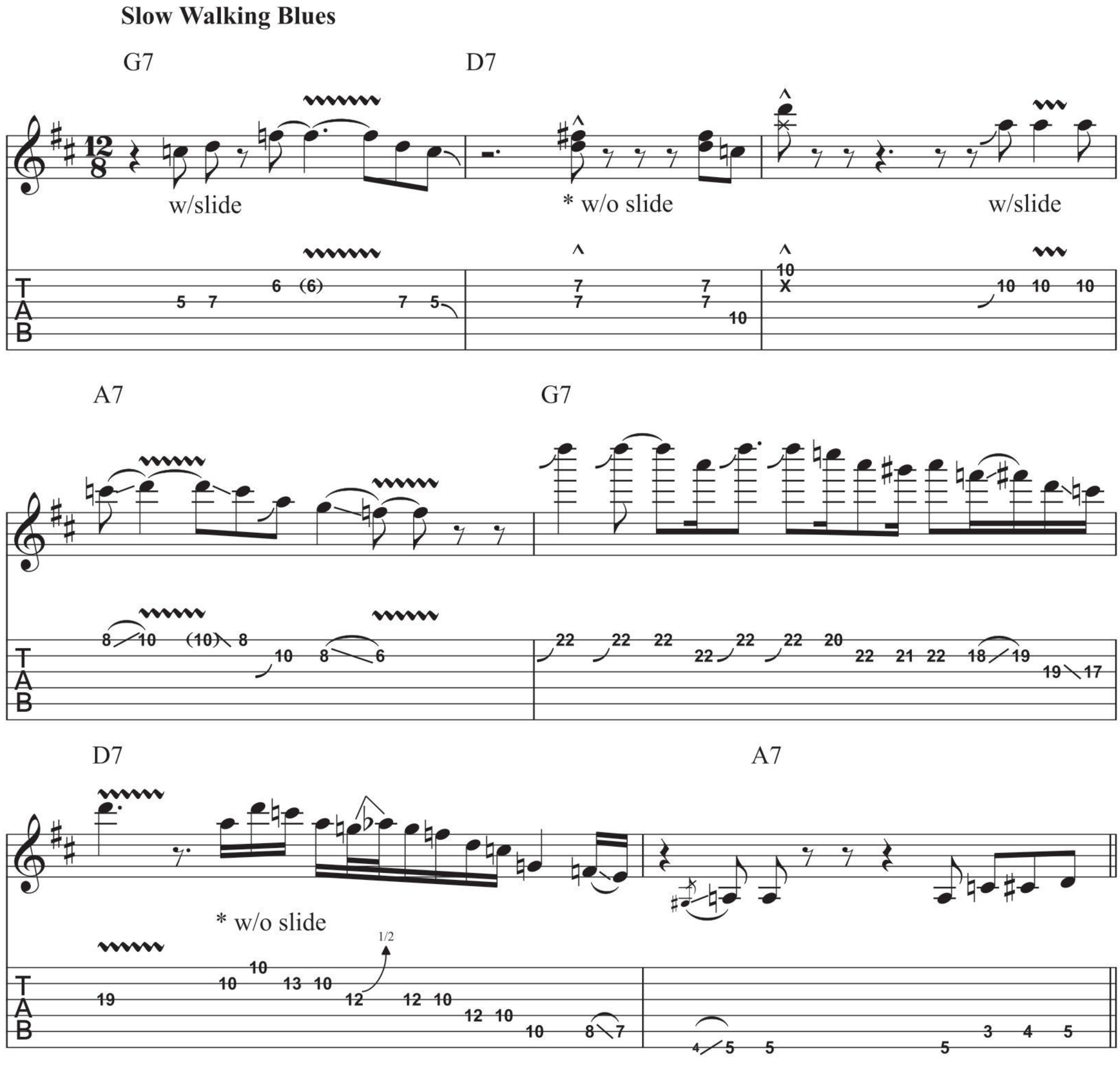

1996 Curbow Retro 5-string Fretless super light & cool.


1997 Conklin Sidewinder 7-string Bass its Ridiculous.


1999 Rick Turner Electroline Bass we have 3 in stock.


2005 Roscoe SKB Custom 7-String Bass 2 in stock.

Sam, A.C. Reed, "Big Moose" Walker, Jackie Brenston, and many others; his playing featured prominently on classics like "Messin' with The Kid" and "It Hurts Me Too." His own output consisted of important instrumentals like "Calling All Blues," "Blues in D Natural," and "Blue Guitar." The latter, cut in '61 while the band was rehearsing, sold surprisingly well for an impromptu instrumental and became a signature piece. Leonard Chess exploited Hooker's cachet in '62, when he struck an arrangement with London to overdub Muddy Waters' vocals (lyrics by Willie Dixon) on the track, renamed "You Shook Me." Chess then hired Earl to record other instrumentals for Waters using a similar formula and found they sold better than Muddy's earlier releases. "You Need Love" ("Whole Lotta Love"), and "You Shook Me" were adapted by Led Zeppelin on it first two albums. From '64 into '67, he recorded for Cuca and released the appropriately titled *Genius of Earl Hooker*, a landmark instrumental opus that contained the prototype-funk ode to tuberculosis, "Two Bugs in a Rug." He was hospitalized in '67/'68 then, against doctors' orders, formed a band with vocalist Andrew Odom, resumed performing and touring, and even upped the ante with *Two Bugs and a Roach*.



Earl's command of alternating slide and standard phrases and the range of the instrument are epitomized in this example from "Blue Guitar." Note the continued use of contrasting lines in measures 1-4, expanded with chord punches in 2-3 and very effective use of space. The wailing slide line in 5 is a climactic phrase in the high register that builds on the minor-pentatonic sound with functional half steps. It's answered in the middle register by a blues-scale fingered phrase that ends the chorus on a decisive note before finally dropping into the low register for closure. Check out the position changes along the way and the traditional blues cadence lick in 6-7.

Hooker was very productive in '69 (his final year), reuniting with Junior Wells for a concert series that included Chicago's Kinetic Playground. He also recorded *Sweet Black Angel* using Ike Turner's arrangements, and guested with cousin John Lee Hooker on *If You Miss 'Im... I Got 'Im*. For Bluesway, he recorded six more albums with Charles Brown, Jimmy Witherspoon, Brownie McGhee & Sonny Terry, Andrew Odom, "Big Moose" Walker, and his own date as leader, *Don't Have to Worry*. The latter is a masterpiece with consistent performances and a sympathetic band that included second guitarist Paul Asbell. He appeared at the Fillmore and Matrix, recorded *Hooker and Steve*, his ode to Wes Montgomery and Jimmy Smith, and retuned to Chicago in August to participate in the Chicago Blues Festival.

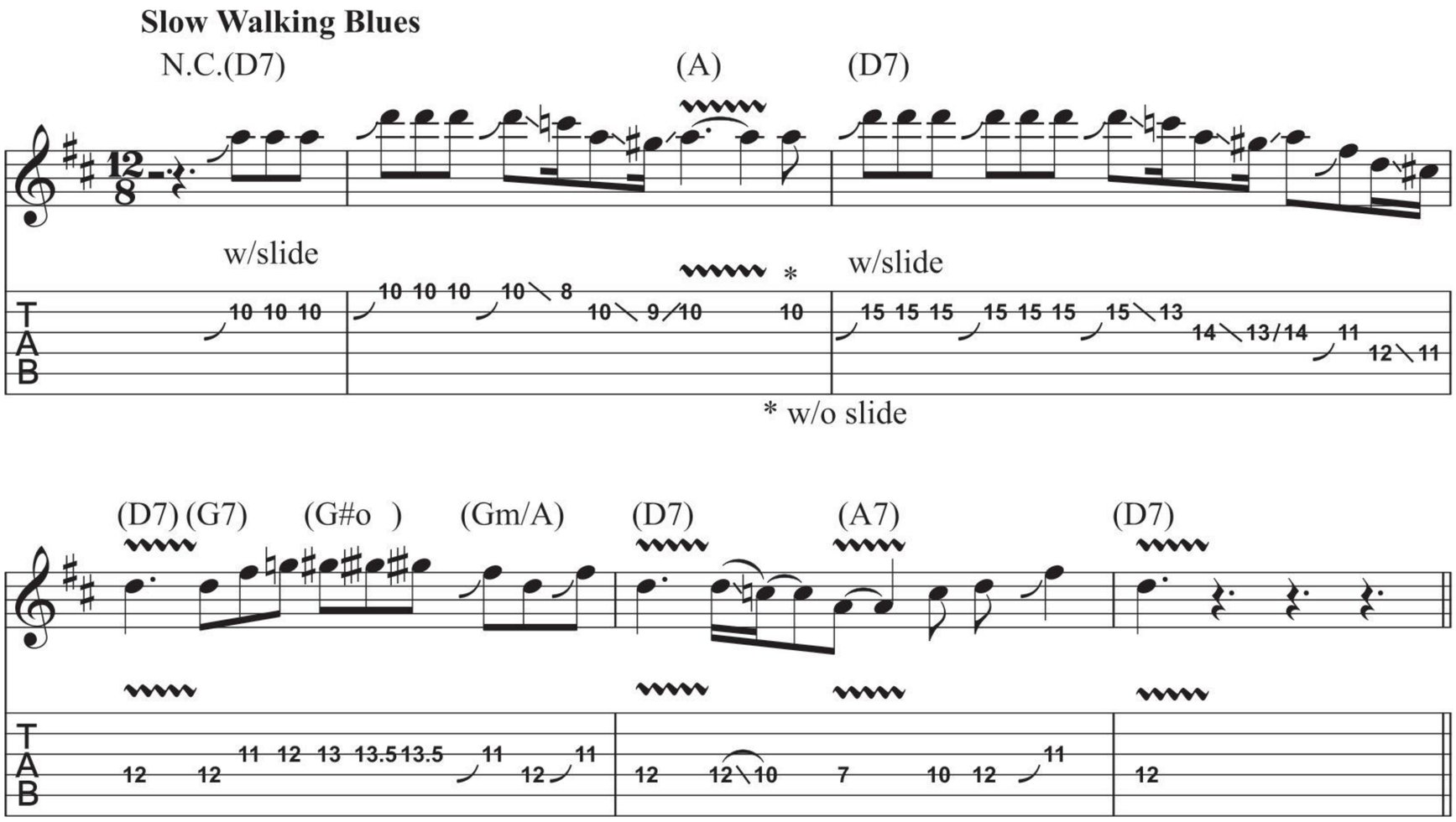
Less than a year later, following a successful tour of Europe in October, he was just 40 years old when he succumbed to TB on April 21, 1970. Respected by peers and adored by fans, he remains unheralded in blues history, though he has influenced countless players.

INFLUENCES

Hooker's primary influences were Robert Nighthawk and T-Bone Walker; he learned slide from the former, and modern electric blues (including showmanship) from Walker.

STYLE

Hooker explored more of the music spectrum than any Chicago blues guitarist, and arguably more than any blues guitarist, period, and was legendary for his mastery of numerous styles. These divergent aspects are memorialized in backstage renditions of "Walking the Floor" and "Rocket 88" as well as electric blues performances in footage from his '69 European tour.



Earl's reworking of a classic country-blues lick is immortalized in the instrumental "Blue Guitar," where his intro showcases the transformation of a famed Tampa Red line (likely played on a National resonator) into a haunting electric-guitar melody that affected Muddy Waters and, ultimately, Led Zeppelin. It's highlighted by Earl's singing standard-tuned slide and demonstrates his use of pure melody in the form of decorated D minor pentatonic and blues-scale lines in contrast to the triadic chord-tuned norms of earlier rural bottleneck styles. Note the use of his vocalesque vibrato and purposeful chromaticism throughout, particularly in the leading-tone effect of half-step motion (A-G#-A and D-C#-D) in measures 2-3 and the microtonal slide melody in 4. This was the basis for "You Shook Me," covered by Zep and countless blues and rock bands.

It's instructive to break his style into three categories – standard blues guitar, slide guitar, and everything else. Among standard blues players, his approach and technique are commensurate with the Kings, Buddy Guy, and Otis Rush. He's equally fluent with the genre's pentatonic/blues-scale vocabulary, single-note melodies, triplet-based phrasing, and idiomatic string bending established by T-Bone Walker, but reveals greater diversity in his application of country, jazz, rock and roll, and other seemingly incongruent elements. He is acknowledged as the "most immaculate" Chicago blues guitarist, which not a denigration of his colleagues; B.B. called him "the best of the modern blues guitarists." "Immaculate" succinctly describes his controlled playing at all tempos, intricate solo lines (check out his quick-picked flurries in "Galloping Horses a Lazy Mule"), well-placed fills, and clean, tuneful slide playing. It's equally appropriate in describing his song-oriented riffs and rhythm-guitar style, elements personified in his superb backing work with Junior Wells, and on recordings as leader.

Earl was concerned with dynamics and contrast in his playing. A typical Hooker solo would find him combining and contrasting tonal shadings in dialoguing phrases, exploiting extreme changes of timbre, either through alternating pickup selection, playing near the bridge, working the guitar's Tone control, or all of the above. Earl often blended these dynamic/timbral changes with changes in volume, attitude, vibrato, and articulation within the same line or stated as call-and-response phrases, as in "End of the Blues" and "Something You Ate."

He sidestepped the confines of playing in the vein of T-Bone Walker and B.B. King. In addition to his fretted blues style, he developed an uncommon standard-tuned slide approach based on his experience with Robert Nighthawk that deviated markedly from chord-tuned norms established by Elmore James and rural blues artists. Hooker authority Billy Flynn verified he wore a small metal tube on his left pinky, leaving the remaining fingers free for fretted licks and chording. He used the slide as a true melody-conscious voice, as in "Blue Guitar." In many tracks, he exhibited skill at alternating slide and fretted lines in solos and fills as in "New Sweet Black Angel." He sometimes used the slide above the pickups to create stratospheric effects, as in "Nothing But Good," like Duane Allman's lines in "Layla." In fact, modern rock owes much to Earl's slide juju. Consider the influence on Page's bottlenecking in "You Shook Me." Moreover, Beck was inspired by his slide work, and used wah and slide during "IAin't Superstitious," while Harrison's style recalls the Hooker melodic mystique of "Tanya."

In the everything-else category, he was a true fusion artist, reconciling hillbilly, swing, Hawaiian, country, pop, boogie woogie, funk, soul jazz, rock and roll and nascent psychedelia with electric blues guitar in its modern form, which he was partly responsible for developing. "Off the Hook" and "Hot and Heavy" hint at soul-jazz leanings while "Galloping Horses a Lazy Mule" features a swing-jazz chording episode in the form of chromatic 9th chords, that presaged and likely influenced "Jeff's Boogie." Earl showcased Hawaiian and pop sounds on "Bertha," acknowledging slide's early slack-key roots. His percussive muted country riffs on "Galloping Horses a Lazy Mule" come off like a more-animated Luther Perkins (Johnny Cash) while "Walking the Floor" and "Guitar Rag" are the closest any modern blues guitarist has gotten to authentic country/western or Western swing. Funk and soul elements are highlighted in "Hooker Special" and "Hold On, I'm Coming" (rendered on 12-string slide). Ethnic-tinged sounds are mingled with blues and R&B in "Apache War Dance." "Bright Sounds" channels the mood and B3 colors of "Green Onions." Not ambivalent about stretching the blues, he incorporated steel-guitar instrumentation on *Two Bugs and a Roach*. Unlike many of his forebears and contemporaries, he exploited the full tonal range of the electric guitar and reached beyond traditional blues to incorporate electric 12-string and atypical effects like spring-reverb on "Calling All Blues" and rockabilly slap echo on "Universal Rock."

18+

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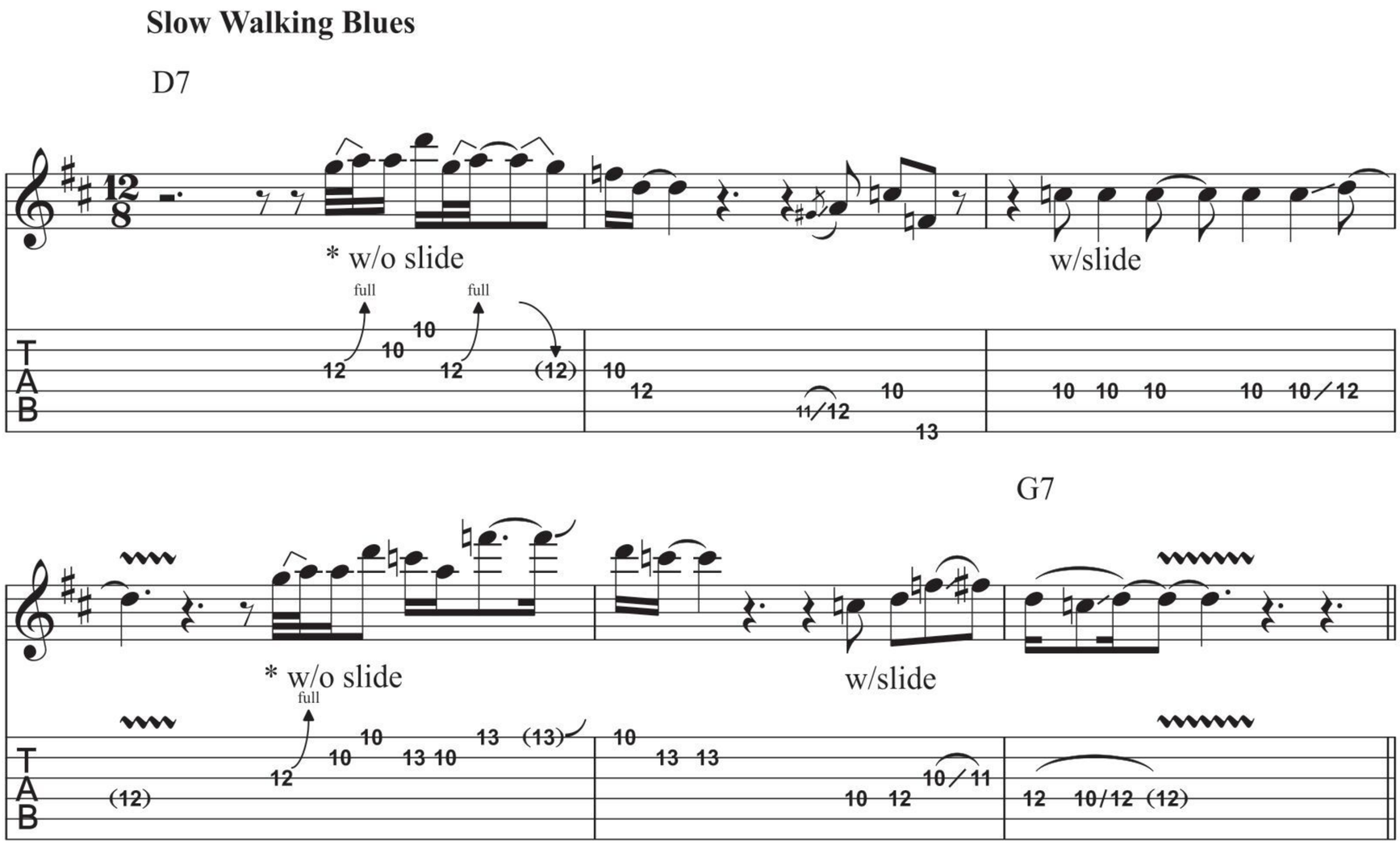
In the late '60s, Hooker was the most successful of mainstream Chicago blues guitarists to exploit wah in his playing. The pedal was not a gimmick or sound effect for him, but a natural outgrowth, as he had experimented with rapid motion of the Tone pot for similar effects years earlier. His slide-wah is exemplified in "Wah Blues," "Earl Hooker Blues," and "You Don't Want Me," which demonstrate his personal application as a tool for blues phrasing.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

Genius Of Earl Hooker, *Blue Guitar*, and *Two Bugs and a Roach* are essential. *Simply The Best* gathers tracks from Chess, Blue Thumb, and Bluesway sessions.

ESSENTIAL VIEWING

Highly recommended are "Earl's Boogie" "Off the Hook," and footage from the American Blues Festival (Europe, 1969).



Hooker was the undisputed master of combining and alternating standard fingered notes and slide technique. This passage from "Blue Guitar" is a striking case in point. Note the familiar flurries and string bends (without slide, reminiscent of the T-Bone/B.B. King school) in measures 1-2 and 4-5. These are alternated with his uncommon standard-tuned slide lines (with slide) in 3-4 and 5-6 in call-and-response phraseology. His slide intensifies the minor-major blues polarity with a powerful approach line in 5. The overlapping, contrasting effect is musically compelling and provides sonic variety that transcends either style.

SOUND

Earl played a number of instruments. In the '50s and early '60s, he favored a Stratocaster heard to good effect on Junior Wells tracks including "Messin' With the Kid." Unique among bluesmen, he employed doubleneck guitars like a Danaelectro 3923 guitar/bass and Gibson EDS-1275. Between 1958 and '62, he used the Double 12, a hollow double florentine-cutaway made a for him, then later, the solidbody EDS. According to Paul Asbell, by '68, he preferred an SG Standard but experimented with an ES-345, a Gibson Trini Lopez (on *Hooker and Steve*), and an import Shaftesbury 3264 Barney Kessel knock-off. His black Univox was also a Japanese Les Paul Custom copy with his name in stick-on letters and flower decals.

Asbell says Earl likely played a blackface Super-Reverb, as favored by many Chicago blues guitarists. During his '69 European tour, he achieved a very potent blues-rock tone with this unassuming guitar and Sound City stacks.

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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The Robby Z Stolen Guitar Collection

My storage facility in San Jose California was broken into sometime between Sept 24, 2020 and December 23, 2020 and my entire collection was stolen.

Over the past 10 months we have recovered 42 guitars out of the 170 that were stolen. Please help us to recover all of them. If you have one of these guitars or know someone that does, please contact Robby Z directly at RobZolezzi@gmail.com A generous reward will be provided for any guitars or amps returned.

FENDER JAGUARS

1963 Fender Jaguar Seafoam Green L21739
1963 Fender Jaguar Seafoam Green Re-Fin 140284
1963 Fender Jaguar Sonic Blue L32293
1964 Fender Jaguar Seafoam Green L73995
1964 Fender Jaguar - Shell Pink - Re-Fin L25454
1964 Fender Jaguar - Black Gold Hardware
1964 Fender Jaguar - Shoreline Gold
1964 Fender Jaguar - Burgundy Mist
1964 Fender Jaguar - Fiesta Red
1965 Fender Jaguar Olympic White - 137611
1965 Fender Jaguar Black L83734
1965 Fender Jaguar Surf Green 104066
1965 Fender Jaguar - Blonde Gold Hardware L68363
1968 Fender Jaguar Lake Placid Blue Gold Hardware 373266
1965 Fender Jaguar - Sunburst - Mint
1965 Fender Jaguar - Ice Blue Metallic
1966 Fender Jaguar Candy Apple Red - Block Markers. 172733
1966 Fender Jaguar Firemist Gold L863**
1966 Fender Jaguar Lake Placid Blue 140209
1966 Fender Jaguar Sonic Blue Turned Green - Block Markers 234397
1966 Fender Jaguar - Lake Placid Blue 238503
1966 Fender Jaguar - Teal Green Metallic - Block Markers
1966 Fender Jaguar - Fiesta Red - Block Markers
1966 Fender Jaguar - Ice Blue Metallic - Block Markers 234397
1966 Fender Jaguar - Olympic White Turned Yellow - Block Markers
1966 Fender Jaguar - Charcoal Frost
1966 Fender Jaguar - Charcoal Frost
1968 Fender Jaguar Lake Placid Blue Gold Hardware 373266
1971 Fender Jaguar - Ocean Turquoise - Maple Neck - Black Markers And Black Binding
1964 Fender Jaguar - Candy Apple Red

FENDER JAZZMASTERS

1959 Fender Jazzmaster - Blonde / Gold Hardware 46450
1961 Fender Jazzmaster - Burgundy Mist
1961 Fender Jazzmaster - Burgundy Mist
1963 Fender Jazzmaster Seafoam Green L15067
1963 Fender Jazzmaster Fiesta Red L20860
1964 Fender Jazzmaster Candy Apple Red L47291
1964 Fender Jazzmaster Olympic White 126552
1965 Fender Jazzmaster Black 11224
1965 Fender Jazzmaster - Shoreline Gold
1965 Fender Jazzmaster Blonde 105452
1965 Fender Jazzmaster - Surf Green L68604
1966 Fender Jazzmaster Olympic White 126552
1966 Fender Jazzmaster - Olympic White 120676
1966 Fender Jazzmaster - Dakota Red

MISC FENDERS

1973 Fender Di Acquisto Blonde E505527
1971 Fender Ltd -18
1966 Fender Mustang Blue 159766
1965 Fender Mustang Red 122191
1999 Fender Robben Ford Sunburst 6F064
1996 Fender Stratocaster Fiesta Red C/Shop Cn608863
1989 Fender Stratocaster Gold - Hle Model - #02
1998 Fender Stratocaster - Deluxe Fat Strat Green Dn810123
1968 Fender Telecaster Black 148068
1969 Fender Telecaster Sonic Blue Turned Green. 886537
1968 Fender Telecaster Lake Placid Blue 251718
1965 Fender Telecaster Lake Placid Blue Gold Hardware L67938
1967 Fender Bronco Red 215004
1967 Fender Coronado Ii Daphne Blue 5824148
1967 Fender Coronado Ii Red/Orange F201030
1964 Fender Duo Sonic Red L52241
1964 Fender Duo Sonic Fiesta Red 138389
1983 Fender Esprit White B010370
2004 Fender Custom Shop Black Gold Hardware Robby Z Inlay On 12th Fret
1978 Fender P-Bass Antigua 5877797
1978 Fender Stratocaster Antigua S918850
1968 Fender Telecaster Thinline Black
1978 Fender Tele Deluxe - Antigua S806889
1978 Fender Coronado Antigua 283522
1998 Fender Stratocaster - Seafoam Green - Custom Shop Cn800816.
1966 Fender Stratocaster - Lpb Turned Green 171685
1978 Fender Mustang Bass - Antigua 5824148
1978 Fender Telecaster - Antigua S834406
1978 Fender Mustang - Antigua. S824148
1978 Fender P-Bass - Antigua - Fretless
1973 Fender D'aquisto - Blonde E505524
1973 Fender P-Bass - Black
1978 Fender Jazz Bass - Antigua
1968 Fender Telecaster Thinline - Blonde 269363
1968 Fender Coronado Ii - Surf Green
1967 Fender Coronado Ii - Sonic Blue
1964 Fender - Black
1979 Fender Stratocaster - Capri Orange
1979 Fender Stratocaster - Sahara Taupe
1983 Fender Stratocaster - Walnut Elite
1973 Fender Stratocaster - Black
1974 Fender Stratocaster - Olympic White
Fender Stratocaster - Robby Z Custom
1979 Fender Stratocaster - Yellow S963731

GIBSON

1968 Gibson Barney Kessel Custom Sunburst 893313
1963 Gibson Es125Tdc Cherry Burst 369074
1968 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop 530374
1995 Gibson Les Paul Heritage Classic 50111
1961 Gibson Les Paul Junior - Signed By Les Paul 68744
1965 Gibson Es-175 - Sunburst. 3685Xx
1953 Gibson Es225 - Blonde
1963 Gibson Es-125Td - Cherryburst 369074
1965 Gibson Es-125Td - Cherryburst 368539
1976 Gibson L6S - Blonde
1970 Gibson Es-335 - Mint
1946 Gibson Es300 - Sunburst
2008 Gibson Les Paul - Conversion

GOYA

1959 Goya 80 Black 460/001
1959 Goya 80 Blue Sparkle 180/254
1959 Goya 80 Gold Sparkle 477/110
1959 Goya 80 Gold Sparkle 477/132
1959 Goya 80 Red Sparkle 477/284
1959 Goya Bass - Red Sparkle

HAGSTRON

1959 Hagstrom P-24 White Pearl 508187
1959 Hagstrom P-24 Blue Sparkle 483149
1959 Hagstrom P-24 Red Sparkle 466/113

PRS GUITARS

2001 Prs Santana Ii Amber 153493
1991 Prs Artist Amber Signed #690 Santana 19094.
1999 Prs Mccarty Amber 420101.
1995 Prs Archtop Ii Amber Burst 83720
1998 Prs Hollowbody Ii Violin Burst 94459

MISC GUITARS

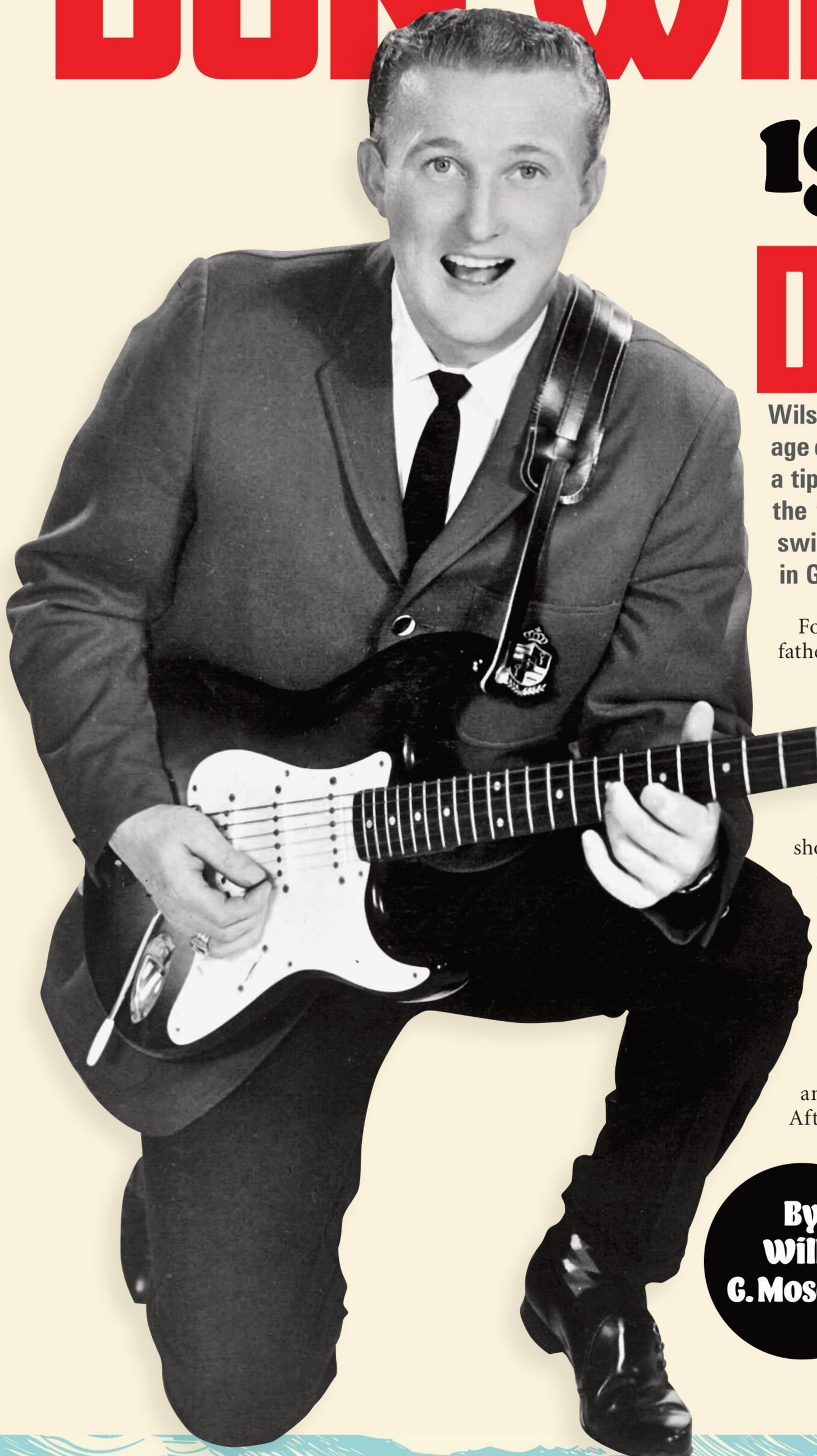
1995 R.C. Allen Archtop Blonde 1026
1960 Supro Student Blue Kit W/Amp G37304
1995 Washburn D-16 Natural 12 String Signed Steve Miller
2002 Charlie Hall No Model Natural Acoustic-Electric 0101
1966 Epiphone Casino - Tan 811822
2015 Danelectro Hornet - "67" Coral
2012 Epiphone Flying V - White Gold Hardware
1980 Electra Les Paul - Natural - Flame
1962 Silvertone - Black
1961 Supro - Black
2004 Warrior - Amber
1965 National Valco Supro 1-16387

AMPS

1965 Fender Twin Reverb
1966 Fender Vibroverb
1955 Fender Princeton - Tweed - Tv Face
Fender Vibrolux - #00678
1966 Fender Bassman - A12389
1965 Fender Super Reverb
1965 Fender Deluxe Reverb
1966 Fender Pro Reverb
1955 Fender Champ - Tweed
1959 Fender Deluxe - Tweed
1966 Fender Pro Reverb (2Nd One)
1959 Fender Super - Tweed
Supro - Student Amp - Blue
Silvertone - 1333 Model - Tweed
1955 Magnatone - Blue Mother Of Pearl
1958 Silvertone - Model 1430 - Brown
1950 Gibson - Cream/Pink

DON WILSON

1933-2022



Don Wilson, co-founder and last remaining member of the Ventures' "classic" lineup, died in his hometown of Tacoma, Washington, on January 22. He was 88 and passed away from natural causes. • Born February 10, 1933, Wilson was exposed to stringed instruments at the age of eight, when his mother taught him chords on a tiple. He played trombone during childhood, and the tiple with friends who played guitar. Wilson switched to guitar in the early '50s while stationed in Germany with the U.S. Army.

Following military service, Wilson was working at his father's car lot when he met Bob Bogle, a construction worker who was also a guitarist. In early '59, Bogle helped Wilson hire on with his construction company; when traveling together for work, they'd jam in motel rooms using pawn-shop guitars. While Wilson's roots were in country music, both were fans of Duane Eddy and the burgeoning instrumental rock.

"We eventually went out on a limb and bought two Fender guitars," Wilson told *VG* in March, 1997. "The first recording we did was called 'The Real McCoy.' We wanted something a little different, so I did a Walter Brennan impersonation in the middle of the song. It did pretty well, locally, so that was encouraging."

Bogle and Wilson formed the Ventures as a duo – lead and rhythm – later recruiting Nokie Edwards on bass. After a Seattle radio station began playing their version of Chet Atkins' cover of Johnny Smith's "Walk, Don't Run" in 1960, the song reached #2 on *Billboard*'s Hot 100, thrusting the group to the top of the international music scene.

The band's classic lineup evolved to include Wilson and Nokie Edwards on guitars, Bogle on bass (sometimes trading axes with Edwards), and Mel Taylor on drums. Wilson usually favored a Jazzmaster, performing as the rhythm player while Edwards handled most of the lead work.

By Willie G. Moseley



Bob Spalding and Don Wilson (right) onstage in 2008 during The Ventures' induction to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Don Wilson: Lucas Jackson/Reuters/Alamy.

Through the '60s and early '70s, 38 of their albums charted in the U.S., along with 14 singles that reached the Hot 100; their final U.S. hit, the "Hawaii Five-O" theme, peaked at #5 in 1969. They specialized in creating instrumental versions of the latest hits, and devised quirky and timely album concepts like 1961's *The Colorful Ventures*, on which every song title includes a color, and Ventures in Space, from '63, which played on NASA and the space race. One of their most-popular albums was, *Surfing*, their take on the surf-music genre, released in May of '64. In '65, they released *The Ventures' Christmas Album*, which charted over the following four holiday seasons. Later in the decade, they cut four albums capitalizing on the popularity of psychedelic rock. To date, they've sold more than 100 million records and inspired many others in the instrumental-rock and surf genres.

"We glommed on to every trend, which was what instrumental-rock bands needed to do," Wilson said. "While we preceded surf music, [*Surfing*] was one of our biggest [albums].

"I've heard DJs call 'Walk, Don't Run' a surf song, and I've heard the Ventures described as playing 'the California sound,' but we came from Seattle. A lot of people even identify songs like 'Wipeout' or 'Pipeline' with us instead of the Surfaris or Chantays, who did the hit singles, for the simple reason that we had those songs on a lot of compilation albums."

There was also the series of instructional albums for aspiring players, on which Wilson, Bogle, and Edwards demonstrated how to play Ventures favorites.

"Those did very well," Wilson recalled. "In fact, they were the first, if not only, instructional albums to make the charts."

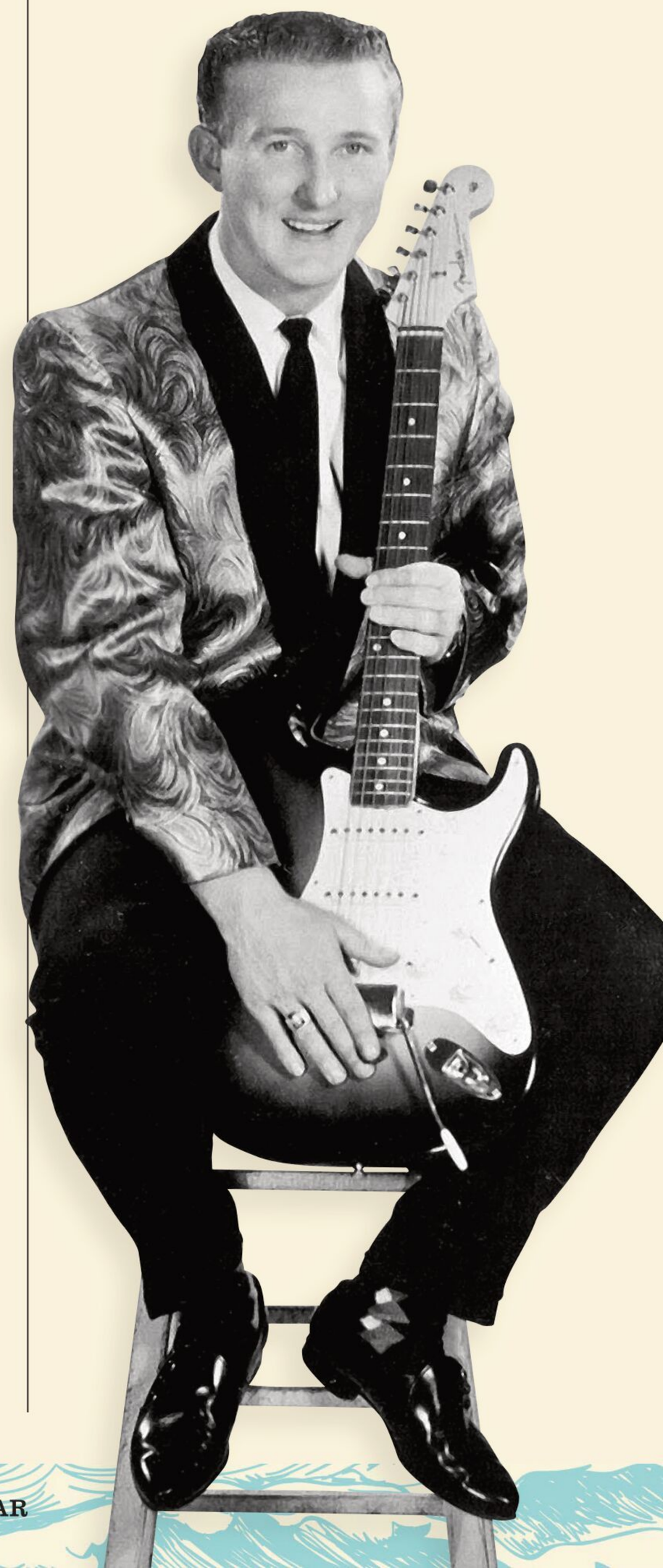
Under the aegis of Wilson and Bogle, the band invested in the Mosrite guitar company. The Ventures Model guitar and bass were keystone instruments in the lineup, though the association lasted just five years before coming to an acrimonious end in 1968. In '96, Fender created a limited-edition signature line with a Stratocaster, Jazzmaster, and Jazz Bass sporting a translucent black finish, gold hardware, and block fretboard markers. Later, the band endorsed Wilson Brothers instruments, which was led by Wilson's son, Tim.

In late 2001, the Ventures released a Wilson-penned song titled "Be Strong America." Proceeds from sales of the CD that followed went to families of victims and families of first responders in New York City.

While the world experienced numerous musical fads, the Ventures stayed true to their craft and even achieved demi-god status in Japan, where they've toured regularly for decades. Wilson retired from touring in 2015; in his later years, he continued to follow modern music and remained an advocate for "tasteful" guitar music.

"That's where it's at," he said. "Some players may be great technicians, but sometimes they don't have the feel for what they're doing, you know?"

For more on Don Wilson and The Ventures, read Dan Forte's "Check This Action" column in this month's "Hit List."





Elliot Easton, Steve Lukather, and Jeff "Skunk" Baxter used Mosrite Ventures models during their tribute to Don Wilson at NAMM in 2020.

FANS AND FRIENDS REMEMBER DON WILSON

"I remember being 15 years old just starting to play guitar and seeing Don and Bob Bogle on stage in 1962 in Japan, where my father was stationed in the Air Force, and dreaming about being a guitar player. In 1981, when Nokie Edwards got sick, I got a call at 2 a.m. to fly to New York. It was a tremendous thrill taking the stage with Bob Bogle, Mel Taylor, and Don Wilson at the Mudd Club. And when I started touring, it was always gratifying to introduce Don to an audience; he was such a great artist and performer. Don influenced a generation of guitar players; most were just regular guys, and some became famous.

"Don's innovative style of playing came from his experiences with Bob when they started out as a guitar duo. In the early days, Don had to play very rhythmic and strong, because they didn't have a drummer. Later when they became a quartet with a drummer, his style never changed, and that unique rhythm-guitar drive became a prominent characteristic of the band's music.

He will be remembered as a special contributor to the guitar and music of rock and roll." ***– Bob Spalding***

"I remember hearing the riff from 'Walk Don't Run' on the radio when I was pre-teen living in South New Jersey. Then, I saw The Ventures on 'The Dick Clark Show.' I'd go to the record store in Pennsgrove to order music by The Ventures. The cover of the 45 with 'Perfidia' and 'No Trespassing' was a photo of the band – Don and Bob were playing an A barre chord and Bob an A7, with Nokie posed on his knees, playing a Precision Bass. I wrote Don's mom, Josie, and she would send me Ventures promo records and photos I have to this day.

"Don playing the beginning chords of 'Walk Don't Run' with such energy really stayed with me. The song was written by jazz guitarist Johnny Smith and recorded by Chet Atkins, so The Ventures doing it gave us young players a great history of guitar music. Don knew all the chords and kept the music together for Bob Bogle, Nokie Edwards, or some guest to play the leads.

"I've known Don personally since the late '70s. When I spent time at Don's house, he showed me many of the rhythm parts on his earlier recordings. My favorites are the Dolton Records period, and I got to play many of them in my early bands. Don had such a distinctive style, and you don't hear *any* mistakes on their recordings!

"Don's work was so important to me as a player. I urge all guitarists to listen, especially those just starting." ***– Seymour W. Duncan***

"I was living in Mexico when I first heard 'Walk, Don't Run,' and just went crazy. Abraham Laboriel and I formed a surf band called the Tarantulas. He was 12, I was 11, and we were getting gigs. I joined the Ventures Fan Club and sent Bob Bogle a letter, and he wrote back. He said, 'You should buy a Fender Jazzmaster.' Which I still have.

"The Ventures decided that they were going to play melody. What a concept! I think that changed the whole focus and created a reality for guitar players – learn the melody from the song.

"From the fan club to getting to know the guys to producing records by them and playing with them, it was a special relationship. Don and I became really close. I helped put together the Lifetime Achievement Award at NAMM for him; Steve Lukather, Elliot Easton, and I played red Mosrites. I did one record with Duane Eddy and the Ventures playing together. That was fun. I had a lot of love for the original clean recorded stuff, but I also wanted to take them into another place. Open the aperture, have some fun.

"When they started, they didn't have a bass player or drummer, so Don's aggressive, powerful, percussive style grew from that. That was the agar-agar in the petri dish that grew that style of playing.

"Rhythm guitar is an art, and there aren't a lot of great rhythm players. There's no doubt Don was the master and crafter. All-encompassing rhythm-section guitar – that's his invention. He's royalty!" ***– Jeff "Skunk" Baxter***

"I first heard Don and 'Walk Don't Run' in the early '60s. I was already playing guitar and it was an exciting new sound. Radio at that time was not very guitar-centric, consisting mostly of girl groups and the Bobbies, Fabians, and Frankies from Philadelphia, so this was important for me to hear. It wasn't long before I was collecting Ventures albums!

"Don had a major influence on the way rock-and-roll rhythm guitar is played. If fact, it was the first time many of us heard the differentiation between lead and rhythm guitar. It sounded exotic, and at first we

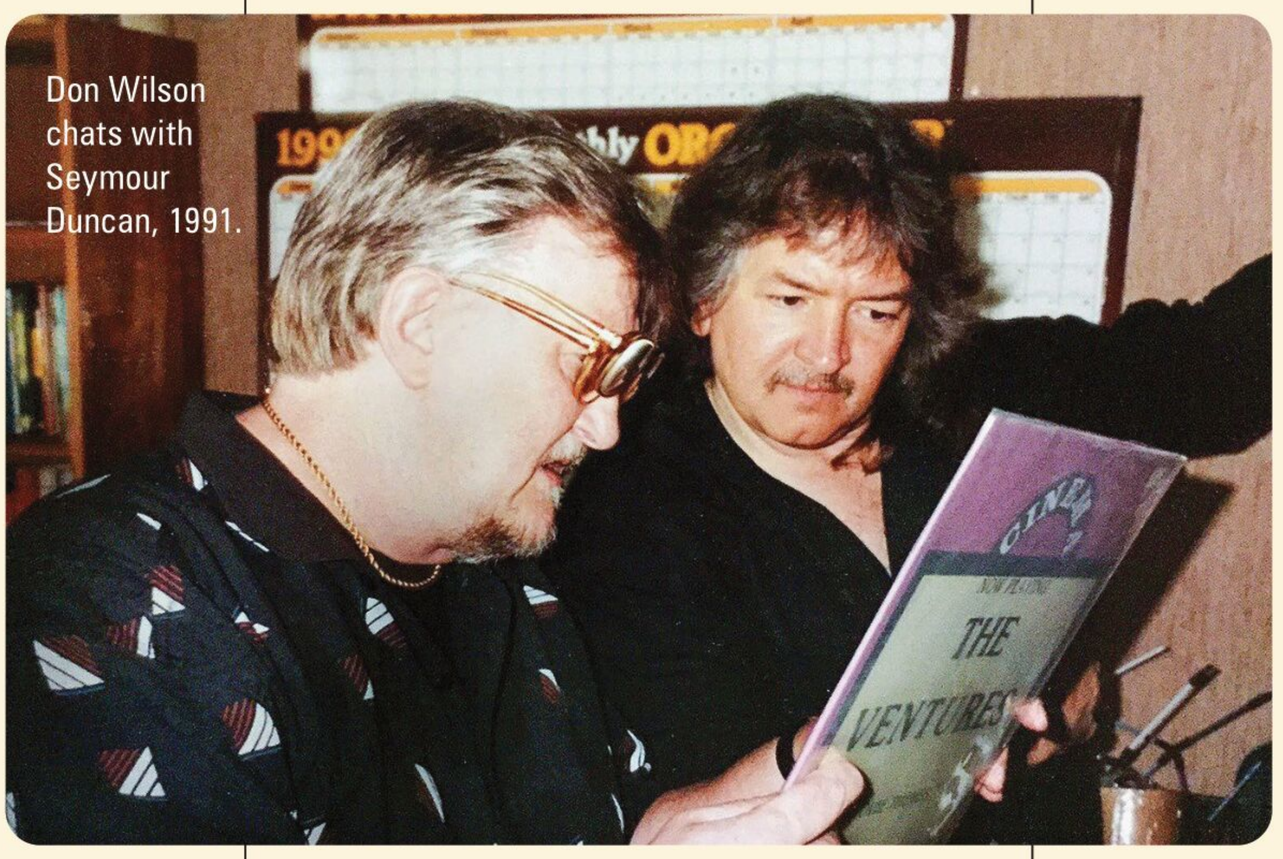
Photo courtesy of Elliot Easton.

thought you needed a different guitar – a 'lead' guitar and a 'rhythm' guitar!

"Don and The Ventures instilled in me a lifelong love of 'twang.' But more importantly, they taught us how to be a band in the years before The Beatles – and what a lot of fun that still is!

"Luke, Skunk, and I played 'Hawaii Five-O' with a full orchestra at the 2020 NAMM TEC awards on our Candy Apple Red Mosrites! We were playing for Don and his wife, who were sitting close to the stage. When we finished, Don's wife gave the three of us each a gift bag with a Ventures hat and other goodies. They were such sweet people.

"What was Don's most important contribution to the Ventures' music? He made it *swing*!" ***– Elliot Easton***



Don Wilson chats with Seymour Duncan, 1991.

"Once I saw the Beatles on Ed Sullivan, anything with an electric guitar is all I wanted to see and hear. So, I loved all that surf-guitar stuff – The Ventures, Dick Dale – it was wonderful, beautiful, *loud* guitar music. And if you wonder how important Don was, try to imagine if he stopped playing, and see what it sounds like. People don't pay enough attention to being a great rhythm player anymore. Back then, it was what we learned first, not last.

"Every once in a while, my playing references Don. Many years ago, I did guitar parts on Michael Jackson's 'A Stranger in Moscow,' and there's a bit at the end where I do this surf thing. I remember saying, 'We need to get a Ventures guitar sound for this,' which meant with nice reverb and playing the low strings with the pick near the bridge. I love that sound." ***– Steve Lukather***

"I was 13 years old in 1960 and just beginning to learn guitar. I only had 10 lessons when 'Perfidia' started to climb the Top 40 radio charts, and it was the first tune I wanted to learn – 'Walk, Don't Run' was added to my young repertoire later. I learned the chords first, and still have the tablature from those lessons. It was Don's full, down-stroked barre chords that pretty much defined how rhythm guitar can be used to move the lead along, instead of just voicing chord support. Whenever I play rhythm guitar for an up-tempo instrumental today, using a similar chord sequence, I tend to drop into a Don Wilson style. That's his lasting effect on me." ***– John Blair, Jon and the Nightriders***

"I first heard the Ventures when I was four or five years old and my teenage brother played his 45 of 'Perfidia'/'No Trespassing.' I don't remember which he played first, but the first time I heard the intro to 'No Trespassing' was the coolest thing I'd *ever* heard! It was probably the first time I was aware of the electric guitar, and for me it defined what an electric guitar is supposed to sound like. Years later, when I was starting a band, a friend played his 'Hawaii Five-O' record, and I remembered how much I loved that sound. At that point, I decided to pursue guitar instrumentals, and went home that night and wrote my very first song, 'Calhoun Surf.' 'Hawaii Five-O' and 'No Trespassing' were also in my set list.

"A few years later, I found myself sharing a stage with The Ventures at the Mudd Club, in New York City, and becoming friends. Fifteen years later, they recorded a version of 'Calhoun Surf' and we did more shows together, including a cruise. A few years ago, when I was undergoing cancer treatment, Don surprised me with a phone call to find out how I was doing and wish me well. Having a friendship with one of my lifelong heroes was indescribable. Don was a wonderful human being. He will be missed." ***– Danny Amis, Los Straitjackets***

"Here's the thing about Don Wilson. Usually, the lead-guitar player in a band hogs the spotlight, playing a million notes, getting all the glory. The rhythm player is relegated to the background, fairly unimportant. Not so for Don Wilson, who practically redefined electric rhythm guitar in the new decade of the '60s. Don's rhythm playing was as exciting as the lead parts, and just as nuanced. That is a rare, rare thing.

"His rhythms defined the Ventures sound through three lead players in their hitmaking years. He was a powerhouse of rhythm guitar. No one played like him." ***– Deke Dickerson***

"The Ventures were a red-hot band by the time I was born in the early '60s, and definitely not on my radar as a '70s teenager. Fast-forward to the '80s, when I was writing what became the book *Legends of Rock Guitar*. The moment I discovered the Ventures, completely outside the historical timeline, was an earthquake – the sound of their hip, melodic, and catchy-as-hell twang made them one of my favorite guitar bands.

"After the millennium, it became urgent to check their box off my concert bucket list. The chance came April 5, 2012, when they played the Birchmere club in Alexandria, Virginia, where – coincidentally (*not*) – I lassoed my family into visiting for spring break. As it turned out, this was Nokie Edwards' last U.S. tour. He perched on a stool for most of the gig, but his chops were nimble as ever. But the star of the show was Don Wilson.

"To the naked eye, Wilson was a wizened, silver-haired, *79-year-old* gent who simply rocked the house. Dressed in black with shades and a block-inlay Jazzmaster, he was having a blast. He stalked the stage, bopping up and down with the beat, and gave that Fender a well-deserved thrashing of chords and riffs. It was prime Ventures.

"While it was wonderful to see Nokie still pickin', Don *owned* the Birchmere audience. The fact he was playing through a Mesa/Boogie Rectifier half-stack only made him that much cooler – we should all be so lucky as to rock so hard at that age, loving every minute of it. It was perfect. Twang on, Mr. Wilson." ***– Pete Prown, VG contributor/music editor VG***

In the weeks before they gathered to record a new album in the spring of 2021, guitar legend Slash, frontman/songwriter Myles Kennedy, and their cohorts in The Conspirators had to pull the reins on their rock-star lifestyles.

In normal times, they'd have jumped on a jet in L.A. and been at Dave Cobb's RCA Studio A in Nashville a few hours later. But... pandemic. So, instead of traveling aloft at 500 miles per hour, the band chartered a bus and took the 65-mph scenic route – just them, the driver, and a cargo hold full of precious guitars and amps.

Bypassing air travel was, of course, the best way to play it safe heading into the studio – a place where time very much *is* money. But then that thing about "the best-laid plans" bit them in the ass when Kennedy became infected with coronavirus literally on the way to meet the bus, then didn't show symptoms until they'd been at Studio A for five days.

While Slash and the rest of the band – Brent Fitz (drums), Todd Kerns (bass), and Frank Sidoris (guitar and vocals)

4 FROM THE FLOOR

THE RETURN OF SLASH AND THE CONSPIRATORS

BY WARD MEEKER

– all eventually contracted Covid, they finished recording before anyone fell ill.

We sat for a Slash chat to hear more about how the album, titled *4*, came together.

What made you so intent on working with Dave Cobb?

I talked to a few people about good rock-and-roll producers, because they're few and far between these days. I like to work analog, which is old-fashioned, and I was given a couple names I wasn't familiar with – one was Dave. I looked at some of the stuff

Slash: Ross Halfin.

he did with Rival Sons, which I really liked the sound of. But I also liked how down-to-earth and raw his country stuff is, as well. So, he and I had a phone conversation and we hit it off – got into a deep discussion about Glyn Johns and recording live and all this other stuff.

Playing and recording live was important for you?

It always has been. I always was influenced more by live records than studio albums – that energy and spontaneity. And I've always done as much of that as I could get away with; every record I've ever done, bass and drums were recorded live with guitars, but then we'd replace the live guitars with overdubs, so I wasn't focused on my sound until I'd go back in.

That's been the norm, but I've wanted to record live with the band, *keep* the guitar tracks, and have the back line in the same room. Most engineers and producers scoff at that. The closest I ever got was working with Eric Valentine when we did the *Apocalyptic Love* record, which was the first studio album the Conspirators ever did. On that one, we played live in the room but I was in a booth with guitars coming through monitors, which of course didn't sound like standing in front of a Marshall.

On this record, we did an actual back line – baffles between cabinets and drums, all guitars and bass playing at the same time – I *love* that feel – and we left everything as-is, so there's little mistakes and this and that. To me, *that's* what's missing as we get further and further from what rock and roll represents.

How many guitars did you take to the sessions?

Not that many. I took the Derrig '59 replica I've been using since 1987, a couple '59 reissues, a '69 reissue Flying V, a '70s B.C. Rich Mockingbird, and a reissue goldtop. I used the Derrig for most of it, the V on a couple songs, one of the '59 reissues on a song, and a reissue Les Paul Custom on one. I did bring a real '59, but never used it.

Did the 'burst ride in the bus with you?

It did, yeah. The Derrig and the '59 both rode on the bus with us.

Why is the Derrig still your number one?

Guitars have personalities, and that one has a thing that has been there since day one. It's really hard to beat.

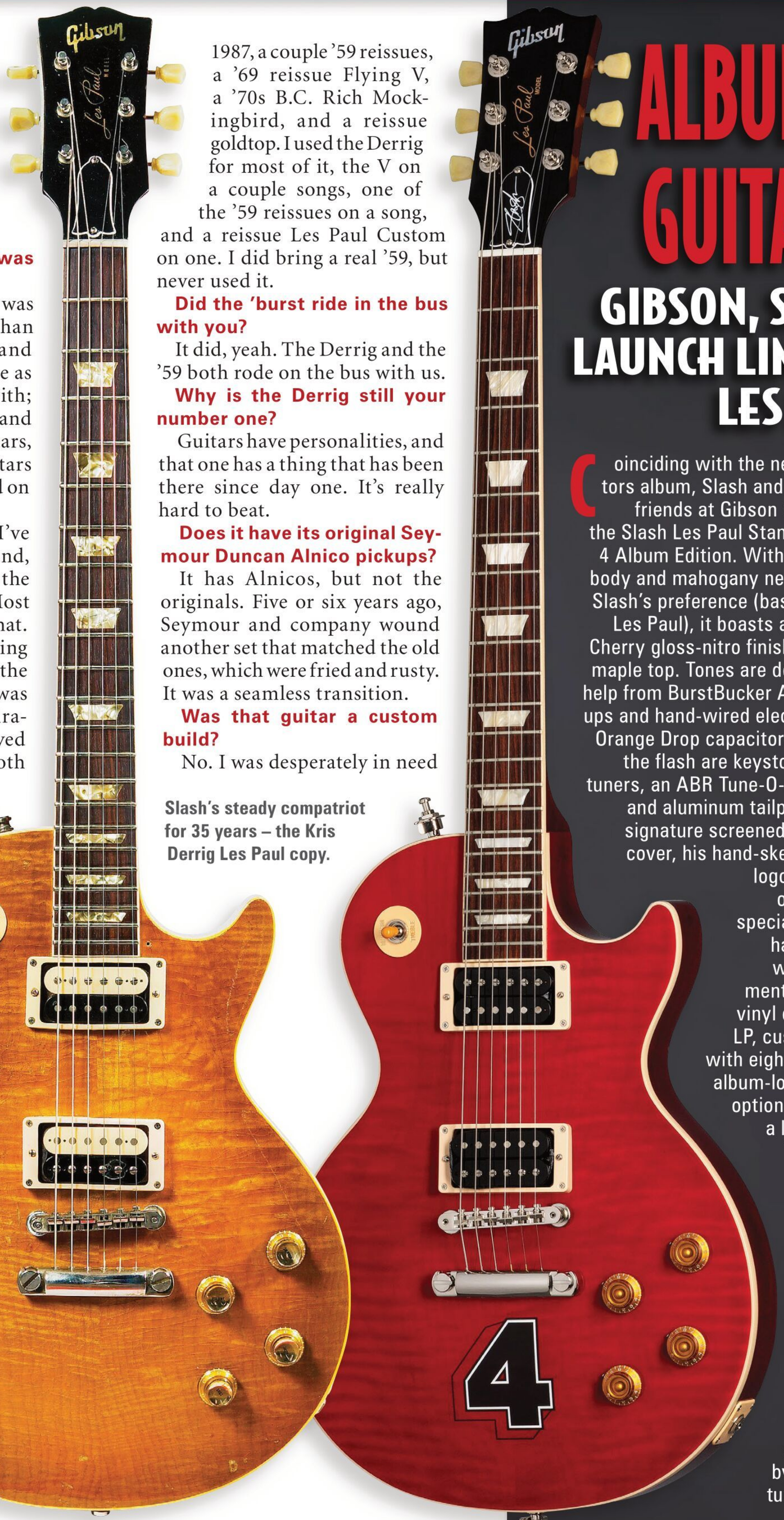
Does it have its original Seymour Duncan Alnico pickups?

It has Alnicos, but not the originals. Five or six years ago, Seymour and company wound another set that matched the old ones, which were fried and rusty. It was a seamless transition.

Was that guitar a custom build?

No. I was desperately in need

Slash's steady compatriot for 35 years – the Kris Derrig Les Paul copy.



Slash Derrig Les Paul: Rick Gould.

ALBUM 4, GUITAR 9

GIBSON, SLASH LAUNCH LIMITED LES PAUL

Coinciding with the new Conspirators album, Slash and his longtime friends at Gibson have created the Slash Les Paul Standard Limited 4 Album Edition. With a mahogany body and mahogany neck shaped to Slash's preference (based on a '50s Les Paul), it boasts a Translucent Cherry gloss-nitro finish on a flame-maple top. Tones are delivered with help from BurstBucker Alnico II pickups and hand-wired electronics with Orange Drop capacitors. Furthering the flash are keystone-buttoned tuners, an ABR Tune-O-Matic bridge and aluminum tailpiece, Slash's signature screened on the truss cover, his hand-sketched Skully logo on the back of the head, a specially designed hardshell case with compartment that holds a vinyl copy of the *4* LP, custom pick tin with eight picks, a "4" album-logo decal (for optional placement a la Slash/Pete Townshend), blank truss cover, and a signed portrait of the band. The 4 Album Edition is the sixth Slash guitar in the current Gibson line, accompanied by three signature Epiphones.

of a Les Paul during the overdub sessions for *Appetite for Destruction*, and the then-manager of Guns N' Roses went to Music Works, in Redondo Beach, where Jim Foote had a couple of Kris Derrig guitars. So, our manager showed up at the studio with this one, and it was just f***ing *magic*; it had this *thing*. I did the record with just it and a Marshall 100-watt half-stack, and I've been tight with it ever since.

Which amps did you have in the studio this time?

I had just a couple 100-watt Marshall Jubilee heads and a couple cabinets with Vintage 30s.

What sort of input did Dave offer as you experimented with tones?

Dave's a guitar nut like me, and he knows what sounds good, but he let me do my thing. He'd go, "Check out this Marshall," or "Check out this guitar." But he recognized right away that the Jubilee with the Derrig was it. I experimented with other stuff but he'd say, "Nah, go back..."

What role do guitars and amps play in your creative process?

I have a studio here in L.A. where I do most of my work these days. I have [counts, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven..."] a *few* Marshall heads (laughs), so I'll find one that sounds good in the moment and use it to write and do a demo. I experiment with other amps, but always end up going back to a Marshall. I'm not super-particular; once I get a decent sound, I'm fine. I usually stick to a 100-watt cab with Vintage 30s, two Jubilee heads, a Super Bassman head, and a Super Bass 100-watt head. I go back and forth, looking for a certain attitude.

Has plugging into a particular guitar or amp ever inspired a riff?

In the moment, a certain combination might produce something, but I don't find it entertaining to try a million things – I just want to get a sound that I can move forward. It's my job to catch a riff and make it something. The creative process is not technical for me.

Speaking of, The Conspirators have been together for 10 years now. How has creativity evolved within the band?

It has always been a very adaptable group that can function in almost any situation. But, as a norm, I write when we're on the road – make up stuff in my dressing room or hotel room, then take ideas to soundcheck. We'll jam to develop something, then keep going from gig to gig, maybe working on a song for that half-hour at a time. By the end of a tour, we've usually amassed a handful of good songs. I might have other stuff kicking around, as well. Then we get together and



MUSIC-CITY TUNE CHARMER

PRODUCER DAVE COBB DRAWS ARTISTS OF ALL ILKS

Grandson of a Pentecostal minister, as a kid, Dave Cobb attended church every day, weaving old-time hymnal music into his DNA. Rather than constraining his musical inclinations, church music – and watching relatives play it – helped open his mind. From the moment he heard rock and roll on the radio, he connected the sound and energy of the two forms.

"To me, rock is six degrees of separation from gospel," he said. "When people are playing hymnals and everyone's singing, stomping, and clapping, it resonates no matter who you are. And of course there's a strong link to religious music in the blues. It's all interwoven; the blues come from gospel, and people from all over the world came to America, where they created jazz, soul, rock and roll, bluegrass, and country music.

"A good AC/DC record resonates like a hymnal, in a different way," he added. "But it's from the same place."

Artists from Chris Stapleton and Brandi Carlile to John Prine and Jason Isbell have recently relied on Cobb's expertise. After Slash became the third *VG* cover subject within a year to hit his resumé, it was time to find out what makes him such a go-to.

Slash, Travis Tritt, and Charlie Starr – guys with very different musical styles – all put you in charge of their latest albums.

Yeah, I've always admired their music, they all have a unique voice, and what they do resonates with everything I grew up hearing in the South, from Lynyrd Skynyrd to Guns N' Roses to country music. I've always listened to AC/DC as much as George Jones.

Artists flock to your method of putting everybody in RCA Studio A together and capturing everything live, including vocals. Why are you such a disciple of that?

It's way easier. Plus, when people sing with the band, they get loud when the band is loud, and when they get quiet, the band gets quiet. Everything fits together and sounds like a song, as opposed to trying to assemble the music.

A lot of people have success with the assembly-line process, but I like a more-present human element. Whether it's turn-of-the-century folk, rock and roll, blues, or soul, human interaction is the most important thing. Finding the soul. And that's harder to achieve when everything is under a separate microscope.

When Charlie and the guys in Blackberry Smoke showed up with their guitars, word is you were rubbing your hands together like an evil genius...

Oh, yeah! Drums are my first instrument,

Dave Cobb: Becky Fluke.

but I've been playing guitar since 1987, and I *love* guitars. I love looking at them. I remember getting my first SG when I was 13. It wasn't a great one – brown, mid-'70s – everything was wrong about it. But I'd fall asleep looking at it in the stand, then wake up and play it all day.

I've still got that fever, and it's funny, the people I really get along with – Charlie, Slash, Chris Stapleton – we're *all* possessed by it. In the studio, we talked as much about guitars as we did about songs.

What was the keystone to your visual guitar fixation?

Seeing Angus Young with an SG; the shape of the horns, the look of it. It was a piece of art.

Who is on your short list of guitar heroes?

My number one is Jimmy Page, hands down. The Beatles are my favorite band, but I remember seeing *The Song Remains the Same* and getting Led Zeppelin *IV* when I was 13 or 14. It was *mystical* to me. You didn't know if Page hung out with Aleister Crowley in a dungeon, if he did magic, or whatever, but there was this power in the songs, the riffs, and his sound. Zeppelin guitar parts were orchestrations.

Was *IV* your first Zeppelin album?

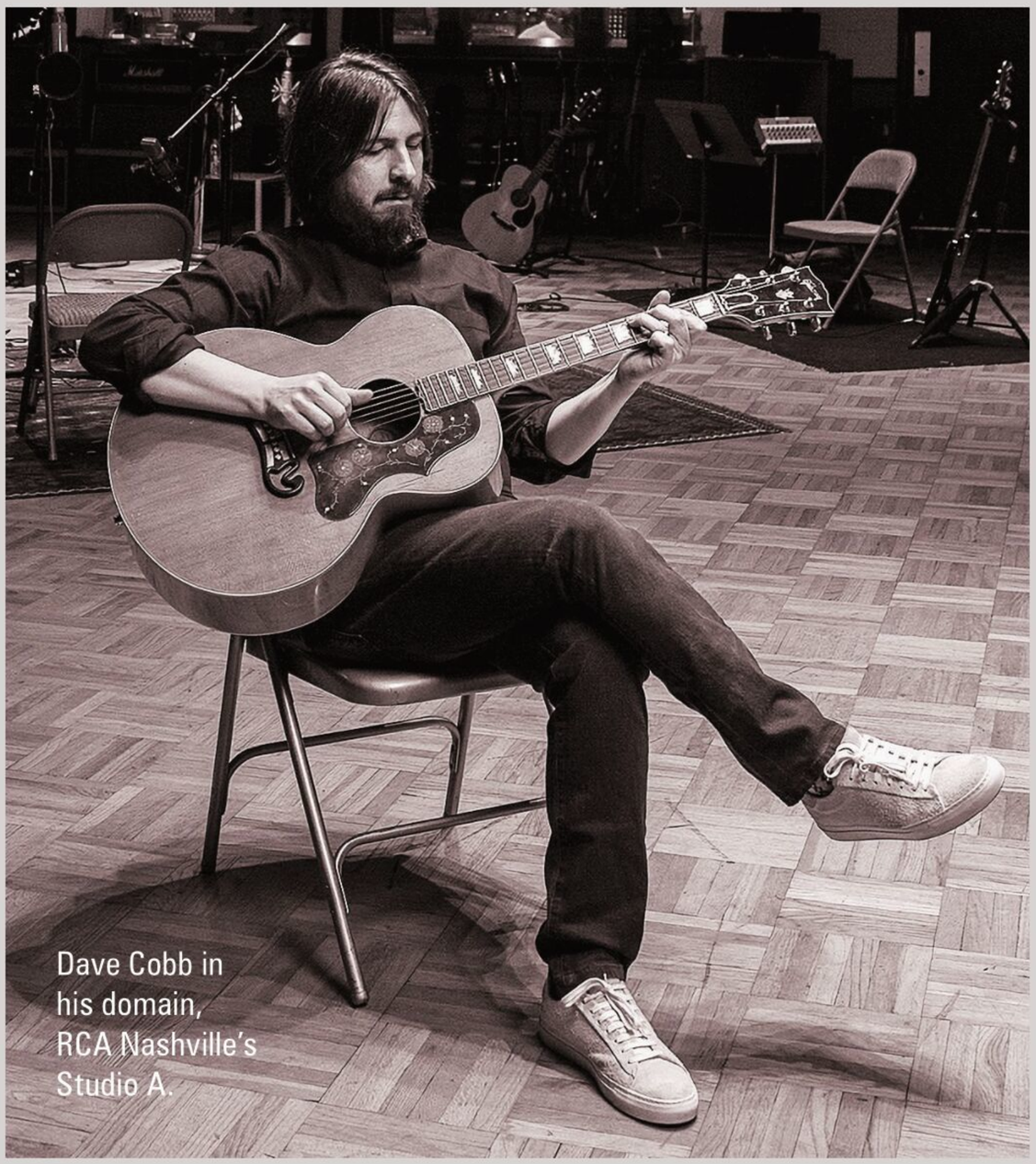
Probably. *Everyone* had it. My favorite is their first one, but the sound of *IV*, I think, led me to producing records. The first time I heard the word "producer," I didn't know that was. But when I read on the label that Jimmy Page produced that album, it mattered.

Who are your other guitar heroes?

Angus and Malcolm [Young]. I put them on the same level because of the pocket Malcolm created, and the "danger" added by Angus (laughs). That was huge for me.

George Harrison was also huge because he was such a melodic soloist. What he played made beautiful sense and brought this interesting vibe.

Also on the list is Pete Townshend because of his right hand. Listen to "The Seeker"; the timing with his right hand was so inspiring, that alone made me want to be a rhythm-guitar player. You can solo all day, but the right hand of Townshend is a force. I always admired that and tried to emulate it when I was a kid. I got into The Who's earlier stuff first, like "I Can't Explain." That simple riff, to me, is *everything*. Then, "The Seeker," and later, *Next*. Again, those records are mystical; I can't imagine bands getting in a room today and making "5:15." It's such a big, expansive, powerful sound.



Dave Cobb in his domain, RCA Nashville's Studio A.

What was your first AC/DC album?

Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap. I was a drummer, played bass a bit, and I went to take a guitar lesson at this little music store. The teacher had a black SG and I remember thinking, "*Man*, that's the coolest thing ever!" Just like that, I didn't want to learn "Mary Had A Little Lamb"; I'd been playing music since I was four, so I didn't want to start at the beginning (laughs). So, I told him what I was into and he sent me to a record store in the same shopping center to get *Dirty Deeds*. He said, "Come back and we'll learn it." I remember him showing me the chords – that [hums the intro riff]. Really simple, and I was off to the races – learned how to play a G like the Young brothers and I've never played it any other way. I only took a few more lessons.

For rhythm-guitar players, Malcolm is a huge part of my vocabulary – the angst they conveyed through the guitar and those Marshalls running clean but nearly to the point of breakup. I always admired somebody who could take an amp that wasn't high-gain and make it sound like it's exploding; Malcolm's *hand* – the way it hit the guitar – was loud, you know?

In your 20s, you moved from Georgia to L.A. specifically to produce rock bands.

Yes, early on I worked with Rival Sons, Europe, and Sammy Hagar. I've always had a pretty heavy rock vocabulary.

How did you connect with Slash?

We talked on the phone about making records the old way – a rock-and-roll band in a room with no headphones going to tape live off the floor. He was excited to do that, and I was super-excited to work with him.

What was it like, watching him in the studio?

Well, growing up, I was a huge fan of Guns N' Roses, and a huge fan of his playing. So, of course it was cool to get to know him. In the studio, he was even better than I expected. Very few people can make a Les Paul and a Marshall sing like he can.

Did you ever grab a guitar and jam?

Oh, man, I'm not picking up a guitar around Slash – that's terrifying (laughs)! When I'm around incredibly talented guitar players, I just shut up and play percussion.

Did the Blackberry Smoke guys need any guitar help?

None whatsoever (laughs).

Did you play on the Travis record?

I played some acoustic guitar. Leroy Powell played a lot of electric, and Travis also played.

Travis and Charlie are both fellow Georgia boys...

Yes, and it's very easy to speak to somebody who comes from the same raising in lot of ways. Travis loves Lynyrd Skynyrd and George Jones as much as I do, so we had a lot of common ground. I also connected him with some like-minded writers who'd grown up listening to his music, like Adam Hood, Channing Wilson, and my cousin, Brent Cobb. They hit it off, and they'd call me, freaking out, going, "I can't believe I just wrote with Travis Tritt!"

How many of your own guitars are in the studio on any given day?

I'll never tell (laughs). Let's just say I have more guitars in there than I have hands. Obviously, they're tools. They're *art*, but they're put to work.

I got to tour a bit with Chris Stapleton last year, and we'd sneak out to guitar shops. Walking into a shop not knowing what you might find is one of the *best* feelings – chasing what's next, finding that new guitar that has a song in it. That's one of my favorite things. I'm not a partier, but I have a *great* time going to guitar shops.

How many of your amplifiers are in the studio?

More than there are guitars (laughs). I've always loved amps; there's something very special about old Fenders, Marshalls, and Voxes. ***– Ward Meeker***

Dave Cobb photo courtesy of Gibson.



Slash (right) with Conspirators co-guitarist Frank Sidoris.

CRACKLING ROCK



Slash featuring Myles Kennedy & The Conspirators
4

Slash is among the last of the old-school guitar heroes; there's a line from '60s and '70s gods straight to him. Though permanently in the giant shadow of Guns N' Roses, Slash's work with vocalist/songwriter Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators (Frank Sidoris, guitar, Todd Kerns, bass, and Brent Fitz, drums) adds to his legacy. The band's new album, *4*, is crackling hard rock – the no-nonsense, straight-up variety being kept alive by veterans, but precious few newer bands.

"The River is Rising" proves hard rock can *groove* – not just one-dimensionally blow your hair back – and a fast, smooth solo jumps out. The snaky, funky "Whatever Gets You By" shimmers with thick guitar and bass riffs and a fluttering guitar solo. "Actions Speak Louder Than Words" leads off with wah touches, and the sneering vocals, buzzing guitar, and stabbing bass lock together in the catchy chorus melody; overall, the tune is distinguished by its tough, laid-back swagger and a bluesy solo. "Spirit Love" features a Middle Eastern-style riff, darker vocals, and a strong '90s feel. Scrappy punk vigor energizes "Call Off the Dogs," while the melodramatic "Fall Back to Earth" includes Slash's precise finale solo, spiritually similar to GNR's "November Rain."

Melodies and hooks permeate *4*, guided by the attack of five rockers letting it rip.
– Bret Adams

start working at rehearsals, which these days have been in my studio.

The pandemic screwed up the rhythm of that; we finished a tour and I was about to go out with Guns when it hit. Everything stopped, so I worked up loose arrangements and demos myself with a drum machine, then I'd send those to Myles and he'd send them back with changes or new ideas. Then I had Todd come over and put bass on it. Eventually, we got together to work out arrangements, then made travel plans for Nashville.

How do you describe Myles as a lyricist?

He's great – very heartfelt and pretty... I want to say "deep," but I don't want to sound too heavy (laughs). He gets on a feeling and fleshes it out. I try not to get too involved.

Why not?

I hate getting into lyrics. I've done it on occasion out of necessity, and it's not that I'm bad at it, but singing and lyrics are not a great outlet for me. I don't get off on it. Myles always has a handle on it – there've been a couple times when he's come to me for an idea, but they're few and far between.

Are there a few songs on *4* that best embody your guitar sounds?

The first song, "The River is Rising," is pretty indicative. It's just the Derrig and one of the Jubilees. "Spirit Love" has an interesting sound; I played electric sitar on the intro, running through a Marshall at full blast.

"Fill My World" isn't the type of song people expect on a Conspirators record. I came up with the opening riff at my studio, then the chord changes came later. I made a demo, but wasn't sure what the guys would think because it has such a sentimental feel. But I sent it to Myles, and he came back with this really heartfelt lyric. I thought it was about all the loss we've been suffering during this dark period, but then he told me it was about his dog (laughs). That was done with the Derrig, as well.

The last song, "Fall Back to Earth," is where we go a little bit left-field; while Dave was in the bathroom, I snuck guitar harmonies on the melody in one section.

Which songs do we hear the reissue V on?

I used that for "C'est La Vie" and "Actions Speak Louder Than Words." The V had this cleaner thing to it, and sounded great with the voice box. For the riff in "Actions," it was loud and raunchy but didn't have as much saturation as the Derrig.

Are you still adding guitars to the collection?

Kennedy/Slash: Austin Nelson.

I'm trying to control that a bit (laughs). I *am* obsessed with guitars; I won't buy anything unless I have a use for it, but that happens *a lot* (laughs), mostly with Les Pauls because I just love finding a cool one.

What makes something cool?

The finish is one thing. I can be drawn to 75 variations on a sunburst (laughs). It's ridiculous. But I can also be interested depending on hardware and pickups.

You recently grabbed a vintage Gibson acoustic at Norman's Rare Guitars...

Yeah, I was doing a photo shoot while they pulled some guitars, and that one – a '63 J-45 – stuck. It sounded amazing, which is first and foremost what I look for.

How many are in the collection now?

I think we're in the realm of 200-plus, but a lot of that comes from working with Gibson on signature Les Pauls and other guitars. We've been doing that since 2005, and I've kept all of the prototypes.

You and the Conspirators will be touring with the new album. Are you psyched to get back on the road?

Yeah, I'm very excited. I haven't played live with the guys since 2019, and I miss them. Considering the way we recorded, it's going to be really fun to play the new songs. And I like the venues this band plays – a lot of theaters, which are perfect because they're big enough to do a full thing but small enough to be intimate. And they usually have great acoustics. Guns N' Roses played the Apollo not long ago, but normally that band plays arenas and stadiums. **VG**

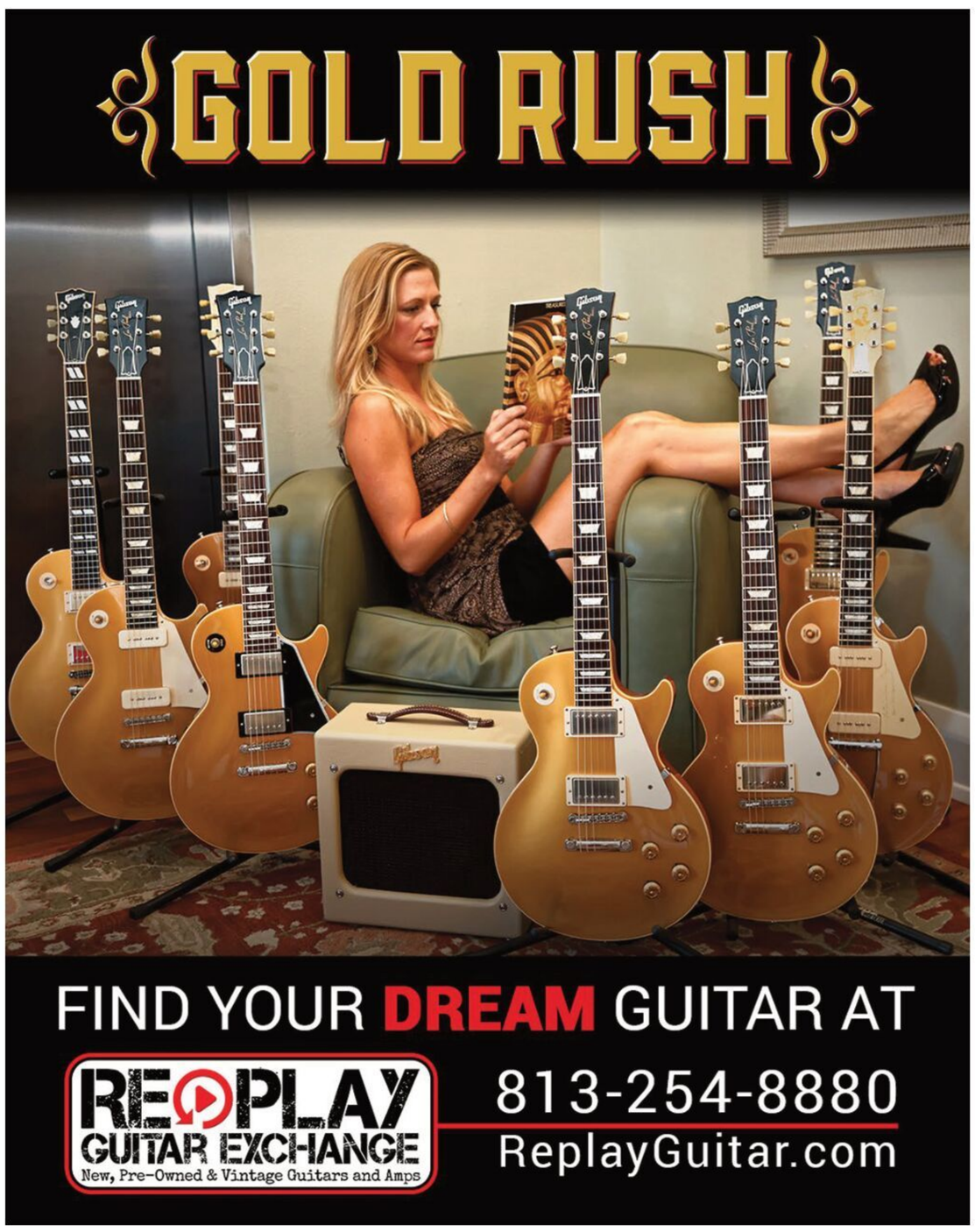


The man himself with a Slash Les Paul Standard in Vermillion Burst.

Slash: Austin Nelson.



Narrow rails under the wound strings, oversize pole pieces under the plain strings. A revolutionary design that tightens lows and fattens highs for exceptional clarity and punch. **Railhammer nails the tone you've been searching for.**





ALEXANDER DUMBLE 1944-2022

RECALLING AN ECCENTRIC GENIUS

BY WARD MEEKER

Howard Alexander Dumble, iconic amp designer and builder, passed away January 16 after suffering a stroke. He was 77 and had been dealing with heart issues including Atrial fibrillation (A-fib).

The son of an engineer, Dumble grew up in Bakersfield, California, and was 12 years old when he started making transistor radios he'd sell to schoolmates for $5. In a 1985 interview with Dan Forte for *Guitar Player*, magazine, Dumble said that in high school, he tinkered on Fender and Gibson guitar amps, which led to building a 200-watt public-address amplifier for a local youth baseball league, using a stockpile of electronic parts donated to the cause. The project inspired him to build an amp for himself, based on Fender's Dual Showman.

A fan of Les Paul and Mary Ford, at 16 he started playing guitar. After graduating high school in 1962, he worked as a studio and touring player, working with songwriter Jim Webb.

In '65, Dumble built an unsolicited amp for his heroes in The Ventures. The band's guitar builder, Semie Moseley, fielded Dumble's pitch, after which Moseley told him, "This is the best thing I've ever heard."

Moseley then bought parts and turned Dumble loose building 10 solid-state amps, paying him $360 for his labor. Ultimately, The Ventures deemed the amps' sound "a little too much rock," but they proposed a business partnership. Dumble declined, opting instead to continue playing guitar as a profession while modding Fender amps for friends and other players.

Between 1966 and '69, he began building original-design amps, beginning with a bass head called the Dumbleland. In '68, he backed pop-folk singer Buffy Saint-Marie, playing bass on tour, then used the earnings to buy equipment for his first shop, at his home in Santa Cruz. His first model, the Explosion, was made in '69; in '72, it became the Overdrive Special (ODS).

Essentially a two-channel/high-gain amp with 6L6 tubes (a handful were made with EL34s), Dumble told Robben Ford the first ODS was inspired by the blackface piggyback Bassman Dumble had seen Ford play with his brothers in The Charles Ford Band. It became widely viewed as the ultimate example of tube-generated overdrive – creamy, with a tactile playing feel and fat, harmonically rich tone. The clean channel was cited for its transparent, responsive, "open" sound. Though it started as a modded Bassman, the amp evolved to become completely original, set apart not only for its sound, but for the hand-measured and matched components, custom transformers, immacu-



Robben Ford's '82 Dumble Overdrive Special (*VG*, May '11), is a 100-watt amp with three 7025 tubes in the preamp, four 6L6GCs in the power section, a solid-state rectifier, controls for Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Overdrive Level and Ratio, Master, and Presence. In the mid '90s, Ford ordered a second ODS, toned down to 45 watts output to lower his stage volume. But after it proved uninspiring for live shows, Dumble reworked it to a 100-watt.

Alexander Dumble photo © Michael Doyle. Ford ODS: Neil Zlozower/VG Archive.

late wire dress, and careful signal-path routing.

After moving his shop from Santa Cruz to North Hollywood, Dumble was hired by record companies to help musicians prep their gear for tour.

"He'd essentially rebuild every instrument, including keyboards, so there'd be no downtime or issues with power in other countries," said Drew Berlin, who, during a 30-year friendship, grew close to Dumble. "One of those bands was Little Feat, and Lowell George was playing an amp that didn't sound very good or work well. Dumble told him, 'I should build an amp for you.'

"That was how Alexander started earning a reputation by bullet-proofing gear, and that carried over because Dumble amps didn't break."

That role also put him the circle of Jackson Browne and his guitarist, David Lindley.

"Dumble was part of their camp," Berlin noted. "He eventually moved into a building on Jackson's estate, and he and Lindley were a big focus for years. He loved them both."

Early on, Dumble accepted amp orders from players of all styles and skill levels. As his reputation grew, the process evolved until he would often have a client play a de facto audition, using their favorite instrument plugged into whichever amps were in his shop. Using his extraordinary ear, he'd make notes about how he'd customize the circuit.

"He could hear things in your playing, and approached your amp specifically for you," said Sonny Landreth, who acquired his first Dumble in 1995. "He tweaked mine to grab the harmonic character that stems from my finger-style approach and palm techniques, basically to enhance what I was doing. It was a deeply personal thing for him – a bond."

That degree of personalization created an unsurprising quirk – anyone other than the player Dumble originally paired to an amp likely would have an unsatisfying experience, at least until they spent significant time learning how to use it – and even then there no guarantees. In fact, Robben Ford and Larry Carlton, two of the highest-profile Dumble users, tell a story of how they swapped Dumbles at a jam and couldn't switch back quickly enough!

As much as he loved building for great players, there were times when Dumble simply didn't click with someone's personality or playing. In a couple of instances, that happened to high-profile musicians.



A "blackface" ODS and Joe Bonamassa's "Robben Ford rig"; ODS, 2x12 cab, and Dumbleator tube-buffered outboard effects loop.

"It wasn't about the money, and it wasn't about the person's fame," said Berlin. "It was about Alexander wanting to add to someone's creativity. If he heard their playing and thought he could do that, then he did."

While Dumbles eventually became a "gotta have one" amp amongst Los Angeles session aces like Carlton, Steve Lukather, Dean Parks, Steve Watson, and Jay Graydon, his work remained mostly under the radar until the emergence of singer/songwriter Jackson Browne as a radio hitmaker, after which they landed in the hands of Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton, Lowell George, Eric Johnson, Bonnie Raitt, Carlos Santana, Sonny Landreth, Robben Ford, and other world-class players.

Backing Browne on lap-steel was David Lindley, whose solo on "Running on Empty," helped push the song to the Top 20 on *Billboard*'s singles chart in 1977.

"That's when I first heard a Dumble," said guitarist Rick Vito (*VG*, November '21), who joined Browne's band in 1982, after Lindley left to record his first solo album, *El Rayo X*. "And the first time I played through a Dumble was at Jackson's studio in downtown L.A. He had a 100-watt Overdrive Special with reverb plugged into a 2x12 cabinet with EVs. It was like plugging into a fighter jet!"

Like Vito, Landreth first heard a Dumble thanks to Browne and Lindley, when the 1979 *Running on Empty* tour landed near a gig he was playing in Jackson, Mississippi.

"I bought my first Overdrive Special from Alexander in 1980," recalled Steve Lukather. "There was a rumble about this guy building amps, so I called him and said, 'I've got to have one,' and he brought it to me, for a thousand bucks. I was working a ton back then and really dug that amp. You can hear it on Quincy Jones' *The Dude* – all the clean sounds. When cranked up, the Dumble started to break up nicely, but I only really used it for that when I did the solo on "Razzamatazz." There's pretty heavy reverb on the track, so you can't really hear the detail, but you hear the burn."

Ford first met Dumble when he ordered an ODS in 1983, after renting one from L.A. gear supplier Andy Brauer, who connected the two.

"We had that hang, that conversation," Ford said. "He was a super-nice cat. At the time, he was working in a rehearsal studio in The Alley. It was interesting because he already knew what he was going to do with my amp, because he'd heard me play the Bassman almost 10 years earlier. And from the beginning, the amplifier was perfect for me. I mean *perfect*."

Vito used Browne's 100-watt Overdrive Reverb and 2x12 cabinet with EV speakers on the 1982 movie-soundtrack hit "Somebody's Baby" (splitting guitar duties with Danny Kortchmar). Then, while Browne and the band were on Thanksgiving break in the run-up to the '83 album *Lawyers in Love,* Stevie Ray Vaughan brought his band to Browne's studio and borrowed a Dumbleland bass head for his clean tones to cut what would become *Texas Flood*. The next year, Browne's Overdrive Reverb was heard on Vito solos for the Top 40 title track and follow-up hits "Tender Is the Night" and "For a Rocker."

"In '84, I was talking to Jackson about how

Dumble blackface ODS courtesy of Joe Bonamassa.



A Dumble Overdrive Deluxe (left) and an '83 ODS profiled by in the February '17 issue of *VG*.

the Dumble had become such a huge part of my playing and sound," Vito recalled. "I'd done a lot of session work with the amp, and I told him I wanted to buy it. Being the kind of guy Jackson is, he said, 'You should have that amp. Take it; it's yours.'"

Among Vito's sessions was one that produced arguably the most-heard lick played through any Dumble – the slide solo from Bob Seger's, "Like A Rock," which reached #1 on the *Billboard* rock-singles chart in 1986 then later spent 13 years propelling TV ads for Chevrolet pickups.

Beyond his blessed ears, Dumble's skill as a guitarist and mathematician played into his meticulousness circuits. He later became guarded about the designs, and developed a penchant for covering much of his chassis in dark epoxy; superficially, the move contributed to the amps' roadworthiness by keeping parts in place, but it also kept the circuit from being copied by emerging "cloners" seeking to cop some Dumble mojo. One major element in the ODS' sound was the Overdrive channel's Ratio control, which adjusted the amount of saturation being fed back into the circuit. And, where most high-gain amps at the time used a gain boost in front of the preamp, Dumble avoided overloading that stage.

By the early '80s, several more models had joined the line, including the Steel String Singer, which he built for Henry Kaiser, Lindley, Browne, Eric Johnson, and Vaughan, whose heavy attack, thick strings, and desire for maximum headroom led Dumble to use 6550 output tubes and a larger power transformer, more like a bass amp. Vaughan called it "King Tone Consoul" and it produced 150 watts output. Other models included the Dumbleland and Winterland bass amps, the Overdrive Reverb, the rackmount Phoenix and Dumbleman, the Big Tex reverb, and the Dumbleator tube-driven outboard effects loop. The 100-watt Overdrive head originally sold for $1,925 while others ranged up to $5,000 before customizing – big money in the '80s.

Landreth's best early look at a Dumble in action happened in '88, when Lindley and his band played a small club in the Midwest near where Landreth was on a tour stop with John Hiatt.

"With that small group, in that setting, I could hear everything David was playing, and his sound *wowed* me," Landreth said. "At the time, I was very into developing my tone, and that night was when I knew I needed one of those amps."

Still, he didn't get to play through one for several years.

"In 1994, Stephen Bruton and I were booked at Grant Street Dancehall, in Lafayette. He had his first Overdrive Special – a 100-watt – and I was playing a Strat with DiMarzio DP181 pickups. At sound check, he said, 'Before you go, you've got to try this.' I plugged in and of course it instantly grabbed me. I said, "Wow! This is *great*!" and he goes, 'Wait a minute. You're more of a midrange guy,' and he flipped a switch. It sounded *even better*."

Later that year, Landreth was recording *South of I-10* when, out of the blue, Dumble called and said, "Why don't you come out to L.A. and try some amps?" From the time Landreth took delivery of his Overdrive Special (and 2x12 cab) in the fall of '95, it became a constant. Every so often, he and the amp would revisit the shop and Dumble would tweak it, continually building on Landreth's tone.

By the early '90s, Dumble offered every amp at three prices, based on how long a customer was willing to wait; the Overdrive Special was $2,135 for "Standard" (24 to 36 months), $3,650 for "Express – 180" (days, that is), and $5,150 for "Express – 60," with a guaranteed two-month completion on the latter. The sheet also offered "telephone consultation" services at $200 for 10 minutes. If the customer didn't pay for a faster build, it could stretch from a few months to several years.

"Sometimes, deals wouldn't materialize even for celebrity players if they needed something quickly," said Berlin. "If Alexander was able to drop everything and do just *that* amp, he usually would. But that meant other things got put pushed aside, and it wasn't always possible."

Dumble admired Carlos Santana as a person, and loved his playing, but Berlin recalled that it took years for him to finish Carlos' amp. Also, Ray Woodbury, rhythm guitarist in Lindley's band, reportedly had to wait a year.

Latter-day Dumble devotees include Don Felder, Slash, Keith Urban, Kirk Hammett, Ben Harper, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Jason Isbell, and Joe Bonamassa, who, while he didn't acquire one until 2010, was turned on to Dumble amps in the early '90s, when he was part of a band called Bloodline.

"We were rehearsing in California, and when the subject of guitar tones would come up, there was always a lot of gushing about Robben Ford's Dumble tone on *Talk to Your Daughter*," he said. "I was, like, 'What the hell is a Dumble?'

"One of the guys in the band was Robby Krieger's son, Waylon, and one day some guy brought an Overdrive Special to rehearsal, saying he wanted to sell it to Robby. He wanted 2,500 bucks. I plugged it into my 4x12 and, being a naive kid, thought, 'I don't sound like Robben Ford, here. What's all the fuss?'" (laughs)

Bonamassa didn't spend real time with a Dumble until he bought his first, an ODS head, 2x12 cabinet with EVs, and Dumbleator – a.k.a. the Robben Ford rig.

"Over the years, I've come to really love the 50-watt 1x12 combos with a Celestion," he said. "They have a big sound out of a little package. I'm normally a 100-watt guy, but four of the five Dumbles I own are 50-watters with 85-watt ceramic Celestions."

Given the mystique surrounding the eccentric, reclusive Dumble even among his celebrity clientele, it's little wonder the guitar press was forced to let players – and the amps themselves – do the talking for him. *Vintage Guitar* contributor Dave Hunter has profiled four Dumble amps (including Robben Ford's personal ODS and the newly unearthed Special 16 in this issue).

"The first time I played a Dumble was about 25 years ago in the studio of a friend," said Hunter, author of several books on amps and other gear. "I was cynical going in, figuring, 'This thing couldn't possibly live up to the hype,' and well... how *wrong* I was. A Dumble wasn't 'my

Dumble Overdrive Deluxe courtesy of Joe Bonamassa. 1983 Dumble Overdrive Special: Dean Gurr/VG Archive.

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Fender

Stratocaster, 1957, Lefty, J Black body refin only, neck original, non-tremolo, beautiful, original tweed hsc, exc $18,500
Stratocaster, 1966, SB, near mint, 100%, exc, ohsc ...$22,500
Stratocaster, 1966, Body pro refin gold, exc, ohsc.....$8500
Strat, 1968, SB, extra switch was routed in once, pg is intact, black bottom pickups, vgc, ohsc $8900
Strat, 1998, Candy Apple red, R'wood brd, exc+, ohsc..$1095
Strat 1954 RI , 2004, sb, Masterbld Greg Fessler, exc...$4950
Strat Relic, 1999, '60 Closet Classic, 3-tone Sunburst...$2750
Clapton Strat, Blackie, c 2013, exc, ohsc..... $1350
Strat, heavy relic LP Blue, 2020, Ltd Ed., big neck, cert $3500
Telecaster, 1952, refret, all else original, OHSC $57,500
Esquire, 1958, Blonde, exc, tweed case.... .....$23,900
Telecaster Thinline, 1969, refin black body, repaired routes, 5.8 lbs. 2 sigle coils, orig pearloid pg, vgc, hsc.....$4750
American Orig 50's Tele, 2020, LEFTY, BlkGrd, nm..... $1650

Gibson Solid Body

Les Paul Standard, 1958, sunburst, nice flame, vgc+,ohsc.....
LP 1960 Re-issue, 2011, csb, nice top!, 8.6 lbs.....$5250
LP'59 Standard RI, 2005, csb, highly figured top, 9.12 lbs., Brazilian brd by hist makeovers, exc+, brown ohsc...$6950
LP Traditional, 2012, faded sb top, 9.7 lbs, vgc, ohsc....$1895
Firebird V, 1963, sb, 2 pu, Vibrola, ohsc, top refin, ohsc....$8,900
Firebird I, c 1963, refin white ages ago, 2 Gibson hb tuno-matic bridge, no breaks, plays great, vgc, ohsc.....$5000
SG Custom, Aged White, 2006,'63 style, 3 pu, short Bigsby added, gold Grovers, vgc+, hsc.....$3250
Les Paul Special, 1960, LEFTY, Pat # hb at bridge.....$12,500
Les Paul Special, 1961, TV Yellow, 2 P-90s, exc,ohsc.....$17,500

Gibson, Epiphone & Other Electric Archtops

Gibson L-5CESN, ca 1972, Blonde, exc, ohsc.....$7900
Gibson Super 400 CES, 1992, SB, 2 hb, exc, ohsc.....$8500
ES-335, LEFTY, 2008, SB small pghd rep, Dot-neck..$2250
Buscarino Virtuoso, c 2000, built for Russell Malone, 18" cut-away, carved Spruce top, Maple b&s, hb neck, exc-, ohsc$8500
SADOWSKY Jim Hall Model, 2007, violin finish, exc....$4000

Gretsch & Rickenbacker

Gretsch 6192 Country Club, 1962, sb, a slim 1 7/8" with 2 Filtertrons, Bigsby plus orig tailpiece, vgc+ ohsc..$3950
Rick Bantar 6000, '64, fireglo, **5-str elect Banjo**, ohsc.....$13,500
Rick Deluxe Lap Steel, silver w/gold, exc, ohsc $1400

Acoustic Archtops

D'Angelico New Yorker, 1946, sunburst, built when John had no apprentice, all orig. exc, ohsc $30,000
D'Angelico New Yorker, 1962, sb, cutaway, nm, ohsc.....
Gibson Johnny Smith, 1966, sb, 1 pu, exc, ohsc $9900
Gibson Style U Harp Gtr, 1907, Black, 21", exc-, ohsc.....$7500
Ibanez 2461 Johnny Smith, 1977, SB, 2 pu, exc, ohsc.....$2450
KAY N-1, ca 1959, 17" cutaway , new frets, plays great. $995
Maccaferri Plastic guitar, G-40 Archtop, '50s, exc+, ssc $895
Marvel Archtop, '50s, 15 1/2" wide non-cut, vgc+... .....$495
Monteleone Eclipse.... .....in transit
Stromberg Master 400, Blonde, 1946, loudest!, ohsc $35,000

Other Electric Guitars

BC RICH Pro X Custom Special Mockingbird, sb, nm $650
Carvin Double neck Model 11, c 1968, sb, Mandolin (1 pu) and Guitar (2 pu) necks, exc, ohsc.....$3950
B&G Crossroads Little Sister, new, Cutaway, sb, 2 hb $1450
B&G Standard Build, Israel, NEW, sb, 2 P-90 pu,curly top .$2995
Burns Baldwin Double Six, ca '66, green burst, 12 str..$2350
Danelectro Convertible, '60s, soundhole pickup..... ..$950
DanocasterThinline, recent, blonde finish, exc.....$4000
FanoAlt de Facto RB6, white, maple neck, exc, hsc..... $1950
Hofner 4575 Verithin, '60s, sb, 3 pickups, exc, hsc $1500
Hagstrom II, ca 1970, pro White refin, 2 pu, exc, gb.....$450
Ibanez Custom Agent, model 2405, 1976, sunburst..... .$1950
KRAMER American, Stagemaster Custom, c 1986, Hot Pink, HB-S-S, Floyd, Ebony board w/ diamond inlays.....$2500
NASH T-59/Flametop, 2019, sb, T-style bod, 2 hb, exc.$2450
NASH TC-63, Tele Custom style, 2016, LPB, binding....$1850
NASH JM-63 Jazzmaster, NEW, Surf Green, ...$2450
National Glenwood 95, '63, White, Map guitar, exc, hsc$4950
OVATION Breadwinner, 1967, black 2pu exc, gigbag.. $1495
Parker NiteFly, USA, Blue, 1c. 996 ,Tremolo, S-S-H..... $1450
Spalt Player's Choice Tool #2, NEW, 2 pu, natural.....$3250
Teuffel Bird Fish, recent, 3 pu, leather case, exc $8900
VOX Student Prince, V229, Italy, c1967, sb, hollow 1pu.....$850
WOODY PHIFER, Signature, ca 2005, figured Maple top, curly Maple back, sides & neck, exquisite, near mint.....$7900
Yamaha SG1000, '80s, sb, 2 hb, was Mick Jones' w/ ID ...$2900

Basses

Alembic Essence 5 String ,1994, AAA curly top, Ebony board, 34" scale, LED dots, 2 pickups, new~ $11,500, nm.....$4200
Alembic Scorpion 1984, nat blistered Maple, 2 pu, Brass hdwr, Neck-thru , LED, dual rods, 32" scale 24 frets $9500
Fender Bass VI, 1974, SB, R'wood brd,3 pu Trem, exc..... $4750
Fender Jazz Bass, 1969, Sunburst, Block inlays, exc...$6500
Fender P- Bass, 1958, body only refin silver, vgc, hsc $8500
Precision Bass, 1964, old white refin, orig neck.....$4995
Fender P-Bass '79, Nat Ash body, Maple neck, Dmarz.... $1950
Gibson EB-6, 1960, 6 Str Baritone, sb, 1 PAF, exc+, ohc $12,900
Gibson EB-0, 1961, Cherry, double cut LP Junior style$3900
GibsonThunderbird IV 1964, 2 pu, sb,Entwistle sig, exc.....$17K
Gibson RD Artist Bass, 1979, Sunburst, exc, ohsc.....$2400
Guild Starfire, sunburst, 1 pickup, 335 style,ohsc, vgc..$2695
KAY M-1B Upright,1953, Blonde, curly Maple, gb,exc-..... $3500
Zim-Gar ER-1, Japan, ca 1970 sunburst, 1 pickup, hsc.....$495

Martins

00-12 Fret Custom Shop, NEW, Adirondack top, Cocobolo b&s, pyramid bridge, Rope purfling, pearl rosette ohsc.....$6900
D-28, 1940, has newer old pg, vgc, ohsc.....$39500
D-28, 1949, Sunburst top refinish , nice Braz, vgc.....$7950
D-18, 1966, all original, medium action, vgc, hsc.....$4500
000-21, 1905, all orig, 5th 000 made, 1 owner, exc+, hsc$24,000
00-21 Custom Shop, 2011, 12 fret, a beauty, exc, ohsc.$2250
GPC Special, 2020, sb, 16 Style Rosewood b&s, pu $1250
Schmidt & Maul, 1845, 2 1/2, Brazilian b&s, earliest X,ohc.$6900
C-1 Concert Uke, '50s, 3 tight back cracks rep, vgc+.....$1150

Gibson & Epiphone Flat Tops

SJ-200, 1953, Blonde, unique pickguard, ohsc.....$17,950
Hummingbird, 1967, csb, "Ernie Lee" in pearl script in fingerboard, double guards ,vgc, hsc.....$4500
Dove, 1969, Cherry Sunburst, Gold Imperial s, ohsc...$5900
B-45-12, 1969, dread 12-string,belly pin bridge, exc..... $2750
J-35 Re-issue, Nat, Spruce top, Mahog b&s, exc-,ohsc..... $2100

Other Flat Tops & Classicals

ASHBORN, 1863, Maple b&s 11 1/2" wide, 3 3/4" deep, Spruce top, Braz board, ice-cream cone heel, vgc+.....$3950
Brondel A-1, '07, Ital Spruce, Bloodwood b&s, exc,hsc $3950
Collings SJ, recent, Blonde, small jumbo with Spruce top, curly Maple back & sides, K&K w/ vol, exc+, ohsc.....$4500
Collings 00-2 MRG, 2008, 12-fret solid peg-head, German Spruce top, Madagascar Rosewood, 1 3/4" nut, nm.....$6900
Harmony LONE RANGER, small guitar, '50s, vgc+..... ....$225
Huss & Dalton DS Custom, Slope shouldered Dread,used, sunburst, Baggs soundhole pu, vgc.....$2500
Harmony Sovereign 12-String, ca 1970, exc, ... $850
STAHL, Larson Brothers, 13 1/2" wide, Brazilian b&s, pearl trimmed Adi Spruce top, pearl rosette, exc, hsc..... .....$8900
Larrivee BARITONE BT-03, 2021, NEW, ohsc..... $1719
Veilette Avante, high strung 12 str, w/ pickup, gigbag..... $1100
Contreras Classical, 1972, Cedar top, R wood b&s,exc.....$5500
Jose Oribe Classic Suprema 1996, Brazilian, exc $5500
Kohno Mod.15, 1978, Spruce top, RW b&s, 660 mm, exc... $2400

Resonator, Steel & Slide Guitars

DOBRO Model 37, ca 1937, sb , *f* holes, Square Neck... $1350
National Aragon, 1939, sb, Wood, Loudest & Rarest, exc... $12,500
Gibson Console Grande, 1952, curly Blonde triple neck, hc...$2900
Epiphone Electar Lap Steel, '50s, sunburst, exc..... .....$650
Rickenbacker Electro, '50s, black, silver plates, new neck? 7-String, original horseshoe pickup $795

Mandolins & Banjos

Gibson H-2 Mandola, 1923, reddish burst, adj rod, exc+, ..$5000
Gibson F-5 Mandolin, 1955, sb, sounds good! ohsc, nm. $8500
F-4, 1928, sb, adj rod, a beauty, great tone, exc, ohsc. $6950
Gibson A-2-Z, 1924, Snakehead, blonde, exc, ohsc.....$4500
Gibson PB-3 Mastertone Plectrum 1925, 60 holeArchtop...$2400
RB-4 Mastertone Archtop, 1932, Monteleone neck.....$7900
VEGA Regent 5-String 1924, orig resonator, exc, hsc...$1550
Vega Professional Tenor, c 1930, vgc, hsc $850

Amps

Ampeg Guitar Amp, c 1951, custom, Lansing 8", exc ...$4500
AMPEG B-15N Fliptop, 1962, 1 owner in real nice shape, all original, blue square tolex, w/ original cover, exc.....$2500
Headstrong Lil King NEW, White, Listen to one..... $2150
Fender Champion 600, 1953, tweed, 6" spkr, vgc.....$2450
Fender Deluxe, 1955, narrow panel, maybe retweeded.$4950
Fender Princeton 1964, white knobs, exc.....,$2700
Fender Princeton 1966, Black Panel, Gilco Spkr exc..$1950
Magnatone Troubador 213, 1964, 1 Jensen C12R 12" $1495
Magnatone Custom 460 ,1961, 2 12" Oxfords, Trem, exc..... $2195
Marshall Slant Cab, 1969, 4 Greenbacks, vgc $3750
Marshall 1969 B bottom, 76/77 g12H30 blackbacks $2900
Marshall JCM 2000 Head, TSL 60 watts, exc $595
Marshall Lead 4x12 Model 8412, 8 Ohms, straight cab..... ..$295
Matchless DC-30, 1994 early production, Burgundy $4250
ROLAND JC-50 Jazz Chorus combo, used, 1x12"...$495
TONE KING Metropolitan 2009, sn 001, Black & Creme,1x12" Combo, 40 watts with output power attenuator, exc....$2150
Vox AC-30, c 1964, new Vox grill cloth, orig spkrs.. .....$2950
Roland Space Echo, c 1979, RE-150,green/black, exc.. ....$995
Tone King Metropolitan '09, sn#001, 1x12" Combo, exc.$2195
Echoplex EP-2, Green Box, Tubes, vgc..... .....$1250

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sound,' yet it was instantly one of the most-expressive and dynamic lead-voiced amps I'd ever played through. I'll never forget that feeling of connectedness."

In the early 2000s, Berlin, then in charge of the vintage-instrument department of the megachain Guitar Center, connected Dumble with CEO Larry Thomas and presented a plan to create and build a Burst Brothers amp based on a Dumble with one input and just a Volume knob.

"It was simple and basic, and I suggested to Alexander that he make the circuit board and I'd find someone to build the cabinets and install the chassis," Berlin said. "I was hoping to get him $1 million to make 50 or 100 of them. He liked the idea, but eventually decided he wanted complete involvement – didn't want to pass a circuit board to someone else to put in. Once I could see that certain details were stressing him out, I suggested we call it off."

Apart from complete amps, Dumble created amp mods like the tone-stack option positioned after the Overdrive channel's gain stage in the ODS, whimsically dubbed the Hot Rubber Monkey, or "HRM mod." Another tone-stack was called Skyline, while more-complex mods to non-Dumble amps were dubbed Rock Fonicks and Ultra-Phonix.

When Eric Johnson moved from Texas to L.A. in preparation to record his 1986 album, *Tones*, he was introduced to Dumble by Christopher Cross and Richard Mullen.

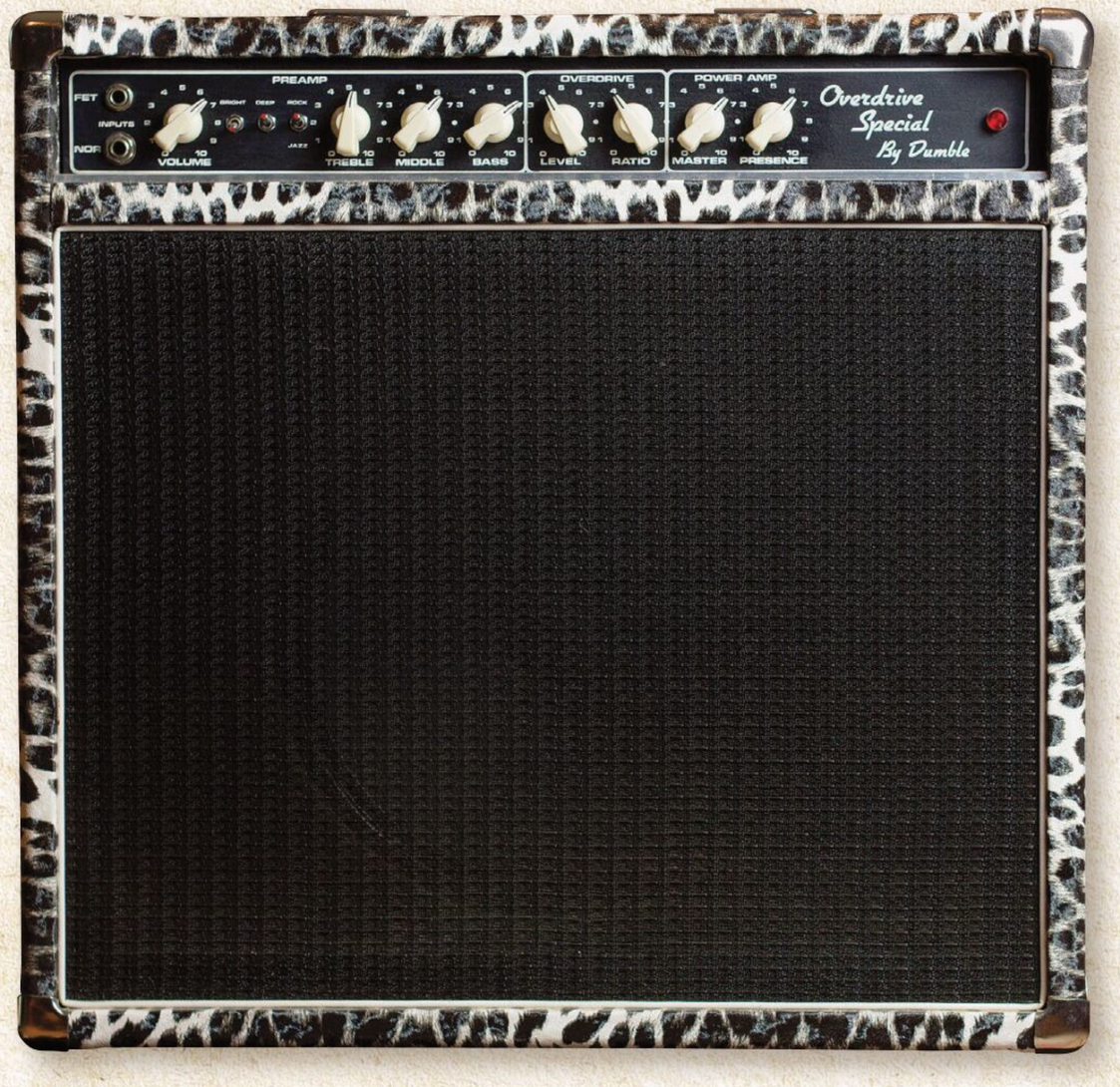
"I have fond memories of going to his shop and talking tone and our visions of music," Johnson said. "Alexander had a wonderful passion for music and sound and guitar tone. I'd always leave there excited.

"I was honored to play two amps made by Alexander; 'Zap' (from *Tones*) was recorded on an Overdrive Special and Roscoe Beck's 335. I eventually got a Steel String Singer from Alexander, and it was such a *magical* amp, there's been nothing quite like it since. I regret that I let go of it when I was going through a traumatic time, suffering from noise exposure. I never thought I'd want to be around or play through an amp of that wattage. It was one of my shortcomings, not to have the insight to put it in the closet and wait [until I] figured a way to use it – baffling speaker cabinets or using lower-efficiency speakers, or simply turning down the master Volume!"

"One of the highlights of my life was getting to know Alexander, talk about amps, and have him mod one for me," said music producer Dave Cobb (page 58), who has worked with discriminating tone lovers including Slash (page 56), Chris Stapleton, and Charlie Starr. "When I went to his house the first time, he had a bunch of amps and was very suspicious because he'd never heard me play. He asked, 'Is there something you'd like to try?'

"There was a blackface Deluxe that caught my attention. I'd brought a Gretsch Penguin, and when I plugged in, that amp checked every box – reminded me of an early Marshall, but it also could've also been a Vox; there was something about that tone – that loud, clean, about-to-break-up thing it did so well.

"After he heard me play a bit, he asked, 'Is there anything you'd like me to build for you?' And I said, 'One of these!' So he did his Ultra-Phonix mod to a mid-'60s Deluxe. It was a complete overhaul, and it's pure magic."



In 1986, Chuck Matses paid $2,150 up-front for this ODS and received it five months after placing the order. He found its leopard-skin covering – originally used on Arctic Cat snowmobile seats – in a friend's upholstery shop, and Dumble used it on several other amps in the era. It was profiled by Dave Hunter in the November '15 issue of *VG*.

SINGING PRAISE

When guitardom learned of Dumble's passing, fans, players, and others chimed in with personal stories.

"The world can say what the legend of Dumble, but when his peers provide thoughtful comments, it carries weight," said Dave Hunter. "In 2005, I interviewed Ken Fischer, of Trainwreck Circuits, and asked if there were other makers he admired. He said, 'As far as really elegant engineering, I'd say Dumble. When he decides to do an amp for an artist, and do it well, there's nothing like it.'

"That spoke volumes, coming from a guy who wasn't impressed by much in contemporary amp building."

While he never made more than a dozen or so amps in any given year, in the last several years of his life, deteriorating health forced Dumble to carefully choose his builds. While most recall his warm, personable character, lore tells of an egotistical curmudgeon; the most famous tale is how he insisted on a substantial down payment for every order, and some customers were instructed never to call asking when their amp would be ready; if they did, their order would be cancelled. But those were the exception.

"The Alexander I knew and loved was always in my corner, always," said Landreth. "He was quirky and could be difficult, but genius types like him operate on a different level. And a lot of times he just didn't feel well. He wasn't in the best of health, which was misunderstood. He sometimes had to choose who he had energy for."

"Hanging out with him, we'd talk about books he was reading – he was into metaphysics, which was out of my bailiwick, but always interesting," said Ford. "He used to go panning for gold – liked to be paid in gold. He was the most reclusive person I've ever known – very into his privacy. And he was no fan of government."

"I have fond memories of Alexander and his genius, his passion and love for music, and of course, his electronic brilliance," Johnson added. "Playing through his masterpieces was an extra jewel of ability and dimension. He was one of a kind."

"I've never met anybody who had such a clear concept of exactly how to get what a player wants out of an amplifier, and make one that matched their tone, hands, and personality," said Cobb. "Getting to know him is one of the most-precious things I've ever experienced. He was one of the deepest, kindest, most beautiful people I've ever known."

"He was always checking on me," Landreth added. "He'd call and I'd tell him about any storms we might be having, and he'd tell me about fires near him. We did that for a long time."

"Alexander was a genius," said Bonamassa. "There are four quintessential guitar-amp tonalities – Marshall, Fender, Vox, and Dumble. He was right there. He came up with something unique and it has been copied hundreds of times. There's a cottage industry of Dumble-style builders. But, Alexander never cashed in. He could have licensed his circuit and made millions."

'86 Dumble ODS: Chuck Matses/VG Archive.

"It's incredible, the number of people who never met Alexander or played one of his amps, but they're nonetheless inspired by him because they love the tones of the artists who played them," Berlin added. "In the last few months of his life, he was very, very happy; he had moved to Northern California and had a beautiful place. His life was good."

Vito loved to tease his eccentric friend a bit, and maybe incite a laugh.

"When I'd run into him, I'd very dramatically recite a poem, to his great delight:

'I used to mumble, my sound would crumble, and my fingers stumble and bumble. But now it's hard to be humble, cause I'm playing through a Dumble and look out, now I roll and I tumble!'"

HEAR IT

Music made with Dumble amps is, to put it mildly, plentiful. Apart from the aforementioned songs by Browne, Seger, Fleetwood Mac, and Quincy Jones, as well as Stevie Ray Vaughan's *Texas Flood* with Browne's Dumbleland; he likely took delivery of his first Steel String Singer in time for *Couldn't Stand The Weather,* and ultimately had three of them that provided his clean tones on every album and tour from that point onward.



Joe Bonamassa onstage with one of his Dumbles.

Bonamassa live: Rick Gould.

"Their sustain and distortion helped make Dumble amps popular," Berlin noted. "But more important, I think, is the warmth of the clean, which you hear on Stevie Ray's 'Little Wing.'"

Every solo album Ford recorded from 1988's *Talk to Your Daughter* through 2015's *Into the Sun* features his Dumble with a 2x12 cab, as did his many jazz-fusion albums with Yellowjackets.

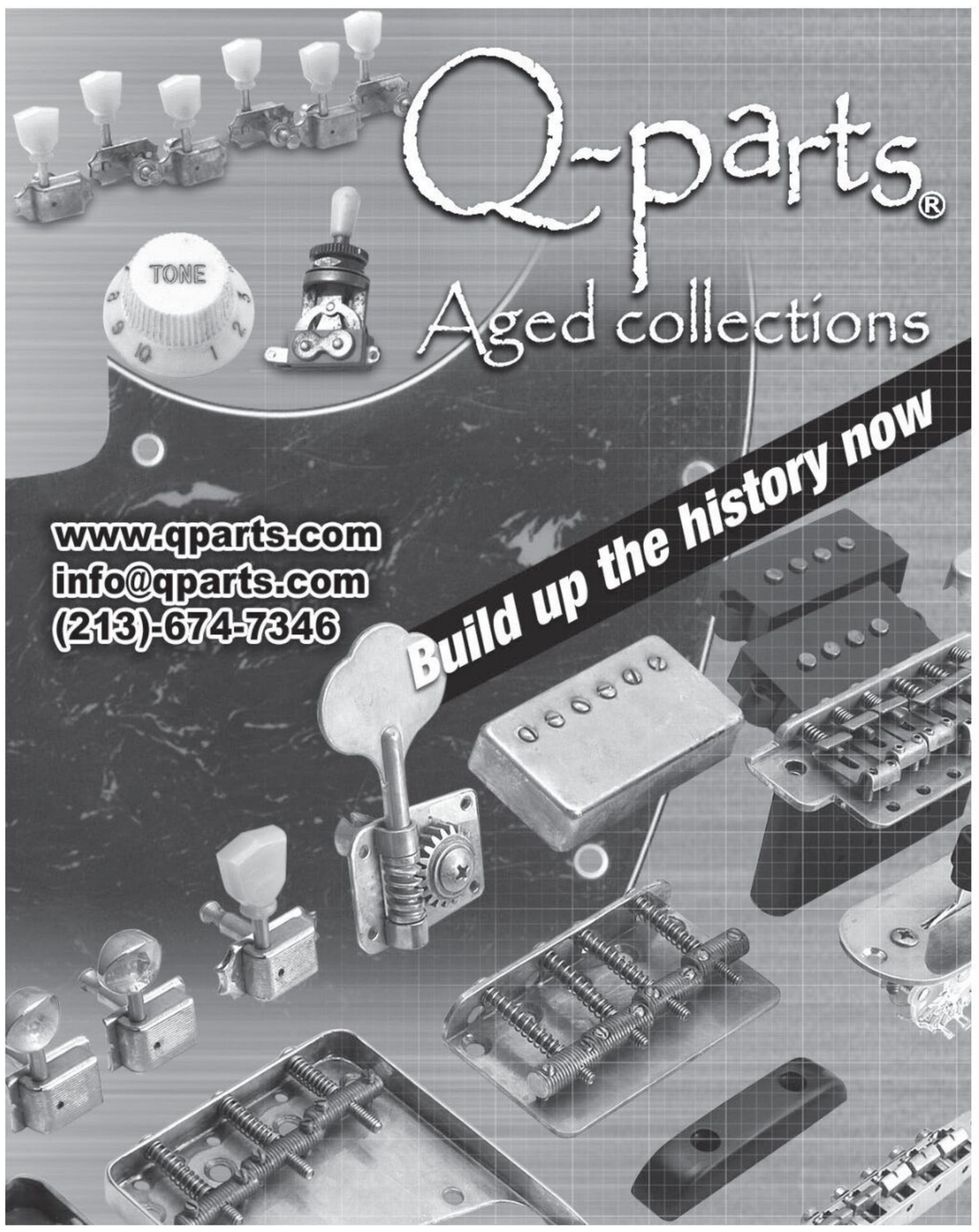
Great examples of Dumble tone purveyed via Landreth's unique style can be heard on the instrumental "Simcoe Street," from *Bound By the Blues*, where his 1960 Les Paul Standard provides what he calls "the perfect marriage." "Howling Moon," on *From the Reach*, offers a glimpse of his Strat sound, while "Gaia Tribe," from *Elemental Journey,* tag-teams Landreth's clean tones with a Joe Satriani solo.

"I especially think of a Dumble when I hear the articulation in the slide playing of Lowell George, and the stuff Larry Carlton did with Steely Dan," said Bonamassa. "And of course Eric Johnson's Steel String Singer on *Ah Via Musicom*."

This list simply scratches the surface of what is known, let alone what's not.

"Most players will tell you their Dumble opens up possibilities," said Berlin. "It increases the tone spectrum and inspires you to be more expressive. But, there are also a lot of people who've used Dumble amps but never really talked about them. And there are big-name players who don't play them onstage, but on their records, you hear them." **VG**





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DALLAS INTERNATIONAL GUITAR FESTIVAL 2022



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Upcoming Events

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Denotes a new or updated listing.

Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, 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

MARCH

Cincinnati Guitar Show, Sunday, March 6 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.

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday, March 6 at The Holiday Inn, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove Village, Il 60007. 9am to 3pm. For Booth Information contact Beverly at 847-931-0707 or email Bakesguitar@aol.com

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 Lansing Music Instrument Swap, Sunday, March 20th at the Causeway Bay Convention Center, 6820 S Cedar St., Lansing, MI 48911 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

Central Coast Guitar Show, March 26, 2022, 10am-4pm, at the Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 3455 Skyway Dr., Santa Maria, CA 93455. For more info, call (805)431-3067, email centralcoastguitarshow@Charter.net, or visit www.CentralCoastGuitarShow.com.

The Indiana Guitar Show, March 19-20, 2022 at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E Main St, Danville, Indiana. For more info visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com **(See Advertisement on page 70.)**

Amigo Nashville Guitar Show, March 26-27, Williamson County Ag Expo Park, Franklin, TN. For more info Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com, Ruth at (817) 312-7659, ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Dave at (417) 850-4751, davelcrocker@gmail.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

APRIL

2022 Southwestern Ohio Guitar Show, April 1 - 3 at the Clark County Fairgrounds - Youth Building, Springfield OH. Dealer day April 1 from 10am - 5pm, Saturday, 10am-5pm, Sunday 10am-4pm. Contact Jimmy at 614-202-5638

NY Guitar Show, April 2-3 at the Freeport Recreation Center, 130 E Merrick Rd. Freeport, NY 11520. Hours 10am-5pm. Contact Rich Johnson at 516-435-8382 or rich@the-fishingline.com. www.nyguitarexpo.com

Northeast Guitar Expo, originally planned for April 3, 2022 has been postponed to November 13th. For more info call Peter Occhineri (860) 983-6774, email – NortheastGuitarExpo@gmail.com, website – www.NortheastGuitarExpo.com

The Kalamazoo Music Instrument Swap, Sunday April 24 at the Kalamazoo County Expo Center, 2900 Lake St., Kalamazoo, MI 49048 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

Dallas International Guitar Festival, April 29 through May 1, at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX, For more info visit www.guitarshow.com. **(See Advertisement on page 68 and 69.)**

MAY

Eastern Kentucky Guitar Show, May 1, Boyd County Community Center, Rt 180, Catlettsburg, KY. Hours 11-4. Vendor set up at 8:00AM. For more information contact Jeff Preston 606-923-4130 or Jeff Ware 606-922-0626

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, May 7-8, 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

Tacoma Guitar & Drum Festival, May 21-22, at the Tacoma Dome; 2727 E D St, Tacoma, WA. For more info contact Bruce at (253) 445-1973, bruce@adolphagency.com or visit www.tacomaguitarfestival.com.

Amigo Chicago Guitar Show, May 21-22, Odeum Sports & Expo Center, Villa Park, IL. For more Dave at (417) 850-4751, davelcrocker@gmail.com, Ruth at (817) 312-7659, ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Rob at (417) 869-3325 or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com

JUNE

Amigo SoCALGuitar Show, June 4-5, OC Fair & Event Center, Costa Mesa, CA. For more info Larry at (918)288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

SEPTEMBER

The Indiana Guitar Show, September 9-11, at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds 1900 E. Main St. Danville, IN. For more information contact Eddie at (317) 272-5222 or visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, September 17-18, 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 18th at the Kent Commons, Kent, WA. For more info contact Bruce (253) 445-1973, bruce@adolphagency.com or visit www.seatacguitarshow.com.

Chicago Vintage Guitar Show, September 25 at The Holiday Inn, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. 9am to 3pm. For Booth Information contact Beverly at 947-931-0707 or email Bakesguitar@aol.com

OCTOBER

Guitarlington 2021, October 15-16 at the Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way,



Upcoming Events

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.

NOVEMBER

The Ann Arbor Music Instrument Swap, Sunday, November 6th at Weber's Inn, 3050 Jackson Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

Northeast Guitar Expo, Sunday, November 13 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

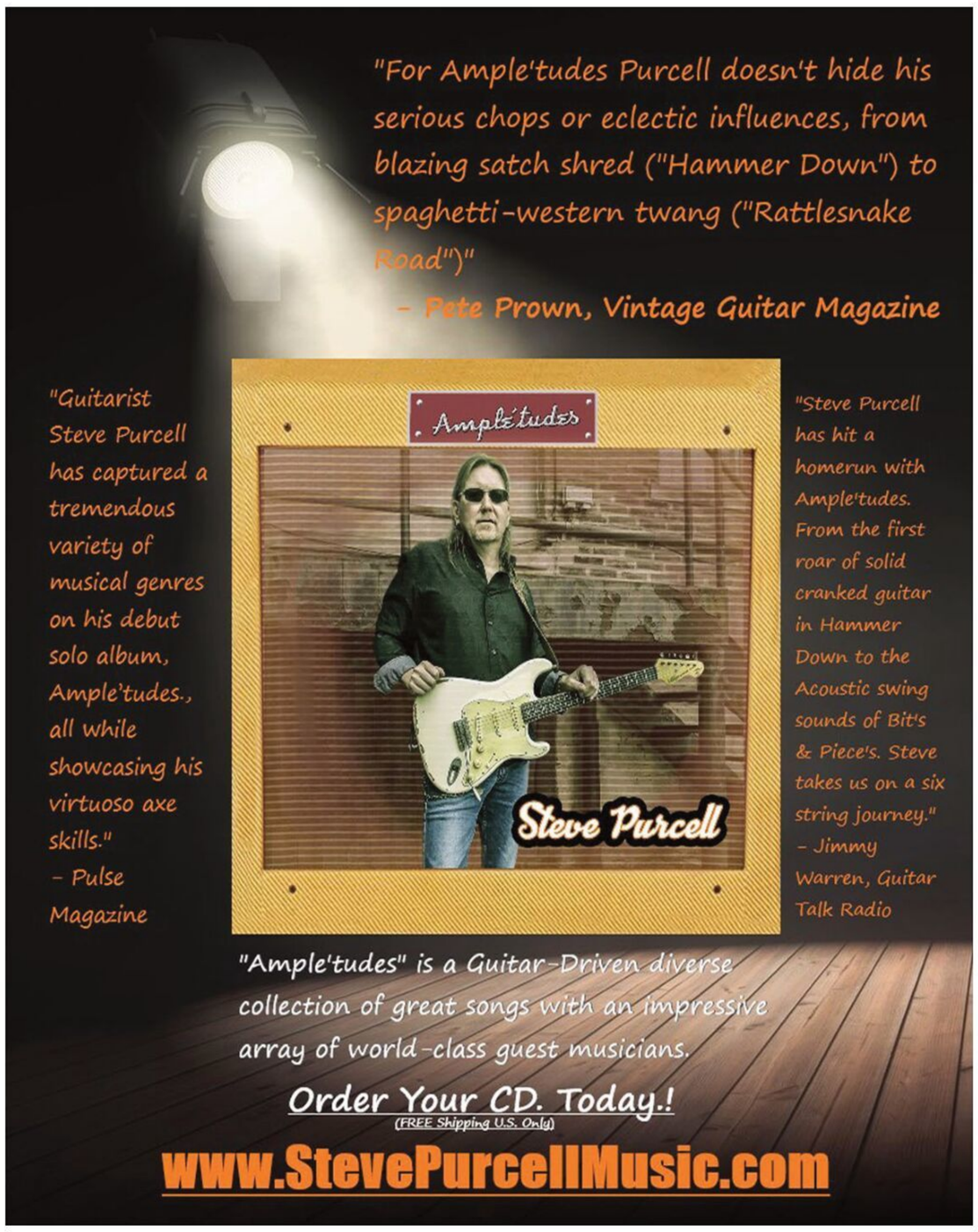
2023

FEBRUARY

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, February 3-5, 2023 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

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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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REVIEWS



BRIM-FULL BLUES

The topic is psychedelic blues, and J.D. Simo is the man with the brown acid. Hypnotic wah, talking hollowbody guitars, and trippy drum patterns permeate an album that will change the equilibrium of any environment. Simo's muse is that time and place when artists like B.B. King shared the bill with bands like Jefferson Airplane. He assembles harmonic infrastructure using elements of acoustic blues, Chicago blues, Northern Mississippi blues, and late-'60s San Francisco hippie rock.

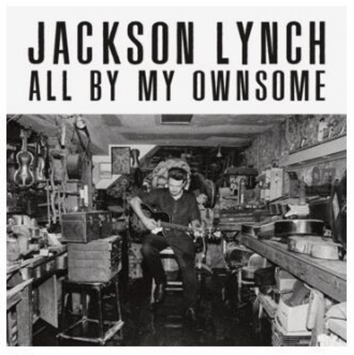
Mind Control is filled to the brim with echo, reverb, stream-of-consciousness soloing, and drug-induced wailings about love, redemption, pain, and humanity. Simo's ferocity jumps right out of the gate on "Go Away Satan," a powerful track with expert wah, aggressive soloing, and emotional singing. His



J.D. Simo
Mind Control

transcendent power-trio configuration yields density and space to support the narrative. Props to drummer Adam Abrashoff and bassist Adam Bednarik. "I'm In Love" is one of many one-chord wonders that sends the listener into the world of obsessive love while shrooming.

Simo gets serious when he whips out the slide for "Let Go." It's intense! "F***ed Up" delivers saturated, ripped-speaker fuzz with a sludgy aftertaste and hip, melodic breaks. This is inspired electric music. – ***Oscar Jordan***



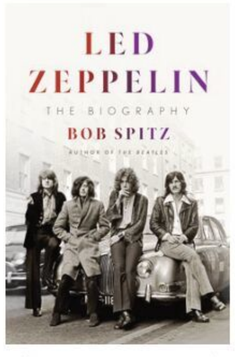
Jackson Lynch
All My By Ownsome

It's often said that music must move forward or die. But genres don't evolve in a straight line – be they Joe Bonamassa paying homage to the Kings or the country blues of Keb' Mo'. Jackson Lynch is a traditionalist in the best sense of the term. He doesn't treat old material like museum pieces, but, in places, his interpretations are so convincing they sound like a 78 record without the surface noise.

Born in Ireland and reared in New York City, Lynch mixes blues, gospel, and early jazz. Though he plays fiddle in the old-timey string band The Down Hill Strugglers, this is solo voice and acoustic guitar. His playing can be rhythmic, but on "Tomorrow Night" he gives a taste of Lonnie Johnson's single-note style.

Five of the covers are obscure, with the exception of "In My Time Of Dying," which leans on '62 Dylan as opposed to Led Zeppelin's version. He takes fellow traditionalist Leonie Evans' "Thanks" and uncannily reels the primitive gospel tune back 70 or so years.

As producer, blues guitarist Big Jon Atkinson stays in the control room, helping get perfect reverb, stressing the solitary nature. But a Lynch/Atkinson collaboration down the line sure would be nice. – ***Dan Forte***



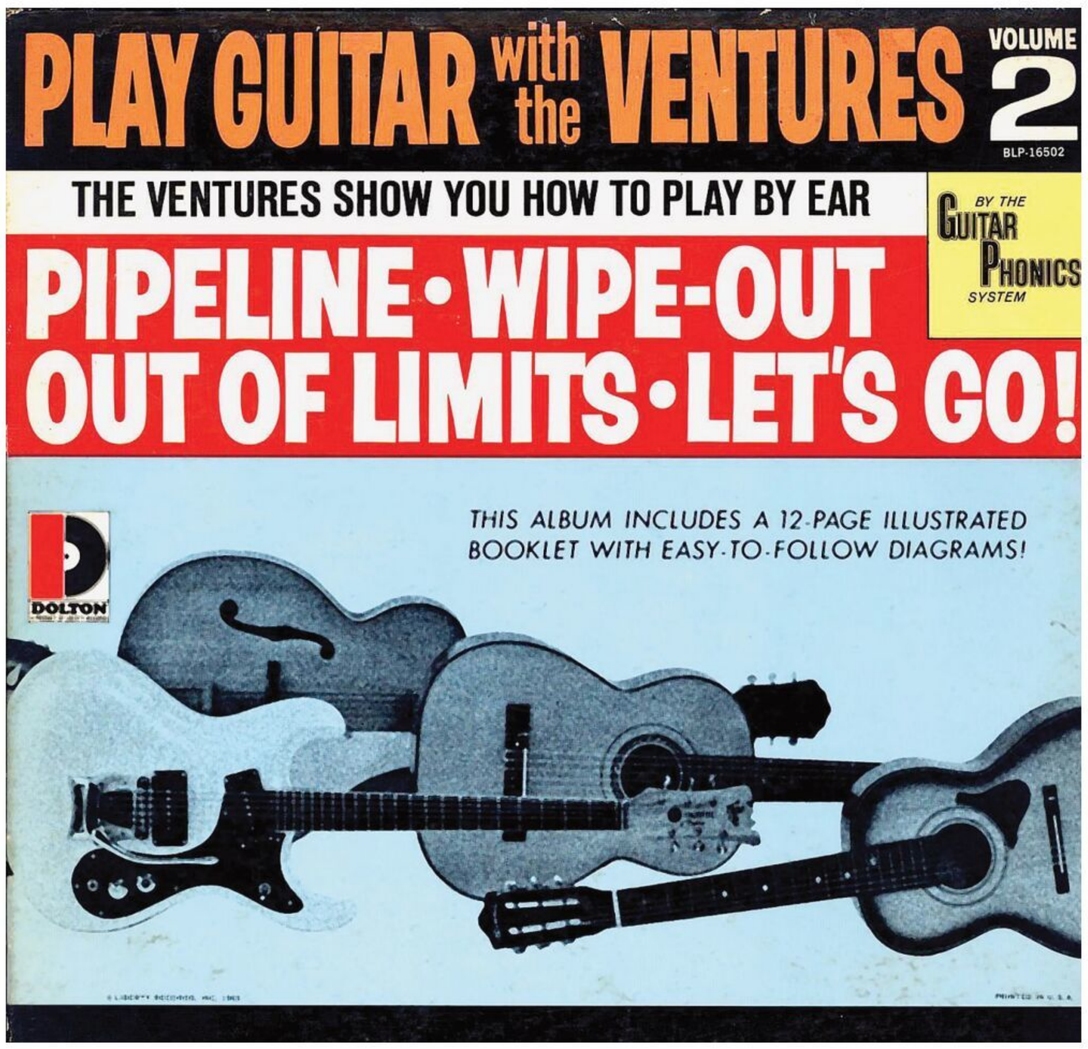
Bob Spitz
Led Zeppelin: The Biography

Zeppelin has been the subject of countless books, but Spitz delivers a fresh, insightful examination of their saga – both the rock and roll exceptionalism and wretched excesses.

There's an exploration of Jimmy Page's formative years; at a 1960 Eddie Cochran concert, teenaged Jimmy catcalls the rocker's Gretsch 6120, as if it were an attractive woman. During a train ride, bassist John Paul Jones thinks up a riff that "...didn't end when you thought it was going to end," and notates it on the back of his ticket. In later rehearsals, Bonzo plays the groove in $^{4}/_{4}$, while Jones and Page attack that devilish riff in $^{5}/_{4}$ – this became "Black Dog." Conversely, the author addresses the bloated machine Zep became in the '70s – disturbing fan violence, along with bullying by gangster-wannabe manager Peter Grant.

Fortunately, Zeppelin's music was the glue that kept them from imploding. In a fascinating passage about the November, 1975, recording of "Achilles Last Stand," Plant sat in a wheelchair from a near-fatal car accident, while Page was a heroin-addicted zombie. Bonham was also on heroin and battling extreme alcoholism (which killed him five years later). Somehow, as many times before, the music came together. – ***Bret Adams***

J.D. Simo: John Tokarczyk.



PLAYING GUITAR WITH THE VENTURES

By Dan Forte

Think of your favorite rock band, and imagine sitting in with them – or better yet, being a member. The Beatles? Sure. Subbing for Keith Richards? Go for it. Going toe-to-toe with Kirk Hammett or surfing with Satch? Why not!

Well, I got to do just that. In 1983, I subbed for rhythm guitarist Don Wilson with the original Ventures for two weeks. It wasn't very glamorous – playing a Sirloin & Brew in Pueblo, Colorado, and a rodeo in Lander, Wyoming. But it was a thrill I'll never get over.

I was first captivated with the electric guitar after seeing Duane Eddy on "American Bandstand" when I was five. Those tremoloed bass-string melodies and whammy-bar dips were exotic and sexy at an age when I didn't know what exotic or sexy was. Then came the Ventures' first smash, "Walk, Don't Run." To fully appreciate it, find it in mono – the way it blasted out of car radios. That sound raises the hair on my arms to this day. Skip Moore, drummer on the session, snapping the snare, Don Wilson entering with those famous major chords – AAA-GGG-FFF-E – shadowed by Nokie Edwards' bass; I was hooked even before the melody came in. Bob Bogle's lead on a Jazzmaster (using both pickups) was clear, melodic, and perfect. Moreover, it rocked!

From 1960 to '69, the Ventures cranked out 32 studio albums and seven live discs, including a whopping six in 1965. When I took up guitar that year, in the midst of the British Invasion, their material was a staple. *Play Guitar With The Ventures* LPs were also a big part of my training – with chord charts and songs played at normal speed and slow, with lead, rhythm, and bass dropped out so the listener could play along.

By the '70s, the band was so popular in Japan that they played virtually no dates in America that entire decade. But, after KROQ disc-jockey Rodney Bingenheimer began spinning their hits alongside new-wave bands, the classic lineup – Edwards on lead, Bogle now on bass, drummer Mel Taylor, and rhythm man Wilson – played to a packed house at Hollywood's Starwood nightclub in December of 1980. Bingenheimer introduced them to the Go-Go's, and in '81 they recorded Charlotte Caffey's instrumental, "Surfin' and Spyin'."

As great as their records were, the Ventures were loads better live, brimming with energy. When they played Northern California, I interviewed them for a September '81 *Guitar Player* cover story, in which Wilson said he broke too many strings using a Stratocaster, never liked Mosrite's "too-sensitive" pickups, and switched to a Jazzmaster in the late '60s.

In '79, I'd formed an instrumental quartet called Cowabunga and, as the name implies, we played surf instrumentals. We got to open for the Ventures at the Sutter Creek Theater in the Sierras in '82, and they remembered me from that interview. So in '83, when Don was busy mixing an album for Japanese release, Mel called to see if I'd sub on tour for two weeks – after I'm sure they called other candidates who weren't available. He asked if I had a Jazzmaster (yes, a '64) and if I could play the famous "Pipeline" lick from the Chantays hit (which I'd fit into nearly every song in my repertoire). I was hired with no audition, no rehearsal, for $500 a week plus expenses.

I flew to L.A. and got together with Don at his house. Just the two of us, Jazzmasters unplugged, we ran down a set of about 18 songs. "Classical Gas" was the hardest, and they did one of those long "Stars On" medleys that were popular at the time, so I had to carry a cheat sheet. But those *Play Guitar With* albums came in handy. I adopted Don's percussive, all-downstrokes, "flogger" style for most songs; he switched to up-and-down for "Slaughter On Tenth Avenue" and some others.

The band always opened with a bang, doing "Walk, Don't Run," with just rhythm guitar following the well-known drum intro, so I knew I couldn't wimp out. I had to hit it hard, with confidence, ignoring the jitters in my every fiber. There were mistakes, and I learned a lot – both musically and in the reality of touring, which I'd never done.

When my little stint was over and Don rejoined the guys, there was a fire in the band's Winnebago, and Wilson broke his foot escaping the blaze. I joked that if I'd still been onboard, headlines would have read "Ventures Escape Fire," with "....journalist perishes" in tiny print.

In a documentary filmed years later, Don said that no matter how many times he played "Walk, Don't Run," he never got tired of it. We played it, as well as their follow-up, "Walk, Don't Run '64," with both of them reprised in the "Stars On Guitars" medley. So if there was a night when we did two shows, I got to play it eight times. And I, too, never got tired of it.

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Leslie West



Tinsley Ellis
Devil May Care

The pandemic largely torpedoed Tinsley Ellis' tour dates in support of the excellent *Ice Cream in Hell*, so the veteran bluesman retreated to his Atlanta base and began tinkering with guitars, amplifiers, tones, and more. What ultimately emerged were 200 original songs, 10 of which he selected for this new album.

It's no secret that Ellis is a fiery, exciting guitarist – and there's plenty of that on *Devil May Care*. The first two tracks, "One Less Reason" (featuring Ellis' 1967 ES-345 through a '65 Deluxe Reverb) and "Right Down the Drain" are both satisfying, five-minute blues-rock workouts. "Juju" – a slide number played on an '82 Gibson Moderne – and "One Last Ride" are both unmistakably Allmanesque in sound and spirit.

But Ellis' chops share the spotlight with an increasingly strong profile as a songwriter. "Just Like Rain" is a tune with love and relationships at its lyrical core. "Don't Bury Our Love" makes a slow-burning emotional appeal, with Ellis' yearning '59 Strat playing the part of a second vocalist.

Throughout the album, Ellis delivers evocative blues with Covid-imposed isolation serving as a creative catalyst. ***– Sean McDevitt***



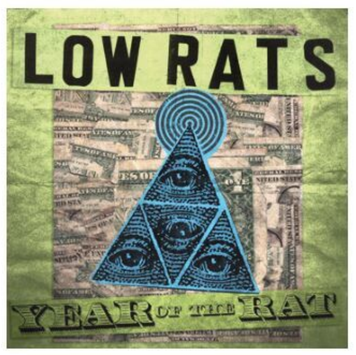
Various artists
Legacy: A Tribute to Leslie West

Here's a much-deserved tribute to the Mountain guitarist who died in 2020, getting his due thanks to a procession of axe heroes.

Zakk Wylde storms "Blood of the Sun," letting every note ring for all they're worth, while Twisted Sister's Dee Snider and Eddie Ojeda conjure a magnificent "Theme For an Imaginary Western." Jethro Tull's Martin Barre ignites fiery riffs on "For Yasgur's Farm," while Rainbow's Joe Lynn Turner nails West's vocal approach. Steve Morse expertly pummels the 1972 West, Bruce & Laing stomper "Why Doncha."

That metallic guitarist on "Sittin' On a Rainbow" is – surprisingly – the Cars' Elliott Easton; Randy Bachman and his son, Tal, cover the obscure '76 cut "Money (Whatcha Gonna Do)." Shredders Marty Friedman and George Lynch pay homage on two tracks, carefully restraining their prodigious chops, while Yngwie Malmsteen misses that point on "Long Red." Far better are Charlie Starr's lotto-winning "Silver Money," and Slash, who brings it home with the cowbell classic "Mississippi Queen."

Legacy hails a tone pioneer who's gone, but never forgotten. ***– Pete Prown***



Low Rats
Year Of The Rat
MMXX

From the Trashmen to the Replacements, Minneapolis has an improbable legacy of untethered garage-rock and punk. Add Low Rats to that lineage.

On their debut LP, the quartet distills seedy psychobilly, Heartbreakers hooks, and rumbling surf – and that's just on the opener, "Ex Crisis." Elsewhere, "She's My Witch" is a nugget hinting at Roky Erickson, while "The Corner" suggests NYC proto-punk, its percussive piano and vocalist Mike Gallows' howl evoking the New York Dolls' latter-day transformation of '50s rock.

Guitarist Poison Sell's standout turn, however, might be the single "Cryin' And Moanin'." Here, the insistent rockabilly riffing-and-vibrato-workouts are filtered through his trusty Gretsch and complemented by a shout-along chorus and Gallows' young-Iggy sneer. Bass-driven and reverb-drenched, "The Old Guard" adds to the overall dynamics, but leaves the listener longing for a return to form – which arrives henceforth with "You Ignore Me." To be sure, there's little flyover material in this 10-track set of Midwest raunch.

Fans of rowdy roots from Supersuckers to Dex Romweber will rejoice to these sinister, snotty exercises with a whiff of sulphur, few surpassing the three-minute mark – as it should be. ***– Dennis Pernu***

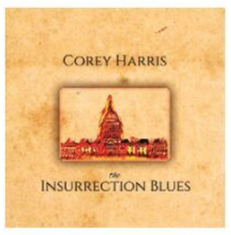
Leslie West: Justin Borucki.

extra EXTRA



EARTHLESS
Night Parade of One Hundred Demons

Fronted by Black Crowes tour guitarist Isaiah Mitchell, this trio explores dark-edged jamming without fear. There are just three long-form cuts, including the two-part title improv, within which Mitchell wails like a demon. *Earthless* brilliantly fuses psychedelia, progressive, and Sabbath-approved doom in "Death to the Red Sun." Here, the guitarist takes us on a screaming, treble-boosted ride – straight to hell. ***– PP***



COREY HARRIS
The Insurrection Blues

Harris, who once spent his days busking on the streets of New Orleans, has returned to his roots with this strictly solo-acoustic effort, which he cut in Italy while under lockdown. As the title suggests, he's got a lot to say about the events of January 6, 2021. Here, Harris delivers a soulful, contemporary lyrical message delivered with a spare Delta backdrop. ***– SM***



MEMPHISSIPPI SOUNDS
Welcome To The Land

Damion Pearson and Cam Kimbrough (grandson of north Mississippi bluesman Junior Kimbrough) play guitars, harmonica, and drums in a collection of originals that are primitive, yet wholly contemporary. Rhythmic one-chord drones, as opposed to 12-bar blues, build intensity with righteous anger declarations such as "get cha foot off my neck." Much like John Lee Hooker, the effect is hypnotic. ***– DF***



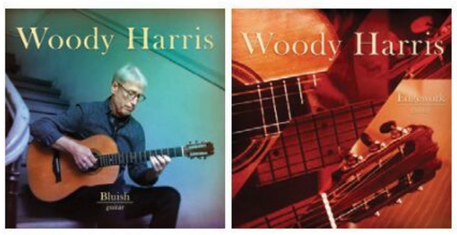
TOM MORELLO
The Atlas Underground Flood

Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello unleashes a dozen eclectic pandemic collaborations featuring Ben Harper, Kirk Hammett, Alex Lifeson, and Rodrigo y Gabriela, to name a few. Rappers, metal dudes, pop, and country cross-pollinate into intense, effects-laden guitar solos that burn deep. Acoustic guitars meet techno and social relevance. Highlights include "Hard Times," "You'll Get Yours," and "Warrior Spirit." ***– OJ***



NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALLSTARS
Set Sail

The brothers Dickinson return with soulful grooves, succulent guitar lines, and talented guest singers. Guitarist Luther sets the tone with lush slide-drenched tremolo on the title track; Lamar Williams, Jr., son of the late Allman Brothers bassist, guests on vocals. A powerful Southern chemistry elevates these songs, heightened by Stax Records legend William Bell on "Never Want To Be Kissed." ***– OJ***



WOODY HARRIS
Bluish & Edgework

In the '70s, Harris recorded acoustic-steel-string albums for the Arhoolie and Kicking Mule labels, influenced by John Fahey and Robbie Basho, and cut a duo album of gospel songs with Mike Bloomfield. Then, little or nothing. His first recordings in 42 years are divided into two EPs – *Bluish* meditative, bordering on New Age, and *Edgework*, jazzy and angular. Both are highly original and intriguing. ***– DF***



SCOTT T. JONES
Fictional Characters

The latest album from the pride of St. Louis unveils some of the most captivating fusion guitar heard in recent years. Backed by a stellar ensemble, Jones goes full-blown intervallic with rich compositions and effortless improvisations. Haunting legato lines on "Long Night" and "Floki's Shipyard" sound like the Midwest love child of Allan Holdsworth and '80s-era Scott Henderson. ***– OJ***



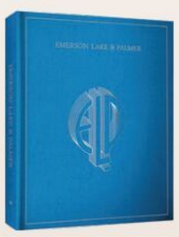
GEORGIA SATELLITES
Lightnin' in a Bottle: The Official Live Album

The Satellites' raggedy rock wasn't overly fashionable in the MTV era, but they scored hits anyway. At this '88 Cleveland gig, vocalist/rhythm guitarist Dan Baird and lead man Rick Richards let the slippery riffs fly. The Beatles' "Don't Pass Me By" is a gleeful cover, while Richards slathers "Shake Your Hips" with slide licks. Relentless jams include "Keep Your Hands To Yourself" and "Railroad Steel." ***– BA***



SAXON
Carpe Diem

Vocalist Biff Byford leads his underappreciated NWOBHM bandmates on their 23rd studio album, helmed by metal superproducer Andy Sneap (Judas Priest, Accept, Slayer). Guitarists Paul Quinn and Doug Scarratt explode on the catchy "Carpe Diem (Seize the Day)." Free-swinging and precision guitar lines drive "Age of Steam." The theatrical epic "The Pilgrimage" has prog touches, while "Super Nova" is fast-and-furious metallurgy. ***– BA***



ELP
Emerson, Lake & Palmer

Celebrating the most over-the-top band *ever*, this coffee-table book unpacks ELP's history with interviews and images – from '70s triumphs and '90s reunions to a disastrous final gig in 2010. For photos, there's a trove of Greg Lake's gear, including his Zemaitis "heart" acoustic and eight-string Alembic bass. If you worship prog-rock, this is a divine keepsake. ***– PP***



SARAH SHOOK & THE DISARMERS
Nightroamer

Vocalist/songwriter Shook and her quartet, The Disarmers, exist in a nexus of country-rock, punk and indie-rock, leaning toward the latter category. Guitarist Eric Peterson and pedal-steeler Adam Kurtz are capable accompanists, their work consistently sharp and tasteful. Both stand out on the R&B-flavored "If It's Poison." "No Mistakes," shows Peterson's hard-edged country twang, meshing hand-in-glove with Kurtz's authentic, Ralph Mooney-style licks. ***– RK***

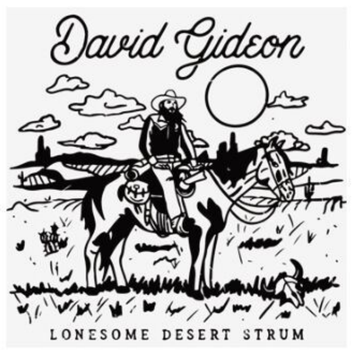


DAVEY JOHNSTONE BAND
Deeper Than My Roots

A true AM guitar hero, Johnstone – wisely – doesn't stray far from his Elton John hallmarks. "Go Easy On My Heart" displays deftly layered parts and Davey's teenaged son on vocals. "One Look in Your Eyes" has jangly Fab Four inspirations, while "Walt Dizney" evokes pop grandeur from the *Captain Fantastic* era. "Melting Snow" is a guitar-driven ballad, smack in the Elton ballpark. ***– PP***



Eliza Gilkyson with a 1951 Gibson CF-100E.

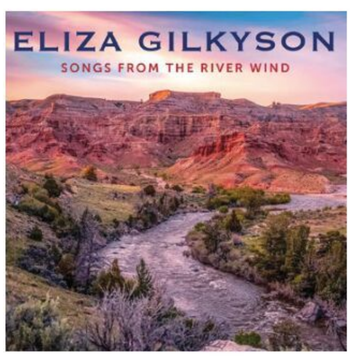


David Gideon
Lonesome Desert Strum

David Gideon's grainy voice and southwest/Nashville roots help him ably explore traditional and modern honky-tonk with equal finesse. His accompanists are familiar – guitarist Kenny Vaughan, bass player Dave Roe Rorick, and (depending on the track) pedal-steel aces Chris Scruggs and Steve Hinson.

"Ashes," the sole acoustic number (co-written with Wood Newton), pays homage to country's past with a veritable punch list of iconic artists and historic locales, enhanced by Robin Ruddy's overdubbed banjo, guitar and dobro. The tempo jumps on "Movin' to the Country," as Vaughan and Hinson add flawless backing and brief, furious solos. On the moody, minor-key "My Birthday," both slip in simple, highly expressive licks enhancing Gideon's dark lyrics.

Vaughan's ability to convey much with just a few notes or chords enhances every track featuring his work. His muscular lead and overdubbed rhythm meld with Gideon's vocal on "A Woman Like Her" (also co-written with Newton). His expansive twang adds heft to the ballad "Wings of an Angel" and the title song. On the Western-swinger "Red Boots," Scruggs' succinct single-string embellishments enhance the authenticity, as does the minimalist color he and Vaughan bring to the upbeat "Drifter" and the ballad "Moonlit Lake." ***– RK***



Eliza Gilkyson
Songs from the River Wind

In contrast to her last few, politically-focused albums, Eliza Gilkyson considers this a "love letter to the Old West." Revisiting her folk roots through originals, covers, and traditional favorites fits her lineage well – her late dad, singer Terry Gilkyson, was one-third of the '50s folk trio The Easy Riders and a successful composer in his own right.

While she accompanies her smoky vocals with acoustic and electric guitars, producer/multi-instrumentalist Don Richmond does the heavy lifting, blending acoustic and electric guitars, mandolin, dobro, lap and pedal steel to craft simple-yet-breathtaking accompaniment. He wraps shimmering electric guitars and steel around her voice on the ballad "Farthest End" and the ethereal, romantic "Don't Stop Lovin' Me."

Richmond's mastery of minimalism results in the eerie backing that complements the haunting lyrics of "Bristlecone Pine." Mandolin, electric and steel guitars create opulent vistas on "Before the Great River Was Tamed." For "Buffalo Gals Redux," her update of a traditional favorite, Richmond creates conventional bluegrass textures. Strategically placed pedal steel and electric guitar brighten the acoustic ensemble on "Colorado Trail." Gilkyson's performances benefit every step of the way from Richmond's less-is-more approach. ***– Rich Kienzle***



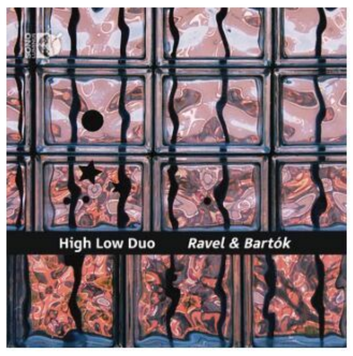
Scorpions
Rock Believer

The 19th studio album by Germany's metal titans reveals a re-energized band recording live in one room, like they did in the '80s, and with no outside songwriters. Guitarists Rudolf Schenker and Matthias Jabs, with their distinctive tones fully displayed, drive Klaus Meine's vocals. It's great hearing bassist Pawel Maciwoda's rumbling parts, and drummer Mikkey Dee is a powerhouse, clearly having a blast post-Motörhead.

Perhaps the revved-up opener, "Gas in the Tank," is meant to argue the band isn't running on fumes after 50-plus years. "Knock 'Em Dead" swings on a cool, laid-back groove. "Rock Believer" serves as a catchy anthem, but it's more mid-tempo than fist-pumping screamer. The chugging power of "Seventh Sun" recalls band anthem "The Zoo" with its sly menace and slashing guitar lines. "Peacemaker" is a concise punch of unforgiving rhythm guitar, topped with searing leads, and the loose "Call of the Wild" is a Zeppelin-flavored change of pace with guitars getting full room to breathe. Electric and acoustic versions of the dramatic ballad "When You Know (Where You Come From)" are interesting to compare.

Scorpions took their time writing this material. Yes, there's a filler track or two, but the crunchy enthusiasm makes it worth the wait. ***– Bret Adams***

Eliza Gilkyson: Tim Reese.



High Low Duo
Ravel & Bartók

As producers and guitarists, Cameron Greider and Jack Petruzzelli come with impressive resumés. The former has played with Chris Cornell, Natalie Merchant, and Joan Baez; the latter has recorded with Joan Osborne, Patti Smith, and Ian Hunter, and is a member of the Fab Faux.

They started playing surf instrumentals and Western themes together, taking inspiration from Chet Atkins and Les Paul. Then their composition and arranging backgrounds led to experimenting with classical music on electric guitar. But this is not a couple of metalheads shredding classics with no regard for the composers' intention. Instead, the pair uses the electric to broaden the sonic palette potential, served well by their interplay.

Featured are the five movements of Maurice Ravel's "Ma Mère l'Oye" (Mother Goose suite) and six pieces from Béla Bartók's "44 Duos for Violin." In spots, Petruzzelli subs a Duesenberg for his Jazzmaster, while Greider plays an Epiphone Casino throughout – both achieving clean, crystalline tones through Princetons. On Ravel's "Beauty and the Beast," Petruzzelli plays bass lines to Greider's muted, staccato brushes and bends, and even adds a little slide.

Will this cause sleepless nights for, say, John Williams? Hardly. But it might raise a smile from the master. ***– DF***


Micki Free



Micki Free
Turquoise Blue

Grammy winner Micki Free's latest is loaded with rockin' badassery. With influences ranging from Billy Gibbons and Carlos Santana to Jimi Hendrix, the former Shalamar guitarist charts his own course with rock and roll, Indigenous American-style.

Highlights include Free shredding with Steve Stevens on "Bye 2020," and Stevens adding impressive nylon-string soloing on "My Big Regret." Christone "Kingfish" Ingram burns like Mississippi on "Judicator Blues," and Gary Clark, Jr. gets mean as hell on "Woman." Fronting a muscular rhythm section, Free is front-and-center with mature phrasing, effortless finesse, and songs that hit home. His Santana influence is undeniable on "World On Fire" with Cindy Blackman-Santana on drums – tone for days! No stranger to crunchy guitars, Free's tone is bulbous and thick, with ample amounts of blues and early-'70s bad-boy swagger like on "Ring of Fire" and "Heaven or Heroin."

There's plenty of wah, delay, and overdrive, but Free's artistry shines through, like on the heartfelt "Blue Memories" and the hypnotic "Heavy Mercy."

Turquoise Blue finds Free performing with grace, power, and conviction – and his cover of "All Along the Watchtower" is absolutely killin'. ***– Oscar Jordan***



Steve Vai
Inviolate

After decades of technical shreddom, Vai returns to his musical mindset prior to David Lee Roth, composing soundtrack-scaled material that is powerful and dramatic. "Teeth of the Hydra" is a showpiece for a new triple-neck Ibanez – listen for the wild harp and bass drones recorded live on the instrument. Listen for Whammy Pedal madness on "Apollo in Color," as well as glorious lead tone and effortless virtuosity; that's Swedish über-bassist Henrik Linder unleashing a whiplash solo.

The guitarist dives into a deep creative zone for "Little Pretty," his almost-limitless musical imagination proven with dense, Mahavishnu-like chord arpeggios. "Candlepower" finds him playing clean, string-popping guitar over a funky vamp that could have been on *Flex-Able*. Within, you can hear Steve's "joint-shifting" method of bending multiple strings simultaneously (though fair credit goes to Jerry Donahue, who pioneered this technique more than 30 years ago).

As great as the kid from Carle Place, Long Island, remains as a guitarist, *Inviolate* seems more about how brilliantly he's *writing* these days. This effort also begs a very real question: Did Vai just drop the best album of his career? ***– PP VG***

Micki Free: Marie Gregorio-Oviedo.

INDEPENDENT

DUDLEY TAFT



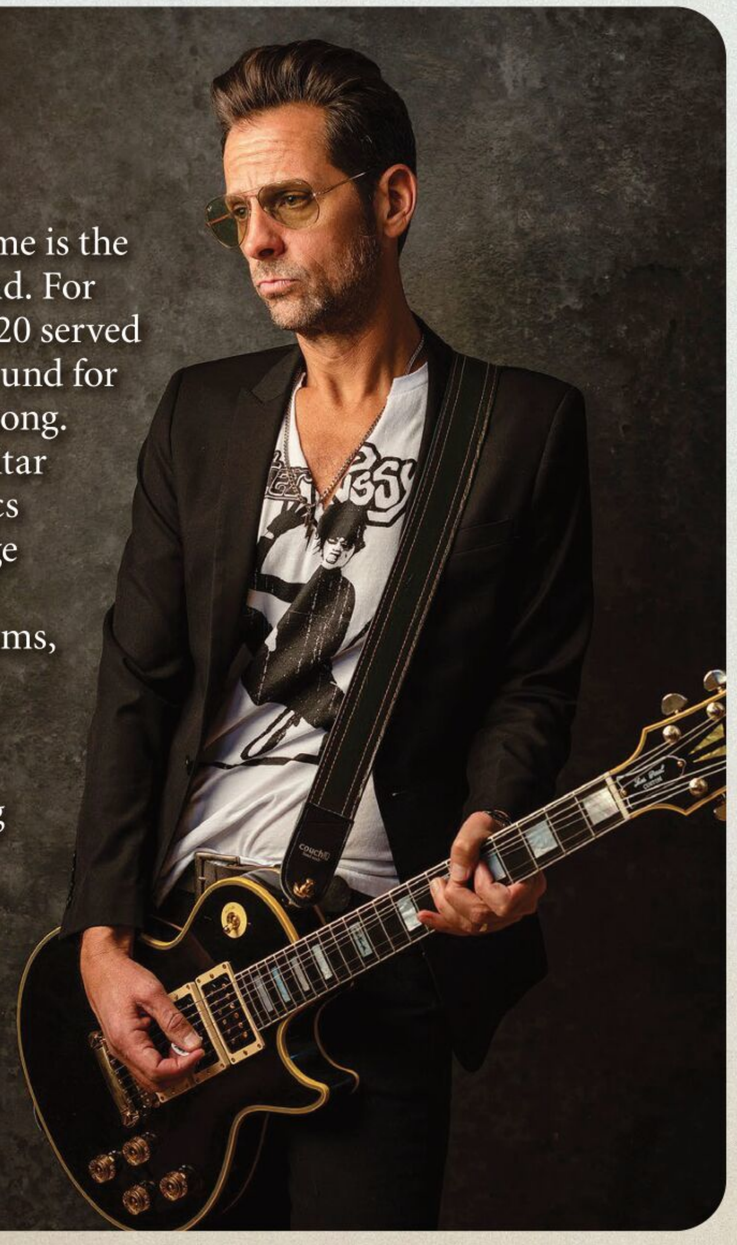
Dudley Taft grew up in the Midwest, where he learned the values of friendship, roots blues, rock 'n roll and a good ear of corn. With a background that includes years of touring with rock bands Sweet Water and Second Coming, Dudley is a thinking man's blues rocker. There's plenty of swagger here, but also the sensitivity of a thoughtful songwriter. **www.DudelyTaft.com**



JARED JAMES NICHOLS

A young artist with an old soul and a few guitars older than that! Onstage he switches seamlessly between his 52 Gold Top Les Paul, "Dorothy" (found in a tree after a tornado), to his Signature Epiphones. His latest release, "Threw Me to the Wolves" features a duel with Joe Bonamassa. Plus a moodier version featuring Americana singer Maggie Rose. **https://linktr.ee/jaredjamesnichols**

JOHNNY ZAPP



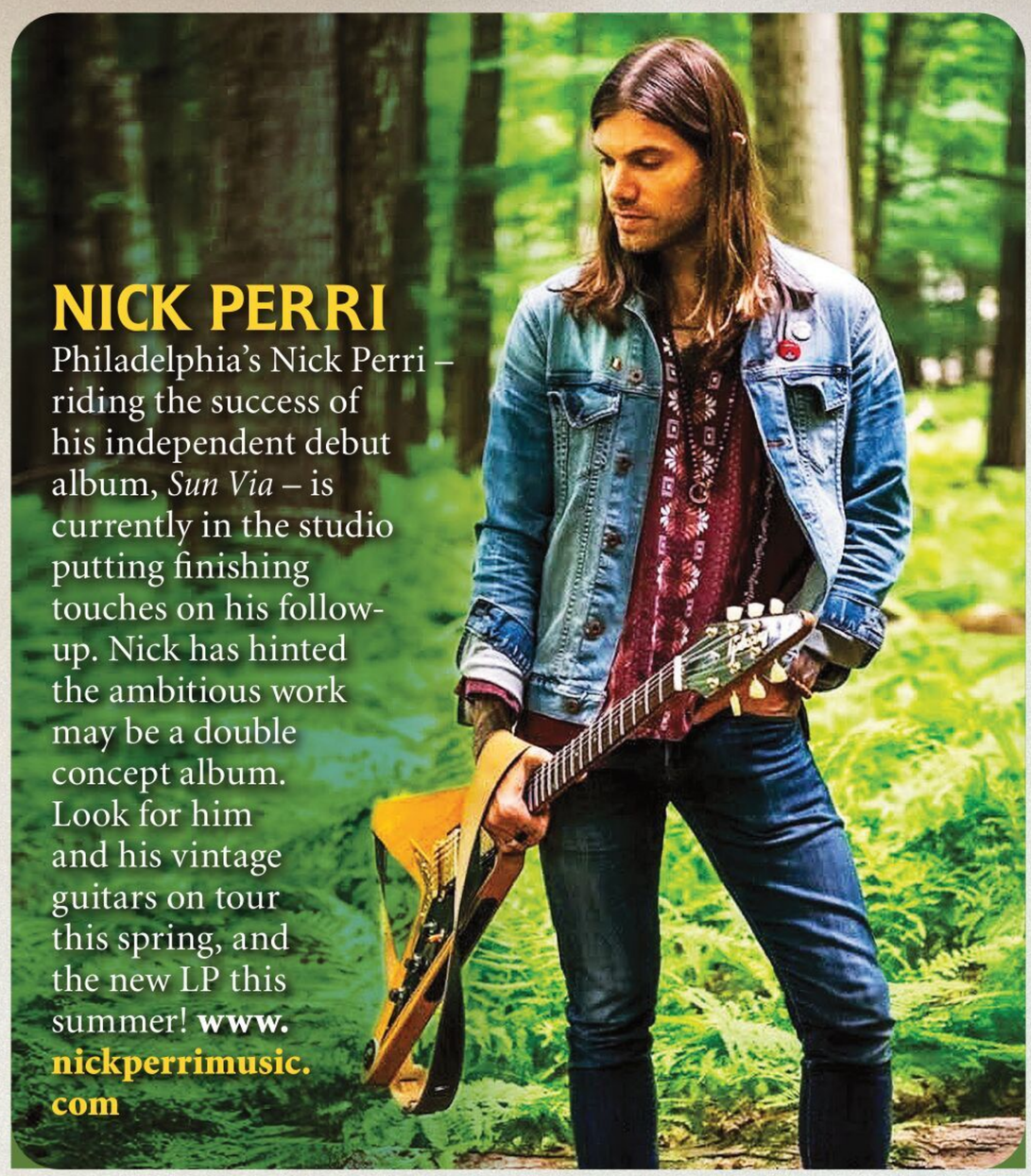
For some, idle time is the devil's playground. For Johnny Zapp, 2020 served as a breeding ground for the elusive rock song. Pulling every guitar out, slapping mics in front of vintage tube amps and tracking real drums, Zapp delivers us an organic rock album this spring. Featuring guests Them Vibes, Whitey Kirst, Daniel Henzerling, and more. **www.johnnyzapp.com**



FRANKIE AND THE STUDS

Hollywood rock 'n roll band Frankie and The Studs unleash their new single "(Not Your) Victim," a song inspired by the inherent strength women possess. Through the challenges of living in a patriarchal society, we can never have enough reminders of our innate superpowers as women. Women supporting women is a powerful force to be reckoned with and this song reminds us to do just that. **https://open.spotify.com/track/7qjC1bHu6fm2qD6XBqrjdN?si=5ff0545ff03b482f**

ARTISTS



NICK PERRI

Philadelphia's Nick Perri – riding the success of his independent debut album, *Sun Via* – is currently in the studio putting finishing touches on his follow-up. Nick has hinted the ambitious work may be a double concept album. Look for him and his vintage guitars on tour this spring, and the new LP this summer! **www.nickperrimusic.com**

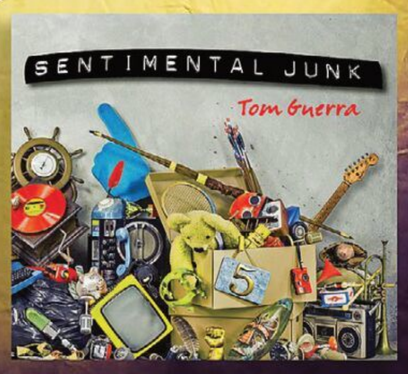


KIRBY JANE

Kirby Jane is an acoustic guitarist from Charleston, SC, with a playing style that draws from her roots as a pianist. Alongside her own growing repertoire, Jane has transcribed for Tommy Emmanuel, Andy McKee, John Knowles, Jerry Douglas and others, and has published numerous lessons on the intricacies of fingerstyle guitar. Her primary guitar is a Marchione OMC, handmade in Texas of Brazilian Rosewood. **www.kirbyjane.net**

TOM GUERRA

Introducing *Sentimental Junk*, the new album from Tom Guerra featuring the single "California's Got to My Girl" (vocal duet with Jon Butcher). With 10 new rock and roll originals and a cover of Bob Dylan's "Clean Cut Kid," and with performances by Tom, Kenny Aaronson, Morgan Fisher, Mike Kosacek and Matt Zeiner. *Sentimental Junk* is available through Apple Music, Spotify, Amazon and **www.TomGuerra.com**





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Information wanted on Grinnell Brothe's Music Houses, who's headquarters were based in Detroit, Michigan on 1515 Woodward Ave. from 1908 to 1981. Specifically needed is info. on Francis Allen Grinnell, the grandson of the founders and his connections to Gibson Inc. of Kalamazoo, MI. during the 1920s and 1930s. Any help will be greatly appreciated, Thanks. billysoutar@frontier.com

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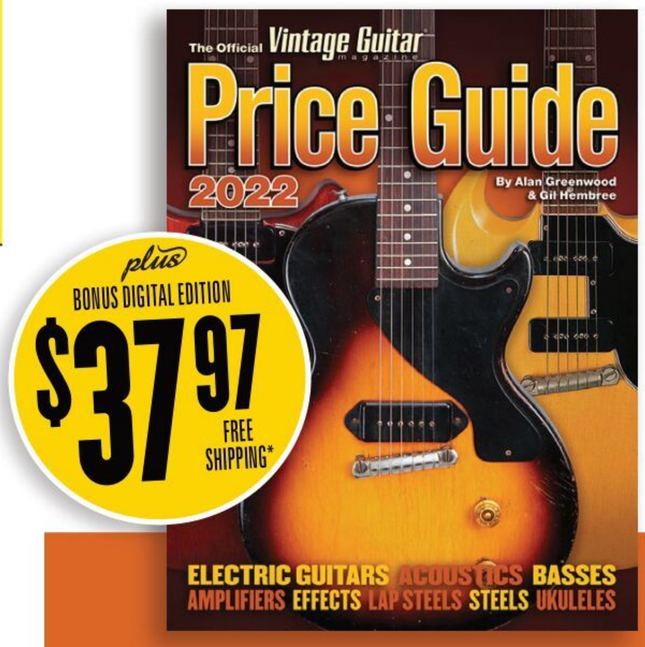
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VG APPROVED GEAR



DOUBLE TROUBLE

Fender's Duel Pugilist Distortion & Dual Marine Layer Reverb

Fender launched its Pugilist Distortion and Marine Layer Reverb in 2018, after VP of Innovation Stan Cotey – who'd previously helped design signature amps with Eric Clapton, Joe Bonamassa, and The Edge – developed a series of new-from-scratch pedals. Updated twists on each, the Duel Pugilist Distortion and Dual Marine Layer Reverboffer an extended array of options and combinations.

Price: Duel Pugilist, $229; Dual Marine, $249
www.fender.com

The all-analog Duel Pugilist provides two independent distortion circuits with series and parallel options and three operating modes; Series stacks the two distortions like two separate pedals. Bypass combines two different distortion sounds or a clean tone with a distorted one. Mute dials in a base tone that can be layered with an additional distortion on top for added depth and richness.

Each channel has its own array of tone controls. To further refine the sounds, the pedal also features a two-band master-shelving EQ. The result is a knockout punch.

The Dual Marine Layer Reverb also has two presets/channels with three algorithm modes that let you mix and match to craft soundscapes – Hall, Room, and Shimmer. And it has an analog dry-signal path.

There are also Mod(ulation) controls that provide lush choral effects for each channel, and a crazy-cool Sustain with footswitch creates far-out dreamscapes of otherworldly reverb. And again, each channel comes with its own set of controls.

Both boxes are housed in stylish anodized aluminum. And those control knobs have LED lights that can be switched off. ***– Michael Dregni***



Price: $169 www.becosfx.com

DIRTY DEEDS

The Becos FX TS8-JZ Ziffer Overdrive

Based on the highly revered Maxon/Ibanez 808 circuit and co-designed with guitarist Jordan Ziff (Ratt, Marty Friedman, Hot Crazy), the Becos Ziffer Overdrive is one of the newest options in the OD underworld.

For a small unit, the Ziffer has plenty of features. Like most overdrives, there are controls for Gain, Tone, and Level that in this case interact with elegant simplicity. A Clipping switch adjusts gain voicing from soft to aggressive, while Deep provides low-end thump.

Also look for the Dry EQ mini knob, which adjusts the tone of the dry-side mix – you can also use the Ziffer as a clean boost. The Dry/Wet Mix control fine-tunes the amount of crunch adding to your clean tone.

The pedal accepts sources from 9 to 18 volts, the latter giving more headroom and clarity; for more flavor, take it down to 7 volts for that "browned-out" sound.

Plugged in, the Ziffer Overdrive is a fat, warm box that actually "tubed-up" a modeling amp and delivered big power chords and dirt for tones in the Aerosmith, Black Crowes, and AC/DC camp.

When it's time to get "dirty" in your search for cool, organic 808 sounds, the Becos Ziffer Overdrive is ready to rock. ***– Pete Prown***

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

B&G Guitars' Caletta Standard Build



B&G Guitars are made in Tel Aviv by a talented shop that translates the best traits of traditional guitars into high-quality instruments for today's player. With the Caletta, their aim was to merge a Stella and a Martin – that is, combine the compact size, playability, and tone of guitars played by early blues fingerstylists (think Blind Lemon Jefferson or Charley Patton) with the warmth and richness of a folky D-28.

Price: $2,999
www.bngguitars.com

Mission accomplished.

The two most immediately striking characteristics of the Caletta are its super-light weight and the big boom of its low-to-mid response. Both warrant a double-take. At about 3.5 pounds, the guitar is so light it's a surprise each time you pluck it off the stand. And for a guitar of this size – somewhere between a parlor and a 000 – such volume and low-end resonance is counterintuitive if not downright confounding.

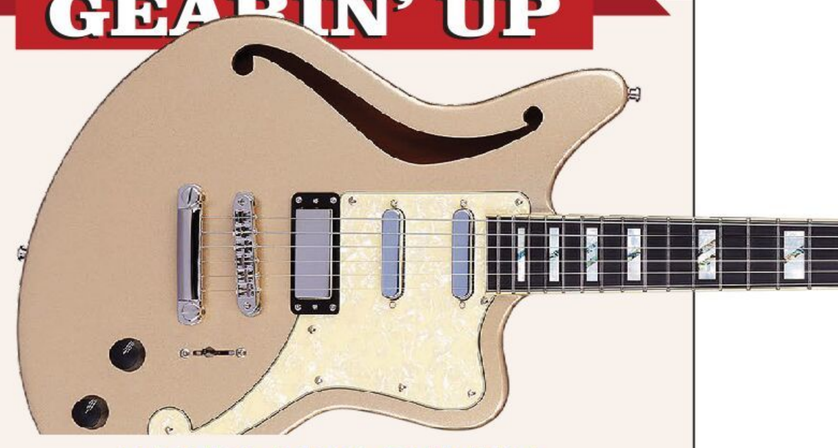
It's a fool's errand (but a luthier's job) to suss how exactly that could be accomplished. Factors include the old-growth Sitka top (just 2mm thick), shaves in the X-bracing, and the tight-grain mahogany back and sides (also available in Indian rosewood). The soft-V neck, with its slotted headstock, is a single piece of mahogany as well, meeting the body at the 12th fret with a joint set deep into the body, enhancing stability and resonance.

The playability of that neck is Caletta's third pleasant surprise. Our test guitar arrived with a great setup (from Israel, mind you). Low action across the neck from the 1.68" nut to the 12th fret made it a dream for fingerstyle. The ease of play is matched by responsiveness; it's forgiving yet articulate. There is a softness under the hands that calls you back, abetted by the 24.75" scale length, which lessens tension.

The highest compliment we can pay to the B&G-built piezo pickup system is that the Caletta's tone through a good acoustic amp maintains all the character, balance, big lows, and strong highs that are there unplugged. A single control – a small thumbwheel for Volume – sits nearly hidden at the top of the soundhole (we played for half an hour before realizing the guitar was wired).

Calettas have a satin nitrocellulose finish and ship in a high-end case. Our test model was in Tobacco Sunburst with cream binding – warm, dark and strong, much like the tone that awaits. ***– Rich Maloof***

GEARIN' UP



D'ANGELICO DELUXE BEDFORD SH

D'Angelico's Deluxe Bedford SH has alder top, back, and sides, Seymour Duncan pickups (STR52-1 neck and middle, SM-1b bridge) controlled via five-way selector, C-shaped three-piece neck with bound 24.75"-scale ebony fretboard, $1^{11}/_{16}$" Tusq nut, and nickel-plated Grover Super Rotomatic locking tuners.



MAGNATONE STARLITE

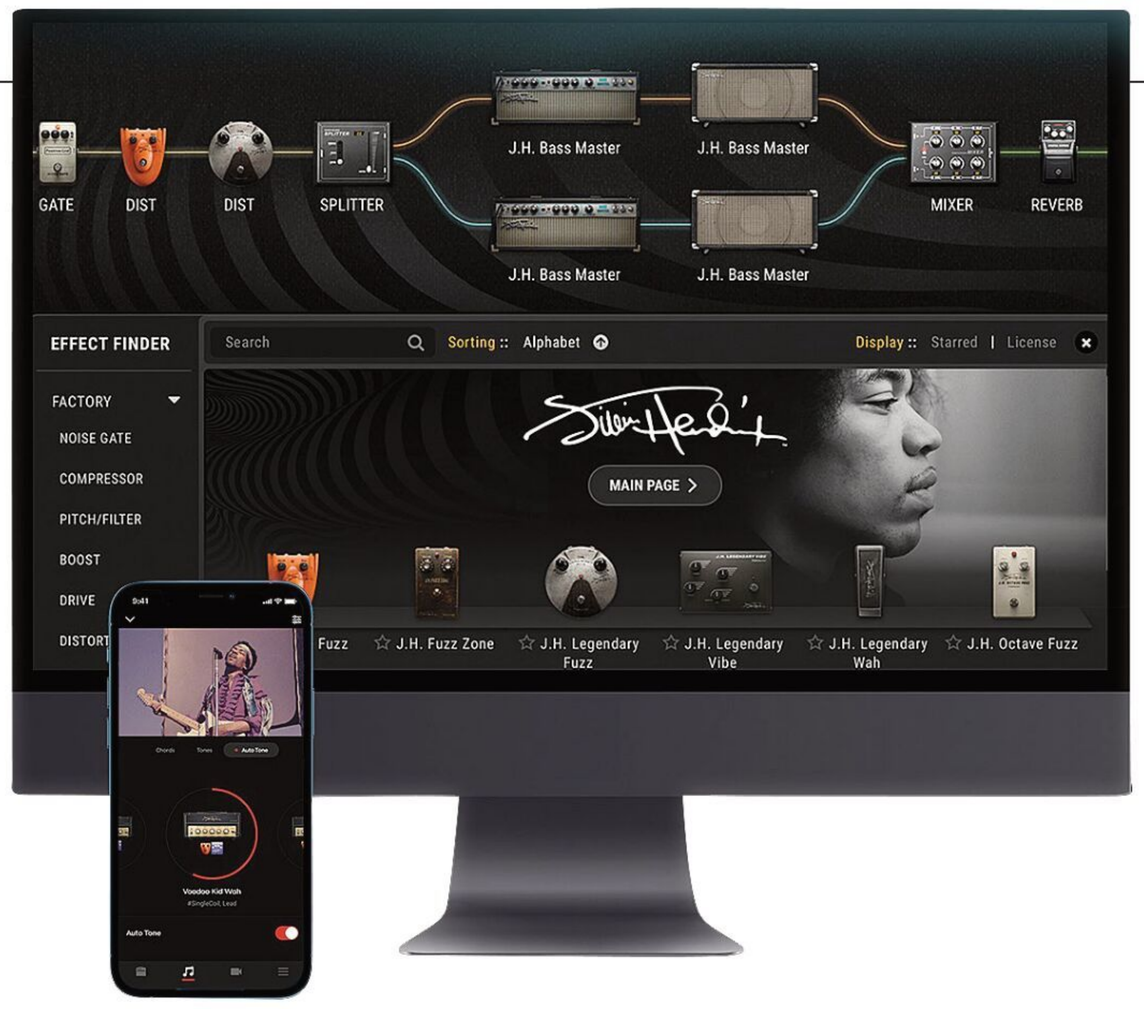
Magnatone's Starlite is a five-watt amplifier with one 6V6, a 12AX7 in the preamp, and a Magnatone Custom 8" ceramic-magnet speaker by WGS. Its Tone control is designed for mid-cut below the 12 o'clock position, while a negative-feedback switch allows for deeper gain control.



MOJO HAND SERICON

The Mojo Hand FX Sericon overdrive has controls for Drive, Gain and Blaze. Gain goes into two op-amp stages with separate Gain and Drive controls, while Blaze is a gain stage that alters low-end and mids with a low-pass filter in the feedback loop.

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



GET EXPERIENCED

Positive Grid's Experience Hendrix For Spark & BIAS FX 2

In the pantheon of guitar gods, few are studied to the degree of Hendrix. And, given the warp speed at which tech moves today, it should come as no surprise how all his puzzled-over and emulated hardware – guitars, pedals, and amps – has been distilled to... software.

Price: $20 (Hendrix Expansion for Spark); $60 (Hendrix Expansion for BIAS FX 2 + Hendrix Expansion, $119)
www.positivegrid.com

Positive Grid has collaborated with Authentic Hendrix to develop a software pack modeling a plethora of amps and effects pedals responsible for Hendrix's most-renowned tones. Made for use with either Positive Grid's BIAS FX 2 amp and effects software or the companion app for their Spark practice amp, the pack includes amps from Marshall, Sunn, and Fender, and re-creations of pedals like Roger Mayer's Axis Fuzz, the Uni-Vibe, Echoplex, Dallas-Arbiter Fuzz Face, Octave Fuzz, Tone Bender, and wah.



The BIAS FX 2 has a Guitar Match feature that allows the user's guitar to model a '57 goldtop and a bevy of Stratocasters, including Jimi's '65 used at the Monterey Pop Festival. Both versions are packed with presets for everything from "Little Wing" to "Purple Haze," and the Spark app also serves as a learning tool for jamming to Hendrix tracks.

Just like BIAS FX 2, Experience Hendrix for Spark is a rabbit hole that reveals insight on the sounds that started a musical revolution. While they only scratch the surface of the depth, complexity, and nuance of what made Hendrix the greatest rock guitarist of his generation, the app is a fun practice rig for advanced guitarists, and an educational tool for the novice. There *is* a learning curve with the software and an assumption the user is... *experienced*. But for the guitar-playing tech jockey who wants to wail, it's very groovy. ***–Oscar Jordan***



Price: $499 www.fomofx.com

WHAMMY FOR ALL

The FOMOfx Virtual Jeff Pro

On most guitars, installing a traditional vibrato is a task ranging from difficult to impossible. And even done right, mechanical vibratos impact tuning stability and increase wear on nuts and saddles.

The Virtual Jeff PRO digital whammy changes all that. A kit that comes complete with the whammy bar and mount, foot controller, radio transmitter, power supply, and cable. Installation is as simple as selecting a position behind the bridge that will not interfere with the arm's movement and sticking the mounting plate in place with the double-sided adhesive foam pads.

The Virtual Jeff PRO offers two switchable ranges that can be pre-selected in one-semitone increments from one octave above to two octaves below original pitch. The Blend function adjusts the balance of the original note with the pitch-shifted tone, so a subtle movement of the vibrato arm produces a soft chorus effect while greater movement yields a convincing Uni-Vibe sound. Combining the Blend and Hold functions generates a range of chorus effects, and harmonies are precise using the Blend and Virtual Capo together. Twelve-string, Octavia, and sub-octaves are no problem.

The musically liquid quality of the notes, combined with the large number of other effects available with the Virtual Jeff PRO and the impossibility of it affecting tuning, makes bypassing, disabling, or completely removing an existing mechanical vibrato from a guitar a serious option. ***–Bob Dragich***

FLYING FINGERS

The Gretsch Richard Fortus G6636T-RF Falcon



Through the decades, the Gretsch White Falcon has been spied in the hands of everyone from top Nashville session cats to rockers like Neil Young and Billy Duffy of the Cult. After recently taking a shine to the iconic semi-hollow, Guns 'N Roses' Richard Fortus co-developed the G6636T-RF Falcon.

This modern version provides a pure Gretsch experience with all the trimmings; its 1.75"-deep/17"-wide body is made of arched laminated maple front, back, and sides with a chambered spruce center block to defeat feedback. The 25.5"-scale maple neck has a U-shaped profile and 22 frets on an ebony board. The electronics get even more interesting, with custom Filter'Tron humbuckers designed to offer both vintage Gretsch tones and PAF cleans. The Volume knob has a treble-bleed circuit – dial it down and that badass tone remains, which doesn't always happen with traditional pots. The Tone and three-way pickup selector sit on the lower bout.

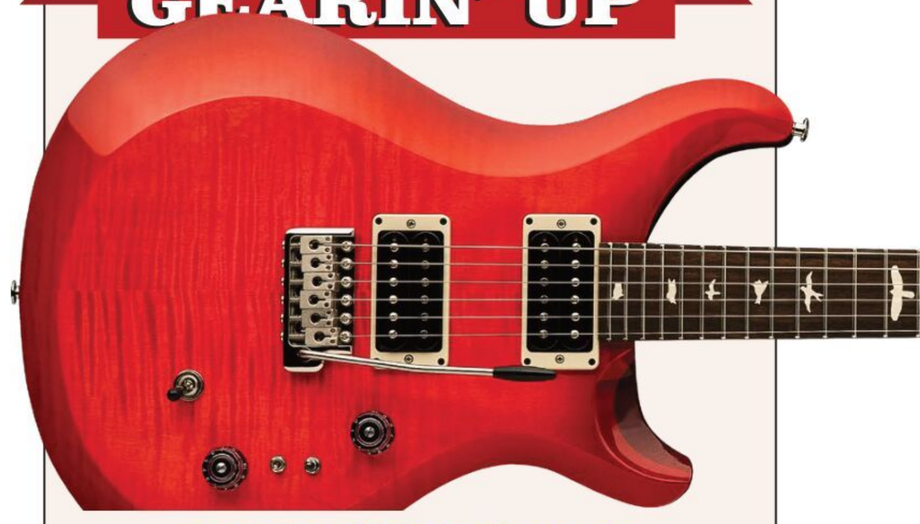
Price: $3,599.99
www.gretschguitars.com

Hardware includes TonePros TP6R bridge with roller saddles and Grover Roto-matic tuners, all in a nickel finish. The crowning glory, though, is a Bigsby B6CP String-Thru Vibrato tailpiece for gentle whammy wiggles. A Graph Tech Tusq XL nut provides low friction to alleviate tuning concerns. Ornaments include jeweled G-arrow knobs, classic Gretsch "thumbnail" inlays, a tortoiseshell headstock logo, and swank tortoiseshell binding on the body.

Unlike a classic Gretsch hollowbody for jazz and country pickin', the Fortus Falcon is also adept at heavy rock thanks to that center block and heavy, tank-like construction. Plug it in and revel in numerous clean flavors – then crank the gain up and enjoy the ride. The Fortus can take as much overdrive as you throw at it. The neck on our tester was expertly set up, with fast-playing and with neatly dressed medium-jumbo frets.

While the G6636T-RF is a pricey axe, you get plenty of bang for the buck, including that classic vintage-white vibe, a Bigsby (there's also a stoptail version), superior Filter'Tron pickups, and a rock-solid build. Made for high-volume rocking, the Fortus Falcon is a premium twang box with modern features, but stays faithful to the Gretsch tradition. – ***Pete Prown*** VG

GEARIN' UP



PRS S2 CUSTOM 24-08

The PRS S2 Custom 24-08 has a maple top, mahogany back and neck, and rosewood fretboard with bird inlays. The Pattern Thin neck has a 25"-scale rosewood board with 24 frets. The 85/15 S pickups have controls for Volume, Tone, and three-way toggle selector with coil-split switches.



SUPRO ROYALE

The Supro Royale amplifier toggles between 35 watts output in Class A mode or 50 watts in Class AB. Available as a 1x12 or 2x12 combo with Supro BD12 speaker(s), features include footswitchable boost, buffered effects loop, and tube-driven spring reverb. Its poplar cabinet has black tolex and hemp grillecloth.

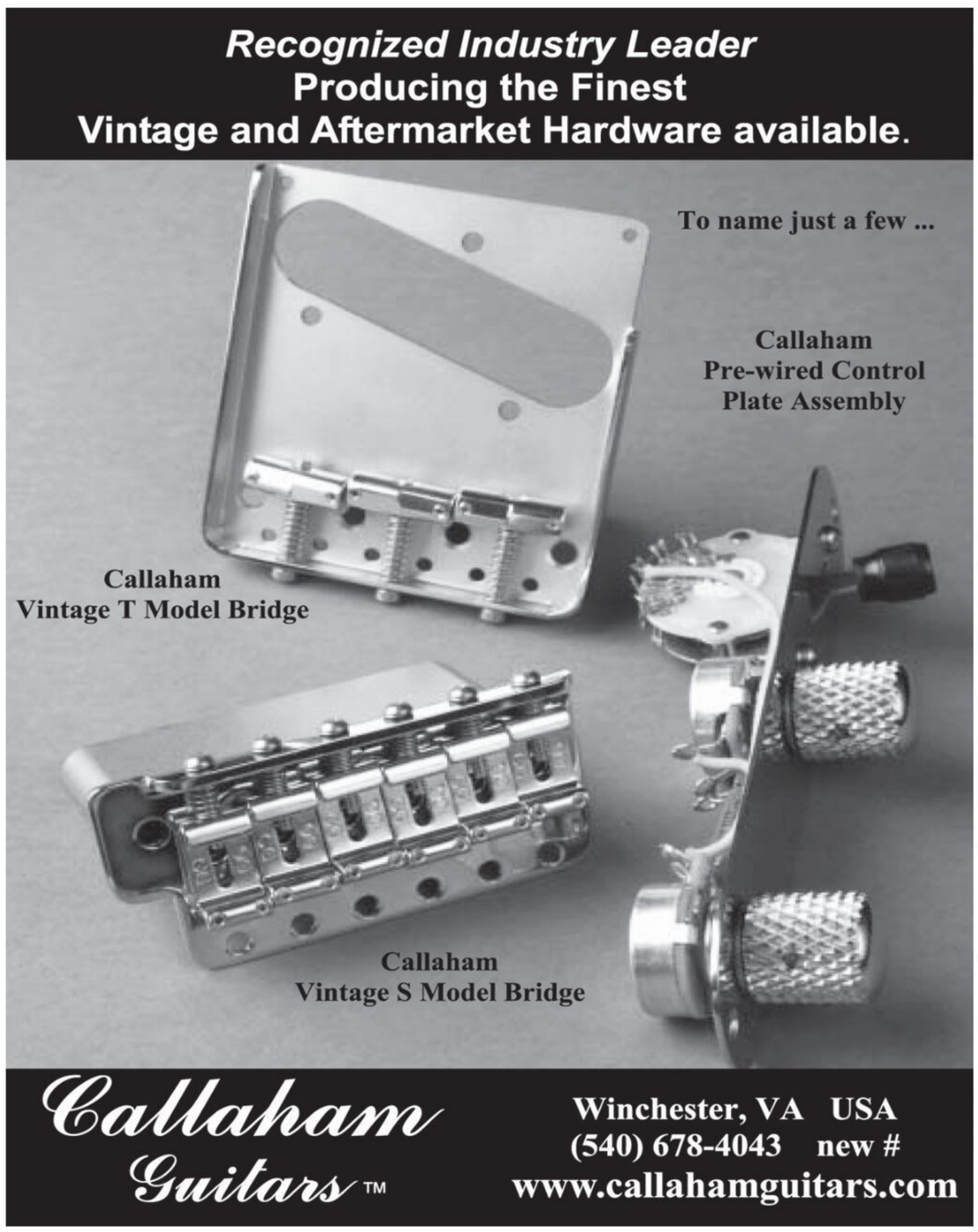


WALRUS AUDIO MAKO D1

The Walrus Audio Mako D1 High-Fidelity Stereo Delay has five tuned programs – Digital, Modulated, Vintage, Dual, and Reverse echoes. Each can be tweaked with Modulation, Tone, Age, and tap/clock switches. Other features include stereo in and out, MIDI control, adjustable stereo width, and nine presets.


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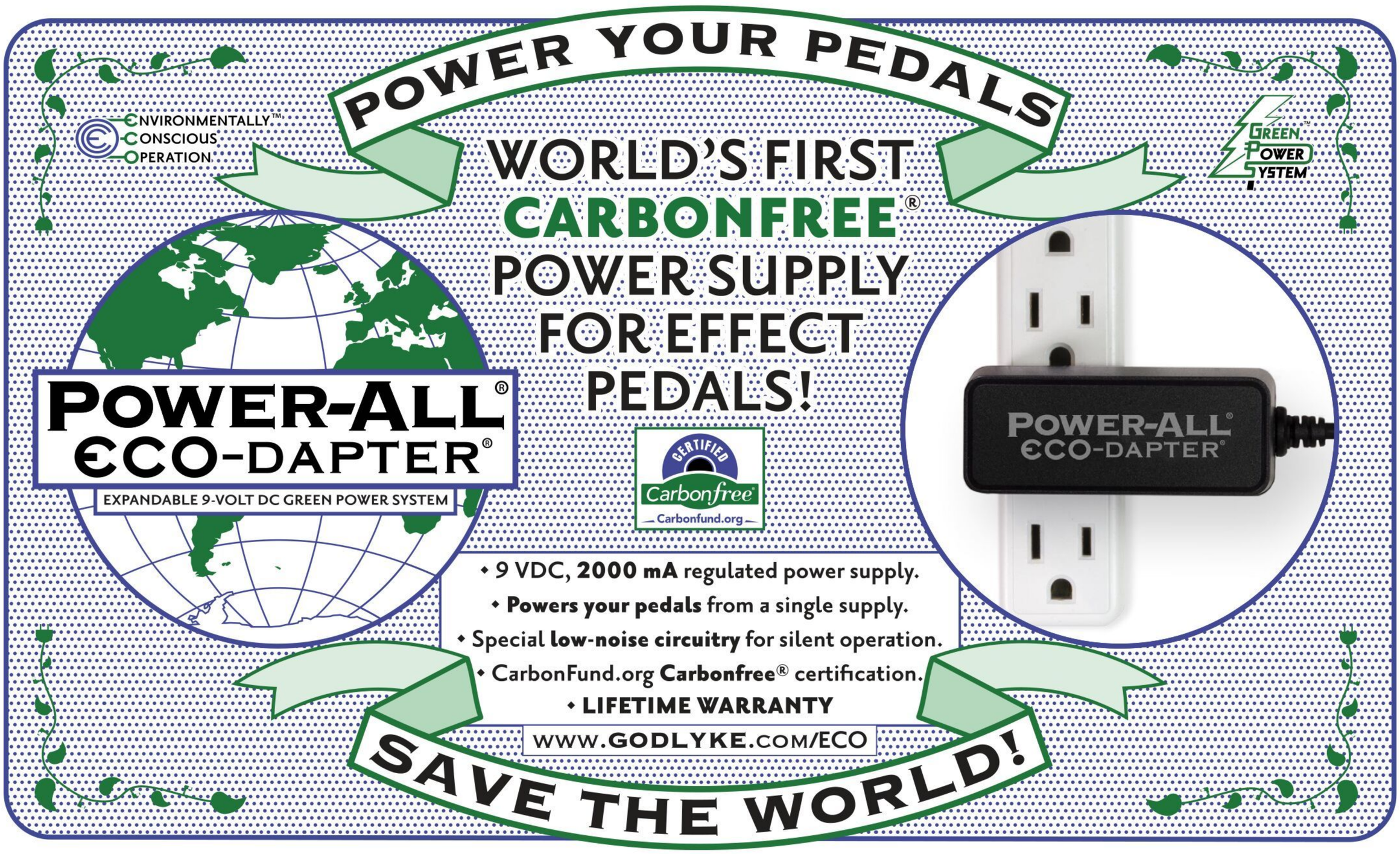

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★★★★★ “As I awaited in eager anticipation for my Tres Equis XXX, the day finally came and this gem arrived! Gerald, you have truly created your Magnum Opus! The range of articulation and tone produced by this amp is amazing. Every instrument I plug into the Tres Equis XXX takes on a new dimension of responsiveness and harmonic richness. Straight in. Words don’t suffice, you have to hear it to believe it. I could go on and on about the workmanship, the quiet operation and the bad-ass design….but sorry, I have to go now so I can hear my 335 through it one more time!” Chet Jordan - St. Petersburg, FL

★★★★★ “My Tres Equis XXX gives me great clean tones and takes pedals really well. It's quieter than a mouse . I must say the lacquered Tweed work is the best I've ever seen. Excellent sounding spring reverb!” Russ Reiser - Neenah, Wisconsin

★★★★★ “I've never had such an experience playing an amp ... my Tres Equis is so responsive and such a sound ... as if I was surrounded by the sound. I never really used the volume knobs on my guitars, but with this amp it's THE secret, THE way to get beautiful sounds ... Thank you so much for this amp.” T. Zwart. - Geneva, Switzerland

★★★★★ “When I finally had the opportunity to actually hear and play the 30 anniversary Tres XXX, I switched it on I heard nothing; no hiss or hum... totally quiet. It was so quiet I thought it wasn't on. But upon striking the first few notes, I was blown away and couldn't believe its responsiveness, clean tone and articulation to my picking nuance. The 8” speakers have an unbelievable “spank” and undeniable tone. This lightweight combo (36 lbs!) took me by surprise and blew me away!!” Andy Garcia - Lampasas, Texas

★★★★★ “Gerald, you made the most unbelievable amp. There are so many things that are just wonderful. Vibrant, touch sensitive, breathy tone, lots of headroom. Sounds great with all my guitars - Tele, Les Paul, Stat, all killer. It just loves every thing. My Tres Equis XXX captures so many dynamics which are so necessary for great tone.” Tim Hill - Westbrook, Maine

★★★★★ “I played my Tres Equis XXX for about 2 hours with all my guitars, comparing it with my other amps, and I kept going back to the Tres Equis … It just sounded “better”at all levels … whether totally clean, slightly broken up or overdriven … more responsive, better dynamics, better overall sound balance (I don’t know how to explain it, but to me, all the necessary important electric guitar frequencies and harmonics are there in perfect balance). Not saying my other quality & custom amps are not good, but compared to your amp, they always seem to have something missing somewhere. So thanks for this really great amp!” Taco - Euro-town

★★★★★ “I have five nice amps - three Kendrick amplifiers, a 1960 Fender Concert and a Fender Dual Professional. If I had to take just one, I’d take the Tres Equis, hands down. It’s lightweight and small enough to tote easily, has plenty of cajones, and makes me sound better than I usually do, no matterwhat type of music I play. Those four 8" speakers have incredible bell-like tone and the response is so fast. I love the simplicity of the controls…vol, bass, treble, reverb. I can get any sound I want with ease. It doesn’t hurt that it looks so good and will blow other players away.” Ralph Metcalf - Tampa Bay, Florida

★★★★★ “My Tres Equis XXX is a very special amplifier. I am impressed with the sag/natural tube compression and it's ability to cut right through a mix. I like the way the mids come out when the volume is cranked. It is the only amp I need - lightweight with plenty of power. It just does everything.” Tony Economo - Tulsa, Oklahoma

★★★★★ “My new Kendrick Tres Equis XXX is obviously a culmination of over 30 years of tube amp building experience. TheTres Equis blows me away, and I am a tech that has worked on hundreds of amps!
The tweed work/amplifier construction/layout/parts selection/and tone on the Tres Equis are all impeccable to say the least.” George Englebretson - Bryan/College Station, Texas

★★★★★ “I bought a new Tres Equis XXX amp from Kendrick and all I can say is WOW! This is the 6th Kendrick I have owned over the last 25 years and I have to say that while it’s tough to pick a favorite, the Tres Equis wins. The sound of this amp is crystal clear but turn the guitar volume up and it breaks up nicely. Amazingly, it’s the size of a 1x12 cabinet but there are FOUR 8 inch speakers in it! It weighs next to nothing, but with 35 watts it packs a serious punch. The spring reverb sounds great and adds to the tonal quality. It’s not cheap, but when you see the workmanship that went into this amp, experience the incredible "feel" and hear the tone, you are certain to agree it’s well worth the dough. Gerald obviously put 30 years of amp building knowledge into this superior amp!” David Tullo - San Antonio, Texas

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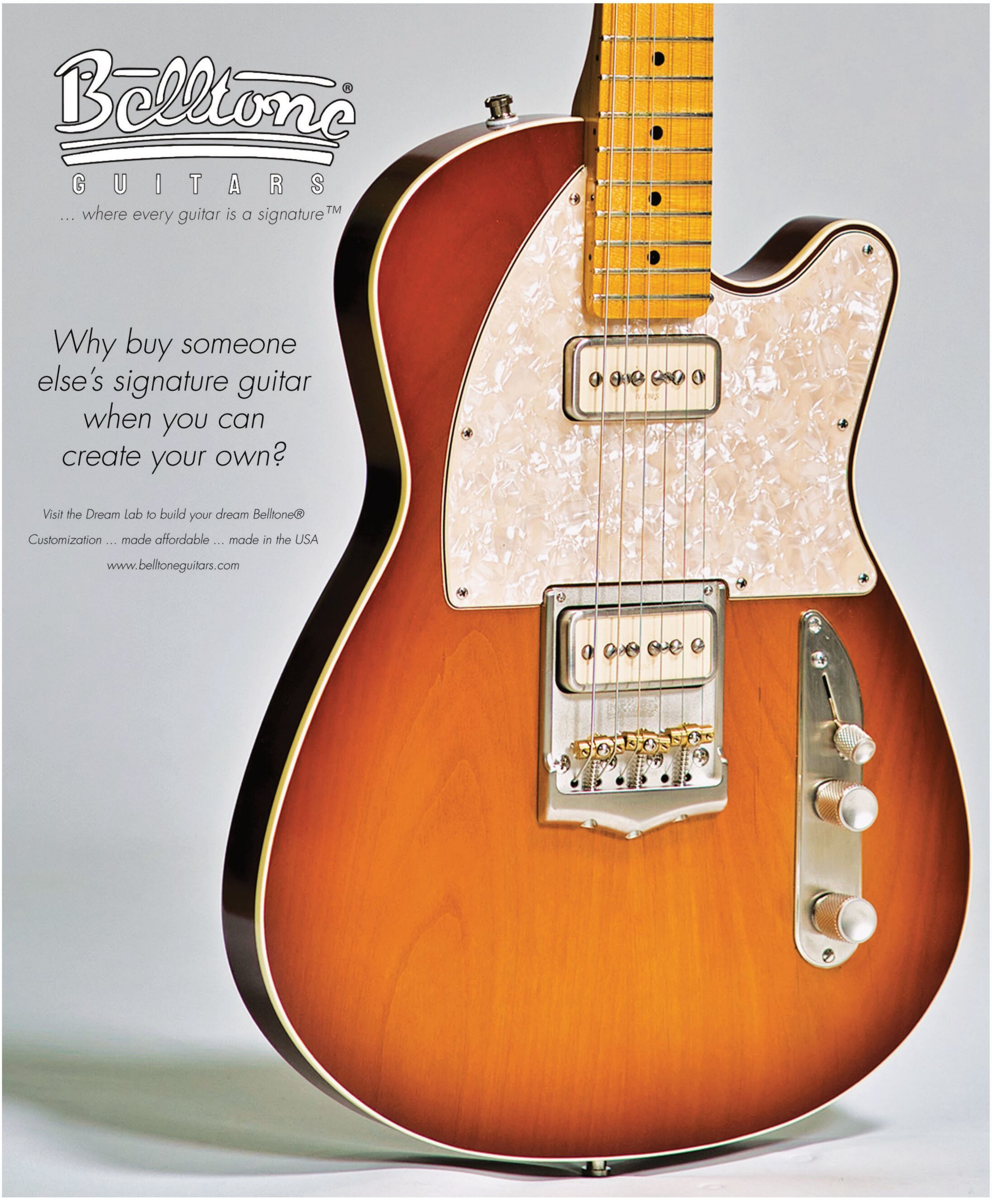
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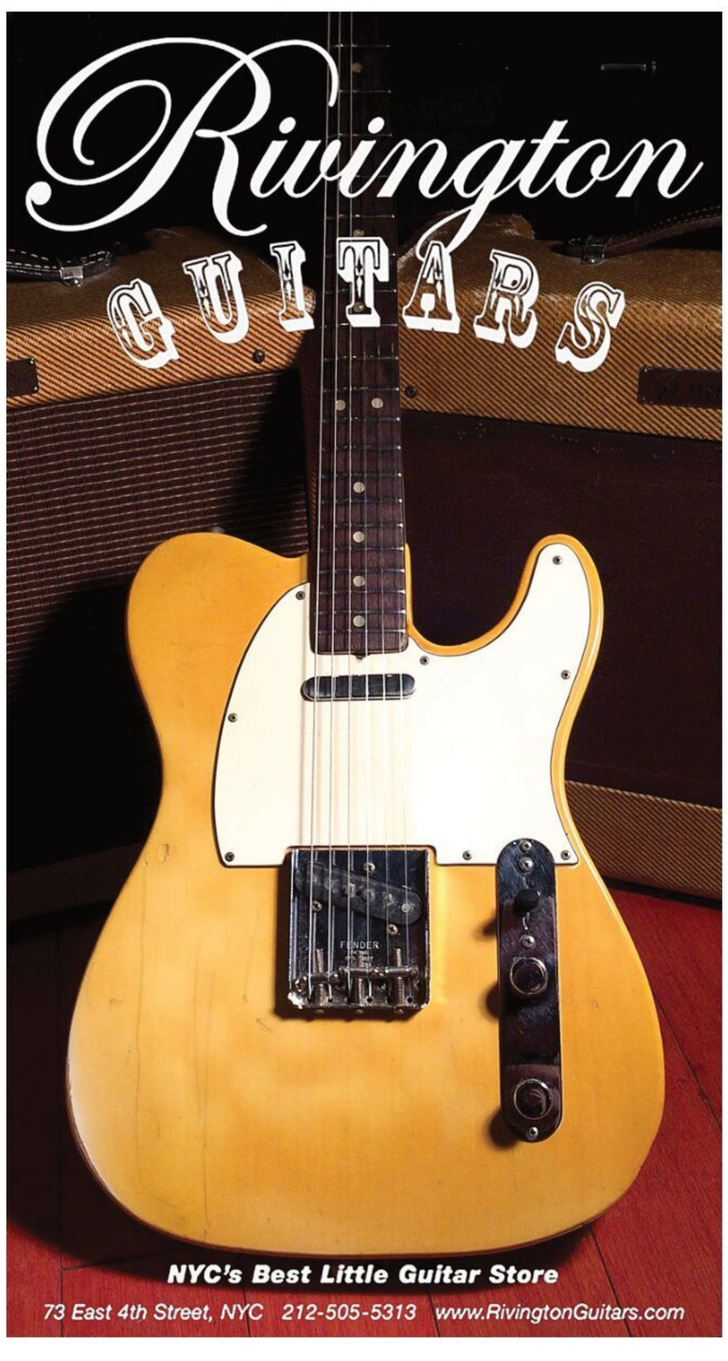
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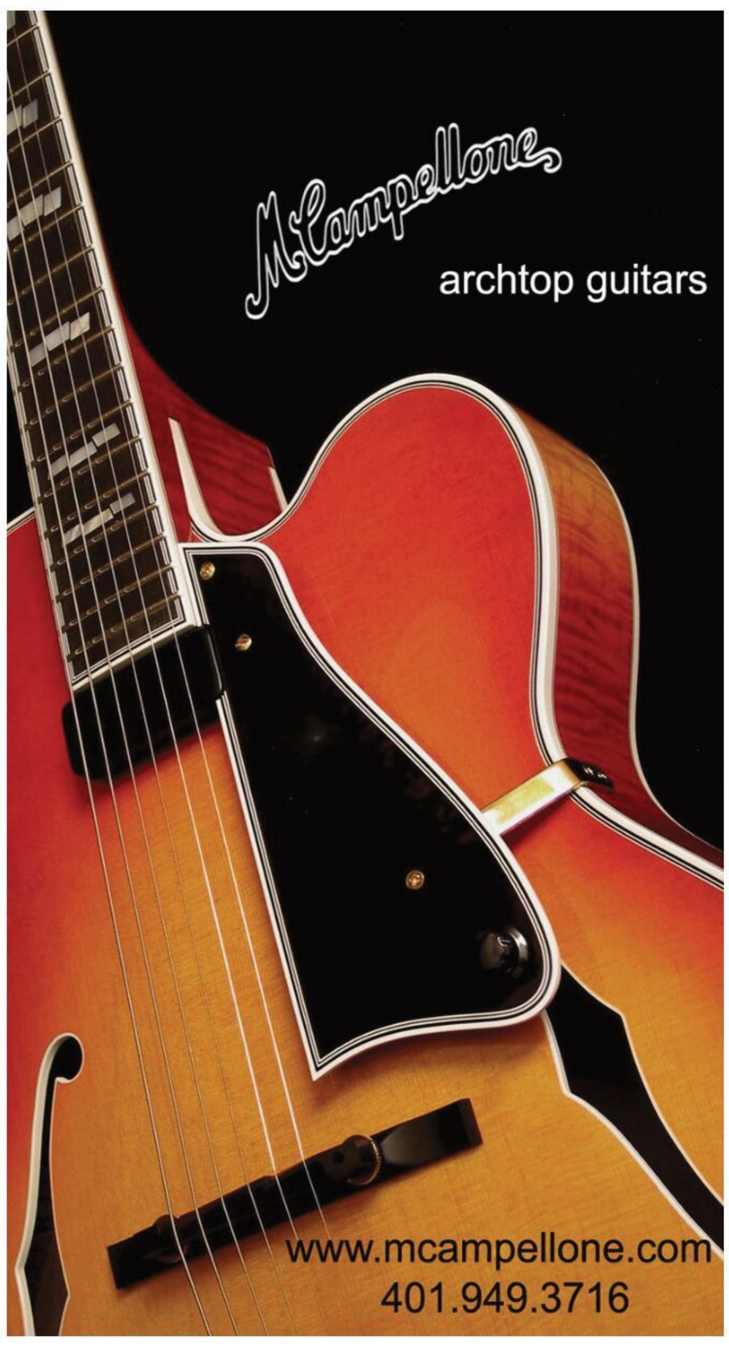
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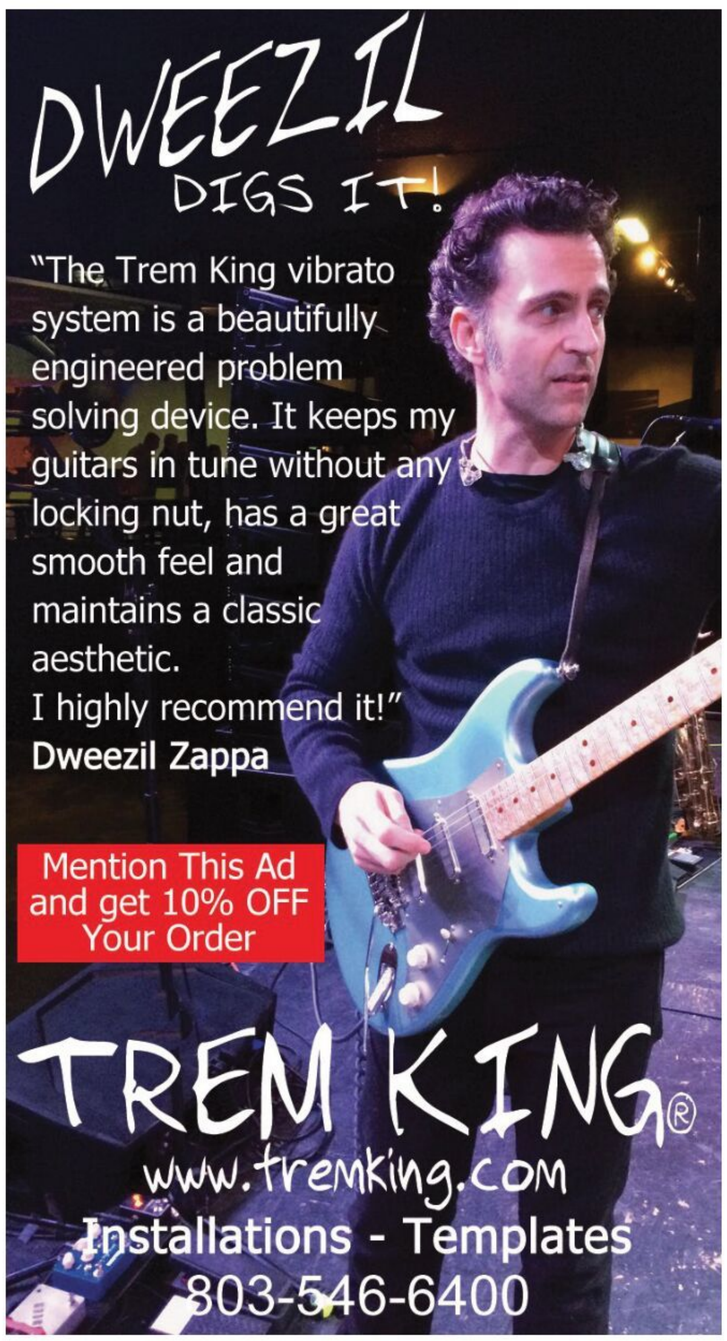


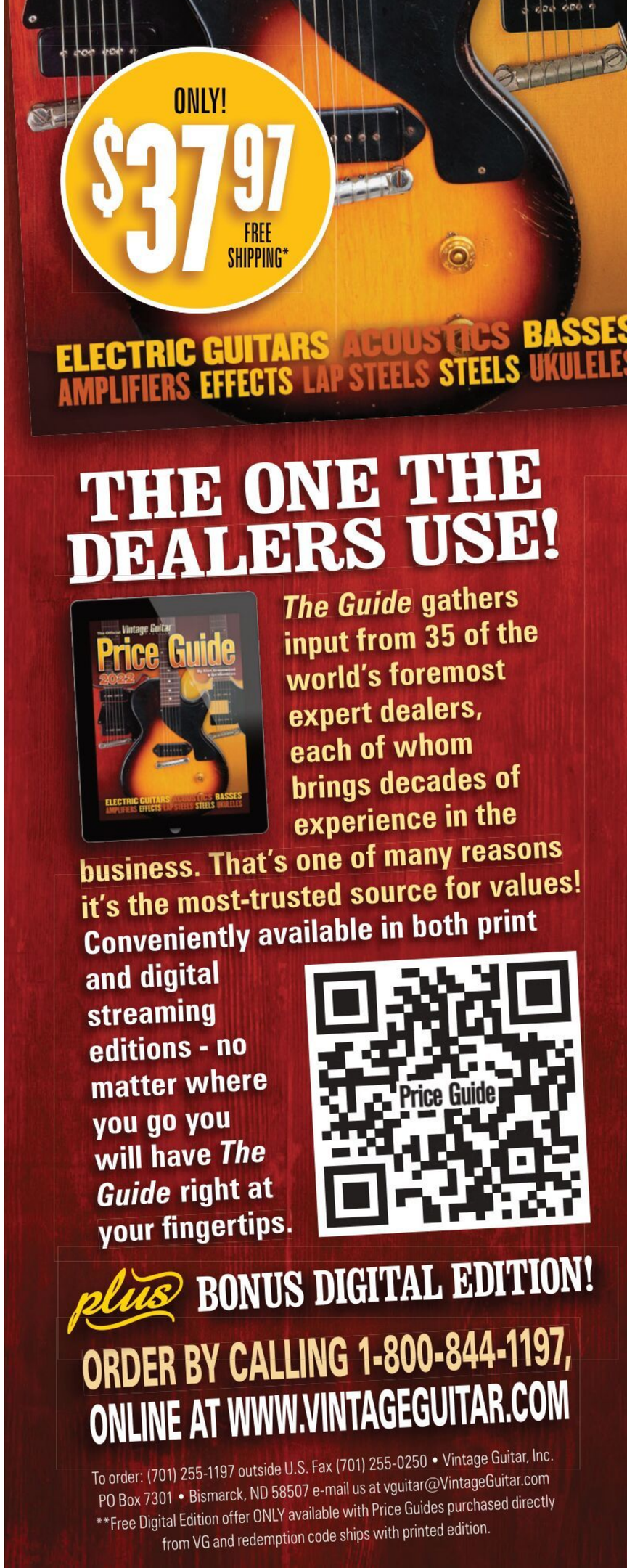





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1) Dan Prater may favor Gibsons, but he doesn't discriminate. Bearing witness are (back, from left) his American Standard Strat, Gretsch Electromatic, Les Paul DC Special, a project Les Paul, Classic Gold Top, Standard Gold Top, a '78 LP Standard, '97 ES-335, LP Traditional, Epiphone Crestwood reissue, and Epi Broadway. In front are a Hound Dog Dobro, Martin 00-13, Epi DR-212, Gibson Songwriter, Fender Vintera '60s Jag, Vintera '50s Tele, and a Tele copy.

2) Christian Linnett invites us to meet the family – a '60s Stella, '40s Kay, '60s Airline, '66 Gibson J-50, a '60s Tribute Les Paul, Recording King 12-string, Gold Tone resonator, and a Regal Resonator he calls "The Tomato."

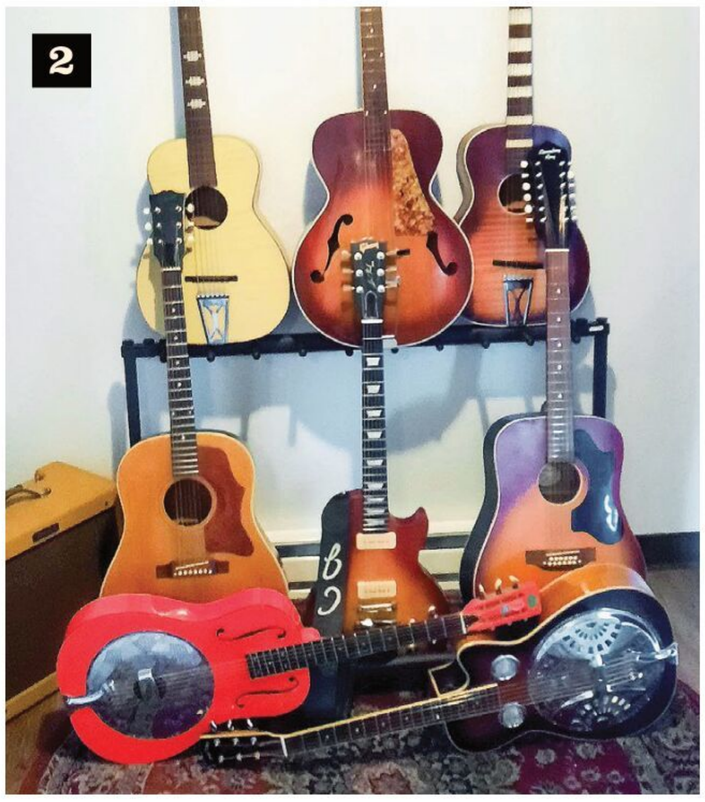
3) John Hefty returns to the "Gallery" with a look at three of his trés cool basses. The red one is a '73 Ibanez Silver Series "lawsuit" model 2366, while the middle is a modern Jazz body with a Precision Roadworn neck. "My pride and joy is the stripped P-bass with a '58 Precision neck and pickups, hardware, and pickguard from a '62," he said. "It's the best Precision I've ever owned, of way too many!"

4) Longtime subscriber Geordan McQuiston loves to play his uncommon (in the U.S.) basses. First is a circa-'66 Baldwin/Burns Vibraslim, followed by a '66-'67 Watkins Rapier, and a '64 Burns with the "Wild Dog" setting.

5) Ben Van Dyk propped his '64 Tele with his '60s Gibson GA-70RVT for this shot. "The amp sounds wonderful," he said. "It's not too loud – good enough for jamming and small clubs."

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SansAmp GT2 (1993)

Affectionately referred to as the "desert island" pedal, the SansAmp GT2 is unchanged (except for the DC input very early on). Consistently in production since introduced, it enables you to "architecturally" create your own rig in seconds.

SansAmp Classic (1989)

B. Andrew Barta's unique invention was the catalyst for the whole "going direct" movement over 30 years ago. Since then, SansAmp has evolved into an extensive line of pedals and racks, as well as being the heart of our Fly Rig® Series. Of the pedal formats, the SansAmp Classic is the most sophisticated.

EXCITEMENT NEVER GETS OLD



SansAmp Bass Driver DI (1994)

Often unseen, it's hardly a secret that the SansAmp Bass Driver is the secret weapon behind mammoth rigs on arena stages around the globe. It is also widely recognized as a studio staple for virtually every genre, and will make any FOH engineer smile.

DOES SOMETHING HAVE TO BE "NEW" TO BE EXCITING?

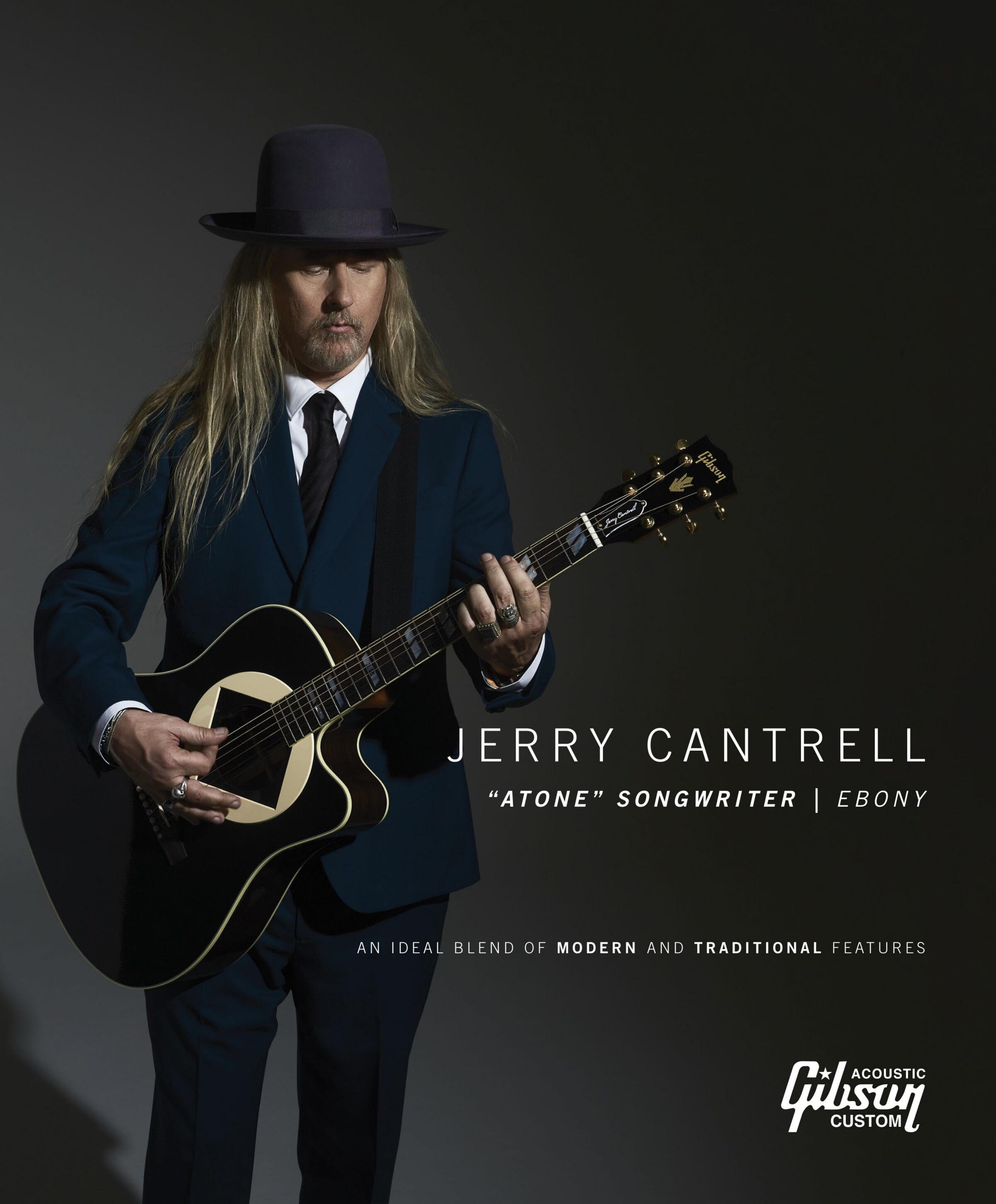
In a world of planned obsolescence and constant upgrades, it's rare an electronic music-related product can survive a lengthy lifespan. Yet these 3, in particular, have done just that. (We have more, such as the MIDI Mouse since 1995, but let's stay focused on SansAmp.)

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