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| ***By Ward Meeker***

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WOOD AND WIRE, STEEL AND RUBBER

["Pretty Pairs: Steve Evans Guitars-and-Cars Passion Project," August '22] was *so* cool! I've thought about guitars and cars for most of my 50-plus years in the guitar biz, and once had a notebook in which I kept a similar list. It was 50 or more names (maybe 100) like the Gretsch/Packard Clipper and Kramer/AMC Pacer. I also remember a few numeric ones like the Lexus ES-300. Keep it up, and thanks to Steve and *VG*.

Steve Stulberg
Maplewood, Minnesota

(*Ed. Note: We enjoyed working with Steve. If you or any other reader can compose a photo of a car and guitar with the same name, they'd be welcome for the "Readers Gallery." Just pose your Pacer with a Pacer (or Mustang with a Mustang, etc.) and send a high-res jpg file to doug@vintage-guitar.com. Include year/make/model of both and a brief caption telling when and why you acquired each.*)

"Pretty Pairs" flashback: Firebirds from '66 and '68.

CONJOINED CAMPBELL

I read with interest (and a chuckle) online criticism of Mike Campbell and the Dirty Knobs' new LP for sounding too much like Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers. As Mike said in your August interview, that's who he is and has been since meeting Tom Petty. He's as much Tom as Tom was Mike. They were the creative backbone. It's like saying Paul McCartney sounds too much like a Beatle or Slash plays like he did with GnR. I easily hear enough difference in the Dirty Knobs. I miss Tom and enjoy the Heartbreaker overtones in their music.

Art Martinez
Crowley, Texas

The photo of Mike Campbell in the August issue shows him playing a Firebird that appears to have an autograph. Who signed it?

Douglas Morgan
Pensacola, Florida

(*Ed. Note: We asked Mike, who told us, "It appears to be Johnny Winter's signature. I bought the guitar at a pawn shop in Philadelphia while on the Fleetwood Mac tour, so I have no idea whether it's real, and if so when or where he signed it. The back is also signed, by 'Philly Joe'."*)

THIS HAT OR THAT?

Regarding Wolf Marshall's August "Fretprints" on Foghat, Roger Earl wasn't in every lineup of Foghat. In 1989, I opened up for Lonesome Dave's Foghat (I've opened up for every Foghat lineup except the current one), and Roger wasn't included, which meant they couldn't use the Foghat logo because it was owned by Roger. I love *VG*. Keep up the good work!

Jason Brown
Wichita Falls, Texas

(*Ed. Note: Thanks, Jason. There was some confusion created by the fact Lonesome Dave's Foghat was a separate act. So it makes sense it wasn't allowed to use the original logo.*)

SUMMER SATISFACTION

I remember getting my first issue of *VG* 20 years ago and reading it cover to cover, ads and all. Today, it's still my favorite magazine, and I enjoyed looking at the ads in the August issue as much as I did reading about Foghat ("Fretprints"), Lynyrd Skynyrd ("Pop 'N Hiss: Down-South Guitar Assault: Lynyrd Skynyrd's *(Pronounced 'Leh-Nerd Skin-Nerd'")*), and Ceil Thompson, the rock-and-roll high-schooler building a guitar from scratch ("Dan's Guitar Rx").

I also enjoy "Reader Mail" and apparently have a lot in common with reader George Lopez (August), who likes playing along with his CDs that he gets inexpensively from Goodwill. I, too, scour the CD bins at the local Goodwill stores and get excited about "Seniors Wednesday" discounts. I also take advantage of your Spotify playlists. So, thanks. I always look forward to the next issue.

J. Douglas Watts
Estero, Florida

(*Ed. Note: Thanks for helping us remind readers that with each issue, we create a custom playlist on Spotify, which is free for anyone to use.*)

SEND LETTERS TO

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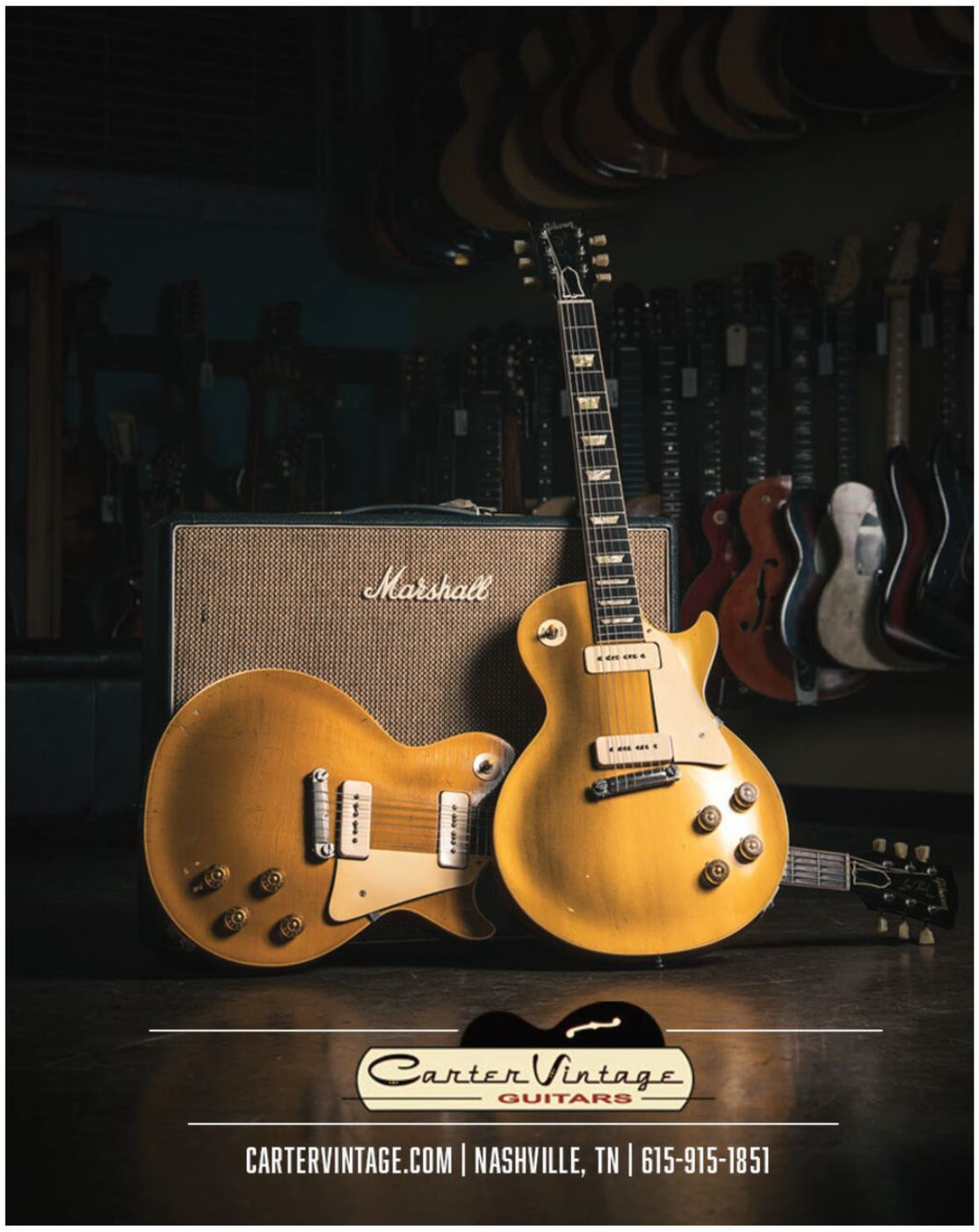

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VIRGINIA MFA HOSTS "STORIED STRINGS" EXHIBIT

Beginning October 8, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, will host "Storied Strings: The Guitar in American Art," an exhibit that explores the guitar's symbolism in American art from the early 19th century to the present day.

Featuring 125 paintings, drawings, watercolors, photographs and sculptures by American artists such as John Baldessari, Romare Bearden, Annie Leibovitz, Ruth Reeves, and Julian Alden Weir, it will also include 35 guitars made by Fender, Gibson, Gretsch, and Martin that have been played by musicians such as Lulu Belle, Eric Clapton, John Lee Hooker, Freddie King, Les Paul, and Brian Setzer.

Other features include audio-visual kiosks showing music and filmed performances, as well as a window overlooking a recording studio where visitors can view in-progress-sessions. Musicians confirmed to record are Tommy Emmanuel, Nels Cline, Stephen McCarthy (The Jayhawks) and Yasmin Williams. Videos of their sessions will be released on VMFA's website and Youtube channel as "Richmond Sessions '22-'23."

The exhibit runs through March 19, 2023. For more, visit www.VMFA.museum.

MORSE LEAVES DEEP PURPLE

Guitarist Steve Morse recently announced his departure from Deep Purple to care for his wife, Janine, who has cancer.

"Last Autumn, I left writing sessions in Germany because my wife was having a real medical crisis," Morse said in a statement. "We are learning to accept stage four cancer and chemo treatment for the rest of her life.

"I couldn't commit to... tours (and initially) suggested a substitute guitarist, hoping we could see the miraculous cure."

Morse played his last show with Purple on a recent Rock Legends Cruise. He was replaced by Simon McBride.

Storied Strings exhibit photo: The Dorothea Lange Collection, courtesy of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Dave Mustaine: Cameron Nunez.

DAVE MUSTAINE

Alive and Shredding

One of the most rugged, resilient rock musicians ever, Megadeth founder Dave Mustaine is a thrash-metal pioneer who has weathered band turnover, addiction, and throat cancer.

Megadeth's new studio album, *The Sick, the Dying... and the Dead!*, is a ferocious, focused effort coming six years after *Dystopia* and its Grammy-winning title track. The second album with guitarist Kiko Loureiro, it didn't include original bassist David Ellefson, who was dismissed after a personal scandal.

Testament bassist Steve DiGiorgio re-recorded Ellefson's parts before former bassist James LoMenzo rejoined as a permanent member.

What was it like, following *Dystopia* and its huge success? Was there pressure?

Pressure? No. It didn't feel like that. It would've been different had we not worked hard for it – if it just kind of came to us like a lot of other genres of music where you see people who win and win and win and you think it really doesn't have anything to do with musical merit or talent at all because a lot of people who win awards have songwriters. That's not fair.

Did you have a direction in mind for songs and themes? Work on the album started before Covid, but it's almost eerie how it coincides with current events.

Well, you can do that with just about any Megadeth song, except the ones that are fantasy. I watch the news. I paid attention in school. I studied as much as I wanted to. I paid attention to world history and American history. I learned a lot about the law and medicine. Here I am. I'm writing about things that make me happy, whether it's exposing light on stuff that's bad or standing as both judge and jury with what I think is a better outcome to some problems we have. I've been through a lot of stuff, and some of the songs talk about personal experiences, mistakes I've made, and how I've overcome them.

I'm really, really excited about how this record stepped up over *Dystopia*, which was as close to a masterpiece as I've come since *Rust in Peace*. That was really a well-thought-out, well-planned record. We did take a lot of time to make that record, too.

It was a lot easier to write this record because I had time to start assembling all the parts. We went into the studio and I showed Kiko all my riff folders. It was pretty overwhfelming. There was so much stuff there. Just pick up a guitar and play and if it's a really good riff, you record it and put it into a folder. You get a plethora of good riffs saved up.

I always think of it like, "It's time to make a record and be the best you possibly can, and don't copy anything you've already done." When a riff doesn't fit a song, it doesn't matter whose it is, it's taken out. If there's a song that's been submitted to the band during the songwriting process and it's a great song, we use it. It doesn't matter whose it was.

Did Steve DiGiorgio dress the bass tracks with his own style?

Steve brought his own style and skill to it because of his superb musicianship. I haven't had a chance to tell anybody how great Steve's been. He came in as a session performer and during the time he was there I fantasized a lot about what it would be like if he didn't have another gig. I really dig Testament and I respect the band. I wouldn't want to poach somebody. He was a breath of fresh air. Testament is a great band and we were lucky to have him.

What does it mean for you to endorse Gibson now? You have the Flying V EXP and the new Songwriter acoustic signature models.

I always wanted to be a Gibson man. There were some things that got in the way. The timing wasn't right. There was a period where Gibson went through changes. After that, they became the company we all know and love. I couldn't *wait* to get in contact with them about being an ambassador.

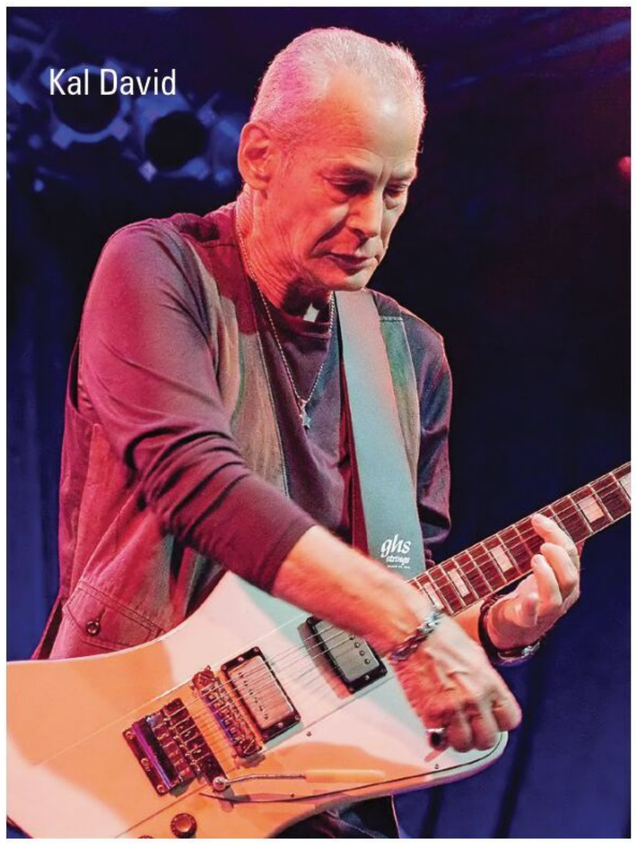
It's quite a responsibility to be an ambassador for the company because it has such a proud and magnificent history. I couldn't be happier. It just happened that the planets aligned and I went to Gibson. ***– Bret Adams***

IN MEMORIAM

KAL DAVID

Blues/rock guitarist Kal David died August 16 in Palm Springs, California. He was 79 and a cause of death was not immediately announced.

Born David Raskin, in 1961 the Chicago native took a stage name to front Kal David and the Exceptions, which included Peter Cetera on bass. The band signed to VeeJay Records and were regulars on the city's blues scene until '65, when David left to join a short-lived band before forming the Rovin' Kind with Paul Cotton. In '68, they changed the name to Illinois Speed Press and moved to Los Angeles.


Kal David

Illinois Speed Press recorded two albums before David left in 1970 to form The Fabulous Rhinestones with bassist Harvey Brooks. The following year, that band moved to Woodstock, where over the next six years they recorded three albums, jammed with members of The Band and Paul Butterfield, and toured with Stevie Wonder, War, The Doobie Brothers, and The Allman Brothers.

Known as a Gibson Firebird player, David acquired his first at a repair shop.

"I thought 'Boy, that's an ugly guitar'," he told *VG* in 2010. "But I got it for $175, and fell in love with it." He later had a signature Hamer T-51.

In '78, David and his longtime girlfriend, singer Laurie Bono, moved to Los Angeles, where he played for Etta James, Al Kooper, and Johnny Rivers (who also hired Bono as a backing vocalist on world tours and for two albums). Through the early '80s, David played in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, helping to record *Cross Country Blues*.

In the early '90s, David and Bono moved to Palm Springs, where they recorded two albums for a local label and became favorites at jams, including one hosted by Rivers. From '98 through 2004, they operated the Blue Guitar club in Palm Springs, where they hosted musical acts and jams. David also sold instructional DVDs and did voice work for Disney World.

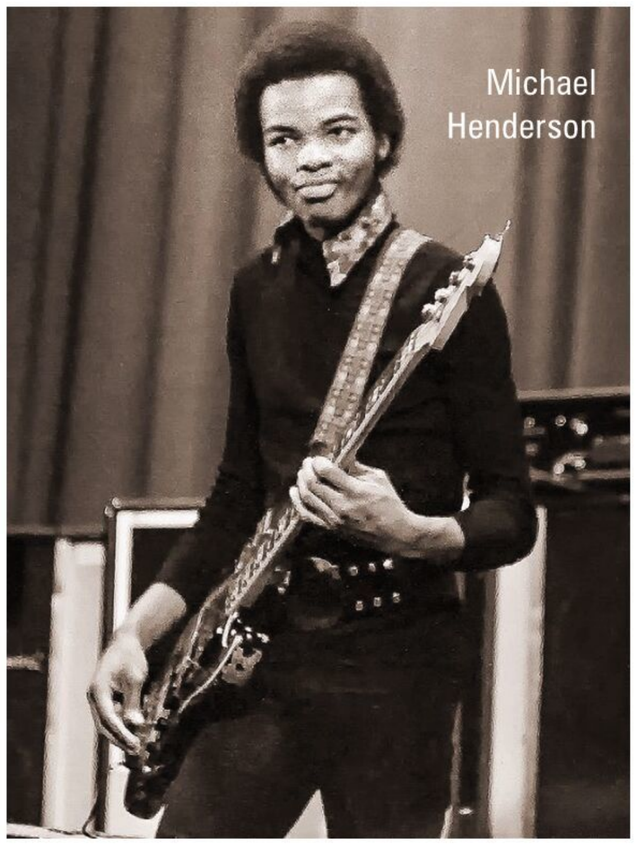
In the early '00s, 38 Special co-founder/lead guitarist Jeff Carlisi spoke to David in Palm Beach, recalling that he "…was completely unaware the Speed Press had been so influential" on his band and other Southern-rock acts including Lynyrd Skynyrd. In 2008, the two jammed at a club in Boston, and stayed in touch afterward.

"He was humble and sincere," Carlisi said. "No pretense, and he was a great ambassador for the blues." ***– Willie G. Moseley and Ward Meeker***

MICHAEL HENDERSON

Bassist, songwriter, and soul-pop singer Michael Henderson passed away July 19 at his home in suburban Atlanta. He was 71 and being treated for cancer.

After he was born in Mississippi, Henderson's family moved to Detroit in 1960. As a youngster, he started playing cello, then, influenced by Motown Records session bassist James Jamerson, started teaching himself to play electric bass at age 12. A prodigy, at age 13 he was backing local acts including The Fantastic Four and Billy Preston. At 14, he began touring with The Detroit Emeralds.


Michael Henderson

In the liner notes to his 2018 compilation CD *Take Me I'm Yours: The Buddah Years Anthology*, Henderson recalled an impromptu jam with Stevie Wonder, who'd sat to play a piano in the dressing room of the theater where the Emeralds were playing. That led to Henderson joining Wonder's touring band. When off the road, Henderson did sessions at Motown; among the acts he backed were the Four Tops, Martha Reeves & the Vandellas, Gladys Knight & the Pips, and Aretha Franklin.

At a 1970 Stevie Wonder gig in New York City, Henderson was recruited/sniped by jazz trumpeter Miles Davis and, two days after joining, started recording *Jack Johnson* with a band that included Herbie Hancock, John McLaughlin, and Billy Cobham. Henderson spent six years with Davis, also recording *Live-Evil* and *On the Corner*.

Whenever Davis would take a break, Henderson kept busy on the Detroit scene, including playing sessions for an R&B band called The Dramatics. Among the approximately 70 songs recorded with the band were several he had written.

In early 1975, Henderson began sessions for an album by drummer/producer Norman Connors. In the process, he pitched three original songs for the disc, including what would become his vocal debut, "Valentine Love," a duet with Jean Carne that became a Top 10 R&B single. Two other Henderson songs also became R&B hits, "We Both Need Each Other" (#23) and "You Are My Starship"(#4).

In 1976, the success of those songs led to Henderson getting his own deal with Buddah Records as a singer/songwriter, and his debut album that year reached #10 on the *Billboard* R&B chart. He released five more albums over the next five years, the most successful being 1978's *In the Night Time*, which charted two R&B singles – the title track (#15) and "Take Me I'm Yours" (#3). His other chart hits included "Wide Receiver" (#4, 1980) and "Can't We Fall in Love Again," (#9, 1981). His last solo album, *Bedtime Stories*, was released in '86, after which he returned his focus to playing bass. He is survived by his mother, son, and two daughters. ***– Ward Meeker***

Kal David: Rainer Knäpper/Wikimedia Commons. Michael Henderson: J.P. Roche/Wikimedia Commons.

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RICH ROBINSON

Back To The Future

The Black Crowes' new six-song EP, *1972*, shows the band exploring rock classics from that year – the seeds of which propelled them to superstardom. For more than 30 years, the band has been mining epic '70s swagger, and they do it oh so well. Here, they cover songs by T-Rex, David Bowie, and The Rolling Stones, all painted with Rich Robinson's fierce guitar playing.

How did you guys come up with the idea for *1972*?

The idea came to us, and we thought it was cool. There was an amazing amount of songs and bands that existed in 1972, before all the corporate interests and greed got involved on an industrial scale. People could be artists; what always drew me to that was how unique everyone was. When you heard Aretha Franklin, you knew it was Aretha Franklin. Stephen Stills and Neil Young had their own identity. From The Rolling Stones to Led Zeppelin, it felt like music was bigger back then. The field was broader even though there were fewer bands. It always meant something to me, personally, and when I look at that list of songs, I think, "Holy s**t!"

It must have been tough choosing only six songs from that year.

We picked songs we thought we could do well or that we could add a little bit to. "Rocks Off" was a no-brainer for us. It's been incredibly influential. We grew up loving T-Rex and "Moonage Daydream." It was amazing for us to do a David Bowie song and tweaking it a tiny bit. "Papa Was a Rollin' Stone" is more of an R&B song, but we brought our rock and roll to it. We thought, "What's the difference between playing a song and bringing something to it?" Whatever we do, we're going to sound like us.

The slide solo on "Papa Was a Rollin' Stone" has some of your best playing.

I was trying to put a rock-and-roll flavor to that song. I recorded it at my home studio because I was sick on the last day. I used my Dan Armstrong that I've had forever. To be able to bring that guitar to that song was very cool.

"Easy To Slip" came out great.

We went back and forth about adding electric or acoustic guitars. I wound up doing my parts on acoustic, then doubling it. One of my favorite things sonically is playing acoustic guitars with drums. You have that organic wood that sounds so incredible. You think about Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young, Led Zeppelin *III*, and *Every Picture Tells a Story*, where you have these prevalent acoustic guitar sounds with drums behind it. It has a specific element that moves me. The same thing with "You Wear It Well" with the 12-string. A well-recorded acoustic guitar is one of my favorite things.

You recently received a new guitar from Martin.

One of the things that has been a part of Chris and I since before we were born was a '53 Martin D-28 that my dad had. He passed away in 2013. I didn't want to tour with that guitar because it's too sentimental. We talked to Martin about making one, and they were cool and supportive. So, we decided to turn it into a series (Rich Robinson Custom Signature Edition D-28). It's a tribute to my dad. I wanted to call it The Appalachian after the name of my dad's duo. I sent the guitar to Martin, and they matched everything exactly. Martin wanted to get everything right, and they did.

How are the Robinson brothers getting along?

It's been great. Being in a band is like being in another family. You have dynamics, and if you've been in a band together since you were teenagers, you have a double dose of dynamics. You have a real family and the family of the band. Going through what we've been through over the last 32 years, it's hard to change. That's why we chose to move forward with new people. People push agendas, have different motives, and we found that a lot of people in our past came out and had their own motives. It manifested itself in keeping Chris and I apart – divide and conquer.

Our old drummer (Steve Gorman) once said, "The scariest scenario was when Chris and I got along because no one could stop us." I was like, "Why would you tell me that?" People would manipulate us and say things like this, so Chris and I now communicate directly. We have conversations, we're honest, and it's the best thing in the world for us. When it's a positive environment, Chris and I can flourish. We can account for our own triggers towards each other, but if you have people that push negative agendas, we don't have time for it. We want to play our music. We want to be positive and cool, and we're thrilled with how it's going. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Rich Robinson: Will Wittmann.

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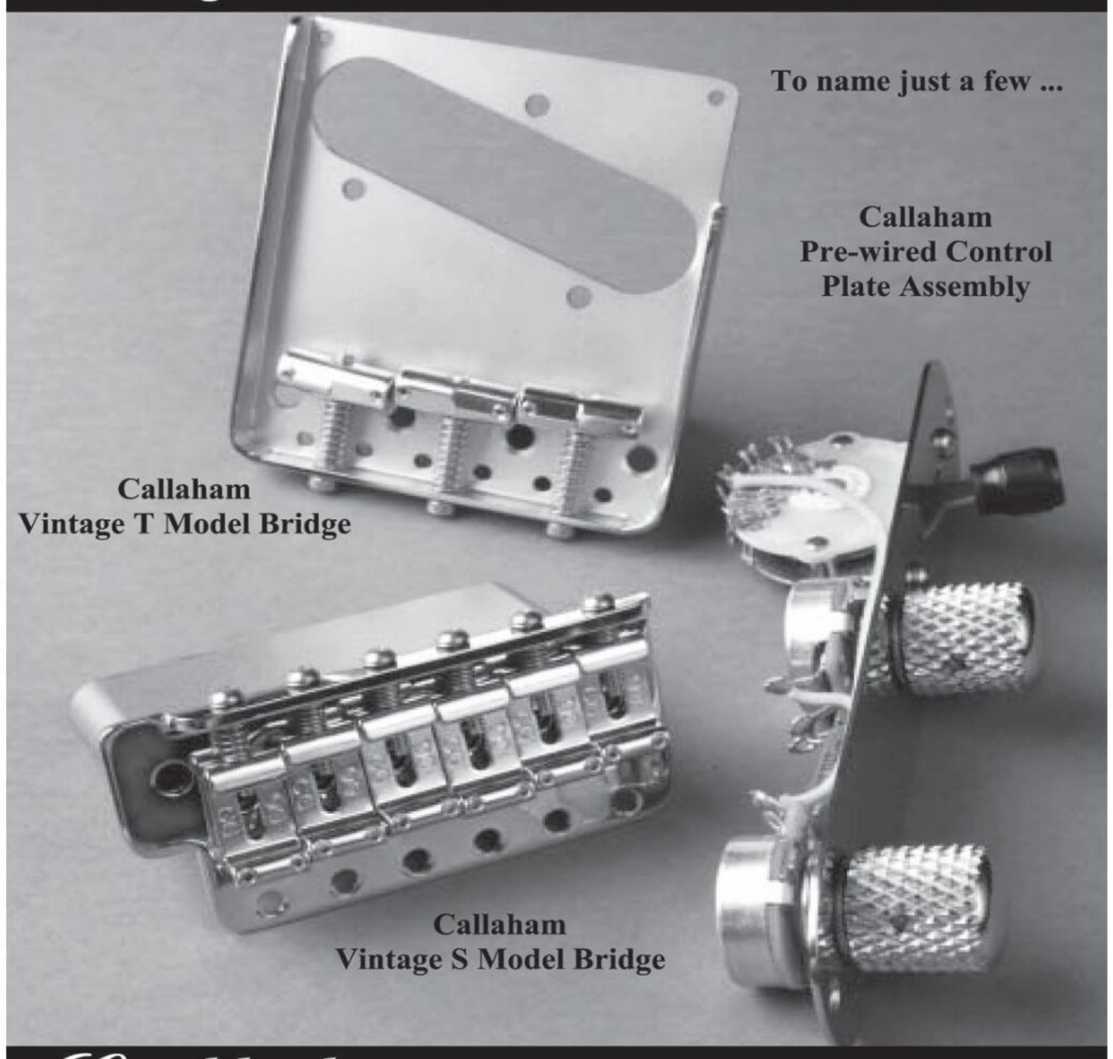

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ALAN PARSONS

New World Record

With his latest album, *From The New World*, legendary musician/producer Alan Parsons continues a string of lushly orchestrated progressive rock, this time featuring guests such as Joe Bonamassa and Styx's Tommy Shaw.

Parsons gained recognition as assistant engineer on the Beatles' *Abbey Road* and *Let it Be* then famously engineered Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother* and *The Dark Side of the Moon*. He became a producer, then formed the Alan Parsons Project with Eric Woolfson (1945-2009), which recorded 10 successful concept albums between 1976 and '87 and enjoyed several hit singles.

The new album borrows from a piece of classical music and includes your cover of a '50s soul-pop song. What led to those choices?

Antonín Dvorák and Phil Spector are two of my boyhood favorites, and I actually wanted to orchestrate more than just the movement we based "Goin' Home" on (Dvorák's "Symphony No. 9 in E minor"). I grew up with classical music and my father was very keen on that movement. I still hope that one day I can do other sections.

I wanted to cover the Ronettes' "Be My Baby" because to me it's quintessential Phil Spector.

Describe the guitar's importance to your music.

It's interesting. For the first three or four APP albums, some people thought I was very electronic and into synthesizers and that sound. The fact is we were – and probably always will be – very much guitar-based. *I Robot* opens with a distinctive synth drone, but it's not long before the guitar takes over. I have to take my hat off to Ian Bairnson. Over the years, he did a fantastic job – some of the greatest guitar-playing in any prog-rock format. We were lucky to have him. Sadly, he's in ill health right now and not able to play.

From the songwriting aspect, it would be easy to assume APP's music would've been keyboard-based, but there's more guitar than people realize.

When you say keyboards, people think of synthesizer and piano. Eric was always ready to play piano or a Rhodes. Some of the sounds that people think are electronic are actually orchestral sounds. People who were buying our records in the early years may not have been sufficiently into classical music to recognize what orchestral instruments sounded like. There were very few acts using heavy orchestration. The Moody Blues was one. Pink Floyd didn't start orchestration until *The Wall*. Genesis and Yes had a limited amount. But it was a *big* part of what I wanted to achieve. I think as long as I'm making records, orchestration will always be considered, but not for every song.

In your live show, you play a lot of acoustic rhythm guitar.

I'm a strummer – I strum chords. I made my start with guitar and played in a band at school doing Chuck Berry and Shadows covers. I didn't play leads. I also went through a brief period of playing folk-blues as a solo artist. I took lessons to play clawhammer style and got pretty good at that. Soon, though, I got the (assistant engineer) job at Abbey Road and put the guitar away for quite a few years.

What do your longtime lead guitarist Jeff Kollman and guitarist Dan Tracey bring to your band?

They're incredible. Jeff's a virtuoso. I respect his ability enormously. Dan's also a very capable guitarist. He's more of a rhythm guy, though he gets his moments in the live show as a lead player. We are, perhaps, a little guitar-heavy in this band because singer P.J. Olsson and saxophonist Todd Cooper also pick up acoustics during the show. I love the sound of acoustic guitar. The more guitars strumming along with a song, the happier I am.

What do you remember most about recording David Gilmour's guitar for Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*?

His Strat, and he had some really good pedals for the period, when it was unusual to have any pedals at all. He's just a great player. He managed to get a great sound. I don't take much credit for that. I just took a mic and stuck it on the amp! He gets credit for the guitar sounds on the album.

Do you have a favorite guitar?

I've been playing a Taylor for three or four years, and love the sound and its action. I've played a PRS semi-acoustic with f holes, and a Washburn acoustic. ***– Bret Adams***

Alan Parsons: Shlomi Pinto.

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Kane Manakoora, Tiki Mo, Grand Foobah, and Sticks onstage. Kane Manakoora on steel.

THE MANAKOORAS

Tiki Twang

Call it exotica or tiki twang, but the Manakooras play tropical instro that evokes visions of dreamy Pacific islands. Led by steel guitarist Kane Manakoora, the act features Tiki Mo on Fender Bass VI and the Grand Foobah on guitar and ukulele, creating a three-way attack heard on the album *Jungle of Steel*. *VG* found the Manakooras sipping mai tai cocktails on the beach, happy to share secrets of their surfy sound.

Tell us about the genre called "exotica."

Kane: It's a 1950s and '60s mix of light classical and small-jazz combos, and a whole range of instrumental-rock artists who did their own versions of exotica-style songs. That approach influenced us to use three percussionists on *Jungle of Steel*.

How did your sound evolve?

Kane: I got interested in Hawaiian music at the same time I started listening to surf music when living in South Florida in 1995. I never really dug into learning the steel until I quit the Aqualads in 2017. I later started to notice a surf connection and began to search for all the Hawaiian steel I could find within surf and instro music. To me, it's a match made in paradise.

How do you keep the low-end uncluttered using both Fender Bass VI and a four-string bass?

Tiki Mo: The VI really has some intriguing melodic and percussive qualities. Doubling a reverb-drenched, palm-muted sound over the bass line, like on "Machete's Kiss," produces a spooky/percussive mood. It's a pretty versatile instrument.

Grand Foobah: There's a very distinct attack to the VI when used for a lead line. You hear that timbre on a lot of the old spaghetti-western soundtracks. The key is to blend the bridge and the neck pickups to get the warmth and punch in one pluck, usually close to the bridge. Combine that with a drippy reverb and it stands out from the traditional bass in a big way.

The combination of vocals, twangy guitars, and drums seems essential, as on "Chant of the Moon."

Kane: Covering an exotica standard involves applying a sort of replacement strategy. Steel can cover vibes, strings, and horns easily. Ukulele is a great replacement for pizzicato strings, while the palm-muted Bass VI accents drum parts. On "Chant," we knew we needed a female vocal to capture the spirit of the song, so Foobah invited his sister to do the vocal parts, and she did a beautiful job.

Which guitars, amps, and pedals do you use on the album?

Kane: My main steel is a '52 Fender Deluxe D8 triple-neck with a fourth leg added for stability, since I play it standing up. For guitars I have a Fiesta Red '65 Mustang. For amps, I set up a '65 Dual Showman with a 2x15 cab, a '65 Bandmaster with a 2x12, and some Bogen PA heads converted to guitar amps by Al Forbes.

Do you use digital reverb or actual tanks?

Kane: We only use reverb tanks – or we'd be banished from the surf community! I have a reissue Fender tank and a '70s solid-state Fender. Lately, everyone has been using SurfyBear tanks, which are fast becoming the surf guitarist's choice due to their portability, flexibility, and amazing, drippy sound.

Foobah: I've used a Guyatone tank for many years. It can go anywhere from a light, roomy reverb to totally whacked-out spacey springs. Lately, I've also been using the SurfyBear, which hits the sweet spot pretty squarely.

Which surf and instro guitarists were your influences?

Kane: We're all huge fans of the first wave players that made the genre what it is – Dick Dale, Jim Messina, The Astronauts, Chantays, and Atlantics. I've always had a place in my heart for Duane Eddy. He's one of those understated players and inspired amazing guitarists like James Calvin Wilsey, who is one of my favorite instro guitarists.

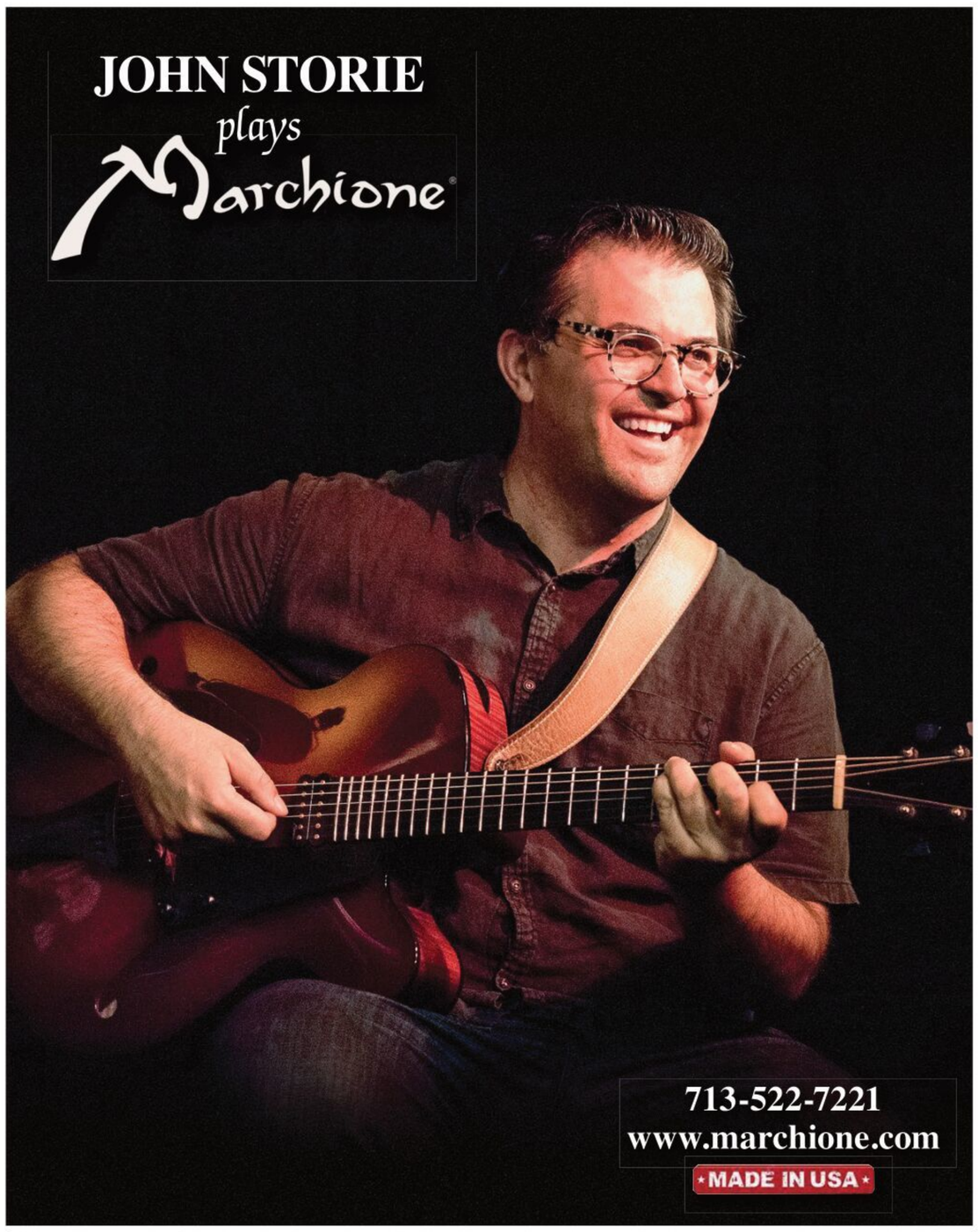
Foobah: I have to add Rick Miller from Southern Culture on the Skids. He's the greatest surf player in a "not really surf but kinda" band. His tone, especially live, is so good.

Tiki Mo: Where do I start? Dick Dale, of course, plus the Ventures, Rick Miller, Ivan Pongracic, Oleg Gitarkin, and Richie Allen. Probably my favorite surf record of all time is 1964's "Dracula's Deuce" by the Ghouls.

The Manakooras are deeply influenced by TV and movies. What's with the Hollywood connection?

Kane: I think Hollywood was responsible for that desire of the exotic in American pop culture. In the '40s you had Dorothy Lamour accompanied by Dick McIntire on "Moon of Manakoora," and Sam Koki doing "Paradise Isle." Hollywood has always been very close to exotica, especially with detective shows such as "Hawaiian Eye" during the JFK years. I'd say if the Manakooras could live inside a TV show, it would be "Hawaiian Eye." ***– Pete Prown***

Kane Manakoora: Spike.



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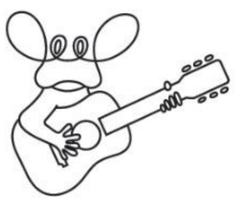

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BILL PITMAN

1920-2022

One of the last surviving members of the record industry's famed Wrecking Crew, Bill Pitman died at his home in LaQuinta, California, on August 11, 2022. He was 102 and fractured his spine in a fall that ultimately caused his demise.

Until recently, Pitman's wife, Jan, said he played guitar daily, often exploring Bill Evans compositions, and would frequently shoot his age on the golf course.

Perhaps no one personified the unsung studio musician as well as Bill Pitman. Few (if any) logged more recording sessions and fewer still were more-instrumental in creating our culture's musical soundtrack. His 40-year career included playing on TV shows such as "The Wild, Wild West," "King of the Hill," 'I Love Lucy," "Sonny and Cher," "Ironside," "Star Trek," "The Deputy," and hundreds more. His 200-plus film credits include *M*A*S*H*, *Jerry McGuire*, *Austin Powers*, *Omega Man*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *Dirty Dancing*, and *Forrest Gump*.

Moreover, he did numerous record dates with jazz giants Marty Paich, Howard Roberts, Nat Cole, Shelly Manne, Peggy Lee, Mel Tormé, Frank Sinatra, and many others in addition to the hundreds of pop-record dates with the Wrecking Crew, often on the six-string Danelectro bass – sessions for the Beach Boys, Byrds, Everly Brothers, Mamas and Papas, and hundreds of Phil Spector dates. Pitman once gave a teenaged Phil Spector guitar lessons, advising him that because he couldn't count time, he would never become a jazz guitarist.

On a September, 2013, episode of "Late Night with David Letterman," the host once mentioned to guest Cher that he'd just enjoyed watching *The Wrecking Crew* documentary, which chronicled the coterie of musicians who helped create many of her records and hundreds of other hits. She responded by naming A-List players such as Leon Russell, Hal Blaine, Carol Kaye, Al Casey, and Tommy Tedesco. But the first name she mentioned was "Billy Pitman." In 1963, when Phil Spector produced the enormously popular "Be My Baby," he titled the jam session on the flip side "Tedesco and Pitman," honoring two of his favorite guitarists. And on NPR's "Talk of the Nation" in 2012, Roger McGuinn recalled recording the Byrd's first hit, "Mr. Tambourine Man" with the Wrecking Crew.

"They were the coolest guys – like James Dean, you know? They wore black leather jackets with the collars turned up," McGuinn said. "And they were so tight; you couldn't get anything in between the beats. It was so solid."

Brian Wilson once said, "Bill played the Dano bass and was so amazing. Bill could really cook!"

Pitman was born in New York in 1920, the child of Keith and Irma Pitman; the former was primary bassist at NBC and made a handsome living during the Great Depression, playing radio shows and recording dates. Young Bill and his pals, Shorty Rogers and Shelly Manne, grew up playing music together and would often sneak into clubs to listen to Charlie Parker.

During World War II, Pitman spent five years in the U.S. Army Air Corps as a radio operator, flying numerous combat missions over the Himalayas.

After the war, Pitman attended music school on the G.I. Bill in L.A. where, in 1951, Laurindo Almeida scored him a gig with Peggy Lee. Soon after, Pitman was offered a radio gig on "The Rusty Draper Show," which netted him a steady $250 a week as well as outside work, signaling a career of steady session dates. He was soon making over $400 per week filling in for established players. Before long, Pitman became a first-call player.

Many of today's players cite Pitman as someone they've admired for decades.

"Bill came from that school of musicians I so admired," said producer and guitarist Richard Bennett. "He's long remembered as part of the Wrecking Crew, but his recording work predates that era by nearly a decade. And there's his Danelectro bass. How could you not love 'The Lonely Surfer'? He probably didn't, but I sure do."

"Bill was a master musician whom we'll miss greatly," added Wrecking Crew producer Don Randi.

Contemporary smooth-jazz guitarist Thom Rotella said, "I remember as a kid seeing Bill's name on the back of albums; he's the last of the studio giants from the Wrecking Crew."

"He was part of Phil Spector's 'Wall of Sound,'" added guitarist Louie Shelton. "He did 'Be My Baby,' 'You've Lost That Loving Feeling,' and few people are aware he played ukulele on 'Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head'."

"Bill didn't seek the 'guitar god' spotlight, but instead enjoyed an amazing career as a total pro," said session veteran Tim May, while fellow session great Mitch Holder added, "There was an obvious reason that Howard Roberts chose Bill to play rhythm on many of his Capitol albums. Just listen to them. RIP Bill. I imagine he's out on the golf course by now or working on re-harmonizing another Bill Evans piece!" ***– Jim Carlton***

Bill Pitman: Brian Lawson.

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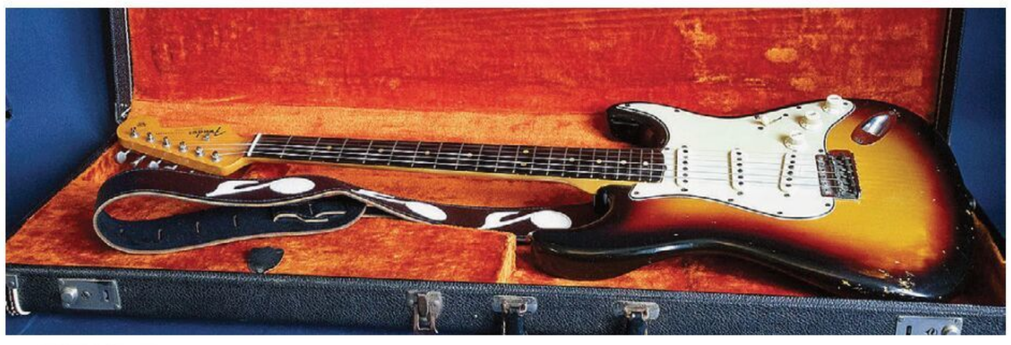

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KIRK FLETCHER

The Mid-life Crisis Sessions

Back from barnstorming the globe, blues guitarist Kirk Fletcher's latest is music for the people. *Heartache by the Pound* is about love, sorrow, joy, and pain, driven by freakishly excellent guitar playing. Mostly recorded at FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, Fletcher checks one off his bucket list by recording at the legendary studio and crafting a record fueled by virtuoso playing and vocals that connect to the heart.

You produced *Heartache by the Pound*.

Yes. This album was the most-challenging in terms of putting it all together. It was a big undertaking. I was living in Switzerland, recorded the album in Muscle Shoals, and did overdubs in Nashville, Switzerland, and Los Angeles. I called Reese Wynans to play some organ, and this young guy from Memphis named Terence Clark, who played with Robert Cray, played drums. Randy Bermudes played bass on the FAME Studio sessions, and the vibe was so much fun.

The one thing that I did differently on this record was GarageBand demos. I had everything mapped out with the help of my co-writer, Richard Cousins. I played bass, had all the grooves and tempos, and wrote out all the guitar parts. It also gave me the opportunity to play the bass lines I wanted. Bass lines and tempos are very important to me. I like to know how it's going to sound.

The album gives the impression it's going to be old-school R&B, then expands with Albert King and beyond.

For a guitar player, if you go too R&B, it's not as hard-hitting as I like. I need to have that edgier thing, too. I won't say rock, but it's edgier – more blues and other textures with edgier guitars. I wrote these songs during the pandemic, so I call the album my "Mid-Life Crisis Sessions" (laughs).

If I could record anywhere, it would be Muscle Shoals. You hear guys say, "It's my dream to record at Abbey Road," or "Sun Studios!" *My* dream was to record at FAME, where Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin, and all these different people recorded. A lot of great blues players, too. So I *had* to. I saved money, sold a guitar or two, and made it happen. I recorded six songs at FAME and the rest at other studios, including Josh Smith's studio in L.A. I recorded the organ trio in Italy. It turned out very cohesive and yet has different colors. It was a challenge to have all these twists and turns with different ideas for the rhythm sections and still make it cohesive.

"Wildcat Tamer" shows your range as a bonafide chicken pickin' enthusiast.

That was on a baritone guitar (laughs)! The way it was mixed made it brighter-sounding, but it was a baritone.

Which other guitars do we hear?

I endorse Gibson exclusively, and just before the sessions I got my Custom Shop Murphy Lab '59 ES-345 with an ebony fretboard. It's on a lot of stuff. On "Wrong Kinda Love," I played my Custom Shop Les Paul, and I used my Les Paul Special with Ron Ellis pickups on the solo to "I Can't Find No Love" and "Wrapped Up, Tangled Up In The Blues." Everything else was the Custom Shop 345.

I don't like having a million guitars; I'm like Larry Carlton – I like guys who can get a lot of things out of one. Switching guitars onstage, for me, is weird, but there are exceptions.

How about amplifiers on the album?

I borrowed an amp from Joe Bonamassa – a late-'50s tweed Bandmaster – and the house amp at FAME, which is a silverface Vibrolux. I always use Josh Smith's Morgan PR12 combo for overdubs. In Switzerland, I used a blackface Princeton.

You have the ability to channel '60s soul, B.B. King, Hendrix, and Prince, but you always show discipline and restraint.

I still go to Hendrix and Joni Mitchell for inspiration. Those are my two biggest influences. It's hard for a lot of guitar players to rein it in. They may feel like playing authentic '60s soul is not who they are as artists. But I really dive into that. I like reining it in for certain things. It's special to me, my music, and my songwriting. Tomorrow, you might hear me play the freakiest Eddie Hazel thing because that's in my brain.

I think of music as different colors. I also love Allan Holdsworth. I'm a child of Hendrix and all the colors and influences he heard. I dove into Chicago blues really heavy, but grew up in the '80s and '90s, and that's the stuff I like. It's also fun. I wanted to write an album that people could relate to – non-guitar players, too! ***– Oscar Jordan***

Kirk Fletcher: Mitch Conrad.

JONATHAN PEARCE

Kiwi Krunch

Hailing from New Zealand, the Beths play crackling power pop fronted by singer/guitarist Liz Stokes with Jonathan Pearce on lead guitar. On its new album, *Expert in a Dying Field*, the quartet delivers 12 exuberant tracks that mix pop, alt-rock, and a dash of punk. *VG* talked to Pearce about how, as producer, he captures the Beths' ferocious energy in the studio, as well as his beloved vintage Les Paul goldtop.

You recorded the album at your own studio. How do you shape the Beths' sound?

We will always do another take if we're allowed one. The live rock and roll energy is all about focus and intent, so if you're losing that, you might get a more accurate take, but it won't have the vibe. I think we can focus long enough to play the songs a lot of times and get the accuracy, and hopefully, also the intent, the rock and roll fury. We are perfectionists for the vibe.

Your music is sometimes described as a mix of pop and "skuzz." What's that?

To me, it sort of means a specific thing about guitar and band arrangement – like being unafraid to play dense stuff with heavy distortion, and still try to find space for a song. We recently tried to rebuild Liz's pedalboard and replace the Crowther Hot Cake pedal with something more versatile. But the new pedal wasn't *skuzz* enough, so the Hot Cake stayed.

"Silence is Golden" is a good example of a super-tight band. How do you make sure the guitar and rhythm section are in lock-step?

For a time, we naively thought that in order to be played on the radio, we needed to *compete*. I've learned that's not always right or a good way to think about it, but we *are* absolute tempo obsessive. We don't want to play live to a click track, so we put ourselves to the test in practices.

Who were your guitar influences?

I always say I'm most influenced by the musicians around me. Michael Howell, of Skilaa, is one of the most inspiring musicians in Auckland at the moment. Our bass player, Ben Sinclair, is a very inspiring musician. I'm really into the classic '60s lead playing – bluesy stuff, often in major-key song formats, but just going ham with a wild fuzz or a loud amp. The New Zealand icon for this would be [psychedelic guitarist] Doug Jerebine.

Do you know of Gary Thain, the New Zealand bassist from the classic '70s lineup of Uriah Heep?

I didn't know about Gary – another undercover Kiwi!

"Knees Deep" has a full-on guitar solo. How do you approach a lead?

I typically play through a solo a crazy number of times, first improvising, then taking bits I like and composing around them. I keep repeating and iterating until I've essentially composed a solo that does everything I want. Some solos are more off-the-cuff, but "Knees Deep" was definitely composed.

We see you with a Les Paul Deluxe goldtop frequently. What year is it?

It's a '78, and it's my dream guitar. Just dreamy. I have a '64 violin bass, too, which is a real beauty, but doesn't get played much on Beths recordings. We have a Jerry Jones borrowed from a good friend, and it gets a lot of use.

What does Liz play?

Liz's main guitar is a G&L Tribute Fallout, which is another great instrument we have a lot of history with. In the studio, we mostly use that for its powerful bridge humbucker sound, or sometimes the smooth middle combination with the P-90.

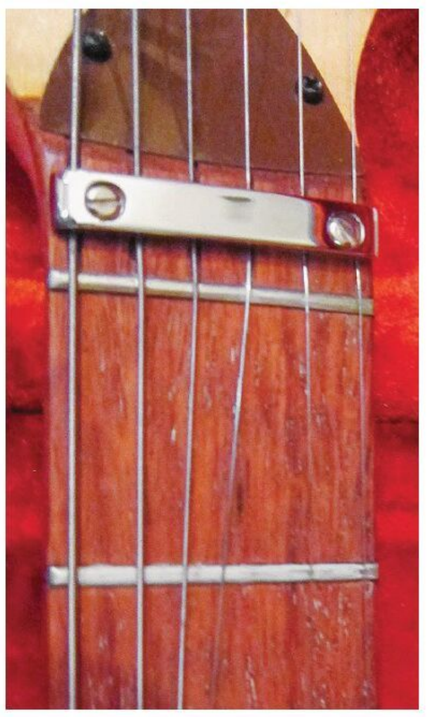
What amps and pedals did you use on *Expert In a Dying Field*?

Our amps are all vintage New Zealand-made valve amps by Jansen and Fountain. We have a small collection now, and they're a history lesson in themselves. They do need work these days, but we love them. For effects, I use plug-ins or pedals like the Earthquaker Interstellar Orbiter and Data Corrupter.

Is there anything about New Zealand music or culture that has become part of the Beths' sound?

Maybe the DIY streak that's evident in classic NZ music – that's part of what we do and must come through in the sound somehow. It used to be that if you wanted a guitar amp or compressor, you had to build one yourself or find a bloke in a garage somewhere who could. To us, even synthesizers feel like they break the rules a little bit – they're all too easy. We still feel like we want to do a lot of the work ourselves. **– *Pete Prown* VG**

Jonathan Pearce: Frances Carter.



A closer look shows the Zephyr's metalflake finish, Tilt Neck adjustor, and locking nut.

LAST GASP

The Magnatone X-5 Zephyr

BY MICHAEL WRIGHT
THE DIFFERENT STRUMMER

Ever since Lonnie Mack unleashed *The Wham of That Memphis Man* and Buddy Holly sang "Peggy Sue," Magnatone amplifiers have been the stuff of legend. Magnatone guitars, on the other hand, are one of guitardom's best-kept secrets.

The Magnatone story starts at the small Dickerson Brothers factory near the heart of the Los Angeles music scene. In 1937, they began building Lumarith-covered (a.k.a. pearloid) Dickerson slap steels and small amplifiers for people who joined the American Hawaiian Teachers Association (AHT), which paid "enrollers" to persuade parents to put their kids in lessons, the cost of which included an instrument.

In 1947, Dickerson Brothers became Magna Electronics, which branded its amps and steels "Magnatone" and relocated to Inglewood. By the mid '50s, they were making one-, two-, and three-neck steel guitars and increasingly popular amps.

In '56, the company introduced its first Spanish-style guitar – the Mark III, "designed exclusively for Magnatone by one of the top designers in the field." That designer was the legendary Paul Bigsby, who also created the upscale double-cut Mark IV and Mark V, introduced in '57 with neck-through construction and sound cavities. Intended to compete with Les Pauls, they got some uptake with a few lounge-jazz guitarists, but otherwise

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didn't gain much traction and lasted only into the following year.

In January of '57, members of Magnatone's management team sold their shares to F. Roy Chilton, former general manager of Thomas Organs, where he had been responsible for the Thomas electric organ; in August of '58, Chilton commissioned a new factory in Torrance.

We can't be sure, but Magnatone's next guitar line, the Artist Mark VII, VIII, IX, and X Artist Deluxe Stereo (covered in faux-rosewood vinyl!) may have come from the new plant in '59. They exhibited a boatload of Rickenbacker influence, which could have been coincidence given that Magnatone and Rickenbacker were practically neighbors. But it also could have been the influence of Paul Barth.

Former production manager at Rickenbacker, Barth started a company of his own and gave Semie Moseley his first guitar-making job. He was "producing" guitars under his own name as well as a line branded Barth Natural Music Guild, all of which were identical to the new Magnatone Artist line. So, either Magnatone made Barth's guitars, or Barth made Magnatones.

In April of '59, Magnatone merged with the organ maker Estey Corporation, with Chilton becoming President. Magnatone's Artist guitars, meanwhile, proved no more successful than the Marks, and disappeared in 1960. The following year, Magnatone rolled out its third generation – the Golden-Voiced Magna-Touch guitars – *definitely* attributable to Paul Barth. A cross between a Tele and a Dano, they had hollow bodies. It's not known how long they were produced.

In '65, Magnatone gave it one last try, debuting the Starstream line – its first true solidbodies. Hyped as "Slimline electric guitars and basses with the new sleek silhouette in the latest Showman colors," they were the three-pickup X-20 Typhoon, two-pickup X-15 Tornado, and the X-5 Zephyr (the bass was the X-10 Hurricane). All were made of Appalachian poplar with Canadian-maple necks, rosewood fretboards, and tilt-neck adjustment. Guitars had the company's Lever-Lock vibratos, an innovative locking nut (from a time well before locking nuts), super-sensitive single-coil pickups (which are exceptional), and necks that promotional material claimed were "the slimmest ever." Finish options were red, white, black, and sunburst, all but the last being metalflake. A molded hardshell case was an option. The Typhoon and Tornado were promoted as "professional guitars" with 25½" scales and slightly larger bodies. Their controls included on/off sliders with an extra "Lead/Rhythm" switch tied to a capacitor.

The Zephyr featured here was billed as a short-scale "¾-size" guitar, though the scale measured 24" – not really three-quarters, or all that short. The body is a little smaller, but doesn't feel small by modern standards, and it lacks the Lead/Rhythm circuit. The Magna pickups are quiet,

Magnatone Starstreams like this '65 X-5 Zephyr hold their own with most mid-'60s solidbodies targeted at teen pop combos.

Photos by/courtesy of Michael Wright.

reasonably loud, and especially responsive to midrange tones.

Like Magnatone's previous lines, Starstreams made it barely a year. In '66, the headstock was changed to a more-hip (though slightly bizarre) offset three-and-three shape, and a thinline hollowbody appeared, perhaps imported from Italy. They also issued a guitar instruction book with a record of the great Jimmy Bryant playing a Magnatone guitar/amp set. Unfortunately, none of it helped.

In '66, Estey closed the California plant and relocated to Harmony, Pennsylvania, where they made the giant solid-state amplifiers so popular at the time. It's highly probable that all of Magnatone's guitars were built in California, though some could have been assembled from parts in Pennsylvania. A few Italian guitars were imported carrying the Estey brand, and that was it.

In August of '71, the trade press announced that the once-mighty Magnatone/Estey had been sold to Miner Industries, Inc., which intended to manufacture toys.

It's unknown if Magnatone guitars are rare birds, but with runs of barely a year for each series, chances are that relatively few have survived. But they are of sufficient quality and interest to no longer be a secret.

A '51 Magnatone G-216 (the great Sol Hoopii endorsed the Dickerson version), along with a '56 Magnatone Mark III, '57 Magnatone Mark V, '59 Barth Natural Music Guild guitar, and '61 Golden-Voiced Magna-Touch Model 100.

Michael Wright profiled the Magna-Touch Model 100 in the January '19 issue.

ORANGE CRUSHED

The Dumble Garage Band Ripper

BY DAVE HUNTER

Through much of his career, Alexander Dumble made amps at his discretion, building one of his hallowed tone machines only if he liked the way you played. But if he *really* liked you – as a guitarist and as a human being – he just might present you a priceless piece of work out of the goodness of his heart, as he did with Joey Brasler's Garage Band Ripper.

By the mid '90s, the Los Angeles-based amp guru enjoyed a long-standing reputation as one the world's premier guitar-amp makers, arguably rivaled only by Ken Fischer of Trainwreck circuits. Robben Ford, Eric Johnson, Lowell George, Stevie Ray Vaughan, David Lindley, Bonnie Raitt, and a host of major stars were devotees, and others were knocking on his door to get a taste of that hallowed tone. But even with such demands on his time – or maybe because of it – Dumble concocted a means of broadening access to the sound, and guitarist Joey Brasler was on hand to help.

Back in the day, Brasler was an L.A. session ace, solo artist, and sideman who toured with Bob Welch, Boz Scaggs, Steve Lukather, the Beach Boys, and others. Even so, he had no idea who Dumble was when they first bumped into each other.

"I met Alexander when he worked out of the Alley, a rehearsal studio in North Hollywood," says Brasler, now vice president of product management for Fender. "I was rehearsing there at the time. I was outside having a smoke when a huge garage door opened, and there stood Dumble. He was very friendly, we chatted about music and gear, and he told me he built amplifiers. I didn't hear one that day and wouldn't for a few years.

"Then, in the early '80s I was rehearsing with Bob Welch at Leeds Musical, and I asked Andy Leeds if he had a Dumble in his rental arsenal. He sent one to the room we were in. I plugged in and played it a bit – and didn't understand it at all. Having played through many Dumble amplifiers since, I can tell you that each was distinctive, and most didn't work for me. I came to learn that those amps were built for players with a much more sensitive touch than I have and that, through a Dumble, my hands would cause what I called 'crushing the circuitry.'"

Through the '80s, Brasler and Dumble encountered each other more often, and eventually became good friends. They'd hang out at the Pagoda on the grounds of Jackson Browne's L.A. home, or at Brasler's apartment. In the '90s, Dumble would catch Brasler's band, the Hose, at a Reseda bar where they often played, bringing amps-in-progress for the guitarist to test.

"He once had Eric Johnson's Steel String Singer in for repair and asked me to test it for

In addition to the hand-lettered control legends, the front panel carries Dumble's inscription, "Made For Joey."

1997 DUMBLE GARAGE BAND RIPPER

- Preamp tubes: three 12AX7
- Output tubes: two EL34
- Rectifier: solid-state
- Controls: Gain with Bright pull-switch, Treble with Mid pull switch, Middle with Shift pull switch, Bass, Ripper (OD) with Boost pull switch, Dirty and Clean Masters, Presence
- Output: approximately 50 watts RMS

Amp courtesy of Joey Brasler, photos by Gene Kirkland.

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The amp's original back panel bears evidence of facilities abandoned in the modification, such as the effects loop's send, return, and level controls, all plugged up.

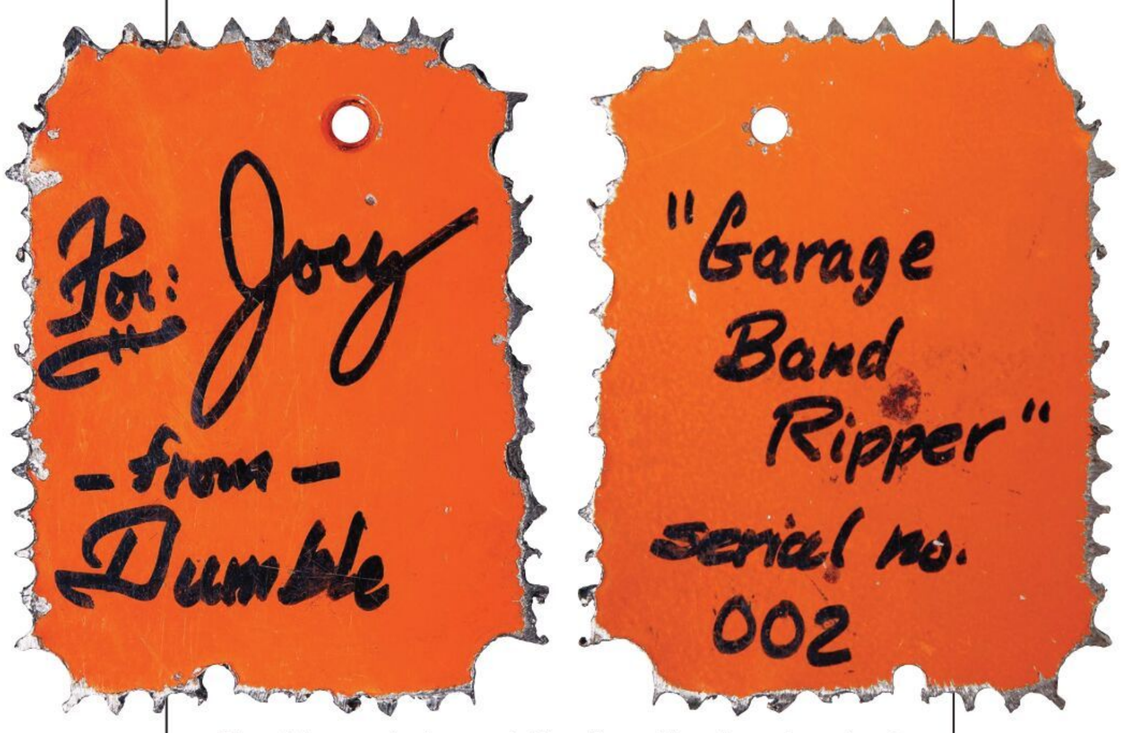
him at the gig," Brasler recalls. "That was the loudest amp I'd ever played through, and I had to cut the test short because I was overwhelming the band – and we played *loud*."

At the time, Brasler also managed Make'n Music, a high-end guitar store in North Hollywood. Its owner, Greg Bayles, was a big fan of Dumble amps and picked them up on the used market whenever he could. Though pricey by standards of the time, they were considerably more affordable than they are today. Given the shop might have a handful of the man's amps on the floor at any given time, Dumble himself was prone to occasionally hanging out at Make'n Music, and while doing so he concocted a plan.

"At one point, Alexander said to me, 'Joey, I want to offer four different amp mods to customers through the store. Here's how it would work: Customers would bring the amps to be modified to you, you would bring them to me, I'd do the designated mod, then you'd pick the amps up, and deliver to the customers. I don't want to speak to customers, and I don't want them calling me. That part's all you.'"

Brasler agreed to the plan and advertised the service in the SoCal edition of *BAM* magazine. One mod, dubbed the Garage Band Ripper, could be installed in any Mesa/Boogie, while another, the Hotel Hog, was for reissue Bassmans. But, while Dumble's reputation preceded him in certain circles, it wasn't enough at the time to bring in a wider clientele. There were relatively few takers – likely, Brasler says, because of the extensive work required, and the price – about $2,500.

Which brings us to this amp, with a cabinet and chassis from an Orange head then outfitted with Dumble's distinctive graphics and preferred knobs on the front panel... plus a lot more inside.



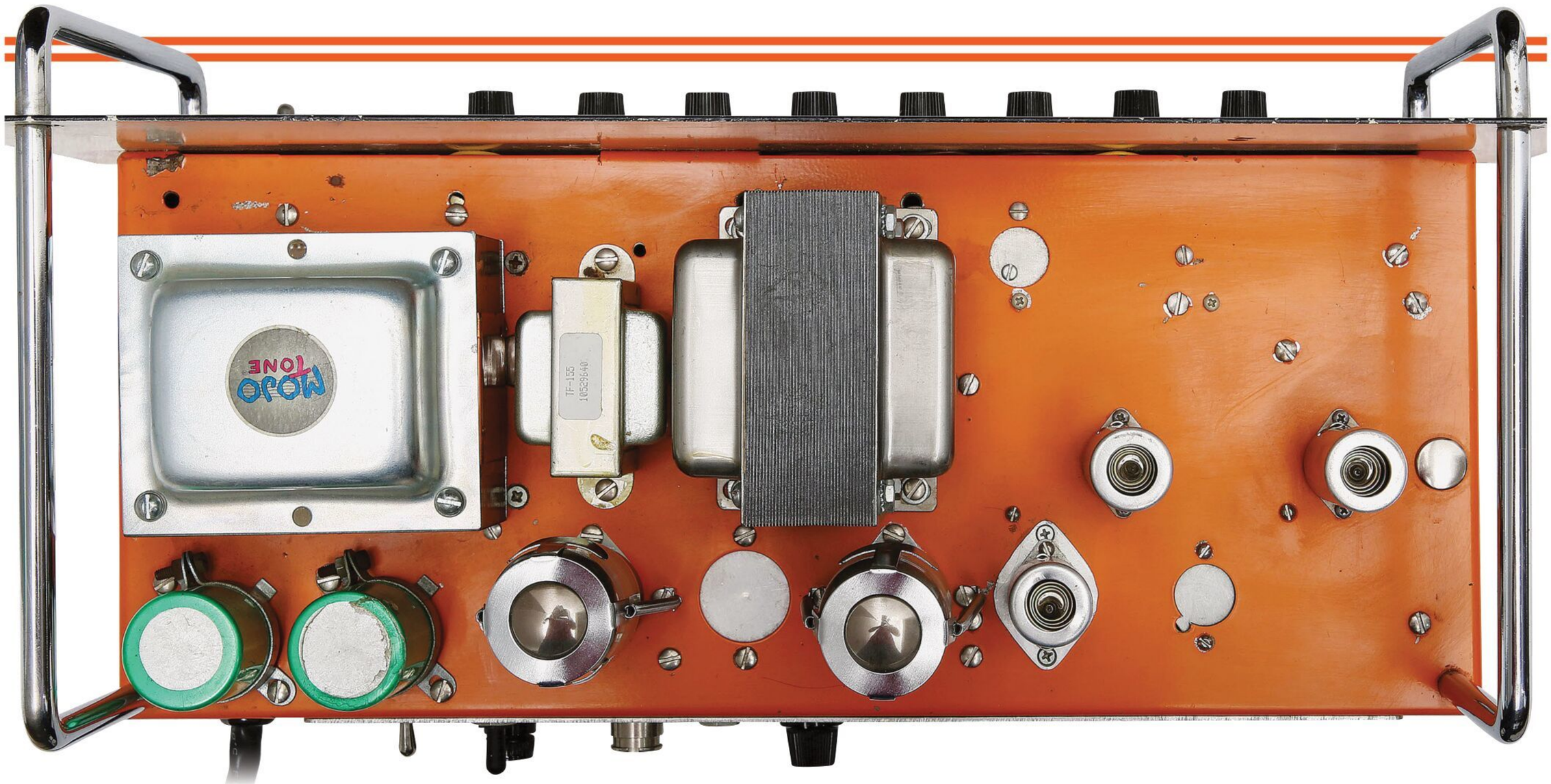
Dumble created a medallion from the chassis cutout for the new power transformer, with an inscription on one side and serial number on the other.

"Around 1994, Alexander asked me, 'What can I do for you?'" Brasler tells us. "I said, 'I have an old Orange head I bought out of the *Recycler* and it doesn't sound good. Can you mod it for me?' I added, 'I don't want it to sound like an Overdrive Special, my hands can't figure those out. I want it to be big, fat, loose, and fun – not a super-tight and focused sound.'

"Dumble had seen me play many times, and he knew what I sounded like."

Expecting a quick mod – maybe an added high-gain stage and a Master Volume control – Brasler found Dumble wanted far more control over the final results; he removed all components from the chassis, cut new holes to reposition the tubes ("He said the original locations would create a field and cause interference and noise...") and created entirely new circuit boards. A new power transformer and choke were procured from Mojotone, Steve Fryette donated an output transformer, and a small Radio Shack transformer powered the requisite switching relay to allow clean and overdrive channels.

Dumble fabricated a new front control panel, laid out its graphics, and peopled it with Telecaster Deluxe knobs, all of which say "Tone." He also created a jagged "medallion" from a piece of the original chassis that he'd cut to make room for the new power transformer. One side bears an inscription from the maker, the other the amp's serial number. Brasler supplied an old Heathkit-style two-button footswitch for channel



switching and boost engagement, to which Dumble added status LEDs and the correct five-pin DIN wiring.

And what did Dumble charge his pal for the work? Nothing.

"He never let me pay him for it," said Brasler. "I tried. We'd become close friends and I did him a number favors – I believe he thought of the Ripper as his return gift."

One contingency the maker applied to all his amp builds, often written into the contract upon paying a deposit, was that the client refrain from opening the chassis, and that the amp be returned to Dumble for any maintenance. Though it was less-overtly stated in Brasler's case, he honored the principle. As such, the first time he gazed at the circuit inside was 25 years after taking ownership, a short while after Dumble's death in January of this year. What he discovered – as seen in the photos here – was much like what is revealed by other owners who eventually opened their Dumbles; the larger circuit board carrying the power-filtering and rectification circuits was fully exposed, but the two smaller boards with the real magic of the Dumble design – the overdrive and clean-channel circuits – were covered in the maker's signature blue goop.

As for the sound, Brasler's assessment tells us it once again nailed the master's uncanny ability to fine-tune his designs to the style of each guitarist.

"Tonally, the Ripper's clean sound is classic Overdrive Special – big headroom, lots of bottom, lovely midrange and a sparkling high-end. Clean can be pushed into Dumbly clean overdrive. The 'Ripper (overdrive)' sound is huge, with lots of gain, as you would expect; not all Marshall-esque and not all Dumble, but some middle ground where the ODS note focus is rounded out sweetly and chords are warm and very punchy. And it's very loud for a 50-watt amp.

"Dumble's mystical gift was in ultra-precise nuance; he created musical tools so unique as to be designed for only one person on Earth. He heard distinctive, defining elements in a musician's sound and watched the musician play to determine arm and finger movement, pick angle, how a chord was struck – every tiny detail – and then designed an electronic device that so matched the musical nature of that musician with pinpoint accuracy that the device became an inseparable part of the player's musical soul. It was a gift beyond comprehension."

Dumble sourced entirely new transformers for the project, and relocated the preamp tubes for better noise rejection.

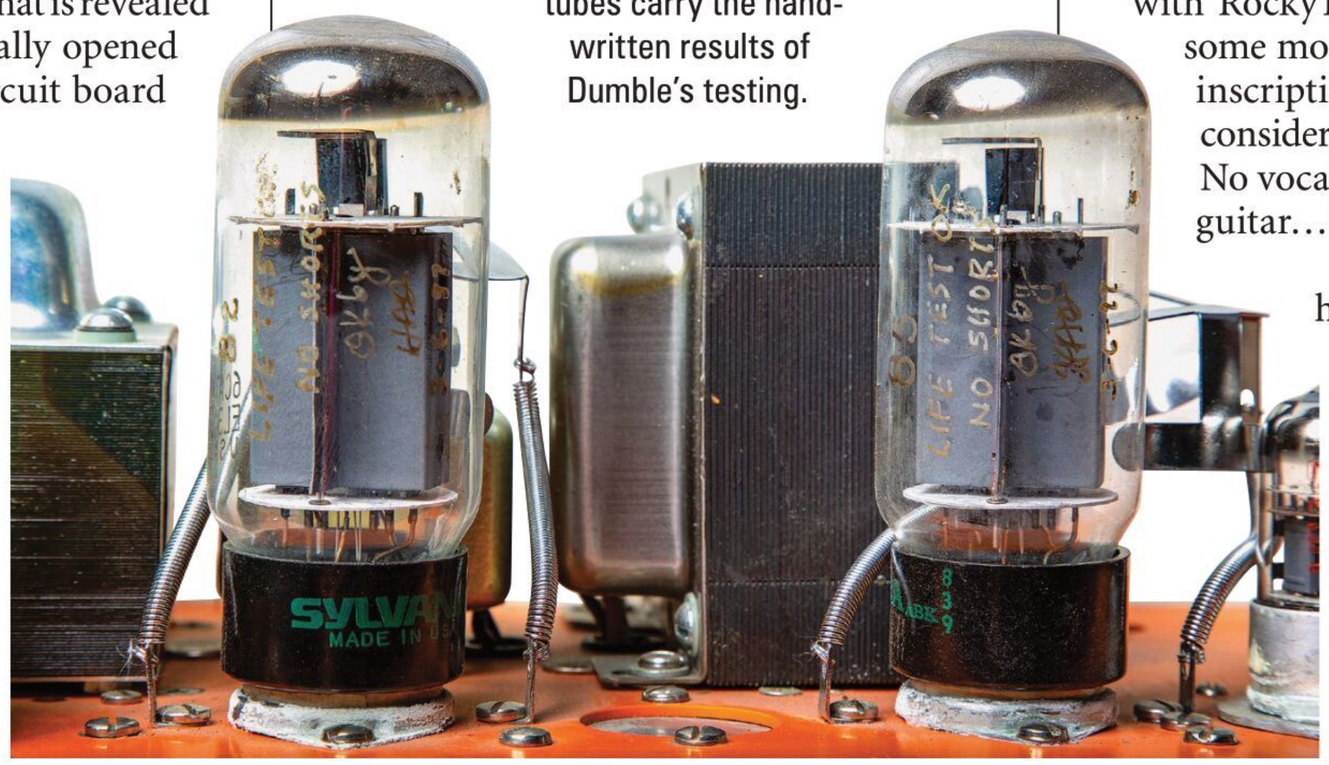
Along with the amp and fond memories of their friendship, Brasler has retained several faxes Dumble sent to him over the years. Some discuss ideas related to amp design or gear modification, others are thank-yous for dinners or other hangs, and most carry touching hand-written notes.

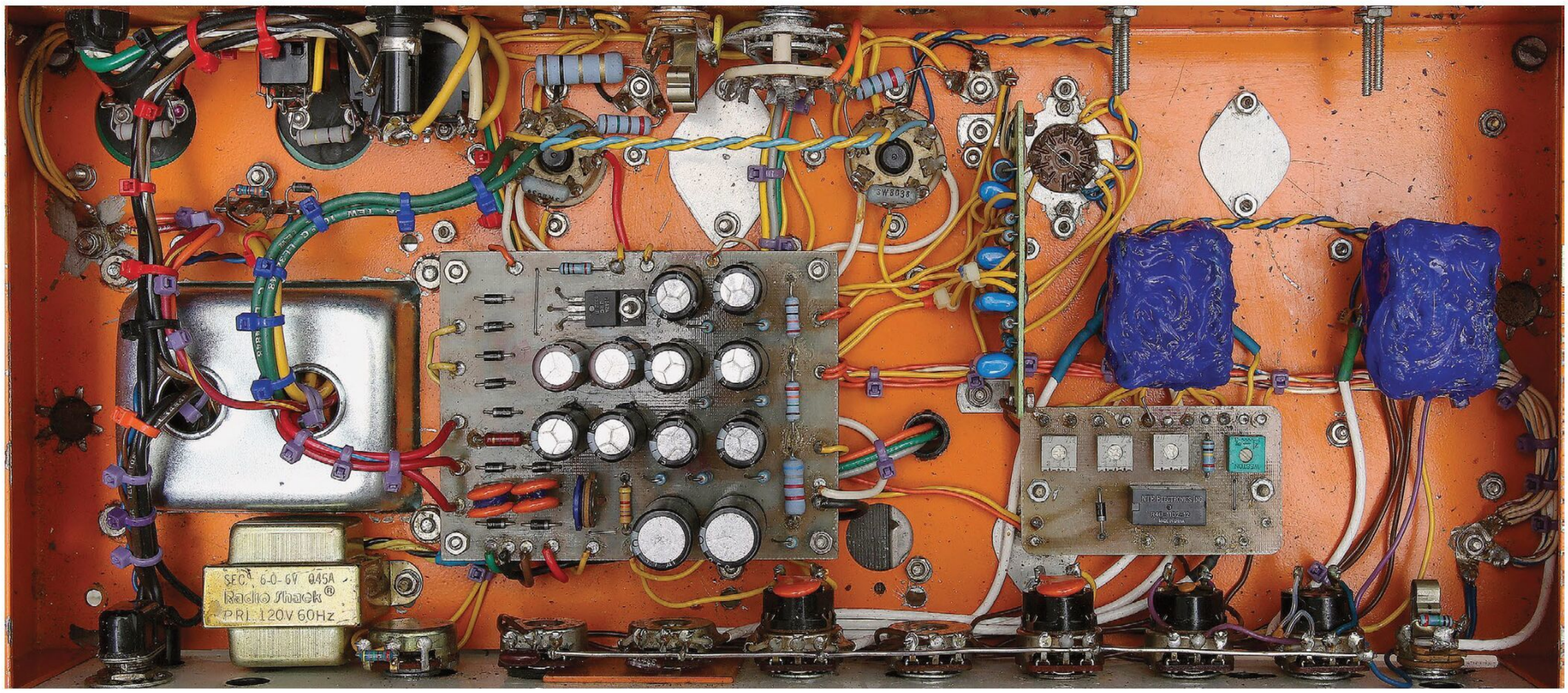
One – following a long typed message that includes the request, "I'd love to get together with you this week at some point. Along with 'Rocky II', perhaps you could show me some more guitar playing" – bears the inscription "PS – Joey, Have you ever considered making a 'Guitar Album'–? No vocals! No words!... Just beautiful guitar…! Your bud, Alexander."

Another, after discussing his desire to return a pickup to Brasler (but needing to drop it in his mailbox in the middle of the night due to his own night-owl schedule), is followed with: "PS – Van Halen is playing in LA in July. Have you heard of this? Hope you have A Great Day! …Your bud, Alexander."

"It's a gross understate-

The amp's original Sylvania EL34 output tubes carry the hand-written results of Dumble's testing.





Dumble devotees will recognize the blue goop hiding the magic, and the clean preamp circuits.

ment to say that Dumble was a thoughtful communicator," Brasler recalls. "In the mid '90s, the fax machine was his texting muse because he was either building amps or thinking about building amps 24 hours a day, so he kept phone conversations short and sent lots of faxes. They afforded him the opportunity to express what was on his mind in an artful way – he would type up the note in Word, then hand-write ideas and his signature."

In all, from amp to faxes to fond memories, the history of Brasler's Garage Band Ripper and his friendship with the guitar world's most legendary amp maker shines a poignant light on an elusive and oft-misunderstood tone guru, while contributing mightily to the Dumble legacy. **VG**

SOUR GRAPES

JERRY MILLER AND THE DUMBLE SPECIAL 16

Nearly every Dumble amplifier carries a story like that told by Joey Brasler (or Robben Ford, David Lindley, Sonny Landreth, et al.; see "Alexander Dumble, 1944-2022: Recalling an Eccentric Genius," April '22). And while there's no arguing the legendary status of Howard Alexander Dumble's work, not every player who plugged into one of his creations walked away enthralled.

One example is the Special 16 profiled by Dave Hunter in the April '22 issue. Though its origins were a mystery when the piece was published, as is often the case, answers surfaced thanks to readers who wrote to *VG* in the months following. Turns out, the amp had been built for Jerry Miller in the waning days of Moby Grape.

Miller first met Dumble when the two were part of a tight Santa Cruz music scene in the late 1960s.

"I went to his shop for something – I don't exactly remember what; maybe it was because he'd invited me over after seeing one of our gigs," Miller recalled. "But, me and our road manager, Don Miller, used to hang out there a lot. Howard would play a bass, I'd play guitar, and we'd make up songs."

In Moby Grape, Miller staged a rig using four Bassman amps that he could masterfully manipulate with his longtime favorite guitar, a '62 Gibson L-5 he called Beulah. Dumble, too, was a big fan of the Bassman.

"I would brag to Howie about how mine could howl anytime I wanted, to hold a note. It was really nice," Miller said. "On a whim one night, I asked him to re-cover my amps – two in black and two white, so I could stack them onstage to look like a checkerboard."

Dumble agreed to the work, but later upped the ante.

"He had the idea to put all four amps into one head, to give me better control of my sound," Miller added.

Dumble went to work and a few months later had the Special 16. But, there was a problem. Moby Grape having dissolved, Miller was no longer playing venues where he could fully employ the new amp's big sound.

"In the clubs I was playing by then with The Rhythm Dukes, it was hard to break loose, and Howie's amp sounded harsh with Beulah. I remember playing it in a club in Walnut Creek, and I had to keep it as far from me as I could."

Out of unfortunate necessity, the Special 16 was benched, and Miller took it back to Dumble.

"He'd charged me $3,500 for it and let me make payments, but I was bringing in just a little money at the time, so I had to tell him, 'You need to take this back. I can't afford it.'"

Before seeing the profile in *VG*, Miller has no idea what had happened to the amp, but the two men remained friends and talked regularly until Dumble moved to Los Angeles.

"I didn't see him after he got really popular," he said. "Whenever I talked to anyone who knew him, I'd ask how Howie was doing. The last time I saw him was at least 30 years ago." – ***Ward Meeker***

DUDLEY TAFT

Dudley Taft sounds a lot smoother than he looks and his guitar work is a real discovery, he manages to fit some blisteringly complex licks into short phrases that compliment his pleasing vocal presentations. – *Blues Matters Magazine*

He is an unabashed blues rocker and his music draws on the best of both its progenitors and helps to define the genre. – *Ben Vee Blues*

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Classics

Had you been a music-loving resident of Bogalusa, Louisiana, at the height of the jazz age, you would've caught wind of a young virtuoso who made the violin sound like angels singing and dropped jaws with his fluid guitar playing.

Eddie "Snoozer" Quinn, born in 1907, was a musical genius in the days before guitar amplification, so his name is known by only the most devout fans of jazz guitar. After finishing high school, Quinn joined dance-hall bands that toured the South and Southwest, playing clubs in small towns and cities including Shreveport, Houston, San Antonio, Galveston, and even Nueva Laredo, Mexico. The bands included Mart Britt's Sylvan Beach Orchestra, the Louisiana Ramblers, and Peck Kelley's Bad Boys; bandleader Kelley gave Quinn the nickname "Snoozer" after joking about how he was so good he could play in his sleep.

By October of 1928, Quinn had moved back to Louisiana, and happened to be visiting a friend in New Orleans one night when The Paul Whiteman Orchestra was playing the St. Charles Theatre. His host attended, and afterward was boasting about Quinn with members of Whiteman's band. Suddenly, Quinn found himself playing an impromptu audition for Whiteman, who at the time was one of the best-known bandleaders in the country.

"We know about that night thanks to the oral histories of early jazz musicians captured by the Tulane University Hogan Jazz Archive, and by memoirs of Johnny Wiggs, who played cornet in a band with Snoozer at the time," said Katy Hobgood Ray, Quinn's great-great niece and co-author of the new biography *Snoozer Quinn: Fingerstyle Jazz Guitar Pioneer* (see our review in this month's "Hit List"). Johnny explained that Snoozer could shake someone's hand while playing guitar with his left hand only. He played 'Tiger Rag' while shaking Whiteman's hand and was immediately asked, 'When can you come to work with me?'

"Snoozer's early experience, especially on vaudeville and minstrel stages in traveling shows around the South, helped him develop skills like using hammer-ons and pull-offs with his left hand. And, he could entertain as a soloist, which would have been especially important." As with his other band stints, Quinn was with White-

From 1928 through circa '41, Quinn played a Gibson L-5.

man briefly, leaving before the end of 1929 (a June, 1930, feature on Whiteman and his 29-piece band includes Eddie Lange as sole guitarist and Bing Crosby, listed as a "Rhythm Boy").

"There wasn't really a place for Snoozer in that band," said Ray. "Whiteman only wanted him for after-parties, to show off his tricks. But, one positive thing that came from the gig was that Snoozer got to know New York musicians who became fans of his incredible virtuosity. Higher-profile jazz guitarists such as Eddie Lang, Dick McDonough, and Carl Kress would hang out with Snoozer, listening to him play.

"He was incredibly innovative. While most jazz guitarists of the day were using a plectrum, he pioneered a fingerstyle approach. And while his contemporaries had a linear style of soloing that came from the Italian mandolin tradition, Snoozer's style was more akin to ragtime piano – he could play a melody line, harmony, and a rhythmic bass part at the same time."

But of course, like other guitarists in the big-band era, Quinn and his instrument struggled to be heard above horn sections.

"Fortunately, record companies recognized he had something special," Ray noted. "In 1928, Victor Records recorded him playing solo. *Unfortunately*, they didn't believe the music would be commercially viable, so the sides were never released."

In his prime and for most of his life, Quinn played a Gibson L-5. Though family lore doesn't include how it was attained, Ray believes he bought it in Houston, New Orleans, or Shreveport, as he lived in all three during those years, teaching guitar lessons and hanging out in music stores.

"He had that guitar until 1941, and there are photos and even silent-film footage of him playing it," Ray said. "I assume it's what he played on the Victor recordings and a 1928 Columbia session with Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer. But, like that music, the L-5 is missing."

There *are* professional recordings of Snoozer's guitar work, but only as accompaniment in orchestras or with vocalists such as Bee Palmer or Jimmie Davis.

Quinn spent the last two decades of

When he found it in the basement, Terry Quinn had no idea the guitar was his uncle's Gibson L-0. "My mother told me to leave it alone because it might have Snoozer's TB," said Quinn. "But, I sprayed it down with Lysol and put new strings on it. It played good that day, and still does. It's got a big, fat neck – comfortable for a guy with a big hand."

his life in Louisiana, playing in orchestras and dance bands, doing solo spots for radio shows, and playing as a hotel-lounge "stroller," going from table to table. Throughout his life and career, he forged friendships with top other bandleaders and musicians of the day including Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Pee Wee Russell, and the Dorsey brothers.

"Even the great Les Paul gave credit to Snoozer for influencing his playing technique," Ray noted. "Les said that Snoozer was the one who taught him to pull and hammer strings."

By the mid '30s, Quinn's health began to decline, thanks in part to alcoholism and later, tuberculosis. While a patient in the TB ward at New Orleans' Charity Hospital in 1948, Quinn was visited by former bandmate Wiggs, who was by then a music educator, having long been retired from gigging. Recognizing the importance of Quinn's guitar work, Wiggs recorded him in a nurse's lounge, using an acetate cutting machine.

"Snoozer was gravely ill at the time, but those recordings offer insight on his musicality and unusual technique," said Ray.

Quinn was just 42 when he died in 1949. The Gibson L-0 he used on Wiggs' acetates spent a decade in the basement of a house belonging to Snoozer's brother, Alton Quinn. Dusty and missing half of its strings, it was a mystery when rediscovered by Snoozer's 12-year-old nephew, Terry. After Ray began researching Snoozer's story, Terry asked her to become caretaker of it and his violin, and today they're both displayed in her home.

"I play the L-0 sometimes at my own gigs, but I mostly play a Gibson B-25, which has a much smaller neck that suits my small hands much better," said Ray. ***– Ward Meeker***

Eddie "Snoozer" Quinn and his friend Louie Armstrong doing a ham-up instrument swap.

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

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The E3 models in Eastman's Traditional series feature a solid Sitka Spruce top with solid Ovangkol back and sides. Ovangkol provides outstanding sustain and tone similar to Rosewood but offering the benefits of being much more environmentally sustainable. The E3 models are available in Dreadnought or OM body styles and come with a pre-installed Fishman Sonitone pickup. **www.eastman-guitars.com**

Marchione

The Marchione modern Spanish guitar is an original design handmade in my Texas studio. Built with a Swiss Spruce top, Brazilian Rosewood back and sides, Spanish Cedar neck, African Ebony bridge and headplate with Arabian Camel Bone, Pearl and Ebony appointments. Built in a traditional classical guitar-style mold, the Marchione Modern Spanish guitar is assembled with chalk-fit components and all joinery is done with hot hide glue. **www.marchioneguitars.com**

Martin Guitars

The SC-10E, with its patented Sure Align neck system, gives players full access to all frets. Features include a satin finished sitka spruce top and stunning koa fine veneer back and sides. The rosette inlay is complimented by an ebony headplate, fingerboard, and bridge, black tuners and knobs. Comes with a soft-shell case or soft gig bag. Selection may vary. $1,299. **www.martinguitar.com**

Grez Guitars

Grez Guitars has been quietly building 12 fret 000 acoustics in steel string and nylon utilizing the same 100+ year old Salvaged Old Growth Redwood they've become known for. Lightly built with scalloped bracing, these warm yet responsive instruments are the perfect companion for the couch, the studio or stage. Grez Guitars plants a Redwood tree for every instrument they sell! **www.grezguitars.com**

Kiesel Zeus

Kiesel Guitars has expanded the headless guitar series with the Zeus acoustic/electric, available in 6, 7, and 8 string configurations both 25.5" and multiscale. Standard features include an Engelmann Spruce or cedar top, genuine Honduran mahogany neck and semi-hollow body, and ebony or rosewood fingerboard with many options for you to choose from while customizing your own. **www.KieselGuitars.com, (858)-GUITARS**

Martin Guitars

Martin's 000-16 StreetMaster features East Indian rosewood back and sides, and Adirondack spruce top. The Adirondack spruce top includes Martin's proprietary Vintage Tone System (VTS), which ages the wood for a truly vintage tone. The look of the StreetMaster finish, with the bigger and bassier sound you get from highly-coveted East Indian rosewood and Adirondack spruce! Comes with a soft-shell case. $1999.

www.martinguitar.com

Eastman Guitars

The E6SS Thermo-Cure is the latest slope-shoulder dreadnought from Eastman's Traditional Series. A thermo-cured Sitka Spruce top is tastefully garnished with a fire-stripe pickguard and herringbone binding. Paired with Mahogany back and sides this guitar is perfect for the ensemble player fighting for sonic space, all the way to the more dynamic player looking for a truly expressive tone. **www.eastmanguitars.com**

Gibson

The G-45 played by Amytyst Kiah is equipped with a Gibson Player Port allowing you to hear the guitar as you're playing it like you've never heard it before. Like all models in the Generation Collection, it is made in Bozeman, MT, and features a solid Sitka spruce top, solid walnut back and sides, TUSQ nut and saddle, along with the Grover Mini Rotomatic tuners. **www.gibson.**com

Epiphone

Perhaps the rarest Epiphone model ever made, only 139 Excellente acoustic guitars were produced. It returns as part of the new Masterbilt Collection. Featuring a solid Sitka spruce top, solid ovangkol back and sides, an ebony fingerboard with historic pearl cloud inlays, bone nut and saddle, and gold vintage-style Waffleback tuners. Powered by the Fishman Sonitone onboard preamp system and features Gibson strings. **www.epiphone.com**

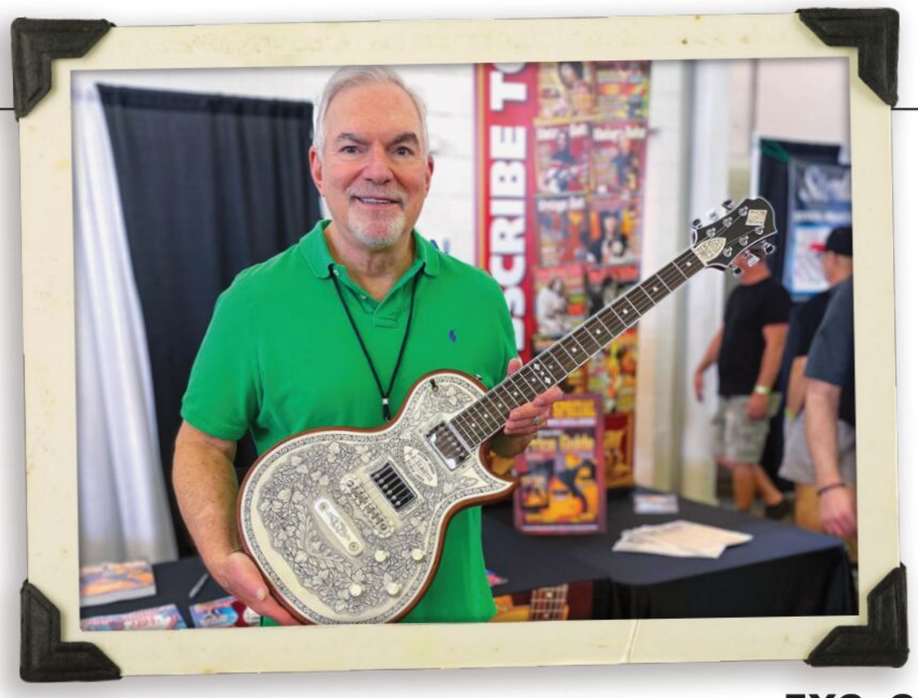
Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Gil Hembree

1970 Fender Rosewood Telecaster

NEW & UPDATED LISTINGS

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
1988	American Showster AS-57 Classic	American-made, H or SSS	$3,800	$5,000
1926	Bacon & Day Silverbell #1 Banjo Mandolin		$850	$1,100
1900	Calace Lyre/Harp-Style Mandolin		$1,050	$1,350
1989	Charvel 750XL Soloist		$875	$1,150
1936	Cromwell GM-4 Mandolin		$550	$725
1968	Danelectro Hawk 1V	1 pickup	$1,100	$1,500
1968	EKO Kadett XII		$550	$700
1977	Electra Concert Professional		$800	$1,050
1974	Electra Super Rock		$550	$725
1948	Epiphone Eddie Alkire Eharp		$725	$950
1958	Epiphone Sheraton	Natural, New York pickups	$9,200	$12,400
1940	Epiphone Spartan	Sunburst	$725	$950
1950	Epiphone Zephyr Regent	Natural	$2,100	$2,650
1960	Fender Champ Amp	Narrow panel, 1x8, 5F1	$2,300	$3,100
1964	Fender Deluxe Reverb Amp	Blackface	$2,900	$3,800
1962	Fender Jazz Bass	Curved, Sunburst, 3-knob	$13,300	$17,300
1958	Fender Jazzmaster	Sunburst	$10,300	$14,000
1969	Fender Kingman		$1,250	$1,625
1970	Fender Malibu		$825	$950
1960	Fender Mandolin	Sunburst	$2,200	$2,900
1973	Fender Precision Bass	Sunburst	$2,600	$3,600
1955	Fender Stratocaster	Blond, nickel, late ‘55	$62,000	$82,000
1973	Fender Stratocaster	Sunburst	$3,600	$4,800
1986	Fender ‘50s Stratocaster/ Classic Series ‘50s	MIJ	$775	$1,000
1983	Fender ‘57 Stratocaster (USA)	SN: V series	$3,300	$4,400
1999	Fender Big Apple Stratocaster	HH	$850	$1,125
1953	Fender Stringmaster Steel (two-neck)	Walnut, 26” scale	$1,300	$1,700
1958	Fender Stringmaster Steel (two-neck)	Blond, 24.5” scale	$1,400	$1,800
1964	Fender Super Reverb Amp	Blackface, Fender Elec.	$2,350	$3,150
1970	Fender Rosewood Telecaster		$13,000	$17,200
1988	Fender ‘72 Telecaster Thinline	Japan	$1,000	$1,300
1980	Flatiron Model 1 Mandolin	Pre-Gibson	$900	$1,200
2003	G & L ASAT Classic Custom	2nd version, 4-bolt neck	$1,000	$1,325
1993	G & L Climax Plus	HSH	$925	$1,225
1965	Gibson EB-3 Bass	Early ‘65 version	$5,200	$6,900
1950	Gibson Electraharp Steel	4-pedals 8-strings	$850	$1,100
1982	Gibson Flying V Bass	Blue stain or ebony	$2,900	$3,900
1993	Gibson Flying V Lonnie Mack		$4,000	$5,200
2006	Gibson Flying V New Century	Mirror body	$1,100	$1,450
2008	Gibson Flying V Robot (Robot Flying V)		$1,000	$1,300
1981	Gibson GGC 700		$800	$1,050
1973	Gibson Gospel	Laminated	$1,075	$1,400
1932	Gibson HG-00 (Hawaiian)		$4,300	$5,600
1964	Gibson Thunderbird II Bass	Sunburst, reverse	$8,500	$11,300



Gary Dick with a recent Zemaitis model.

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1940	Gretsch Synchromatic 100	Natural	$850	$1,125
1956	Gretsch White Falcon Mono (6136)		$24,000	$32,000
1957	Gretsch White Penguin (6134)	Single-cut, standard case	$87,000	$113,000
1993	Guild D-412 12-String	Mahogany	$1,150	$1,500
1988	Guild D-60	Rosewood	$2,300	$3,100
1968	Harmony Bobcat H14	1 pickup	$325	$425
1960	Harmony H63 Espanada	Black, thick body	$1,375	$1,800
1973	Ibanez Model 2363R	345/355 style copy era	$975	$1,300
1994	Jackson King V Pro		$600	$800
1983	Jackson Randy Rhoads (USA)	Early serial #1-#10, no trem	$4,300	$5,700
1990	Kramer Baretta III	Hybrid	$650	$850
2008	Larrivee LV-03		$1,200	$1,600
2008	Larrivee SD-50	Mahogany	$1,850	$2,400
1952	Magnatone Lyric Doubleneck Lap Steel	3-legs included	$850	$1,100
1967	Marshall Model 1917 PA-20 Amp Head	Plexi panel	$2,400	$3,100
1965	Marshall Model 1958 18-Watt Lead Amp	2x10, black	$4,700	$6,100
2008	Martin D-18		$1,800	$2,350
1964	Martin D-28	Early '64 North St.	$8,000	$10,600
2020	Martin HD-35		$2,150	$2,850
1985	Martin J-65/E/M		$2,050	$2,700
1986	Martin M-64		$2,050	$2,700
1977	Martin N-10	Long scale	$1,800	$2,450
1930	Martin OM-28	Pyramid bridge, small guard, banjo tuners	$80,000	$106,000
2005	Martin OM-28 Marquis/Adirondack	Adirondack, Indian	$3,000	$4,000
1997	Martin OM-42 PS Paul Simon	225 offered, Indian rw	$3,900	$5,200
2003	Martin OMC-16E		$1,300	$1,675
2022	Martin SC-10E (used)		$925	$1,200
2000	Martin SP00-16RST Stauffer		$1,250	$1,675
2002	Martin SPD-16T		$1,150	$1,500
1996	Martin SPDC-16TR		$1,225	$1,650
1835	Martin Stauffer	Plain	$15,400	$21,000
2002	Martin SWMGT		$950	$1,275
1925	Marveltone by Regal Marveltone 14 Brazilian		$2,300	$3,000
1982	Mesa-Boogie Mark II B Combo Amp	1x12 or 1x15, tolex cover	$1,000	$1,350
1942	National Collegian		$1,350	$1,800
1936	National Don Style 3		$16,000	$21,300
1962	National Grand Console Steel	Model 1050 2 neck	$850	$1,100

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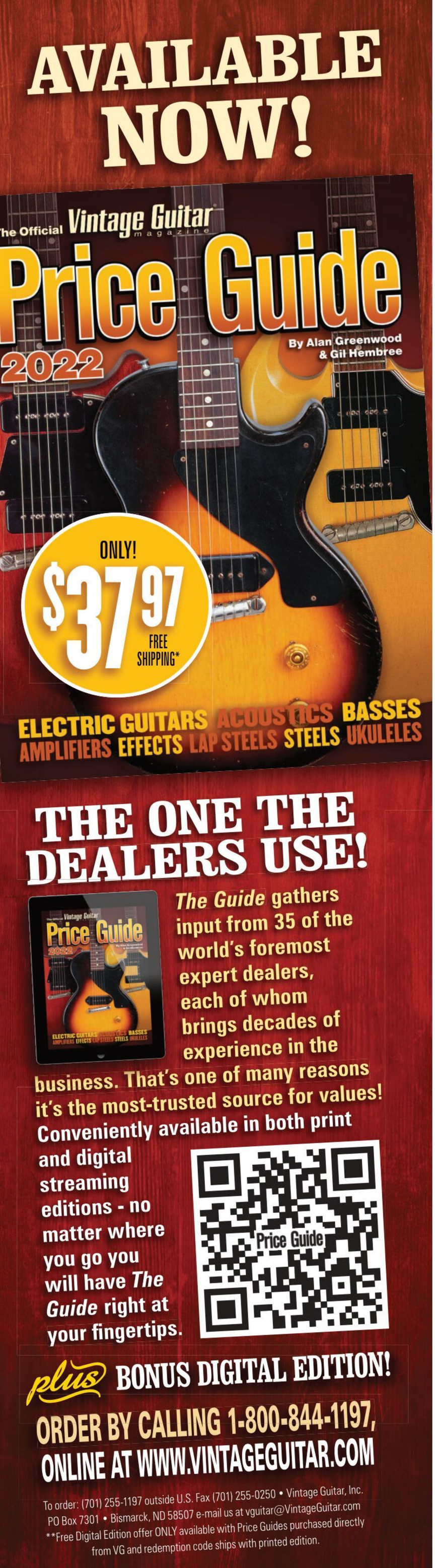
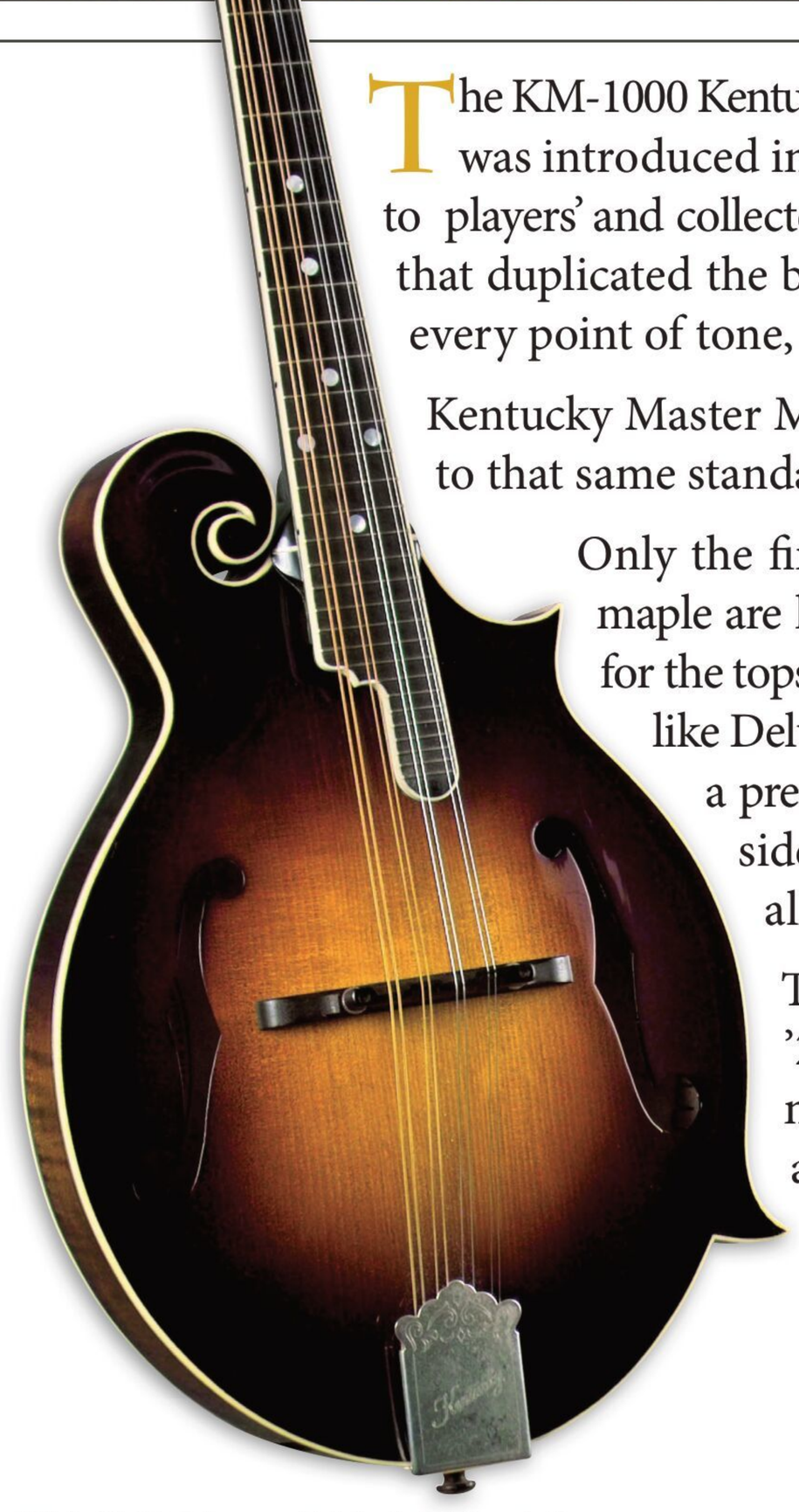


YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1954	National Model 1103 Del-Mar		$1,275	$1,700
1935	Orpheum Orpheum			
	Special (Regal)		$800	$1,050
1988	Orville by Gibson J-200NE		$1,600	$2,100
2008	Ovation Balladeer Standard	Model 1771-LX	$575	$750
1968	Ovation Glen Campbell 12-String	1118/K-1118	$650	$850
1925	Paramount GB (Guitar Banjo)		$1,000	$1,325
1996	Parker Fly Classic		$1,700	$2,250
1999	Peavey EVH Wolfgang Special	Flamed maple top	$750	$1,000
1987	Peavey Predator		$175	$225
1988	Pensa (Pensa-Suhr)			
	MK 1 (Mark Knopfler)		$1,850	$2,450
1975	Ramirez A/1A	Indian	$2,700	$3,600
1940	Recording King M-4	Archtop, Gibson	$900	$1,200
1965	Rickenbacker Electro ES-17		$1,000	$1,300
1965	Rickenbacker			
	Model 1996 (Rose-Morris)		$9,000	$11,800
1967	Rickenbacker			
	Model 1999 Bass (Rose-Morris)		$7,200	$9,500
1974	Rickenbacker Model 325		$3,800	$5,000
2000	Rickenbacker Model 330		$1,600	$2,100
1985	Rickenbacker			
	Model 4001 V63 Reissue Bass	Figured top	$3,000	$3,900
2013	Rickenbacker Model 4003-S Bass	4-string, reissue	$1,450	$1,900
1960	Rickenbacker Model SW	8-string lap steel	$1,000	$1,300
1988	Robin Raider II	2 pickup	$425	$575
1942	Selmer Classique	Gut strings	$4,700	$6,200
1973	Sho-Bud Pro 1 Steel	Round front	$1,850	$2,400
1957	Silvertone Model 1317			
	Single Pickup Guitar		$500	$650
1959	Silvertone Model 623	Black, archtop	$225	$300
1935	Slingerland Songster Archtop		$650	$850
1967	Standel Custom Deluxe Thinbody 402 Bass		$1,025	$1,350
1939	Stromberg Master 300	2 braces, Sunburst, non-cut	$6,000	$11,000
1950	Stromberg Master 300	1 brace, Sunburst, non-cut	$11,000	$21,000
1953	Supro Spectator Steel	Wood body painted	$325	$425
1958	Supro Westwood 1580A		$900	$1,200
2005	Taylor 554		$1,550	$2,000
1977	Travis Bean TB-3000 Wedge	V shape	$5,000	$6,500
1965	True Tone Double			
	Cutaway Elec./Arch. (K592)		$475	$625
1976	Univox Bicentennial		$800	$1,050
1968	Univox Thin Line Bass	EB-2 style	$525	$675
1949	Vega Lap Steels (Art deco-style)		$400	$500
2020	Vigier Excalibur 13		$2,000	$2,600
1967	Vox Bossman		$600	$800
1963	Vox Phantom IV Bass	English made	$2,400	$3,200
1983	Wal Custom (IV) Mark I Bass		$5,800	$7,800
2014	Waterloo WL-12 (Parlor)		$1,475	$1,950
1975	Yamaha FG Series Flat Tops	Lower-end	$75	$250
1975	Yamaha FG Series Flat Tops	Mid-level	$250	$500
1975	Yamaha FG Series Flat Tops	Higher-end	$500	$1,000
1975	Yamaha FG Series Flat Tops	Highest-end	$1,000	$1,500
1972	Yamaha SG-20		$425	$575
1983	Yamaha SG-2100S		$1,275	$1,700
1963	Zim-Gar Electric Solidbody	Various models	$200	$600

Take a Trip Back to 1923… with a Kentucky Master Model Mandolin!



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KM-1000 Master F-Model Mandolin

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- Traditional high-gloss Nitrocellulose lacquer sunburst finish with ivoroid binding
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Vivian Campbell onstage in 1984 with a Charvel given to him by Grover Jackson; built for Twisted Sister's Eddie Ojeda, Campbell covered its pink-and-black finish in gaffer tape.

DIVINE METAL

Dio's *Holy Diver*

By Bret Adams

Vocalist Ronnie James Dio was on a roll as he formed the band that would record his 1983 album *Holy Diver*. Coming off a successful run in Rainbow and an early-'80s stint in Black Sabbath, he enlisted two former bandmates – bassist Jimmy Bain and drummer Vinny Appice – and together, they began a search for a guitarist who could bring the heavy-metal flash.

While the three were hanging together in London, Bain recommended Vivian Campbell, a kid playing in a Belfast band called Sweet Savage. Dio called the 19-year-old, inviting him to audition.

"It was a complete surprise to me," Campbell recalled. "I had met Jimmy, but didn't really *know* him. He was in a band called Wild Horses with Brian Robertson (of Thin Lizzy). They'd played in Ireland a month or two before, and Sweet Savage opened for them. They tracked me down, miraculously enough because my father was the only Vivian Campbell in the phone book! It was 2 o'clock in the morning when they called and woke him up. He then woke me up and said, 'There's a drunken Scotsman on the phone for you.' That was Jimmy!

"Jimmy told me, 'I'm in a hotel room with Ronnie James Dio and Vinny Appice, looking for a guitar player. Can you be in London tomorrow night?' I didn't have the money, but my father bought a plane ticket. If not for that it wouldn't have happened.

"I put fresh strings on my guitar and played all day before I went to the airport. At the time, that's all I did anyway – 24/7,

Vivian Campbell: PG Brunelli.

I was dedicated to playing guitar. That was my obsession. I flew over with my '77 Les Paul Deluxe, rented a Marshall JCM 800, we got in a room at a John Henry's rehearsal facility and started playing."

Sparks flew immediately as they ran through material, including songs for the new album.

"There was intense chemistry, from the very first moment," Campbell said. "We jammed 'Holy Diver' a lot! When it came time to playing the solo, it was loosely over what became the final version on the record. I was just jamming away, and Ronnie was in the corner of the room, rolling a joint, and he kept gesturing to us, 'Keep playing! Keep playing!' (laughs) It seemed like an eternity. Like every young guitar player, I started off with my fast and furious licks, trying to cram in as many notes as possible until I'd exhausted the toolbox and had to revert to playing more with feel, more basic rock-and-roll kind of stuff. As a guitar player, you're thinking it's all about technique... until you realize it's more about feel."

The band rehearsed and recorded at the famed Sound City, in Los Angeles. They were so tight the album was mostly recorded live.

"We'd go for a good take – guitar, bass, and drums. I'd go in and do another rhythm guitar track on top of it. Then we'd move on to the next song," Campbell said. "It was definitely old-school, the way we cut it."

The Les Paul was the only electric he played on the album – though there were some pickup swaps.

"I was experimenting like crazy," said Campbell. "I went through several pickup changes, but mostly kept a DiMarzio X2N in the bridge. I also put on a Bigsby vibrato that *wasn't* a Bigsby – it was some kind of flush-mounted trem that clipped in where the bridge goes. On a couple of solos – the end of 'Gypsy' in particular – you hear it. I had it on for a couple of weeks, but threw it away because the guitar would never stay in tune.

"I ran through a Marshall JCM 800 and a Boss overdrive pedal. That was it."

The title track and "Rainbow in the Dark" became rock radio and MTV favorites while the album eventually sold two million copies in the U.S. A four-CD super deluxe edition was recently released (see review in this month's "Hit List"). The acoustic heard on the intro to "Don't Talk to Strangers" was a

12-string that belonged to Dio, as Campbell didn't own an acoustic at the time.

Campbell was aboard for Dio's next two albums, *The Last in Line* and *Sacred Heart*. He maintains he was then fired because he persistently raised business issues; Dio and his then-wife/manager, Wendy, claimed Campbell quit. For years, Campbell distanced himself from the albums and downplayed his own work. Eventually, though, he reassessed and re-embraced the music. After Dio's death, he, Bain, Appice, and vocalist Andrew Freeman formed Last in Line, which toured and released new music in testament to the legacy of the original Dio band. Former Ozzy Osbourne bassist Phil Soussan joined after Bain's death. Their third album is set for release in 2023.

"There are several factors to it. The passage of time changes your perspective on everything. Ronnie's passing was one thing. What set me on the wrong path was how I was fired from the band. The way that went down left a very, very bad taste in my mouth," said Campbell.

"As a guitarist, at the time I never appreciated what it was I did. I never thought it was any good. I couldn't understand what Ronnie heard in me as a guitar player. There were so many other guitarists in L.A. who were miles better than me from a technical point of view. When I started doing the Last in Line project, I had to go back and learn my own guitar solos. It was during that process – after years playing with Whitesnake, Riverdogs, Shadow King, and decades with Def Leppard – that made me realize, 'Oh! That's quite interesting what I did when I was 20, 21 years old.' That made me look at it differently. I started to have an appreciation for my playing at the time and for the music we created."

Dio died of stomach cancer in 2010, at age 67. **VG**

Schenker in 1981.

MICHAEL SCHENKER

The UFO Years

By Wolf Marshall

Underrated pioneers of melodic metal in the 1970s and '80s, UFO's music compared with contemporaries Thin Lizzy, Rainbow, AC/DC, and Whitesnake, yet they achieved only modest success – until uber-guitarist Michael Schenker elevated their status.

Formed in 1968 by vocalist Phil Mogg, guitarist Mick Bolton, bassist Pete Way, and drummer Andy Parker, from its inception, UFO was a group in search of an identity. Gravitating to the space-rock excursions of Pink Floyd, Hawkwind, and Gong, they initially failed to chart in England while making inroads in Germany and Japan; *UFO 2: Flying* ('71) put a finer point on it with the 19-minute "Star Storm" and 26-minute title track. Guitarists Bolton, Larry Wallis (Motörhead) and Bernie Marsden (Whitesnake) preceded Schenker's tenure, but with Schenker aboard, UFO boldly changed course.

Born January 10, 1955, in Sarstedt, Germany, Schenker was a prodigy. He taught himself to play by decoding songs for his older brother Rudolf (of Scorpions fame). His first performance was a Scorpions club gig at 11, and by 15 he'd mastered the music of Eric Clapton, Leslie West, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Johnny Winter, and others. At 16, he debuted on *Lonesome Crow*, the Scorpions' first album, displaying precocious guitar and foreshadowing the darker strain of Eurometal and the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM). While on tour supporting UFO, he performed with both, and at 17 was recruited into the headliner's lineup. Though he didn't speak English, he contributed substantially as guitarist/composer to *Phenomenon*, marking the band's transition from an adventurous (if undistinguished) art-rock outfit to a guitar-driven hard-rock powerhouse. *Phenomenon* found them retaining spacey tendencies in "Queen of the Deep" and "Space Child" while portending the future with the rock shuffle "Doctor Doctor" and heavy riff-dominated "Rock Bottom."

Force It continued the momentum and proved to be the band's U.S. breakthrough with concert favorites "Let It Roll," "Shoot Shoot," "Mother Mary" and "Out in the Street." Critics praised them as listenable metal, paving the way for greater success with *No Heavy Petting*, which added Danny Peyronel as keyboardist and sported future classics "Natural Thing" and "I'm a Loser." With producer Ron Nevison, orchestration and keyboards became more prevalent on *Lights Out*, yet UFO didn't sacrifice its metal cachet. Paul Raymond (Chicken Shack, Savoy Brown) became a core member, replacing Peyronel as keyboardist and second guitarist, allowing UFO to move comfortably from two-guitar metal instrumentation (Priest, Maiden) to prog-rock/power-pop guitar/keyboard textures. The only constants were the straightforward vocals of Mogg and Schenker's electrifying guitar – prime factors exemplifying their classic sound on five studio albums and one live recording.

Lights Out marked UFO's pinnacle, reaching #23 in America and #54 in Britain, yielding "Too Hot to Handle," "Gettin' Ready" and "Lights Out." *Obsession* was a diverse, more-polished effort that reached #43 in America while hitting #26 in England. It nonetheless

Michael Schenker: Laurens van Houten/Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy.

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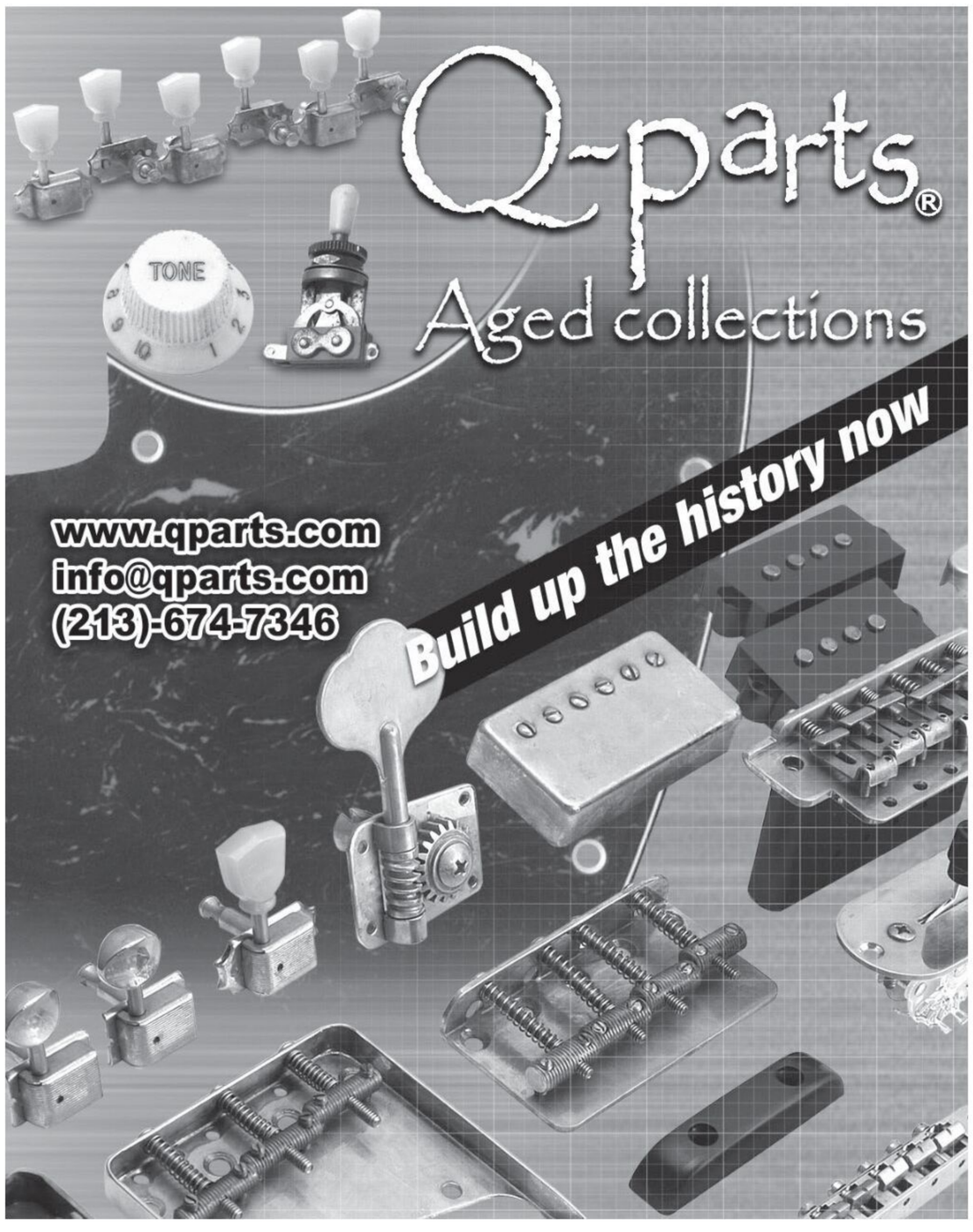

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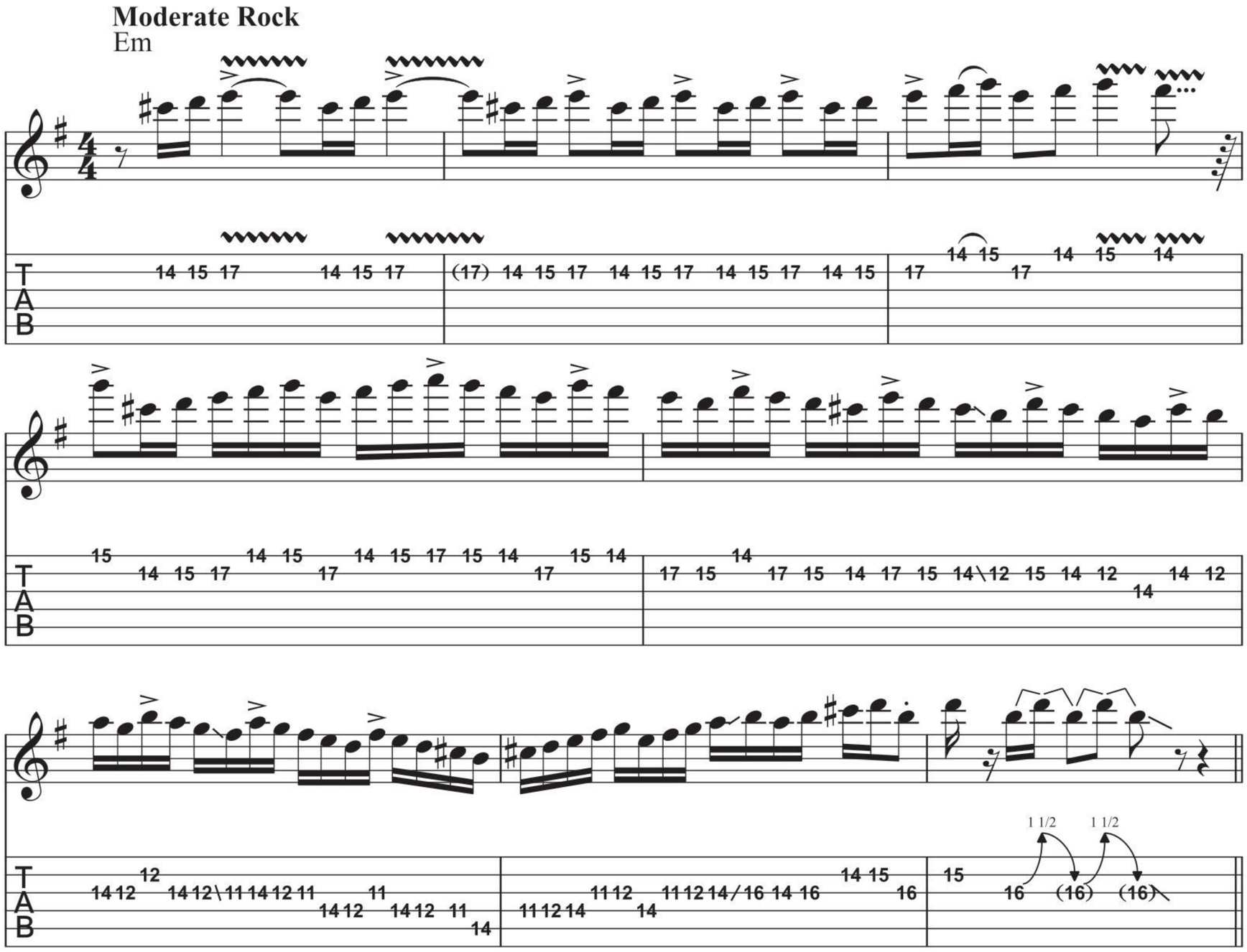
ensured their preeminence as arena stars and offered "Only You Can Rock Me," "Cherry," "Pack It Up," "Ain't No Baby," and "Hot 'n Ready," a frequent concert opener. Amidst driving rock pieces were Schenker's gentle semi-classical instrumental "Arbory Hill" (with him playing recorder and acoustic guitars) and "Lookin' Out for No. 1," an unapologetic power-pop number anticipating '80s rock ballads. A series of recorded concerts in Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio and Kentucky resulted in *Strangers in the Night*, which reached #7 on U.K. charts, #42 in America, and has since risen to the top tier of live rock records. It remains Schenker's shining hour.

UFO provided the vital step to international acclaim for Schenker. By the winter of '78, he left to pursue other projects, briefly reuniting with Scorpions on *Lovedrive*. He considered joining Aerosmith in '79 and led several MSG lineups in the '80s. He rejoined UFO three times, punctuated by stints with MSG and side projects; returning first on *Walk on Water* and later two Shrapnel releases, *Covenant* and *Sharks*. UFO-Schenker's influence on rock guitarists is profound; Randy Rhoads, Mike McCready, Slash, Paul Gilbert, George Lynch, John Petrucci, Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, Def Leppard, Metallica, Tesla, Dio, Megadeth, Pantera, Testament, and Slayer are on the short list.

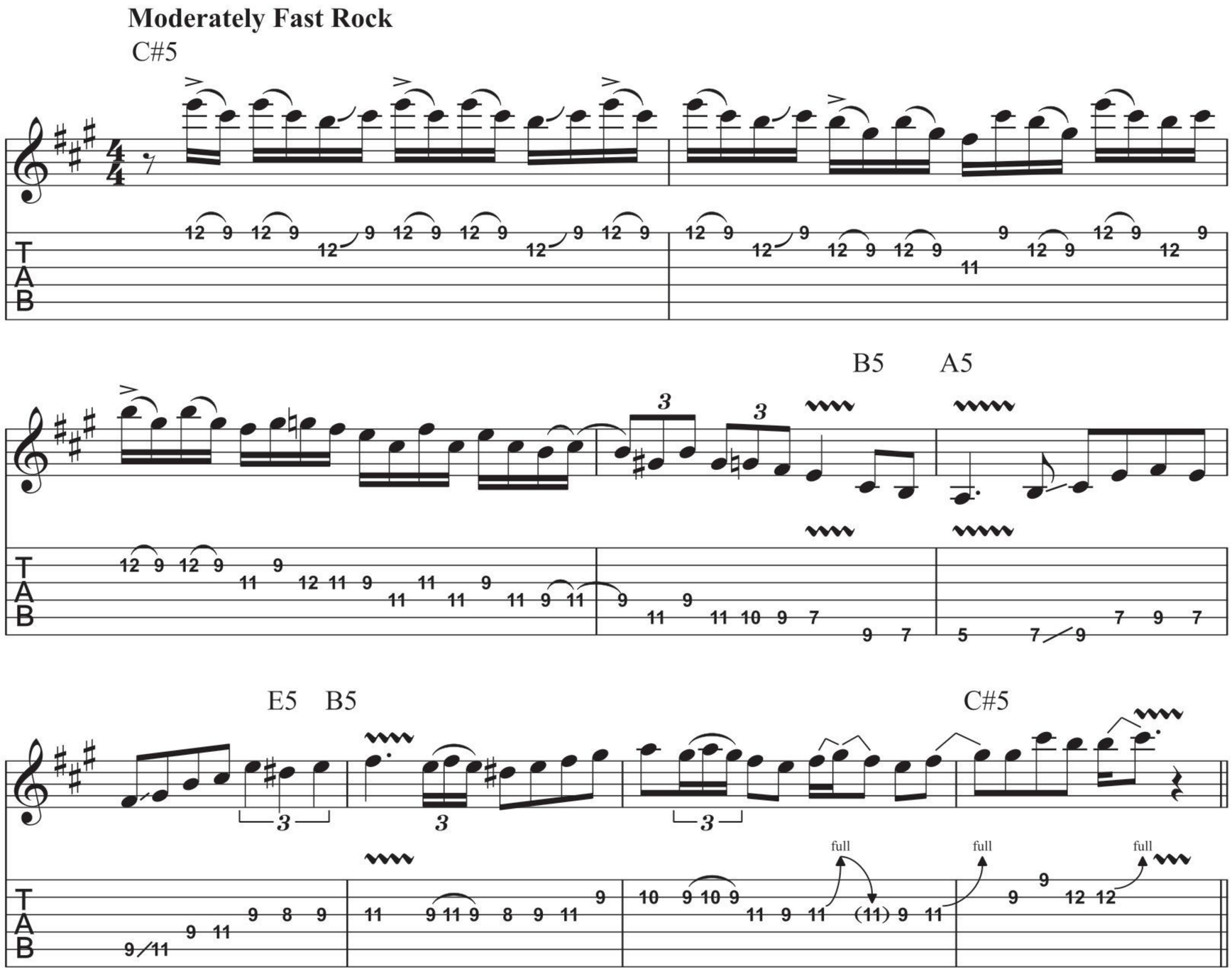


"Rock Bottom" is a defining tune, with equally definitive solo opportunities, for Schenker. There are many versions recorded throughout his career, but towering above is the live performance on *Strangers in the Night*. This excerpt (5:10) includes features found in many improvisations. Note the repeated three-note motifs (C#-D-E) played rhythmically in measures 1-2. These gather momentum, and are sequenced and thematically developed as E-F#-G at the phrase ending in 3. Bar 4 begins a lengthy four-bar flight that epitomizes his technical prowess. Check out the ascending scalar line joined seamlessly to a signature descending diatonic sequence in four-note groupings in 4-6, delivered with impeccable picking and precise articulation. A final ascending sequence in 7 leads to a wailing wide string bend in 8 as closure. The logic and clarity in this example illustrate his credo that a Schenker solo "must build."

STYLE

Schenker boasted an identifiable, impressive style as a teen on *Lonesome Crow*, which introduced his guitar skills and early use of the wah pedal ("Inheritance") that became a central aspect of his sound and style in UFO. Rarely rocking the pedal conventionally, he instead used it as an EQ/booster (in a notched position) to shape and color phrases, accentuate his attack, dynamics, and pinch harmonics, enhance the midrange, change timbre, increase sustain, and cultivate feedback. A disciple of British blues-rock and the Gibson-into-Marshall school epitomized by Clapton, he expounded on EC's thick sound, soulful phrasing and expansive improvisations, taking Cream's live ferocity to greater heights while expounding on Clapton's melodic blues approach in "Badge" and "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." He merged and repurposed tenets of rock and metal – the heavy guitar/keyboard textures of Deep Purple and Rainbow, guitar orchestration of the Beatles, Allman Brothers, Wishbone Ash, and Queen, metallic riffs and power chords of Zep and Sabbath, blues-based virtuosity of Johnny Winter, angularity, standard-tuned slide and wah quirkiness of *Truth*-era Jeff Beck, vocal-like wide vibrato and string bending of Leslie West, and exotic modal melodies of Rory Gallagher.

Schenker was one of the earliest shred guitarists and established many precedents in modern rock soloing. However, his complexity, precise alternate picking, speed, and aggression were tempered by the soulful delivery of blues-rock, with its legato phrasing, choppy-speech rhythms, slinky bends, and sense of melodic structure comparable to classical music. He relied on characteristic pentatonic/blues vocabulary – supercharged with florid passages, frequently developing short motives (unison bends, three- and four-note fragments) repeated as flurries and ostinato riffs (per the live coda in "Shoot Shoot"), added embellishing ornaments and juxtaposed longer diatonic lines – such as the sequences in "Electric Phase" (2:35) and "Lights Out" (2:18). He added neck bending and pushing on strings behind the nut to achieve quasi whammy-bar effects. Schenker crafted purposeful melodies to reflect underlying progressions, particularly in instrumental interludes, exploiting arpeggios to strengthen note-to-chord relationships,



Schenker is among the earliest hard-rock guitarists to breathe new life and energy into pentatonic blues material. "Lights Out," from *Strangers in the Night*, boasts a striking case in point. The improvised patterns in this excerpt (4:32) are exemplary. Note his use of short fragments, made from C# minor-pentatonic, repeated, juggled to different starting notes, and rhythmically displaced across the time span in measures 1-3. This is a clever and effective way to expand the pentatonic's melodic possibilities and create excitement with simple patterns. Measure 4 contains a signature descending blues-scale line phrased as triplets. In measure 5-9 he addresses the A-B-C#m chord progression (played as power chords) with harmonically active melodies decorated with chromaticism. Check out his thoughtful use of major-pentatonic and hexatonic lines over A, more-intricate modal melody (C#m Aeolian Mode) with characteristic hammer-on/pull-off mordents (a fixture of his classical side) over B, and an idiomatic bluesy phrase ending on C#m.

deviated from strict blues-based confines to include harmonically-astute diatonic, modal and chromatic note choices, and presaged Eurometal's incipient neoclassical lexicon – even on unlikely numbers like "Alone Again Or" with its odd mix of Brit-pop/flamenco sounds. Offsetting his shred tendencies are singable structured solos like "Only You Can Rock Me," "Try Me," "Looking Out for No. 1," "Love to Love," "On With the Action," the atmospheric slide lines in "I'm a Loser," and Santana-esque intro in live versions of "Doctor Doctor."

Live solos merged thematic elements from studio tracks with more intricate melodic development tantamount to jazz improvisation or classical theme-and-variations procedures, epitomized by "Rock Bottom," his concert feature with lengthy soloing and multiple enlarged sections. Similarly, he converted twin-guitar harmony lines to a single part in "Doctor Doctor" and added more elaborate fills to songs on stage.

Schenker was a masterful composer, riff maker and rhythm guitarist in the tradition of his forebears. Consider the boogie-based opening figure of "Only You Can Rock Me" or Blackmore-inspired dyads in "Hot 'n Ready." His use of the "heavy-metal gallop" punctuated by slashing power chords in "Lights Out" (chorus) and "Rock Bottom" are templates for '80s metal and power pop, and his chord figures and steady-eighth bass patterns were often given the now-ubiquitous palm-muted metal treatment. Moreover, he was skillful at reinterpreting classic mannerisms of rock. Consider the Chuck Berry comping and double-stops in the refrain of "Natural Thing," Who-inspired bombast and drama of numerous power-chord figures, melodic counterlines reminiscent of Queen in "Only You Can Rock Me" (chorus), and twin-guitar harmony in "Lipstick Traces," "Electric Phase," "Lookin' Out for No. 1 (reprise)," and "Doctor Doctor."

UFO was musically ambitious, which suited Schenker's wide-ranging vision. They blended diverse blues-rock, metal, prog, classical, ethnic, and pop tangents over a variety of grooves, tempos, feels, and textures, sometimes within the same tune. "I'm a Loser" would fit well in the play lists of John Mellencamp, Bob Seeger, or Bryan Adams, while "Born to Lose" melds a Jimi-meets-Eurometal chordal intro with pop-rock balladry and melodic rock solo traversing tricky, modulating changes. "Cherry" could be a Foo Fighters track from '90s alt-rock and interludes suggesting prog-rock leanings, emphasized by keyboard colors (piano, organ, synth, and string pads), are found in "Let It Roll," "Love to Love," and "Rock Bottom." Conversely, "Rock Bottom" and "Lights Out" convey unabashed heavy metal intensified by guitar-dominated timbres. "Hot 'n Ready," "Let It Roll," "Too Hot to Handle" and "Shoot Shoot" are hook-laden hard-rock pieces that Kiss would envy and Schenker's opening solo in "Out in the Street" is as catchy as Gary Richrath's tastiest moments in REO's pop-rock.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

Strangers in the Night is a definitive live recording. Originally 13 tracks, the 2020 Deluxe Edition helps fans investigate Schenker's claim "There were better takes they could've used." An overview of studio tracks can be found on *Best of UFO (1974-1983)*, but serious rock fans should check out all five studio albums spanning '74 to '78.

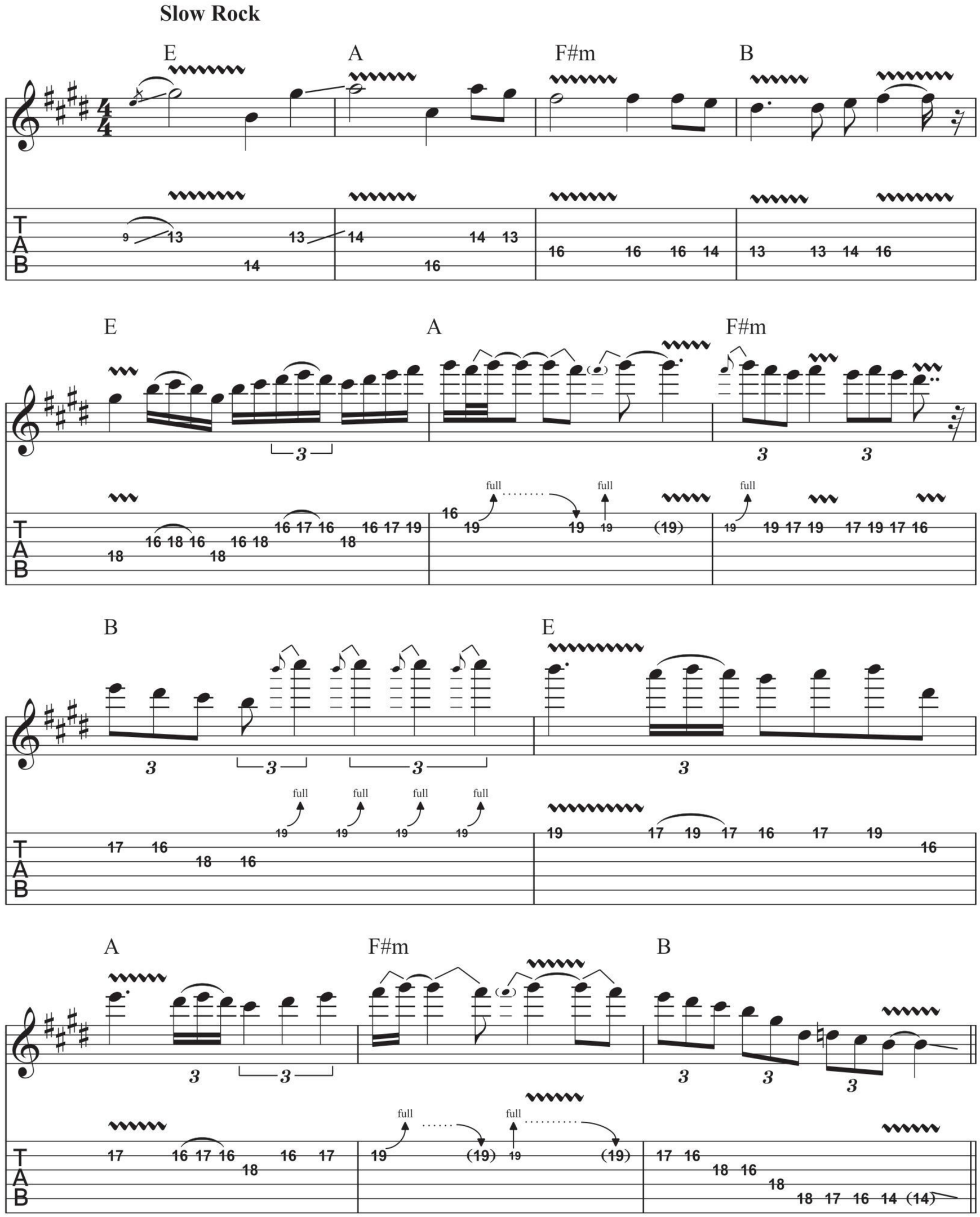
ESSENTIAL VIEWING

Recommended are UFO's entire '74 show from "Don Kirshner's Rock Concert" featuring early versions of "Doctor Doctor" and "Rock Bottom," an eight-song montage of concert clips from London spanning '75 through '77, and a number of illuminating Schenker interviews.

SOUND

For more than a half century, Schenker's signature instrument has been a Flying V. The relationship began when he borrowed brother Rudolf's red '71 Gibson Medallion V with T-Top pickups and plugged into a Marshall stack. Early photos depict a stripped mahogany V, later painted black, then white, and finally the trademark graphic black and white panels. He also played a Les Paul Standard and white ES-1275 in the studio. Gibson issued a tribute model V in '85 and Dean currently markets his signature version. He used .009 Fender Rock and Roll strings, preferred high action, a glass slide, and Herco gray nylon picks held with thumb and two fingers.

Schenker plugged into 50-watt 1987 Marshall heads (Presence, Treble, Middle and Bass on 10, Volume at 8), later graduated to 2204 and 2205 models, and often chained two together. In '73, he routinely used at least two full 4x12 stacks. A departure from the norm, he experimented with a Pignose amp on much of *Lights Out*. His effects were minimal – a modified Crybaby wah pedal and WEM Copicat tape echo.



"Only You Can Rock Me" rates high on the Schenker scale of strong melodic moments in UFO. This passage, (2:11) from *Obsession*, presents key lines from the memorable "story solo" – played as a song within a song and delivered practically verbatim onstage. From the outset, he adopts a stately semi-classical attitude akin to Brian May in "Bohemian Rhapsody." Note the singable intervallic opening in measures 1-2, with its clear harmonic references to E-major and A-major chords answered by a lofty diatonic line similarly gravitating to chord tones in F#m and B. 5-6 contains a quicker contrasting line rising to a climactic string bend. 7 begins a sequence of short three-note motifs progressing to more drama with string bends in the higher register in 8. The diatonic lines with their trademark ornaments in 9-10 convey a classical impression while the held bend and pre-bend in 11 represent Schenker's transformation of blues melody. The final descending line combines diatonic, pentatonic and blues influences. Note the deliberate chromaticism at the closing.

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

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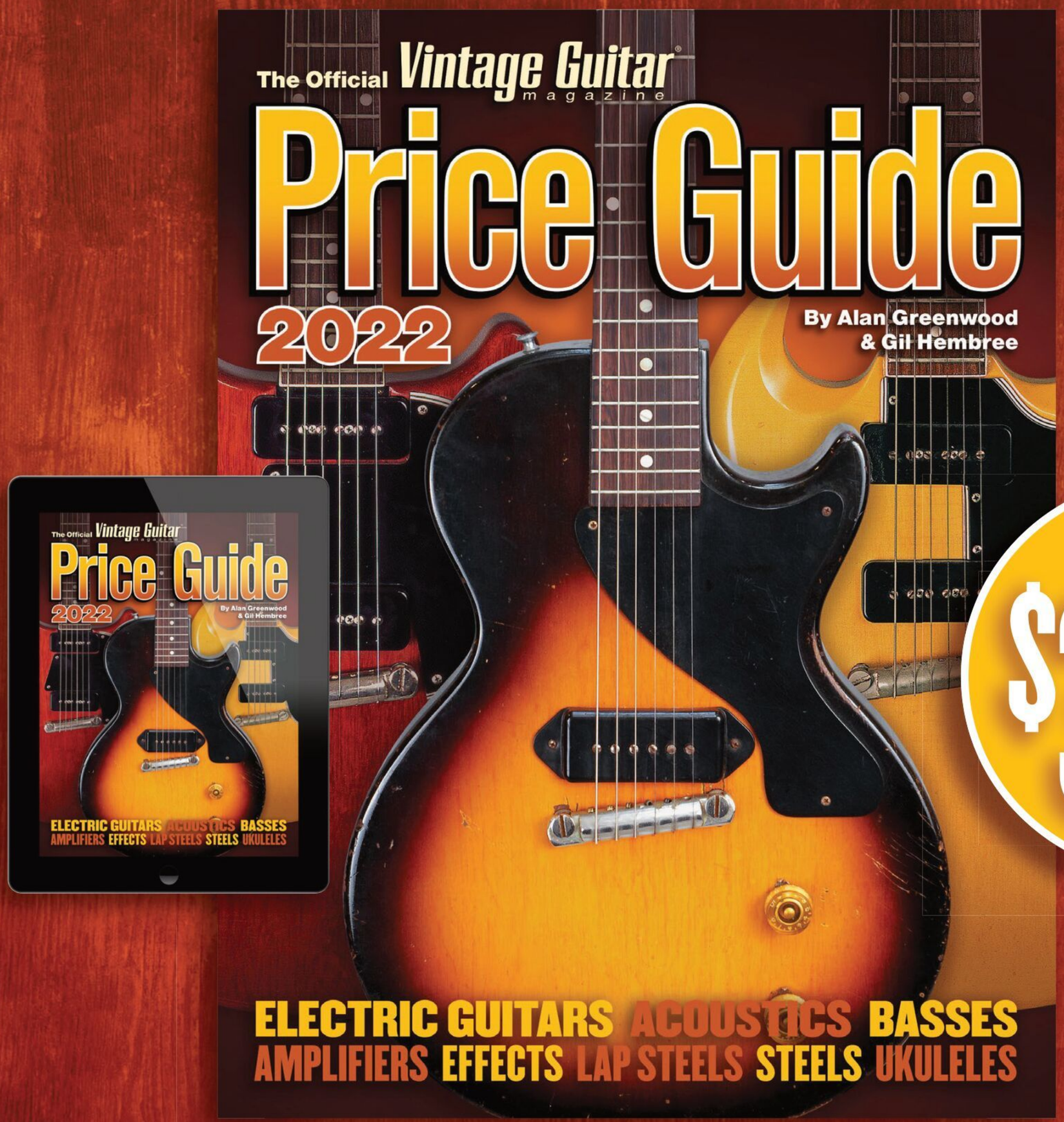

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Marcus King
SWAMP GUIDE

BY OSCAR JORDAN

King with his all-original '61 Les Paul SG and signature Orange MK Ultra head. The guitar was used to write "Lie Lie Lie" and several other tracks on his new album, *Young Blood*.

Marcus King is a guitar slingin' powerhouse barnstormer. Unlike most contemporary pop music – heavy on production, low on everything else – King's new album, *Young Blood*, propels music fans back in time to a world of meaningful lyrics, saucy grooves, clever arrangements, and cowbell. Dan Auerbach (*VG*, October '19) returns as producer with a purposefully different recording approach. Drummer Chris St. Hilaire, bassist Nick Movshon, and rhythm guitarist Andrew Gabbard keep the ship rock-steady and tight while King's impassioned vocals and commanding guitar style put asses in the seats.

Young Blood is more than just another blues-based rock record packed with guts, grit, and guitars – it's a sonic diary of a man struggling with the burdens of existence, mental health, and the courage to confront them. It's intense and muggy, but King took it upon himself to guide *VG* readers gently through the swamp.

***Young Blood* is heavy and dreamy, but tight.**

Marcus King: Alysse Gafkjen.

King main guitar is a family heirloom '62 ES-345 known as Big Red.

Marcus King: Alysse Gafkjen.

It sounds tight because it *was* tight. Those cats stuck to me. I have a tendency to veer off, but Chris and Nick are bad motherf***ers. As far as the mixing, we didn't want much reverb; we wanted to hear everyone in the room, so that's what went into the mix. It's not so much what we did to the record as what we *didn't* do. We didn't want to muddle it up. We were really happy with the way the band sounded, and wanted people to hear *that*, not the capabilities of whoever was mixing and mastering it.

The music has a classic power-trio feel. How are you pulling off guitar riffs live with vocals?

A lot of that pressure was taken off when we hired Drew Smithers to join the group. He helps with a lot of the rhythm-guitar parts. He's even able to handle some of the pedal-steel parts from my older records, which makes it sound a lot bigger. On the record, there were two guitar players – Andrew Gabbard played rhythm because we wanted a panned sound to make the record feel full and live. We didn't want to overdub too much. He played live with me in the room, and Drew does it onstage now. That makes it easier for me to be frontman, singer, and guitar player.

There are always challenges and upsides to everything, but we have a seven-piece group and our horn players both double on percussion. There's more percussion on the record than one might think – congas, tambourines, shakers…

Cowbell...

Yeah (laughs), we have cowbell, of course. All the parts are there, and it's never a bad idea to put Hammond organ on something.

Was the plan to strip down the sound compared to your last album, *El Dorado*?

Yeah, we wanted the listener to feel like they were in the room. So that's how it was mixed, and there's not a lot of after-the-fact production. We worked hard to capture the moment, and I feel confident we did. The old-school power trio feel was a real big idea for us – it's one of the biggest inspirations behind wanting to do *Young Blood* like a real power-trio arena-rock record.

You worked with producer Dan Auerbach again. Whose idea was that?

I kind of drummed it up. Originally, I was going to tour as a trio. During the pandemic, we'd gone out and done some trio shows, and field-tested some of the songs I was writing. I ended up changing my mind as far as personnel goes, but realized I was able to do a lot more with more guys. Me and Dan talked about it; he really liked the idea and we really loved the idea of working together again. This time around, it felt a lot more comfortable and natural.

You have a deep emotional connection to these songs.

Before each [recording] session, we had a [writing] session that was really like

therapy; I would talk about what was going on with me on that particular day, and luckily, we were working with writers who were really listening to every word carefully.

I was having a really difficult time dealing with a lot of heartbreak s**t and personal stuff. I was not doing great, but it limited itself to a really creative space for me. That's really the only way I've ever known how to write, anyway. For me, the real challenge is writing a *happy* song.

One of the writers was Desmond Child. What was it like to collaborate with him?

Desmond is one of my favorite people. He's unapologetically Desmond all the time. I like that trait – people who aren't afraid to be themselves all the time. I really admire that in people. Desmond has a very big personality, and he's a legend for a reason. He's so good at what he does, and we had a great time writing together. I fidget a lot, and he got frustrated that I kept clicking my pen. So, he took my pen away. Otherwise, we got along famously.

It's one thing to write a song by yourself, but to be vulnerable in front of other people while doing so is a whole other thing.

M. King ES-345s/Orange amp: Margaret Jacobi Lee.

King's #1 guitar is a '62 ES-345 called Big Red (left). His grandfather, Marvin Lee King, bought it in 1963 in Great Falls, Montana, passed it to Marcus' father, William, who then handed it down to Marcus. It's the basis of King's Gibson Custom Shop '62 ES-345 signature model (right), which has a maple/poplar body, maple center block, mahogany neck shaped to King's taste, rosewood fretboard, Vibrola tailpiece, Varitone circuit, and a pair of Custombucker pickups.

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I think I was in a stage in my life where I just didn't want to be alone, so I'd always have people over at the house. Or, I'd always be out doing something. In that way, it lent itself to the project. I didn't want to write these songs alone. It would have just driven me further to the edge. I'm really happy with the way we approached it, not to mention that the writers we brought in were such prolific cats that it really helped me say what I needed to say.

"Rescue Me" has so much stuff pouring out of it.

It really is an outcry. When you listen, I want you to draw your own conclusions or apply them to yourself however you can. Everybody has a moment in their life where they feel like, "Somebody f***in' help me. I'm spiraling out." When you're in a tailspin, you don't really care who's going to help you, just hoping for whatever is going to make you feel better than you do right there. That's what I was feeling when I wrote it.

You seem comfortable singing about your struggles.

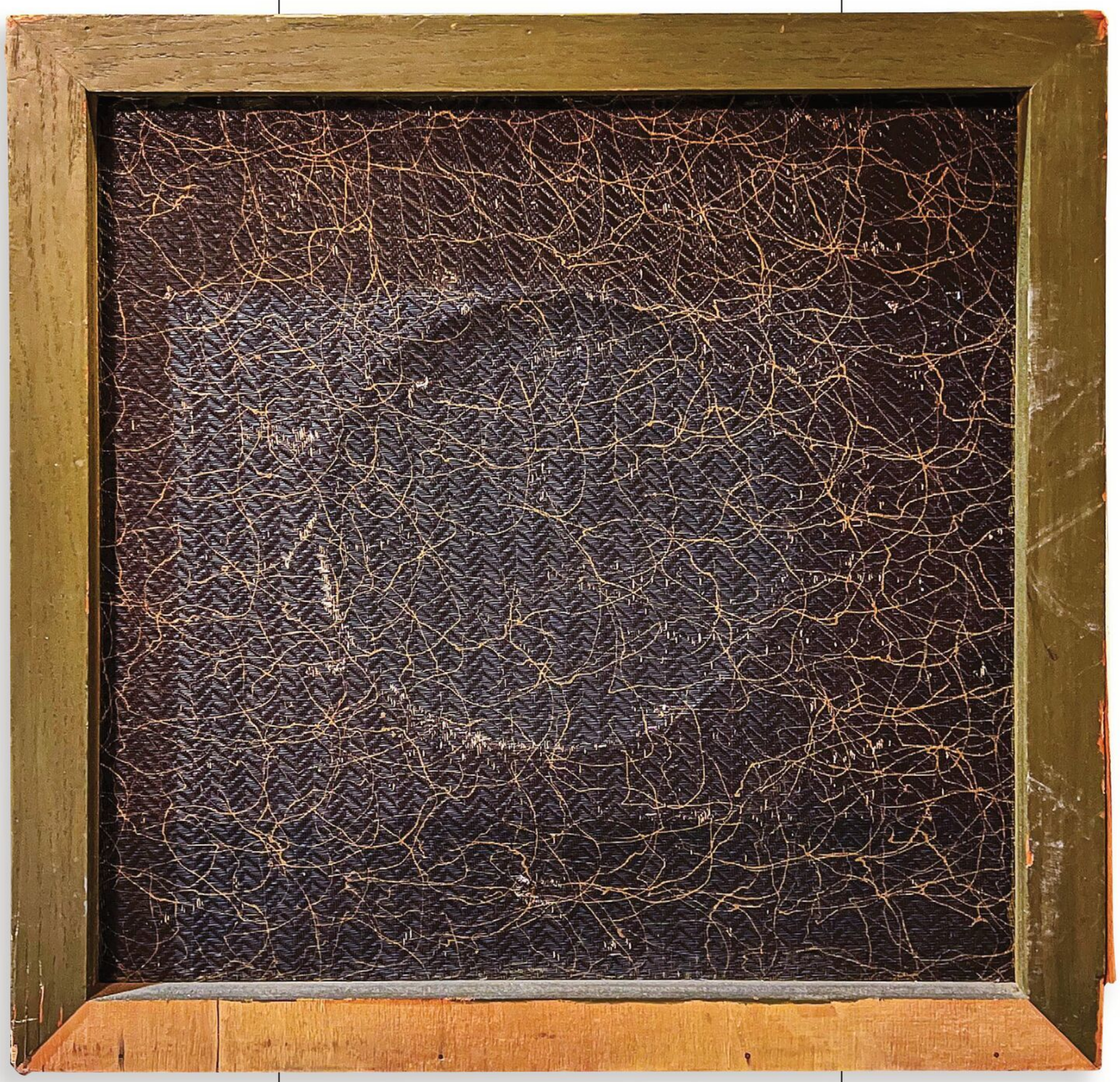
Mental health is one of those ingredients that's always volatile. You mix it with anything and chances are the whole thing is going to catch fire. Likewise, mental health struggles without combining them with a healthy lifestyle, steady meditation, therapy, and positive things will always set the room on fire. But sometimes you learn the hard way.

It sounds like you and Dan have great chemistry in the studio.

We get on really well, and I think that's why we work so well together. He just sends me out there and tells me to do what I feel, and he hits the "Record" button. With each record, it seems more and more seamless. We wrote everything within a month and recorded the album in six days.

Was there a lot of physical separation in the studio?

We were all in the same room, with the exception of drums so they wouldn't bleed too badly. Dan and I shared the same vision – we wanted this record to be as up-close and personal as we could get. The chemistry of the musicians was there immediately, so we just needed to just put a mic in the room and go. We tracked the vocals while I played guitar. It was challenging, especially with riffs, but it happened really naturally. There were only a couple of overdubs.



Marcus King's "secret weapon" in the studio is this vintage Gibson amp that was rebuilt in the '60s and spent years collecting dust in his dad's house.

The fuzz solo on "Aim High" is simply killin'.

Thanks, I appreciate that. I used a Tone Bender on that. It was either that or a Tru-Fi Colordriver. My main gear was Dan's '59 Les Paul Standard, which is a wonderful guitar – really special. And, I used a secret weapon, which is one of my studio amps. It's an old Gibson with tremolo, not very big; somebody rebuilt it in the '60s, and it's been through the wringer. It's an Army green plywood box – *ugly* (laughs) – but it's my favorite studio amp. It sat in my dad's side room for years. He asked if I had any use for it and I said, "Uh, yeah. I got a lot of ideas (laughs)." I used it on every song as the control variable. We'd put it in the chain with an AC30 or an old Supro from the '60s and some spring reverb tanks. We cranked them up, always going stereo. I had a direct feed going into the Gibson the whole time.

Did you use guitars other than the '59?

I used my signature Gibson ES-345, and Gabbard and I both used a Banker Excalibur for that chunky rhythm sound. I also played a 12-string and a '69 Black Beauty I named Gizmo.

For the guitar solo on "Pain," which pedal did you step on?

It would have been the Tone Bender or Colordriver. I'm not much of an effects guy – I have some on the road, but don't really use them. I love a Univibe, and sometimes I'll use my MXR Reverb for spacey effects to add flavor to the fusiony sections of the set. I use the Colordriver for fuzz, and they make a great tremolo called the Ultra Tremolo that I use on the road.

What's in your live rig?

I have my Orange signature head – the Marcus King MK Ultra. It's a 50-watt with Tone, Volume, and Bass. It's got 6L6s and the circuitry is really similar to a British-made Super Reverb, with more oomph. Orange did a fantastic job with that head. I wanted a slant 8x10 cabinet, and they were happy to oblige, so both Drew and

I play through one of those, and next to that I have a 2x15. In the States, I have a 2x15 Bassman cab with a Dual Showman on top. I replaced its output transformer with one from a brownface Twin, so it has a lot more power.

I'm also using a Clean Boost from MXR, and a Tube Screamer. When I get really nuts, I'll use the Colordriver. Other than that, I'm using an MXR Univibe and a couple other bells and whistles that don't get clicked on as much.

How about guitars?

I have a really great Firebird that Gibson made a few years ago. It's the Custom Shop Eric Clapton 1964 Firebird. Gibson was kind enough to let me hold on to one. I always have a Les Paul with me, whether it's Gizmo or another one I've been playing lately. I also have my red Tele, which is a reissue. When I do fly dates, I always bring reissue stuff. Right now, I have my red Tele and my 345. My signature ES-345 is the first prototype of the one that Jim Willard made. It was the only one made in the Memphis factory, so it's really special to me.

There's some bitchin' slide on "Rescue Me." Do you have guitars set up for that?

No, I always play standard. However, in order to make it as swampy as we could, I added a little wah on it, which gave it a pretty cool vibe.

That track has a lot of humidity.

That's a fine way of putting it. We certainly wanted to make it as humid as possible.

Marcus King: Mitch Conrad.

"The chemistry of the musicians was there immediately, so we just needed to put a mic in the room and go."

Were there any challenges traveling through Europe in the spring and early summer?

Not necessarily. I feel at home on the road. It can sometimes be challenging, but I'm used to it.

What's the live show like?

We keep it different and fresh every night. Folks don't want to hear us play the same thing every night, and we would certainly get bored with that. So we keep it fresh, and we're always adding new ideas to the tunes – add horns to something and see if it works. We're not afraid to try something.

Your back-catalog is so strong it must be hard to narrow down songs.

We write a guide each night, but whether we stick to it or go off course depends on audience participation and how much we're feeling it from the room. Sometimes we find ourselves in interesting territory. I don't like being locked into one thing or another. We have a group that can change speeds at the drop of a hat. We work well together in that way; we're able to go into something completely different. We have a setlist for if we aren't feeling any reciprocation, which isn't very often, thank God. There are certain things that work well for the show.

What are your plans for the near future?

I'll be working on the next album. That's pretty much it. Writing about everything and keeping busy on the road. We're on a really big U.S. run. I love being able to share the stage with my friends and mentors. It's always a treat. I know what music has done for me, so if I can, in any way, contribute to music that can help people or contribute to people's mental health growth, I'm honored to take part in that. No matter how lonely you feel, there's always someone who will be there for you. Often, it's a record. There's always a guest amplifier in my trailer. VG

Mat Rile's Burke has a Gibson-esque "Custom" plate, DeArmond pickup, and Grestch Space Control roller bridge.

THE BURKE GUITAR

AXE THAT TIME FORGOT

BY WARD MEEKER

For more than 70 years, aluminum has been a component in guitar construction. Exactly whose idea it was originally has never been a cut-and-dried matter of fact, but it *has* amply provided cud for the world's guitar animals to chew upon.

In his November '04 column "The Different Strummer: Al-u-minium!," *VG* contributor Michael Wright offered an in-depth look at the use of aluminum as a structural element in guitars, noting how it was seen as a solution to the inherent instability of wood necks, with the occasional exception when it was used to render different tones.

Once upon a time, of course, stringed instruments were made only of wood and were strung with "gut." As Wright points out, the adoption of steel strings began after the mandolin was introduced to America in 1880, and as more mando – and guitar – players transitioned to steel strings, the necks, bridges, and bellies of their instruments began to suffer the consequences of the inherently higher tension. The solution was, Wright recalled, "...the trapeze tailpiece, [which relieved] stress [from] the belly and bridge. By the 20th century, guitars were made with pin bridges for gut and trapezes for steel." The next game-changing use of metal came with the truss rod, which by the '30s was common.

John Beauchamp and Adolph Rickenbacher were the first builders to use aluminum as a primary element in the construction of an instrument when, in 1931, they devised the all-aluminum A-22 Hawaiian guitar – a lap-steel.

As a means to stabilize the neck of a *Spanish-style* guitar, credit has traditionally gone to Italian artist Wandré Pioli (whom Wright featured in the November and December '99 issues of *VG*), an architectural engineer who loved motorcycles and began designing guitars in the mid 1950s; in '59, he began using a flat-faced, semi-circular aluminum bar as a neck, with a rosewood fingerboard glued to its face and a back formed with molded PVC.

"Pioli employed three neck designs," said Wright. "One was a traditional bolt-on, but most intriguing was a neck-through concept with the aluminum extending to a chevron-style [tailpiece]."

Later builders who employed aluminum necks included Jacobacci, in Paris, and Messenger, which was founded in the late '60s by Bert Casey and Arnold Curtis in San Francisco. John Veleno, a guitar player/teacher and machinist whose day gig was in a machine shop that made aluminum electrical housings used in early rockets, began building guitars in '66 using necks cast of Almag 35, an aluminum/magnesium alloy. They were the only axes of the bunch to use an aluminum fretboard.

Travis Bean, another motorcycle enthusiast, used aluminum necks to avoid wood-related twisting on his koa-bodied guitars, which were known for the machined "T" cutout

on the headstock. Bean necks have a chunk of aluminum at the end which served as a heel block, solidifying the neck-to-body joint.

The most commercially successful use of aluminum necks happened with Kramer guitars, which originally sought to improve on the Bean concept; Gary Kramer and Dennis Berardi used a headstock with a wishbone shape similar to Bean's T. Kramer necks have two wooden inserts plugged into the sides of the T stem, so the only aluminum the player feels is a narrow strip along the back. By '81, wood necks had all but supplanted aluminum at Kramer. Beyond that, a few guitar hardcores might remember a brand called Hustler, which used aluminum necks and were promoted briefly in mid '79.

The emergence of two instruments in 2010/'11 threw guitar history yet another curveball...

"Before the Messenger, before Kramer, before Veleno and Travis Bean, there was the Burke guitar," said Mick Flynn, a guitar dealer in Kirkland, Washington, who got a call from a man who had found an unusual instrument at a Goodwill store in nearby Eugene, Oregon. Having no idea what it was, the man took it to a big-box music store, where, Flynn said, "A manager identified it as a homemade guitar that was 'worthless and should be burned!' And yes, that's exactly what they told him!"

Rightfully miffed at the ignorance displayed by the big-box guy, the man began researching the brand online, where he found a snippet on the website belonging to Flynn's store, Guitar Archeology; it turns out that after finding a Messenger guitar, Flynn and his staff did some leg work to find out what it was. Then, "We posted pictures and told everything we knew about the guitar," Flynn said. "There was a lot of interest."

Then, Flynn got an e-mail that started with the cryptic passage, "So the myth continues..."

The note came from Colleen Pulley, whose father, area residen0t Glen Burke, had designed an aluminum-necked guitar before Messenger. And she wanted to set the record straight!

"I am surprised more people haven't realized the Tuning Fork Guitar Company preceded the Messenger guitar by at least eight years," she told Flynn. "I think it's time my father is given credit."

Tuning Fork Guitar Company? Flynn was curious. So he started once again to dig, beginning with a contact offered by Pulley – Daniel LeBlanc, a one-time sales rep for the company.

LeBlanc told Flynn how Tuning Fork Guitar was founded by Burke and based on a "kit guitar" that used sourced parts to "bolt" to an aluminum neck that attached to wooden body segments.

"I met Burke in late April of 1965," said LeBlanc. "At the time, I was employed as a security guard at the Tongue Point Job Corps in Astoria, Oregon, and Glen was instructing students there on how to construct guitars using his Tuning Fork kits. The students loved building the guitars, and because of the aluminum neck, they sounded great."

LeBlanc's relationship with Burke evolved to the point where the former quit his job to work as a distributor for Burke, focused on Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska. The two conducted sales presentations and bought parts – fretboards, strings, bridges, pickups, etc. In '66, Burke moved the company to Grants Pass, Oregon. There, LeBlanc would compile the parts to make kits, and assemble some to sell as completed guitars. And though both were dedicated to the effort, they soon faced significant hurdles.

"I remember going with Glen to purchase parts at a large music outlet in Portland," LeBlanc said. "Glen was talking to the owner while I looked around. Then, he asked me to wait outside while he talked to the guy. Later, he told me how the shop owner told him word had come down from two large American guitar manufacturers, instructing him not to sell parts to Glen."

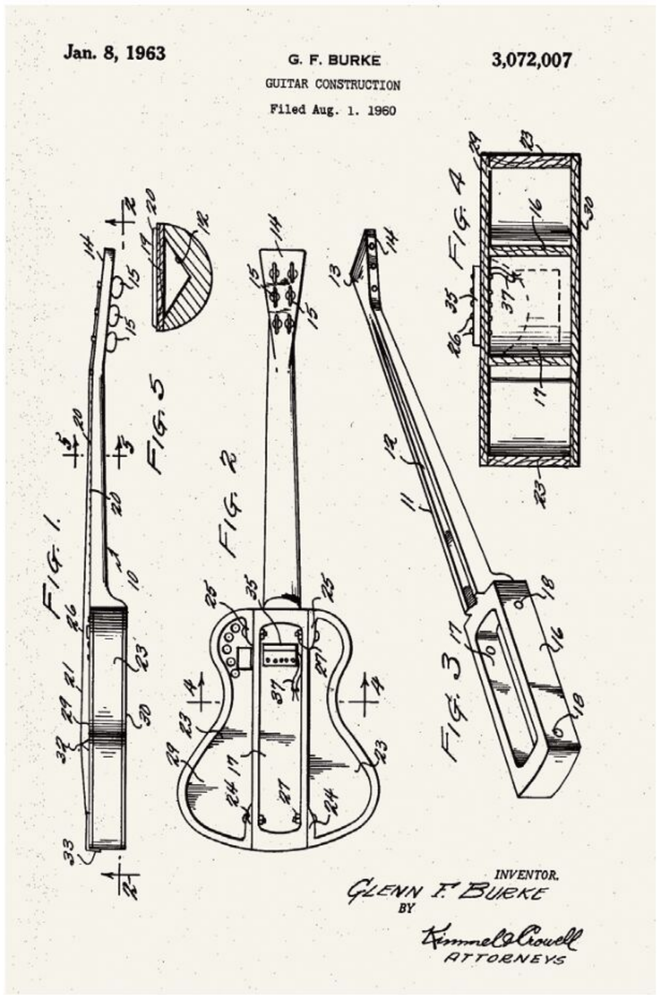
The development all but halted Burke's operation, and within a few months LeBlanc was forced to move his family and find work in California. To this day, he's saddened by the story because as he saw it, Burke poured his heart and soul into the effort, and LeBlanc himself saw – and still sees – so much potential in Burke's concept.

"When the students at Tongue Point built the guitars, you could see the excitement, the pride, and the sense of accomplishment they had when 'their guitar' was finished. Glen's vision was to see the same thing happen everywhere – people all over the world building *their* guitars and playing *their* music."

LeBlanc recalls that most of the Burkes assembled were six-string guitars, along with several 12-strings. And be-

The Burke guitar belonging to Mat Rile (left) and one discovered in Oregon and documented by Mick Flynn.

cause they could be dressed with whatever finish the builder wanted, he saw instruments in everything from standard paint to odd variations like cowhide and tooled-leather coverings. Their common element, of course, was the neck shown in the drawings for the 1960 patent, with, as described in the filing "...a hollow aluminum neck which extends entirely through the guitar to the base and has the body portion attached to the sides thereof." The illustration shows the topless aluminum box that made up the neck-through element.



The patent drawing for Glen Burke's creation, and a handwritten note in the body of the Burke documented by Mick Flynn.

"Before we got the e-mail from Colleen Pulley, I had never heard of Burke guitars, and neither had anyone I knew here in the Pacific Northwest," said Flynn. "But while doing the research so we could put the bit on our website, I found Glen's patent filing. Within six months of posting everything we knew about Burke guitars, we were contacted by the couple who found the guitar at Goodwill."

Soon after that contact, Flynn made his way to Eugene, where he expected to simply pay a visit to one very rare bird of a guitar. But...

"When we got there, it had been taken apart," he recalled. Such a scenario can be a dealer's worst nightmare, but this time, it was key to a pleasant surprise. "I could read what was written inside – and it was *amazing*!" There, written in pencil on the wooden back of the instrument, between the aluminum forks, were the words, "Built March 8, 1960, to last until 2060. Builder Glen F. Burke, 4025 E 17 Ave. Eugene, Oregon." Then, inside the bass bout, it says, "When this is opened, I'll probably be long gone from the worries of the world, so if you've had good luck with this guitar, you can wish me good luck wherever I am. G.F.B"

"We believe this is one of Glen's first guitars – if not *very* first, given that it predates, by five months, the patent filing," Flynn said.

So, what's it like to hold and play a Burke?

"It has a very unique tone, completely unlike any other guitar," Flynn noted. "It's very resonant and bright, but not brittle. Chords sound full and rich. It really is a shame they weren't given a chance to catch on, commercially."

Another Burke owner is Mat Rile, in Toluca Lake, California; his weighs just shy of eight pounds.

"It's very light compared to similar instruments by Messenger, Travis Bean, or Kramer," Rile said. "Its gold-foil DeArmond pickups are amazing. The output on both read almost 12K, and they can cover many genres of music, from country/rockabilly to rock, with distinct twang. When driven, it can also get real nasty yet maintain full character. Also, because the body is hollow, it possesses a banjo-like acoustic tone, which you'd never expect. The bottom line is, it sounds *so* good!"

Rile's guitar has a master Volume and Tone controls and a three-way toggle switch.

"The pickguard assembly is unique," he points out. "The pickguard has no screw holes. It's mounted to four pots and the switch, as they're routed through holes inside the body, then they're attached to the pickguard, secured with a nut and washer."

Three "extra" holes under each pickup indicate Burke (or someone else) experimented with pickup placement. The DeArmond pickups on Rile's guitar have goldfoil-inlaid coves, a DeArmond wiring harness, CTS pots, Switchcraft jack, Valco tailpiece (with custom gold coloring), Gibson control knobs and switch caps, Kluson tuners, a "Custom Made" plaque as seen on certain Gibson models, and a gold-colored Grestch Space Control roller bridge.

Though Burke's body shape is non-traditional, Rile says the guitar is comfy to play. "It's designed very well and fits the player's body," he noted. "Even better, it fits like a glove when you're sitting down."

The guitar's scale measures 25$^{7}/_{8}$" and Rile describes its neck profile as a "meaty/mild D shape," and as one might expect, "The aluminum gives it a totally *different* feel and truly plays fantastic, with a neck angle that results in a real player instrument, like all the desired brands of yesteryear.

"I've owned many rare aluminum-neck guitars in the past – Davoli/Wandre, Messenger, Veleno, Travis Bean and even top-of-the-line Kramers," he adds. "But *nothing* plays or sounds similar to this instrument, either in terms of natural acoustic projection or plugged-in tone. If you ask me, Burke was the Picasso of guitars."

"I've often wondered what might have happened if Glen had better luck," added LeBlanc. "What if he had been able to overcome those who kept him from succeeding? And regardless, the industry should recognize Glen and the Tuning Fork Guitar. It was Glen's idea, which *he* patented, worked, and sacrificed for! If I had the resources, I'd bring it back myself."

This feature was first published in the April '12 issue. **VG**

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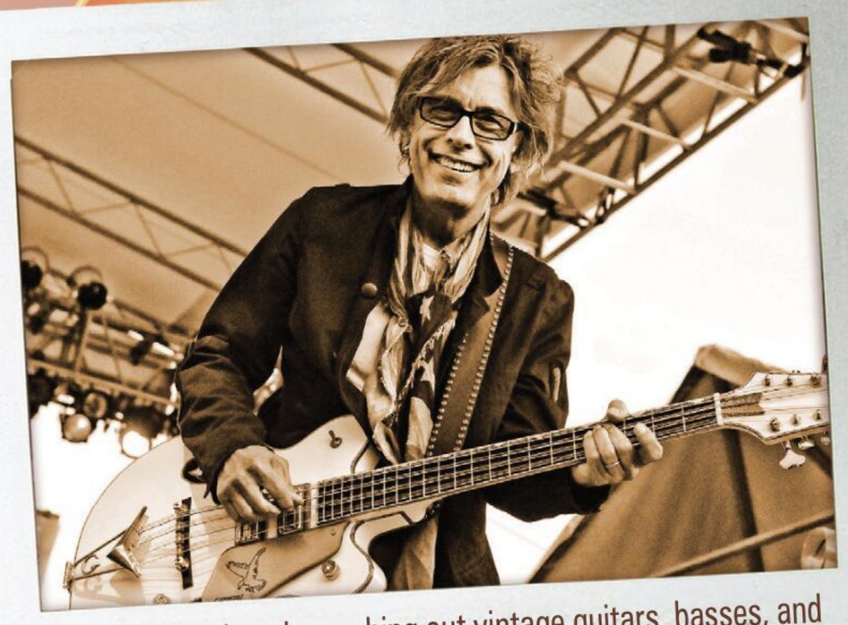

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SEPTEMBER

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

The Grand Rapids Music Instrument Swap Sunday, September 11th at the Double Tree Hotel, 4747 28th St SE Grand Rapids MI 49512, 10am -4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.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. 9 am to 3pm. For Booth Information contact Beverly at 947-931-0707 or email Bakesguitar@aol.com

The Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, Sunday, September 25. Printscape Arena, 114 Southpointe Blvd., Canonsburg, PA. Show hours 11-4. For more info contact Scott at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net or visit www.guitarshowusa.com.

OCTOBER

Guitarlington 2022, October 15-16 at the Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington TX. For more info contact Ruth Brinkmann (817) 312-7659 ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com , Larry Briggs (918) 288-2222 larryb@stringswest.com, Dave Crocker (417) 850-4751 davelcrocker@gmail.com, Fax 817-592-3381www.amigoguitarshows.com. **(See Advertisement on page 71.)**

Guitar & Music Gear Swap Meet Sunday, October 23, 2022 at the Army & Navy Club, 1090 Main St. Manchester, CT 06040, noon to 4pm. For more information, call Peter at 860-983-6774. **(See Advertisement on page 70.)**

NOVEMBER

Great American Guitar Show (Fall Philly), November 5-6, at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA. For more info contact Bee 3 Vintage at (828) 298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com.

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

JANUARY

2023 Winter Ohio Guitar Show, Sunday, January 8, 2023 at the Makoy Center 5462 Center St, Hilliard, OH 43026 Show hours 11:30-5:00. For more info, contact Marc at (740) 797-3351. guitardigest@frontier.com, www.ohioguitarshows.com.

Amigo Bay Area World Guitar Show, January 14-15, 2023, Marin Civic Exhibit Hall, 10 Avenue of the Flags, San Rafael, CA. For more info call Larry at (918) 288-2222,

amigoshows@stringswest.com, www.amigoguitarshows.com

Amigo SoCal World Guitar Show, January 28-29, 2023, OC Fair & Event Center, Arlington & Fairview St., Costa Mesa, CA. For more info call Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com, www.amigoguitarshows.com.

Chicago Regional Guitar Show, Sunday January 29 at the Kankakee County Fairgrounds 213 W 4000S Rd. Kankakee, IL 60901, 11am to 4pm. For more info, visit: https://www.guitartalkofficial.com/chicagoregionalguitarshow

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

MARCH

The 2023 Cincinnati Guitar Show - Our 29th year! Sunday, MARCH 5th , 10am -4pm, at the Sharonville Convention Center, 11355 Chester Rd Cincinnati OH 45246. Contact Denny Melchers at 513-503-1072. More info at CINCYGUITARSHOW.COM & FB.

West Coast Guitar Show – NorthWest, Saturday, March 11th, 2023 at the Renton Community Center - Renton, WA. For more info contact Bruce Adolph 253-445-1973 or bruceadolph@mac.com

Central Coast Guitar Show. Saturday, March 25, 2023, 10am-4pm at the Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 3455 Skyway Dr. Santa Maria CA 93465. For more info call 805-431-3067 or email centralcoastguitarshow@charter.net or visit www.CentralCoastGuitarShow.com

Amigo NashvilleGuitar Show, March 25-26, 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.

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REVIEWS

POP IN OVERDRIVE

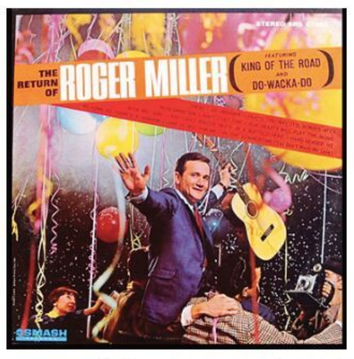
Known for her solo work and as Michael Jackson's final touring lead guitarist, Orianthi's 2022 performance at the Bourbon Room in Hollywood displays the Aussie ripping over a bevy of well-manicured pop-rock ditties and love ballads.

Sizzling distortion, wicked wah, and dusky PRS tones permeate as Orianthi shreds and vocalizes effortlessly, combining mellifluous two-handed tapping on the power-popper "According To You" with an assist from powerhouse drummer Glen Sobel. On the poignant "How Do You Sleep?," Orianthi's affinity for Vai and Santana shines to great effect.

Orianthi
Live In Hollywood

Former Jeff Beck guitarist Carmen Vandenberg guests on "You Don't Wanna Know," as they trade solos in friendly (and note-heavy!) competition. Other highlights include "Contagious," "Blow," and "Impulsive," as Orianthi dazzles with clear and expressive vocals and time-honored blues-rock guitar showmanship.

Her love of rockin' pop, overdriven guitars, hooky choruses, and lyrics about jerky men continue with "What's It Gonna Be." *Live In Hollywood* is a robust set that finds Orianthi intent on bringing kick-ass rock guitar back to pop radio. ***– Oscar Jordan***

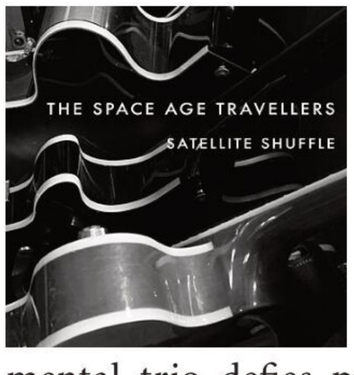


Roger Miller
Roger and Out/A Trip in the Country, et al

Like Willie Nelson and Mel Tillis, Roger Miller was one of the 1950s-'60s Nashville songwriters who left a lasting mark. He wrote hits for others before "Dang Me" and the 1965 signature song "King of the Road" launched his own lengthy hit streak. His witty originals and zany vocals are showcased on a dozen vintage LPs, digitally reissued by Universal Music.

Roger and Out (1964), *The Return of Roger Miller*, *The 3rd Time Around* ('65), and *Words and Music by Roger Miller* ('66) cover the peak years and hits like "Chug-A-Lug," "Engine, Engine #9," "Kansas City Star," and "Husbands and Wives." Producer Jerry Kennedy placed Miller's vocals atop a cushion of acoustic guitars played by A-Teamers Harold Bradley, Ray Edenton, and Kennedy himself.

A Trip in the Country (1970) revisited hits Miller penned for George Jones, Ray Price, Faron Young, Ernest Tubb, and others. Backed by a smoking studio band with fiddles, Buddy Emmons' pedal steel, and the guitars of Bradley, Edenton, and Chip Young, Miller tore into "Tall, Tall Trees" and "Invitation to the Blues," recalling Ray Price's 1958 version. Emmons excels throughout, particularly on "Invitation," "That's The Way I Feel," and "Half a Mind." ***– Rich Kienzle***



The Space Age Travelers
Satellite Shuffle

Though their name tosses them into the surf/space pond, this instrumental trio defies pigeonholing. It's an eclectic set – no wonder, considering guitarist/composer/producer B.J. Baartmans' influences; he lists a *few* as Cliff Gallup, Julian Lage, Hank Marvin, Bill Frisell, Charles Mingus, Blake Mills, and Nels Cline.

Formed in Holland in 2018, this is a step up from their previous work. Baartmans displays ample technique but always with taste, and it's his songwriting that lifts the proceedings; perhaps his other hat as singer/songwriter helps. Jazz sensibility is something almost devoid among the surf crowd, but B.J. handles it well, particularly on "Miles Inbetween," yet elsewhere, country slips in.

In addition to the usual Fender-types, a Gretsch Firebird, and Greco 175, he broadens the palette by adding mandolin, 12-string, banjo, and electric sitar. Slide crops up on "Monk's Mood" – an original inspired by but not to be confused with the Thelonious Monk tune. The swinging "Charlie's Pickup" begins with a fake low-fi recording before the trio kicks in for catchy fun.

In the broader category of instrumental guitar albums, this is one of the best to come along in a good while. ***– Dan Forte***

Orianthi: Elizabeth Viggiano.

Julian Lage: Shervin Lainez

ONE SAX, THREE GUITARS

By Dan Forte

It starts with a tenor saxophone floating above spare electric guitar arpeggios. After a dipsy-doodle cadenza, the sax states a slow, deliberate melody and the guitar asserts itself more, while upright bass makes its presence known. With support from bassist Thomas Morgan, jazz eclectic **Bill Frisell** is feeling out sax icon **Charles Lloyd**, as always listening, sensitively embellishing, but leaving room. Soon, the tune transforms from its new-age-y entrance to somewhat of a modern standard. Eventually, Lloyd drops out, leaving Frisell to solo backed only by Morgan.

This is "Blood Count," a Billy Strayhorn composition from *Trio: Chapel*. It's the first in a trilogy of *Trio* CDs, the others subtitled *Ocean* and *Sacred Thread*, their releases staggered from June to October. What makes this ambitious series fascinating are the changing lineups, featuring three of contemporary jazz guitar's finest, each possessing an identifiable voice – first Frisell, then **Anthony Wilson**, and finally, **Julian Lage**.

At 84, Lloyd is still a creative force. He grew up in the musical hotbed of Memphis in the '40s and '50s before moving to Los Angeles in '56, where he earned a degree in music from USC. Over the years, he's played with a gamut of greats stretching from Bobby "Blue" Bland to Ornette Coleman – including fruitful stints with Chico Hamilton and Cannonball Adderley. As a leader in the mid '60s, his group included guitarist Gábor Szabó.

His 1966 album *Forest Flower* sold a million copies, and in '67 he was the first jazz act to play San Francisco's Fillmore Auditorium, where he shared bills with the Grateful Dead, Butterfield Blues Band, and Janis Joplin. Subsequent session appearances included The Doors, Beach Boys, Roger McGuinn, and Harvey Mandel.

In 2016 and '18, Charles Lloyd and the Marvels, featuring Frisell and steel guitarist Greg Leisz, recorded two albums with repertoire bouncing from bebop to gospel, folk, Billy Preston's "You Are So Beautiful," and Bob Dylan's "Masters Of War."

Frisell and Morgan are left to interact in "The Song My Lady Sings," penned by Lloyd, who doesn't appear until almost four minutes in. Whether accompanying or soloing, Frisell doesn't just leave room for others, his playing *breathes*, much like a horn player or vocalist. There's more than enough speed-demon heroics among current jazzers; he's the anti-hero – which has made him a hero to his many fans.

For *Ocean*, Lloyd's sax and flute are backed by piano and guitar, in the person of Anthony Wilson. The guitarist is the son of arranger and big-band leader Gerald Wilson, so things come full circle, because in his teens Lloyd was a member of the elder Wilson's band. Anthony is best known for his work with Diana Krall and has recorded with Paul McCartney, Mose Allison, Bobby Hutcherson, and others. Drawn to the playing of Clapton, Hendrix, and Page as an adolescent, he later absorbed T-Bone Walker, Wes Montgomery, and Duke Ellington.

Ocean is taken from a live-streamed concert at the Lobero Theatre in Lloyd's hometown of Santa Barbara. Because there was no live audience, the hall essentially became a studio. Like Frisell, Wilson listens. The four extended Lloyd originals find him complementing the leader and pianist Gerald Clayton. In "Hagar and The Inuits," the three solo simultaneously, their angular improvised lines never competing or cluttering, before Wilson solos in near-avant fashion. "Jaramillo Blues" finds them on solid ground, confidently playing a blues that's anything but samey.

Sacred Thread features percussionist/vocalist Zakir Hussain and guitarist Julian Lage. A child prodigy, Lage was the subject of the mini-documentary *Jules At Eight*. Growing up near San Francisco, he took lessons from Randy Vincent, recorded with David Grisman (at 11) and studied at the Ali Akbar Khan College of Music and San Francisco Conservatory before, at 15, becoming a faculty member at Stanford's Jazz Workshop. Look for a remarkable video of him at age nine playing "Maggot Brain" with Santana. Lloyd, who encountered him at 12, says, "He was known to be a wunderkind; he had big ears and I heard his potential."

Now 34, Lage has released a dozen solo albums, served time with Gary Burton, and recorded with John Zorn, Nels Cline, and others. Reflecting the differing backgrounds and directions of Lloyd and Hussain as composers, Lage's playing is both concise and free. It's a testament to all of the players and Lloyd's vision that such creative music involving extremely varied personalities resulted in three wondrous CDs.

Lage is also featured on three tracks from *Pandemoonia* by the Dharma Moon Orchestra. Co-leader **David Nichtern** wrote "Samba For Julio" for Lage, who trades single-note lines with trumpet great Randy Brecker. Julian stretches out on the bouncy "Thinkin'," which earns a reprise with even more hot licks.

Nichtern is best known for penning "Midnight At The Oasis," but he's an excellent guitarist in his own right. His bandleader counterpart, keyboardist Matt Oestreicher, serves up some soulful B-3 on the title track, featuring cool *wah-stortion* from Nichtern.

These are four releases to suit jazz tastes you may not even know you have yet.

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Marcus King

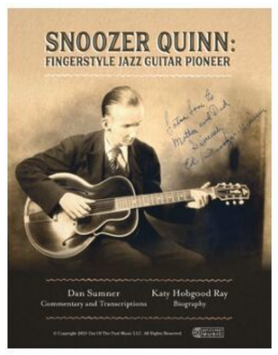
Marcus King
Young Blood

Young gun Marcus King enlists Dan Auerbach of The Black Keys as producer on this latest project. *Young Blood* combines blues, rock, and a pervasive swampy feel with southern-fried vocals and mondo guitar playing.

The single, "Rescue Me," is an impassioned psychedelic-blues track full of humidity and a literal cry for help. King is equally adept at single-note soloing as he is with slide, and the slide-a-riffic outro is hallucinatory.

The album displays power-trio swagger with King up front and killin'. "Pain" is Exhibit A, as he wails in the classic Cream bootleg tradition with long-term soloing.

Although King gets writing assistance from Auerbach, Angelo Petraglia, and Desmond Child, he owns this musical universe. Intense riffage and pentatonic anarchy can be found on "Good and Gone" with support from celebrated virtuosos Chris St. Hilaire (drums) and Nick Movshon (bass). Though *Young Blood* is a bonafide guitar record, King reminds listeners that the song is the crux of the biscuit. From the relentless cowbell on "Dark Cloud" to the "Hey Baby" Ted Nugent aroma of "It's Too Late," young Marcus hints at 1970s rock in the best way. **– *OJ***

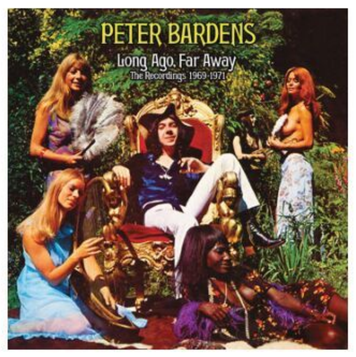


Dan Summer & Kathryn Hobgood Ray
Snoozer Quinn: Fingerstyle Jazz Guitar Pioneer

Legend has it that Ed "Snoozer" Quinn could shake your hand while playing guitar – and never miss a beat. A pioneering fingerstyle-jazz picker, he was famous in the late 1920s and '30s, playing primarily as a sideman during the glory days of the big bands, performing with the likes of Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Teagarden, Paul Whiteman, and the Dorsey brothers. Sadly, while he recorded behind singers like Bee Palmer and Jimmie Davis, there's only a few extant 1948 recordings (the year before his early death) that capture the beauty of Snoozer's solo playing (search "Snoozer Quinn – Topic" on Youtube).

Born in 1907 in McComb, Mississippi, Quinn is a missing link between country blues guitarists like Big Bill Broonzy and early jazz guitar soloists like Eddie Lang and Lonnie Johnson. Yet his style is rather unique – not surprising given his time and sphere, of course. Take a listen to tracks like "Snoozer's Telephone Blues" and you, too, will be dazzled by the sense of timeless swing.

This book shines the spotlight on Snoozer, at long last. Author Kathy Hobgood Ray is Quinn's great-great niece (see her thoughts on Snoozer's Gibson L-0 in this month's "Classics" feature) and this is a smart biography; Dan Summer provides transcriptions of those '48 tunes and musical commentary. Along with glorious photos, the result is an essential read for fans of pioneering guitarists. **– *Michael Dregni***



Peter Bardens
Long Ago, Far Away: The Recordings (1968-1971)

Following a sort of carousel-calliope intro, with one unmistakable bend, Peter Green enters "The Answer" and quickly transforms the proceedings. Keyboardist Peter Bardens released an album of the same name in 1970, featuring an uncredited Green, guitarist Andy Gee, and future Elvis Costello bassist Bruce Thomas.

Previously, he led Peter B's Looners (with Green and Mick Fleetwood), which morphed into Shotgun Express (featuring Rod Stewart). *The Answer*, along with Bardens' eclectic self-titled followup, two singles, and the extended "Long Ago, Far Away," are collected in a two-CD set that straddles blues, psychedelia, and prog. Other players include guitarist Vic Linton, singer/violinist Victor Brox (of the Aynsley Dunbar Retaliation), and drummer Reg Isadore (pre-Robin Trower).

The trippy "Don't Goof With A Spook" gets a hefty dose of Green's reverb, while "Let's Get It On" is a shuffle in the manner of Jimmy Reed, with Bardens' jangly piano complemented by wah guitar. Churning 13 minutes of "Homage To The God Of Light" swirls around a single chord.

This is definitely a timepiece, but Bardens, who later formed Camel and worked with Van Morrison before dying of lung cancer in 2002 at 56, is deserving of the recognition it offers. **– *DF***

Marcus King: Danny Cinch.

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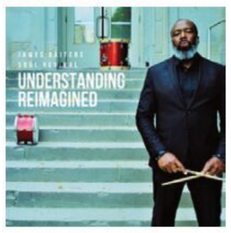
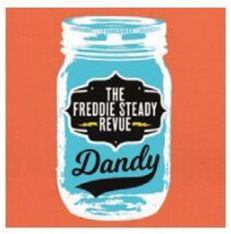


JAMES GAITERS SOUL REVIVAL
Understanding Reimagined

Paying tribute to organist Big John Patton's 1968 album, Understanding, drummer James Gaiters brought together guitarist Kevin Turner, saxophonist Eddie Bayard, and organist Robert Mason. Their re-creations of Patton's six-selection program are reverential without becoming stiff. Turner shines on the Sam & Dave hit "Soul Man" and Kenny Burrell's "Chitlins Con Carne" for Blue Note-style jazz with plenty of soul. **– *DF***



THE FREDDIE STEADY REVUE
Dandy

Drummer/guitarist/songwriter Freddie Krc is an Austin institution thanks to his work with fellow Texans Roky Erickson, Jerry Jeff Walker, and The Explosives. Along with longtime bandmates Cam King (guitar) and Layton DePenning (bass) are cameos by guitar heavyweights Bill Kirchen, John Inmon, and David Hargraves. Think top-flight country with pop sensibility, psychedelic touches, and plenty of Tex-Mex. **– *DF***

TOM PRINCIPATO
It's Tele Time!

Six-string ace Principato unleashes some Leo love by paying homage to titans of the Telecaster – specifically, Roy Buchanan and Danny Gatton. It's raw, filthy, live, and made for lovers of chicken pickin', pedal-steel licks, and funky double-stops. Highlights include the rip-roaring "One For Danny," the superhuman "8 Counts For Rita," and Buchanan's mesmerizing "The Messiah Will Come Again." **– *OJ***

COLLECTIVE SOUL
Vibrating

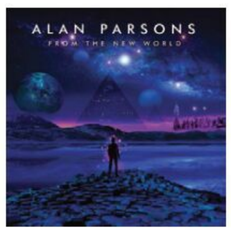
The potent three-guitar lineup – vocalist/guitarist Ed Roland, rhythm guitarist Dean Roland, and lead guitarist Jesse Triplett – coalesces in this consistent set. "Cut the Cord" explodes immediately while "Reason" features a spitting riff, choppy rhythm guitar, and a pinched guitar solo tone – all distinctive. "All Our Pieces" channels the vibe of the band's original hits. The '90s are back. **– *BA***

SOFT MACHINE
Bundles

Now expanded, this 1975 jazz-rock album was an *earthquake*, introducing many to the genius of Allan Holdsworth. Even decades later, his spidery solos in "Hazard Profile, Part One" remain stupefying. Allan was also brilliant on acoustic, heard in the beguiling "Gone Sailing." After Holdsworth departed, speedster John Etheridge joined the Softs, blazing through a complete '75 concert included here. **– *PP***

SUNNY SWEENEY
Married Alone

Texas-born Sweeney's sharp, incisive songs fit a vocal style recalling Miranda Lambert. Producer/singer Paul Cauthen frames her with a twangy Outlaw sound featuring guitarist Harley Husbands and various pedal steel players (Mike Johnson, Jeff Queen and Jake Clayton). It's a flawless fit, especially on "Married Alone" (with Vince Gill), "Tie Me Up," and the downright explosive "Someday You'll Call My Name." **– *RK***



ALAN PARSONS
From the New World

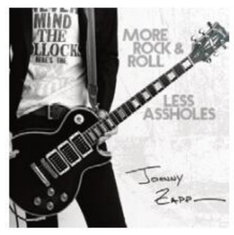
Legendary producer/engineer Parsons (Pink Floyd, Al Stewart) has a new batch of his progressive, radio-ready ear candy – along with a small army of guitarists including longtime band members Jeff Kollman and Dan Tracey, augmented by Joe Bonamassa. The atmospheric "Fare Thee Well" is trademark Parsons, with a piercing guitar solo. Joe B.'s emotive break lifts "I Won't Be Led Astray," while "Halos" is a smoky winner. **– *BA***

THE BETHS
Expert in a Dying Field

The New Zealand quartet is back with more infectious, witty power-pop. Vocalist/guitarist Liz Stokes is a rising star, surrounded by lead man Jonathan Pearce's expert production. His solo in "Knees Deep" never wastes a note, while "Silence is Golden" has a manic rhythm and berserk solo. Celebrating the pop attack of Cheap Trick, Weezer, and the Cranberries, the Beths have finally arrived. **– *PP***

JENNIFER LYN & THE GROOVE REVIVAL
Nothing Holding Me Down

Jennifer Lyn's latest record showcases her rock and roll-drenched blues with rugged production and visceral guitar playing. It's a twin-guitar attack as Lyn and Richard Torrance go deep, like on the bluesy ballad "Lay Your Memory Down." While the guitar playing is adept, Lyn's passionate, big-girl vocals melt hearts and convert the uninitiated. **– *OJ***



JOHNNY ZAPP
*More Rock & Roll, Less A**holes*

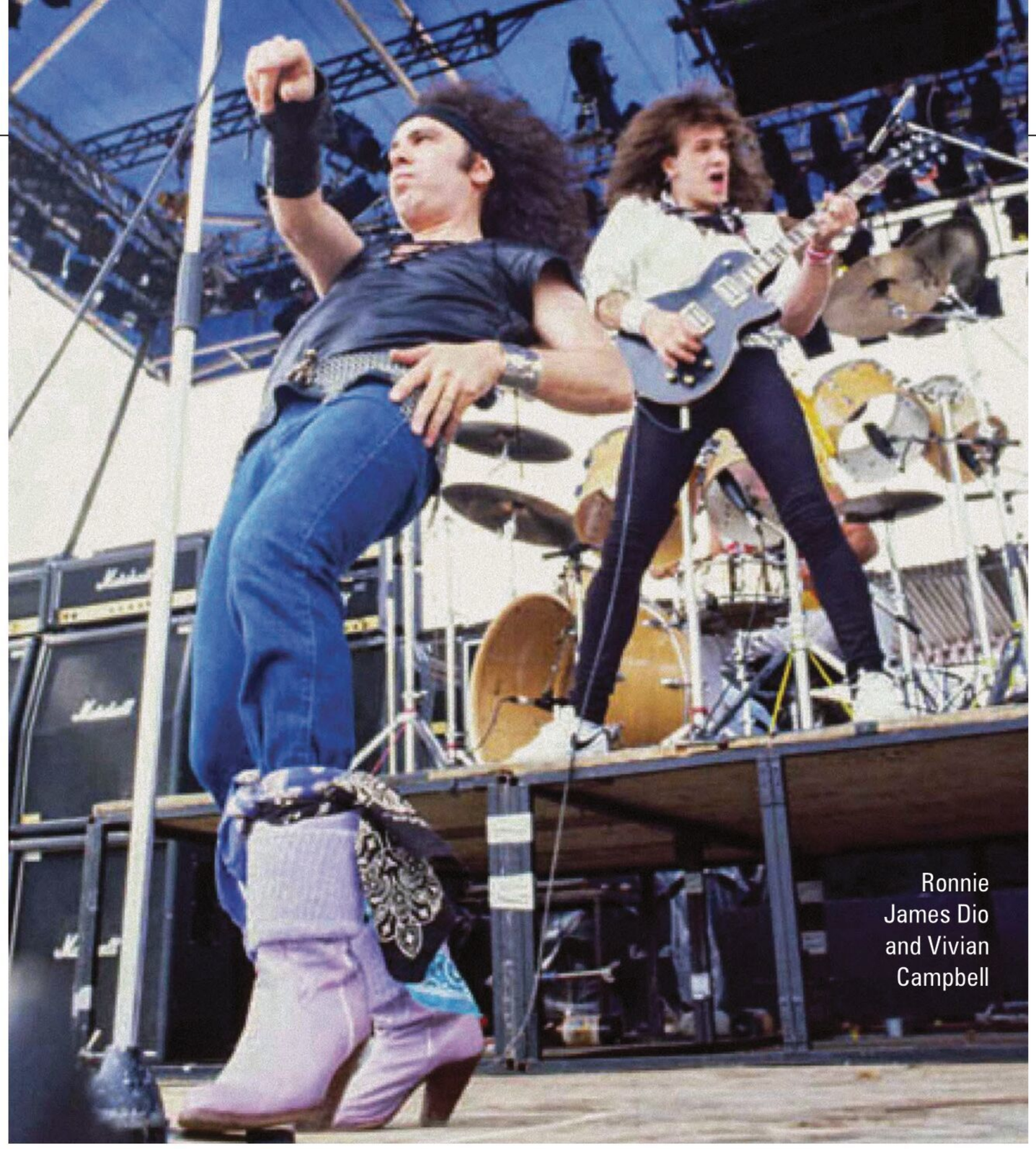
VG staffer Zapp is virtually a one-man band on this batch of no-frills garage rock with plenty of punk swagger. "Don't Be Runnin' from Me" is a Stones-like jam. "Killing Time" and "Pretty in Pictures" bash along freely, while "Kicker" is thick hard-rock. Lou Reed's "Coney Island Baby" is a hidden bonus track. Gearheads, be sure to check the liner notes. **– *BA***

HANK WILLIAMS, JR.
Rich White Honky Blues

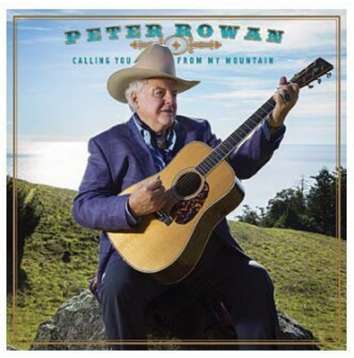
Another dilettante blues effort by a star? Guess again. Williams displays familiarity and command with the genre, covering R.L. Burnside and Lightnin' Hopkins while also penning three tunes. Black Keys' Dan Auerbach's production injects North Mississippi vibe via Junior Kimbrough's son, Kinney, on drums, and guitarist Kenny Brown (who apprenticed with Burnside). Atypical instrumentation finds dual slide guitars by Brown and Auerbach. **– *DF***

THE MANAKOORAS
Jungle of Steel

The sub-genre of "tiki surf" borrows campy themes from Hawaiian and Polynesian pop-culture of the '50s and '60s. With reverby guitars and pedal steel, "Chant of the Moon" drops a twangy riff under Kane Manakoora's steel and a haunting, word-less female vocal. Fender Bass VI licks dominate "Zombie Hula," while "Machete's Kiss" evokes a steamy jungle safari. Cowabunga! **– *PP***



Ronnie James Dio and Vivian Campbell



Peter Rowan

Calling You From My Mountain

Rowan made his bones in the early '60s, singing and playing guitar with Bill Monroe & the Blue Grass Boys. Later a member of the rock bands Earth Opera and Seatrain, he settled into a blend of traditional bluegrass, folk favorites, and original tunes.

Conceived to honor the "Luke the Drifter" recitations of longtime hero Hank Williams, *Calling You* evolved into something more eclectic. He, with banjoist Max Wareham, fiddler Julian Pinelli, mandolin picker Chris Henry, and bassist Eric Thorin, retain a bluegrass sound. Rowan adds a flatpicking break to "Veil of Deja Blue," while the entire band kicks along "New York Town." Rowan, Wareham, and Henry excel on the instrumentals "Come Along Jody" and Monroe's "Frog on the Lily Pad." Molly Tuttle's clawhammer banjo enhances "The Red, The White and The Blue."

Rowan's picking turns bluesy on "The Song that Made Hank Williams Dance," and continues by adding Lightnin' Hopkins licks to his bluegrass recasting of Hopkins's "Penitentiary Blues." Billy Strings and his '44 D-28 contribute graceful arpeggios to "A Winning Hand" and dazzling leads to "Freedom Trilogy."

Rowan had a different concept at the start, yet the final results here are consistent with his longtime artistic vision. **– *RK***

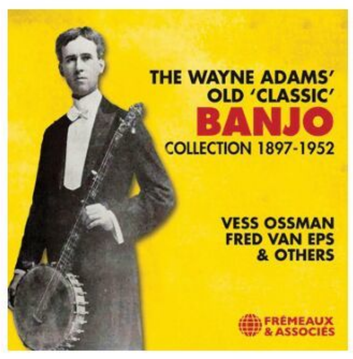
Dio

Holy Diver Super Deluxe Edition

After Rainbow and Black Sabbath, vocalist Ronnie James Dio assembled his own band with previous accomplices Jimmy Bain (bass) and Vinny Appice (drums), then recruited unknown Irish wunderkind Vivian Campbell. In 1983, they released *Holy Diver*, one of the finest examples of '80s metal. This four-CD box set includes the original album, a new remix, previously unreleased live material from the tour, and unreleased outtakes and B-sides.

Holy Diver is a roaring statement of purpose. The title track thunders with Campbell's monstrous power-chord riff. The catchy centerpiece, "Rainbow in the Dark," includes his blazing solo, which cuts like razor blades attached to a circular saw. Remixing is a slippery slope; fortunately, it isn't overdone here. In the liner notes, engineer Joe Barresi says he was cautious and added only slight boost to the drums and solos. The live material includes a pummeling 20-minute version of Sabbath's "Heaven and Hell" with a nearly four-minute Campbell shredfest.

Notable outtakes include "Rainbow in the Dark" with an alternate solo (inferior to album version, but interesting), the B-side "Evil Eyes," and a remixed version. This box is essential for Dio and heavy metal fans. **– *Bret Adams***



Various artists

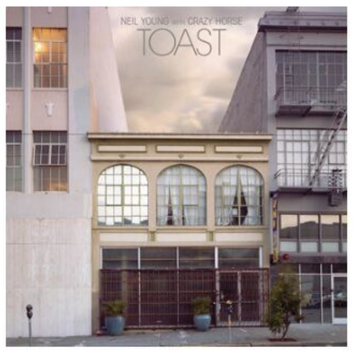
Wayne Adams' Old "Classic" Banjo Collection 1897-1952

"When you want genuine music – music that will come right home to you like a bad quarter, suffuse your system like strychnine whisky, go right through you like Brandreth's pills, ramify your whole constitution like the measles, and break out on your hide like the pin-feather pimples on a picked goose – when you want all this, just smash your piano, and invoke the glory-beaming banjo!" So wrote Mark Twain in 1865, and this three-CD set goes a long way to collecting the best of the earliest banjo recordings extant.

The first disc features 25 songs by Vess Ossman ranging from "Yankee Doodle" to Rossini's "William Tell Overture" – which shows the versatility not only of his playing but of the banjo itself. On "The Mosquito Parade," Ossman unreels a complex ragtime tune that buzzes with dazzling picking. The second disc is all Fred Van Eps – 27 songs that not only influenced jazz and country music, but also the earliest guitarists. And that's only fitting, as he became the father of renowned jazz guitar George Van Eps, born in 1913 – halfway through the run of recordings here.

The final disc collects another 25 songs from players such as Fred Bacon, Sidney Turner, Olly Oakley, and more. Say what you will about banjos, these rare sides showcase a key era in string music. **– *MD***

Dio and Campbell: PG Brunelli.



Neil Young with Crazy Horse

Toast

Neil Young and Crazy Horse are known for uncorking an electric-guitar roar that would shame most heavy metal bands. The mesmerizing *Toast*, while not explosive, relies on distorted electric guitars, with simple hooks and layered textures.

Young's unique voice and iconoclastic playing alongside guitar foil Frank "Poncho" Sampedro, bassist Billy Talbot, and drummer Ralph Molina form one of rock's singular sounds. Recorded in 2001 at Toast Studios, in San Francisco, it includes three previously unreleased songs. It's among the treasure trove in Young's vast archives that he's been steadily releasing. The album has been discussed by Young collectors for years, while Young himself has proffered bits of information, explaining the music is about the realization of a relationship's demise.

Melancholy solos and lightly droning fills flesh out "Quit." The catchy "Standing in the Light of Love" is melodic pop filtered through the band's power and glorious guitar distortion. Known for their epic jams, the 10-minute "Gateway of Love" and 13-minute "Boom Boom Boom" don't disappoint. The former features a section with a surf-rock tone and riffing; the latter is a hypnotic wing-stretcher with tasteful soloing and muffled, jazz-trumpet accents. In all, *Toast* is Neil Young disciples' bread and butter. **– *BA***

Pasquale Grasso

Pasquale Grasso

Be-Bop!

A genuine six-string phenomenon, Pasquale Grasso (*VG*, November '21) is redefining jazz guitar with a radical approach, making one instrument sound like two. Your ears may hear a duo at the opening of "A Night in Tunisia," but it's the Italian flash playing, in real time, with a unique hybrid-picking technique. With heart-stopping speed, he further re-creates Charlie Parker's iconic alto-sax intro before wild torrents of 8th- and 16th-note soloing mastery. For emphasis, Pasquale employs a warm, muted tone resembling a small amp on a vintage 78-r.p.m. record.

In "Be-Bop," Grasso opens the throttle and burns across the fretboard of his archtop, in the grand tradition of Tal Farlow and Johnny Smith. Singer Samara Joy joins for "I'm In a Mess," a piece of small-combo swing highlighting the guitarist's chord comping. "Ornithology" is an improvisational tour-de-force of chops, history, and mid-century American music – his one-man-harmony technique on full display in the finale. Bassist Ari Roland and drummer Keith Balla round out the crack ensemble.

With a focus on Dizzy Gillespie and Bird compositions, Grasso's *Be-Bop!* affirms there's a new bop sheriff in town. Easily a contender for jazz-guitar album of the year. **– *Pete Prown***

Al Di Meola, John McLaughlin, Paco de Lucía

Saturday Night in San Francisco

Recorded in December, 1980, *Friday Night in San Francisco* was a genre-busting album of acoustic guitar, and a surprise best-seller. The following night's gig at the Warfield Theater is here, resurrected from 16-track tapes, and it's a joyous explosion from three masters of flamenco-fusion.

The soundscape is important; Di Meola is in the right speaker on an Ovation steel-string, McLaughlin in the middle on Ovation nylon, and the late de Lucía at left with his Conde Hermanos classical. "Splendido Sundance" kicks things off with a triple guitar fest of sparking rhythms, led by Al's Latin melodies and tight ensemble work. The hot-potato soloing in the finale is as mind-blowing as it was 40 years ago.

For flamenco passion, cue up "El Pañuelo" to hear Paco in his natural element – it's testament to his genius that he could play utterly complex arrangements with John and Al, yet couldn't read music. Adapted from the Mahavishnu Orchestra anthem, "Meeting of the Spirits" is a McLaughlin tour-de-force of minor arpeggios, while Di Meola displays his blistering alternate picking. In all, *Saturday Night* is a solid sequel to the original hit, filled with jaw-dropping performances. **– *PP* VG**

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VINTAGE APPROVED GEAR

HANG TEN

The Guild Surfliner

The Surfliner is Guild's first new solidbody to come along in decades. A thoroughly modern design with classic features, there's no mistaking the influence in this offset guitar.

Named after a California railroad line that stretches from San Luis Obispo to San Diego, the Surfliner has a comfortable bolt-on, medium C-shaped satin-finish neck with a 25.5" scale and six-in-line headstock, which means it'll feel familiar to Fender players. Indeed, the guitar feels broken-in right out of the box, and Tone is provided by a Guild LB-1 Little Bucker in the bridge and two new DeArmond Aerosonic single-coils in the middle and neck. Three on/off rocker switches above the neck pickup access seven pickup combinations – their location may mean more-aggressive players bump a switch or two in heated moments. There are also master controls for Volume and Tone.

Price: $620
www.guildguitars.com

The Surfliner does clean twang very nicely, with plenty of sparkle and chime, and even a bit of Strat-like quack. Even the humbucker has more top-end response than you'd expect. The seven tonal combinations give the player lots of choices – but, does it take to distortion and overdrive?

The answer is a firm "Yes." The Surfliner responded well to a Klon-style OD and a fuzz pedal cranked through a vintage tube amp, which means its highly versatile/useful for many musical styles. Our one nit to pick falls at the tailpiece; while a vibrato may seem a natural in this format, you won't find it here. Still, the guitar balances nicely and stays in tune even when subjected to serious thrashing and string bending. And let's not forget the cool factor; the Surfliner is a looker in every way. ***– Bob Cianci***

Price: $299
www.dsmhumboldt.com

SMOOTH AND SWEET

The DSM Humboldt ClearComp 1078 Dynamic Threshold Compressor

When it comes to compressor pedals, the modern standard is to pursue studio-quality results in a pedalboard-friendly box. DSM Humboldt Electronics' ClearComp 1078 Dynamic Threshold Compressor is a fresh design that largely achieves that goal in a unit that can be easily adjusted on the fly.

The ClearComp dynamically modifies the threshold with fixed gain reduction, creating a clearer, natural-sounding compression with less noise, coloration, and greater dynamic range.

The simple layout uses controls for Level, Compression, Blend, Threshold, Ratio, Release, and Attack. Compression affects input gain, Blend mixes compressed signal with unaffected signal, Ratio adjusts gain reduction ratio, and Release adjusts the length of time gain reduction is applied. Attack controls the attack time, while the Threshold toggle has three options tailored for the level of output from pickups.

Using a tweed combo and a Tele, the ClearComp was smooth, sweet, and quiet. Its settings can be changed quickly, and yield a smooth, organic compression that blends with any signal. Spanky choked notes reign supreme, and it sweetens clean tones or accentuates rugged, dirty signals. And no matter which, it maintains fantastic clarity when using overdrive and offers lush, touch-sensitive picking dynamics. ***– Oscar Jordan***

WAY COOL VERSION

The Newman Guitars' Honeycomb Chambered Jr.

Following Ted Newman Jones' passing in 2016, protégé Jeff Smith took over Newman Guitars and is furthering the vision, using the same offset body as Jones' original guitars but employing modern methods. Their latest is the Honeycomb Chambered Jr.

Sporting a 1 7/8"-thick laminated mahogany body with chambers, the Jr. is light and solidly built; the design was created with input from Billy Gibbons, who, while devising guitars for the latest ZZ Top tour, suggested the slightly thicker body with deeper honeycombs for better resonance and weight relief.

At 6.5 pounds, the Jr. is well-balanced, with a bolt-on cedar neck reinforced with carbon-fiber truss and carved to a soft-but-full V reminiscent of those faound on many classic vintage guitars. Fretboard radius is 12", scale is 24.75", and hardware is top-quality including a Cream T Whiskerbucker (modeled on the PAF in Gibbons' Pearly Gates), GraphTech Ratio locking tuners, Tone Pros locking bridge posts, and a Music City wraparound bridge. Adding to the coolness factor is a rosewood headstock overlay with Newman's ambigram logo and another that glows in the dark at the body end of the fretboard.

Price: $3,199
www.newmanguitars.com

An acoustically loud instrument, the Jr. was incredibly resonant and responsive when cranked through a vintage 50-watt Marshall and '66 Vibrolux Reverb. Tweaking the Volume and Tone knobs coaxed a range of tones from clean and bluesy for chord comping to balls-to-the-wall humbucker tones, perfect for hard rock and even heavy metal. Playing through the Marshall with the guitar's Tone turned all the way down produced a smooth tone reminiscent of a vintage Gibson solidbody. While the action was low enough to shred, it also offered enough height and consistency to facilitate slide playing. In fact, tuning to open E was a blast, as the Jr. makes a fantastic slide machine, with fast action up and down the neck and its offset cutaway offering easy access to all 24 frets. Fretwork and intonation on our tester were perfect.

The Jr. will appeal to most rock and blues players, and while some shy away from single-pickup guitars, the Jr. is incredibly versatile, capable of handling many types of music. And, vintage enthusiasts will appreciate the finish options, which mirror those on original Les Paul Juniors – Sunburst, TV Yellow, and Red. ***– Tom Guerra***

GEARIN' UP

MESA/BOOGIE CALIFORNIA TWEED 2:20

Mesa/Boogie's California Tweed 2:20 uses two 6V6 tubes along with five 12AX7s in the preamp. Its Multi-Watt and Dyna-Watt functions provide three power levels and two operating classes (20- or 10-watt A/B pentode/fixed-bias, or one-watt/single-ended Class A cathode-bias) via three-way rotary switch. Combos use Jensen Blackbird 40 Alnico speakers.

GRETSCH ELECTROMATIC DOUBLE JET BT V-STOPTAIL

Gretsch's G5222 Electromatic Double Jet BT V-Stoptail has a chambered mahogany body, maple top, mahogany neck, 12"-radius laurel fretboard with pearloid inlays, Broad'Tron pickups, Master Volume with treble-bleed circuit, master Tone, individual pickup Volume controls, three-position toggle switch, anchored Adjusto-Matic bridge, and chrome hardware.

WALRUS MIRA OPTICAL COMPRESSOR

Walrus Audio's Mira Optical Compressor has a push-button High Pass Filter, Make-Up knob to maintain unity after signal is compressed, and Blend to mix compressed sound with clean tone. Other controls include Attack, Release, and Ratio. Wired true-bypass, the unit requires 9-volt DC power and runs internally at ±15 volts.

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RETURN TO THE SPACE(Y) AGE

Maestro's Comet Chorus and Discoverer Delay

Maestro's Comet Chorus and Discoverer Delay, from the company's Original Collection effects series, may have a retro-chic aesthetic, but they bring a pronounced (and welcome) modern twist.

Both are analog and use bucket-brigade device (BBD) tech, a chip invented in 1968-'69 by the Philips Research Labs. It's basically a brilliant mini circuit within a circuit, which is how Maestro fits a full, lush-sounding delay or chorus circuit into a stompbox.

The Discoverer provides delay range from 20 to 600 milliseconds, which is all most players will want, going from a classic '50s slapback to plenty far out sounds. You can adjust the number of delay repeats via the Sustain control, or level of delay by tweaking the Mix knob. The toggle adjusts modulation from a tape-like wow and flutter with saturation to a NASA-level pitch shift. Internal trim pots tweak modulation Rate and Width.

Price: $149 (Comet Chorus); $159 (Discoverer Delay)
www.maestroelectronics.com

The Comet is equally adaptable; in Earth mode, the toggle offers a shimmering chorus effect, while switching to Orbit adds amplitude modulation for a Leslie/Uni-Vibe rotary-speaker effect. Again, an internal trim pot adjusts levels of modulation. Both use a 9-volt battery or wall wart and employ a true-bypass on/off footswitch.

Like their sounds, styling is another tip of the hat to the space age – vintage control knobs, mod graphics, and lights in the funky trumpets graphic add up to unique-looking boxes.

So, how do they sound?

Both are natural and warm-sounding, offering everything you expect from a delay or chorus that's not some fantastical boutique *objets d'art* at a distant-galaxy price. They're solidly built, straightforward in function, and ready to get down to the business of making music. ***– Michael Dregni***

Price: $69
www.tcelectronic.com

BOOSTER SHOT

The TC Electronic Spark

Everyone's guitar tone sometimes needs a little assistance, especially playing with a band. To the rescue comes the TC Electronic Spark, ready to give you a range – actually, a *huge* range – of tonal choices from clean to dirty, plus a whopping volume boost.

What makes the Spark a competitive choice? First, it sounds killer. Just click the footswitch and your weak, flabby signal finds vibrance and girth – the de facto "spark." For muscle, the Level knob offers a whopping 26dB of clean boost, plenty for cutting through the band and taking a hot solo. Also, the Spark's controls couldn't be simpler. You'll find an active EQ of Treble and Bass knobs to adjust frequencies to boost or cut with pinpoint accuracy. A mini switch chooses tone profiles of Mid/Clean/Fat – another useful sonic dimension. Also look for true-bypass circuitry, metal housing, and a choice of 9-volt battery or DC power.

The cherry on top is Gain, which delivers textures from fully clean to seriously beefy overdrive. The combination of the massive volume boost, overdrive, and tonal shaping also comes in under $70, making the Spark hard to resist. It might not be the only booster/overdrive pedal on your board, but you may wonder how you ever lived without it. The buzzwords "tone sculpting" are overused, but fit the Spark perfectly. ***– Pete Prown***

BOLD AND BRIGHT

Taylor's 724ce

In the Hawaiian tongue, koa means "bold" and it's an apt name for the wood known in guitardom for its bright tone and golden grain. In kindred spirit, the new Taylor 724ce has the rich look that comes with a koa top, back, and sides.

Visually, the acoustic/electric 724ce is a dazzler. Our tester had deep grain patterns, alternating gold with brown veins on bookmatched top and back, and sides. Add to the picture a stained-maple pickguard, matte-black headstock face with the Taylor logo and fountain inlay, rosewood-and-maple body binding, and an abalone rosette, and you have a knockout. An ebony bridge, black Tusq/micarta nut (1.75"), 25.5" scale, and Grand Auditorium body with Venetian cutaway complete the package.

The V-bracing exudes a warmer, more-traditional sound compared to the trebly "Taylor sound" of the '90s and 2000s. The 724ce delivers a balanced presentation with bright treble and midrange, and reasonable bass output – not boomy like a dreadnought, but sitting nicely in the EQ spectrum. Strumming or fingerpicking, low-end is nuanced with the upper strings for a sophisticated tone, *especially* for a cutaway (which typically offer upper-fret convenience at the expense of bass muscle).

Price: $3,499
www.taylorguitars.com

Plugged in, its ES-2 electronics system becomes one of the stars of the show. With pickup sensors behind the bridge (instead of underneath), the unit delivers a surprisingly natural tone through an acoustic amp or PA. There's little, if any, of the dreaded piezo quack. After decades of plastic-y sound from piezo pickups, the ES-2 is a revelation and, hopefully, a harbinger of more-organic acoustic/electric flavors. For playability, the 724ce has a comfortable, D-shaped mahogany neck with 20 frets on a West African ebony fretboard. In fine Taylor tradition, the guitar had a fast setup with low action, ready for quick licks up the neck.

The 724ce is a pricey, premium acoustic, but you get a sweet-sounding (and looking) instrument with a hardshell case. Perched on a stand, the guitar looks gorgeous and, on your lap, the tone and playability are top-notch. Beast of all, plug it in at a gig and dig that old-school miked sound with the convenience of acoustic/electric. In all, the 724ce has a "deep bench" of features that combine tone, looks, and stellar craftsmanship. ***– Pete Prown***

GEARIN' UP

CARVIN BX1

Carvin's BX1 Bass Preamp has controls for Preamp Gain, Volume, Blend (for EQ/dry mix), a mid-sweep semi-parametric EQ, Compressor, effects loop, -12db attentuation, and switchable mute. Wired for true-bypass operation, it has balanced XLR and 1/4" jacks.

FENDER ZUMA EXOTIC CONCERT UKE

Fender's Zuma Exotic Concert Uke is made with bocote or spalted maple top, back and sides, nato neck, walnut fretboard, abalone rosette, and has an open-pore satin finish. Details include a 16-fret neck, pull-through bridge, and binding on its top, back and fretboard.

GATOR LOCKING STAND

Gator Frameworks' locking guitar stand has an integrated self-locking neck cradle activated by the weight of an instrument. Other features include rubberized guards, a padded body cradle, and a locking cam that allows height adjustment.

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SWAP MEET

The Reddick Voyager Custom

The concept of pickup-swapping guitars has been around for decades, almost always with cumbersome results. With the Voyager, Reddick Guitars has devised a fresh approach.

The essential idea has been to provide guitarists with pickups that can instantly be swapped out. Reddick offers several modules and our test Voyager came with two – one with Fralin Blues single-coils, the other Seymour Duncan JB and Jazz humbuckers. Jumping between them was effortless and intuitive. Unlike earlier attempts, you don't have to unscrew anything; just grab the module's grip hole in the back and gently pull. Take another module and slide it in. *Done.*

The Reddick's other key feature is its ability to swap control modules, quickly accomplished with two thumbscrews (no screwdriver required).

Swaps aside, the guitar is a double-cutaway with an asymmetrical, C-shaped maple neck (25" scale, available as 25.5") and a katalox fretboard with 22 frets. Our tester Custom's body was figured maple on sapele mahogany, while the Standard's body is ash.

At a band rehearsal, the Voyager proved a lively axe with a likable neck. Of the two modules, the Fralin single-coils really popped, offering seriously impressive Leo tones – you could see how this Reddick could become a highly valued recording instrument.

Price: $1,799 (with control module and one-pickup module)
www.reddickguitars.com

The base Voyager is reasonably affordable and additional modules cost between $260 and $375, while control sections go for $200. At nearly nine pounds, the guitar is on the heavier side, and swapping modules should be done with enough finesse to be mindful of the connectors.

In all, the Voyager deftly accomplishes pickup-swapping with a clean, efficient design. It's an elegant system and, more importantly – it totally works. ***– Pete Prown***

Price: $268
www.xotic.us

SMALL WONDER

The Xotic XW-1 LPB Limited Edition

Wah pedals come in a variety of sizes and textures, so finding one that checks all the boxes can be difficult. Based on the iconic Clyde McCoy wahs of the late 1960s, the Xotic XW-1 Lake Placid Blue Limited Edition is where the technology of the past meets the present.

With external controls for Bias, Wah-Q, Treble, and Bass, users get a range of sounds that can be swapped on the fly. Wah-Q affects the width of the filtered sounds, while Treble and Bass can add or cut 15dBs, customizable for any rig. Inside the pedal are more tone-shaping options that can alter gain to +6dB using internal DIP switches. The treadle has a self-lubricating nylon bushing pivot for smooth, quiet operation, and rocker tension is adjustable. The red LED indicator and 9-volt negative-center adapter are a nice touch. Twenty percent smaller than standard wahs, the XW-1 takes up less space and is wired true-bypass.

Paired with a Strat and Les Paul running through a Marshall DSL40 and Fender Deluxe Reverb, the pedal offered clean, transparent, and boost-free wah colors for funk, easily morphing into grittier territory with thicker bass response and a range of gainy, boosted tones for hard rock. Best of all, though, is how the XW-1 displays a love connection with a variety of overdrives, distortion, and fuzz pedals. ***– Oscar Jordan*** VG

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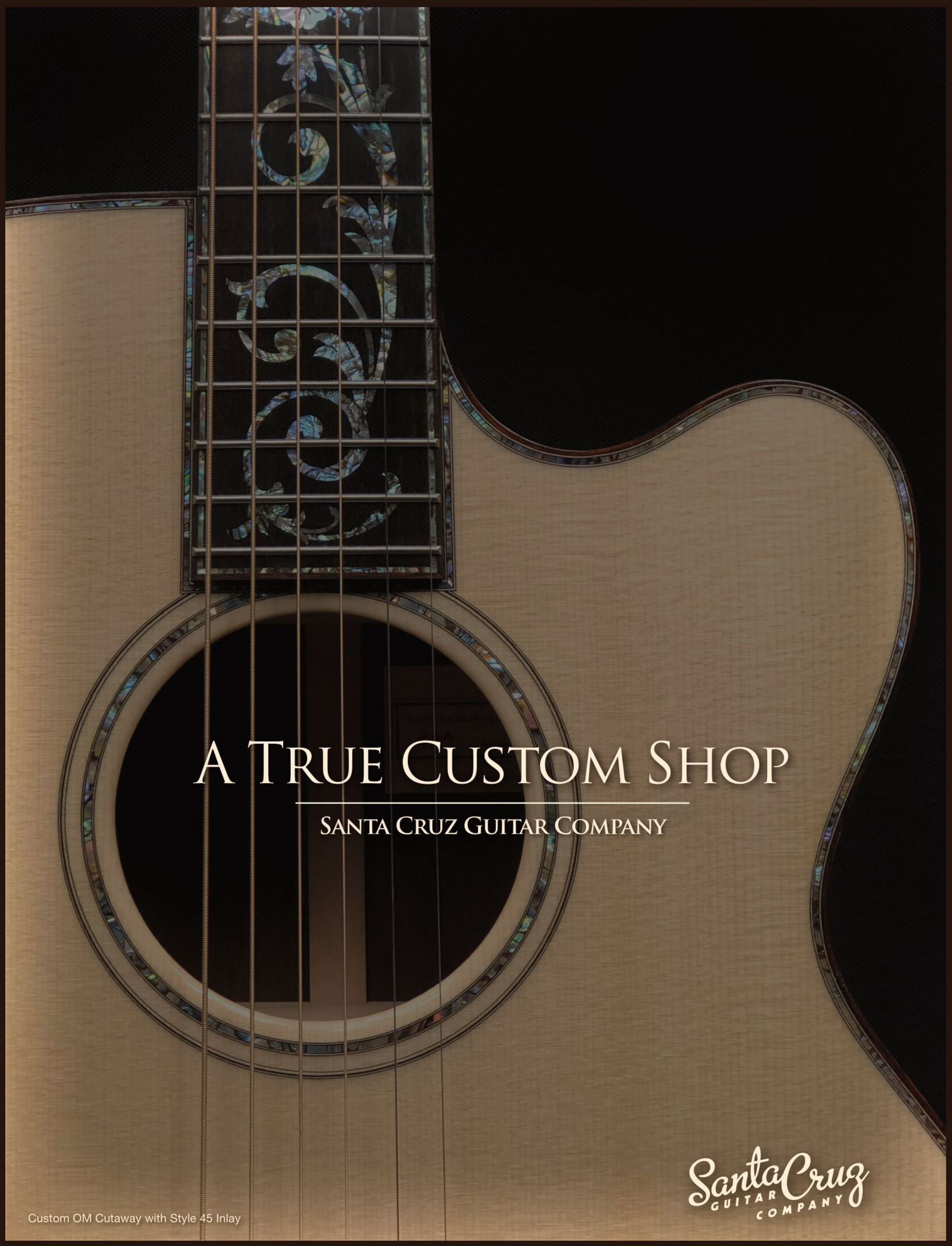
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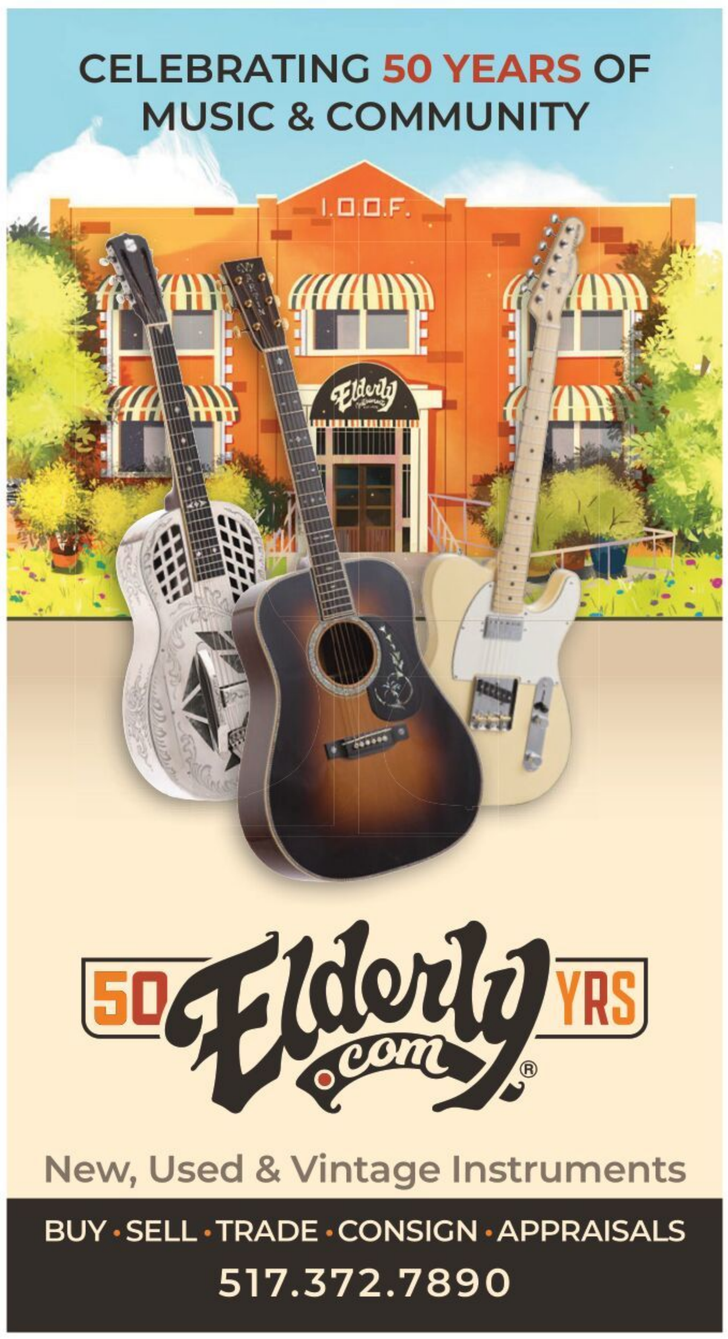
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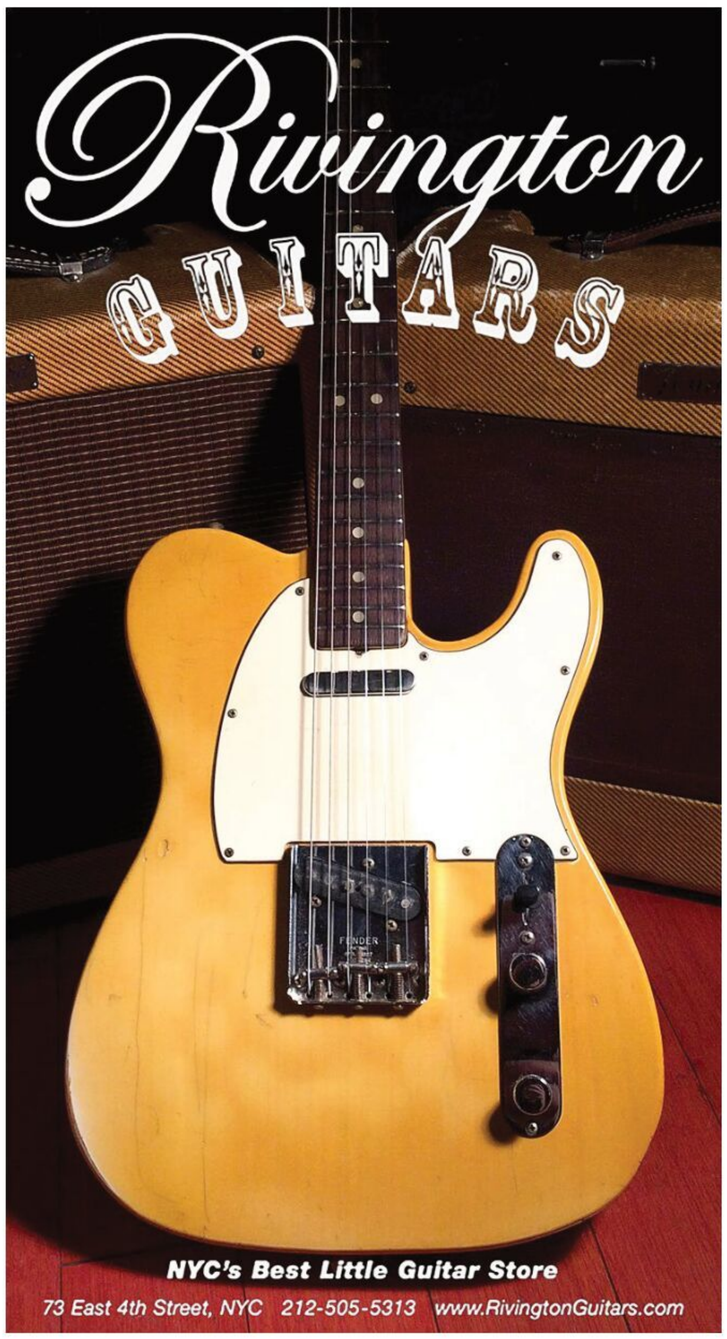
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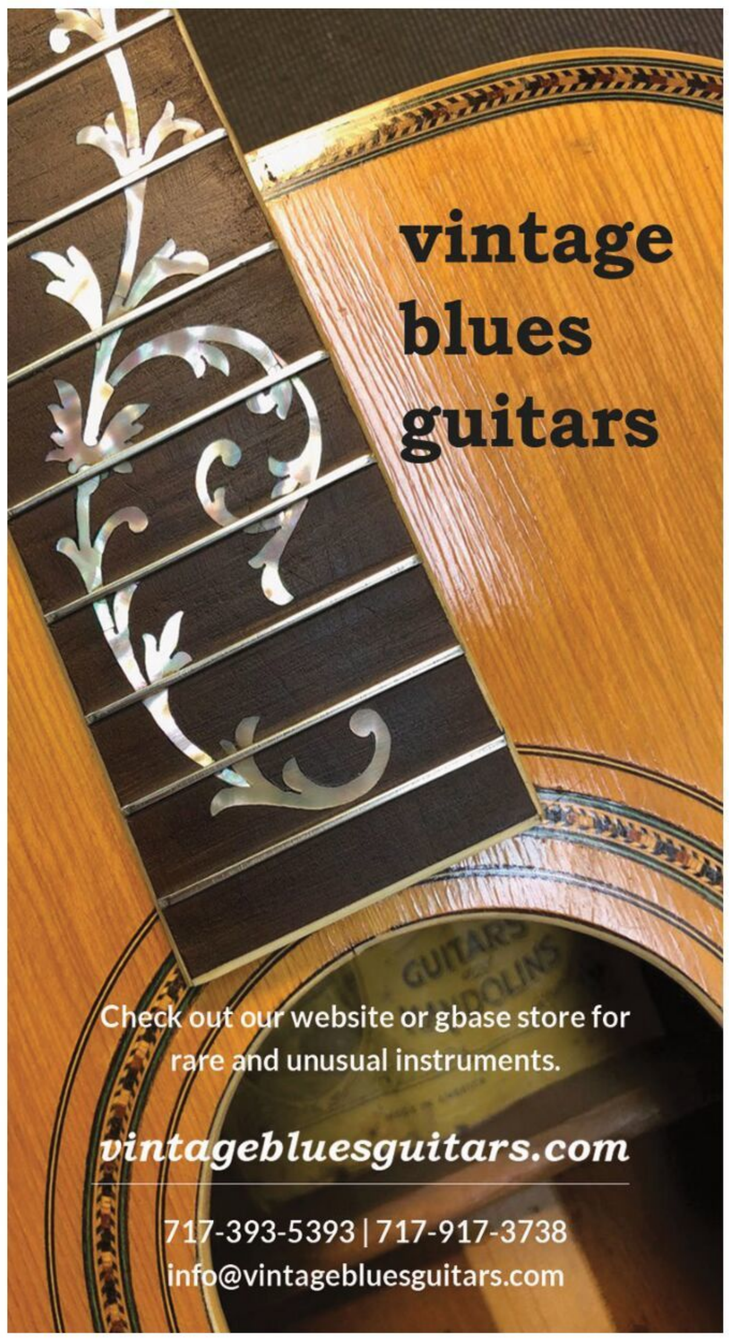
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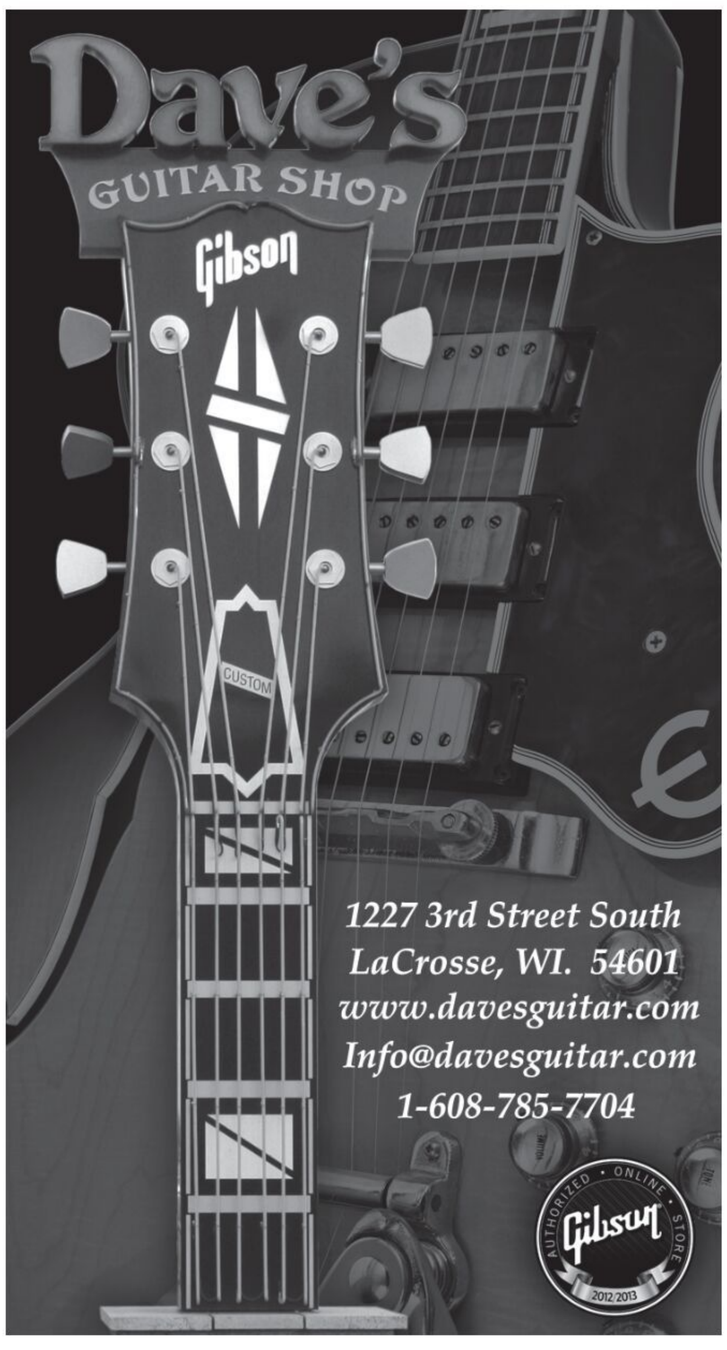
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ROCKY MOUNTAIN SLIDES

By Ward Meeker

In their mind, every guitarist hears a "perfect" tone. It doesn't matter what sort of music they play or the gear they employ. As years worth of notes pass from brain to fingers to ears, the ideal evolves and the chase never ends.

For some, the pursuit of tone compels them to go beyond trying different strings, instruments, amps, pickups, tubes, and transformers to actually *creating* something to deliver their dream. For Todd "Doc" Sigmier, fixation came in the form of a slide.

"I love to play slide, and had a box full of slides that were *okay* – they did the job – but I didn't have a go-to that really touched me. I had these tones in my head, but the people making slides back then were not innovating or re-thinking the slide as a tone tool. I wanted a better tool."

The son of a ceramicist, one day he mentioned that lack of inspiration to his father, Robert, and they started kicking around ideas for a slide made from something "new," like the stoneware clay he used for art pieces. In February of 2002, they began to market a ceramic slide called the Blues Boy, originally sold only through an ad in *Vintage Guitar* before they launched a website in March of '05.

Was making slides a full-time venture as soon as you had the Blues Boy, or did it start as a side hustle?

At first I was working a full-time gig, and of course I needed to see if the slide would take off and do something before I dove headfirst into making guitar accessories; in marketing terms, it's a niche within a niche. But I had ideas and hopes. Even once we started selling slides, it took about a year and a half before I took the plunge.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SLIDES COMPANY
Todd Sigmier, PO Box 262, Poncha Springs, CO 81242-0262. (719) 851-0645 rockymountainslides.com

Had you expanded the line by then?

No, it was only the Blues Boy. After a year or so, the Salidan followed, then the Shavano and Columbine, each with particular specs and in three additional lengths.

How have your slide offerings changed since those early years?

We added three lengths in addition to our standard 2.5". The others now are the Middy at 2.25", Shorty at 1.75", and Big Bart Knuckle Slides at 1.50". We've also expanded to eight glazes – Bayou Blue, Spanish Moss, Mojo Green, Juju White, Hellhound Red, Hoodoo Black, Voodoo Black, and Midnight Black.

What drove those adjustments?

Talking with other slide players. With the Columbine, I was getting a lot of requests from women and other players with smaller hands that needed a slide to fit them better. That led to the Cochetopa, with an inner diameter of 14 millimeters.

At that point, about four years in, I had five models, then added a thicker-walled version of the Columbine called the Monarch, which has a 17-millimeter inner diameter but a wall thickness of five millimeters, for more volume and a nicer bottom-end tone.

What most sets your slides apart?

The combination of materials, our clay formula, and the in-house custom glazes. Being a slide player, I knew what the issues were with slides, and the most-noticeable upgrade comes with hand-crafting and the fact you can talk directly with me. I work hard to get customers the right tool, *and* make it right the first time. I've created slides and tone bars for many veterans and others who have lost a portion of their hand and need something specific that allows them to play again. With them, I create one slide at a time, which is a slow process but well worth it to create a personal tool that helps players get back to doing what they love. That's a cool mission!

Though I've used different forms of promotion, the most effective is word of mouth and Youtube, where artists do demos for me. Letting others see and hear how these tools are used in the studio and live onstage helps confirm their uniqueness. I'm so blessed to have a group of players that can see, hear, and feel the difference when they use my tools and most of all, pass slides around for others to try. I get a lot of feedback from them.

Another important avenue is being reviewed and spotlighted, which helps players see different details in my custom work.

You've also moved to a wider range of materials, and even other accessories.

Ever since I started, I saw how creating tools helped musicians better express themselves. And different materials – stoneware clays,

glass, brass, and stone – all offer something different.

We spent three years developing the world's first ceramic tone bar, the Poncha Bullet, for lap and pedal steels, and then expanded to accessories like the Speed Grip caddy, which keeps slides safe and close until needed. I also ventured into the world of finger picks. Once I discovered how different materials like buffalo horn, bone, coconut husk, and mother of pearl made such a difference in that sonic chain, I was hooked and invested in design so I can offer those, as well.

Rocky Mountain's Elements Series.

What are your hopes for the future of the industry?

The market is strong and I think there will always be a need for tools to help players better define their sound and sonic signature.

What are your goals for Rocky Mountain?

As a designer, I'll continue to create and expand. I have several projects in the works for different stone finger slides, a cool new flatpick design, and accessories that solve issues players experience, but when they see my solution, they say, "Wow, I could use that!" VG

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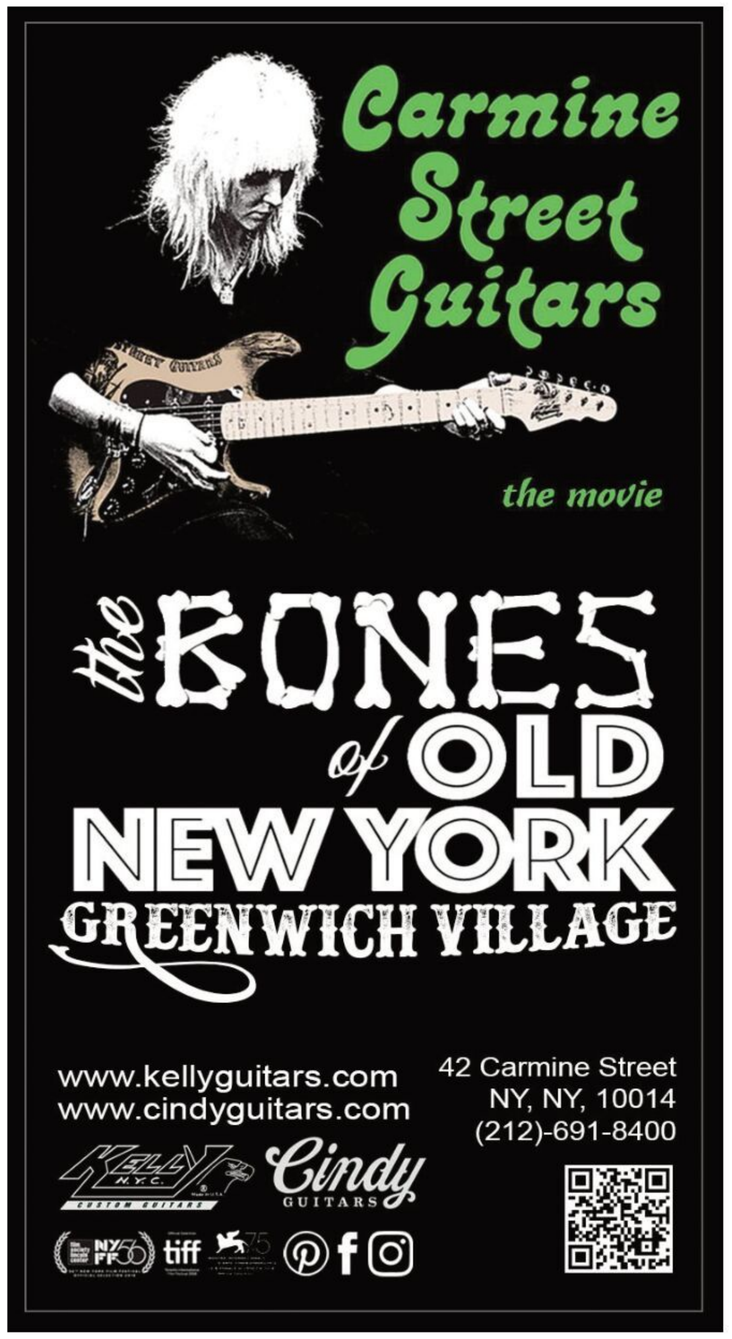

READERS Gallery

Send your photos to:
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Readers submit photos with the understanding that they may be used in any *VG*, Inc. project. Due to the volume of photos we receive, we are unable to return them, please do not send your only print.

1) Brian Flook finally (his word, not ours!) got around to sending a photo of his gear. From left in front are a '74 D-42, '86 Les Paul Custom, Eric Johnson signature Strat, a Lucky Dog Evangelist, Ron Kern Tele copy, and a '17 Brad Paisley Road Worn Tele. In back are a reissue Danelectro U-2, Taylor Builders Reserve SB-BR1, '57 Gretsch Streamliner 6189, a modern Firebird, and a Les Paul Studio. Perched on the amp pile is a '92 Alvarez Yairi DY62.

2) Subscriber Johnny Meza might be the only guy on earth who has four Fender Performers – a bass and guitar in matching Emerald Mist, along with guitars in Gun Metal Blue and Frost White. "I just love their '80s quirkiness," he said.

3) Dieter Soltis has an appreciation for Moonstone guitars. From left are a '00 0018, an '87 M80 (the last one made, he says, before the Moonstone factory was destroyed by a fire in 1988), and a '99 J-90 Eagle.

4) Art Doyle's collection includes this 2004 Martin D-35, 1905 12-fret parlor (make unknown), an '03 Ovation 1778t Elite, and a '99 American Standard Strat.

5) Mark Williams is a longtime reader who collects Clark amplifiers from the era when they were hand-wired by their creator, Michael Clark. At top left is a Beaufort, top right is a high-powered Beaufort, bottom left is a Tyger, and bottom right is a SE Beaufort/"double" Li'l Bit that was reconditioned by Clark.

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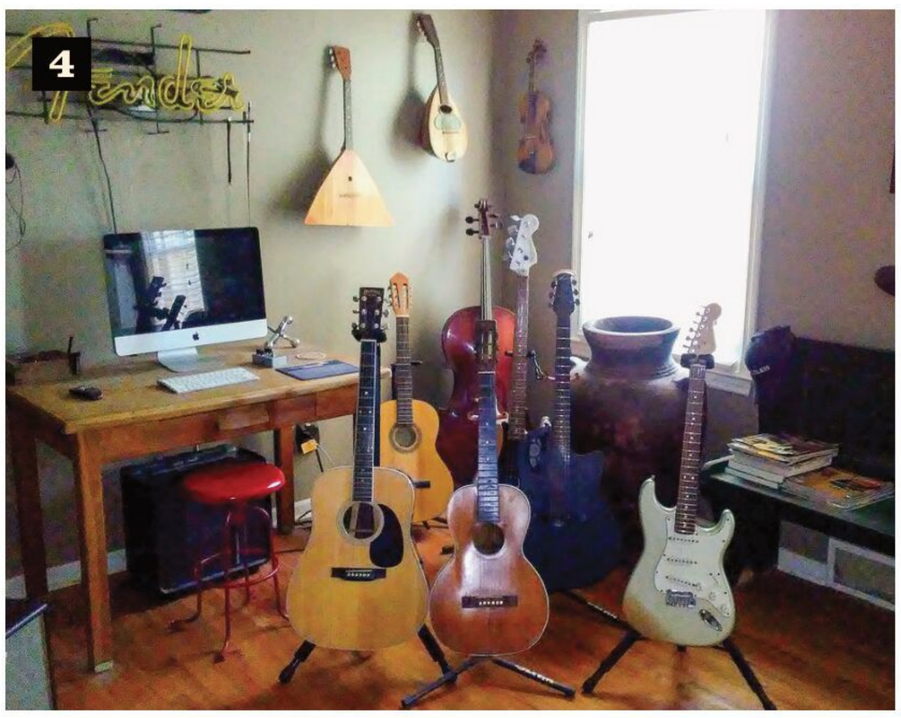
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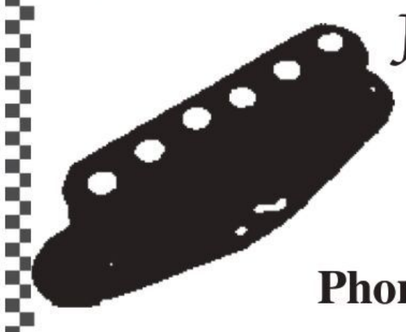

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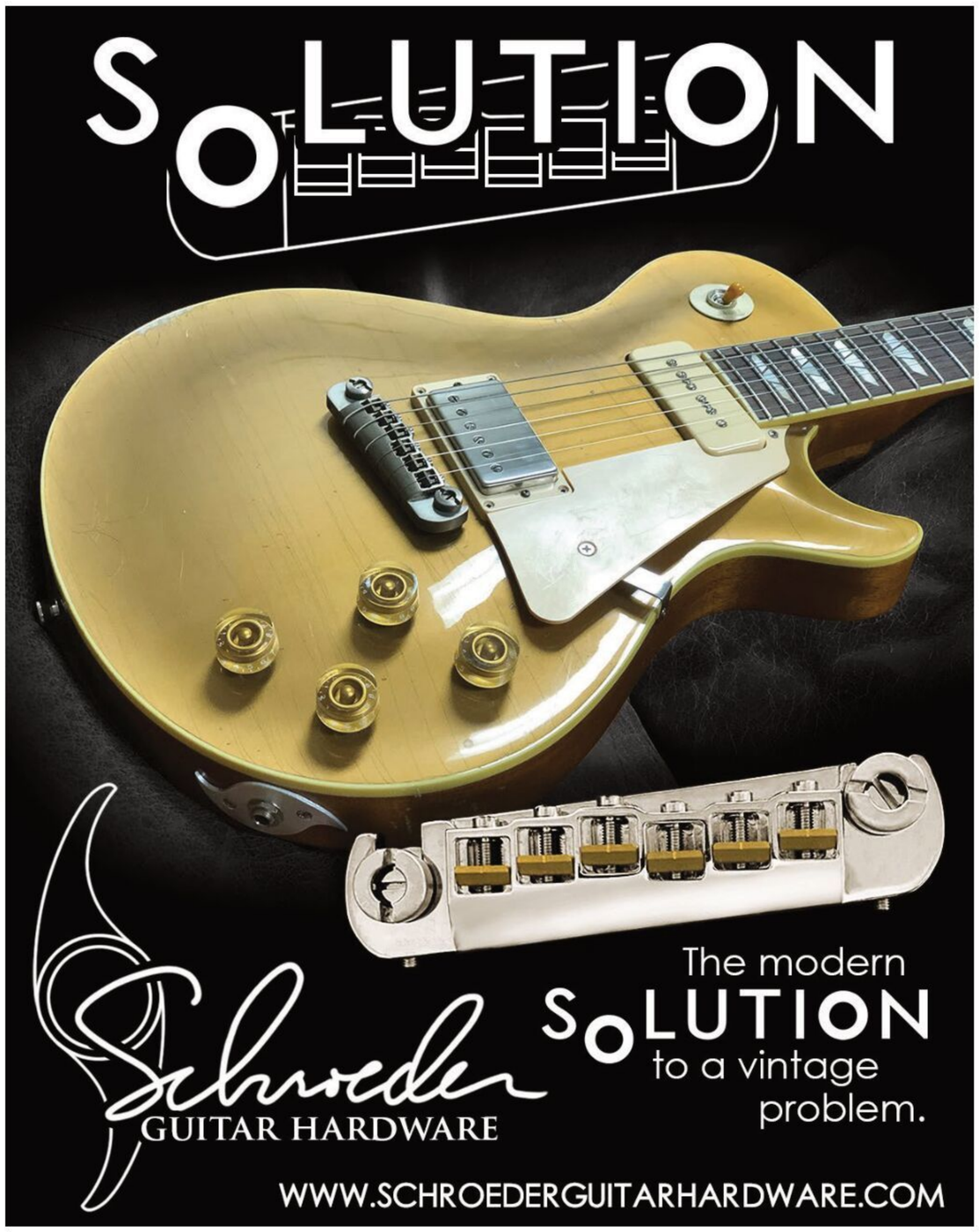

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