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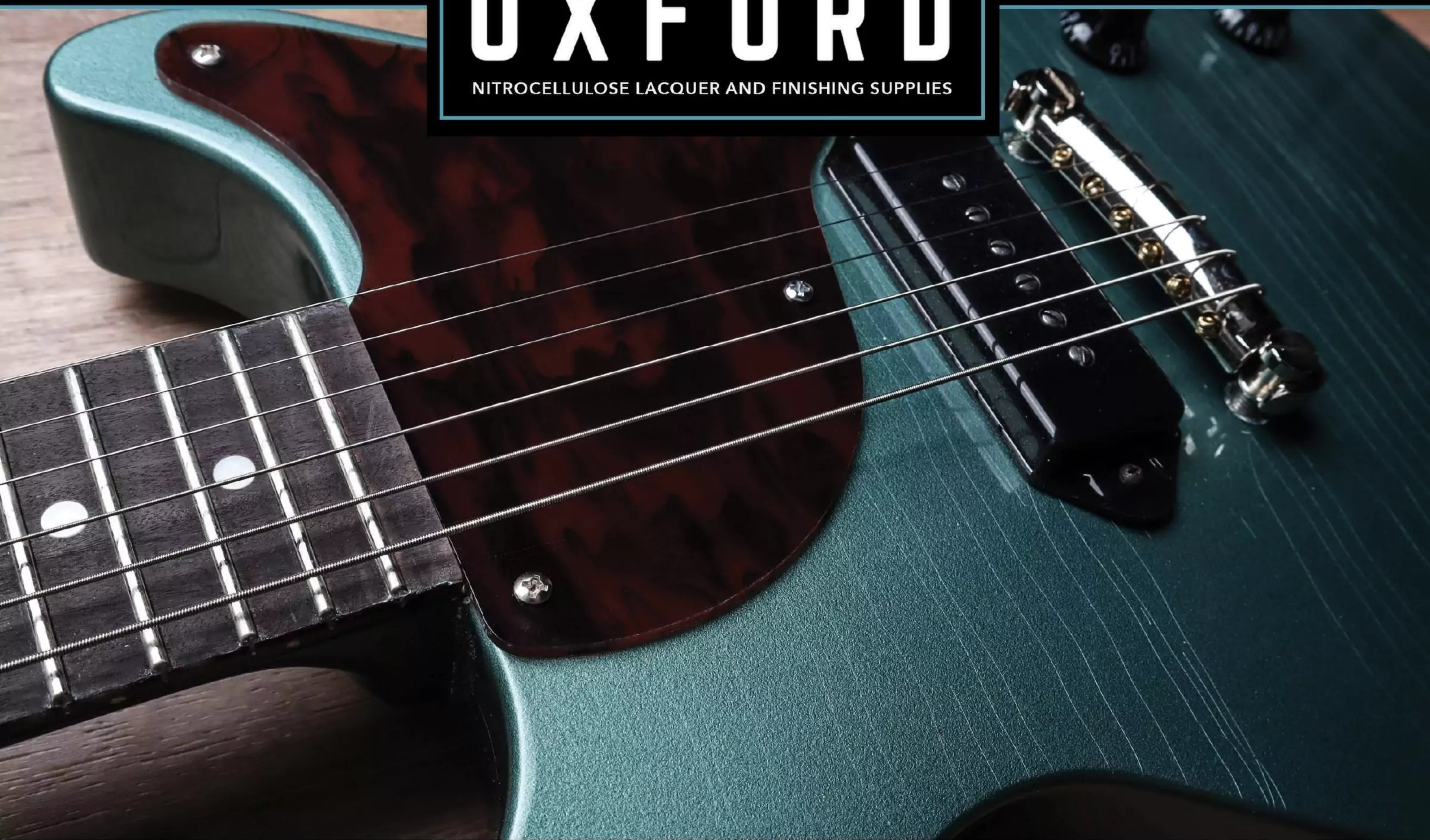
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READER MAIL

CROPPER, TOP

Thanks for the October feature on Steve Cropper. It's funny how one can be influenced by things without really realizing it.

Growing up in Montreal in the late '60s, we got a lot of R&B on local radio, especially Stax/Volt records. I always appreciated the little flourishes Cropper would add to songs, and his economy of style. But it wasn't until many years later that I realized the degree of his influence on my own playing.

In 1999, I went to see Booker T & the MGs on a rain-soaked night at the Ottawa Bluesfest, and with every solo Steve would take, I'd think, "Man, that is exactly what I would have played right there!" It was like he was reading my mind. Then it hit me – all those years I played with other musicians, I was trying to *be* Steve Cropper. Maybe I didn't do it as well, but I was *trying*.

The guidance is much appreciated, Mr. C.

Mark Hammer
Ottawa, Canada

JERRY, JOHN, AND DICKEY

We recently lost some pillars of rock and blues music. If you're not familiar with Jerry Miller ("In Memoriam," October '24), check out "Miller's

Blues," "Murder In My Heart For The Judge," and "Funky Tunk" from Moby Grape's 1968 release, *Wow*. That album was a big influence on my Kentucky Headhunters bandmates Fred Young, Richard Young, and I during our formative years.

John Mayall's contribution to blues and rock cannot be overstated.

Any guitarist who plugs a Les Paul into a cranked Marshall amp is giving a tip of the hat to Mayall and the Bluesbreakers, whose 1966 "Beano" album was inspirational for everyone from Mike Bloomfield to Jimi Hendrix and countless others along the way. I regret not latching on to Beano until around 1970, so I had some catching up to do. But, after first hearing Eric Clapton on Cream's *Disraeli Gears* in '67, I backtracked and found it as well as *Fresh Cream*. As much as I loved Bloomfield with The Electric Flag, I quickly fell under the spell of Clapton's tone, vibrato, and phrasing. To this day, I strive for that tone.



2017, on a Rock Legends Cruise. I also was fortunate to have interviewed him that year on my radio show and podcast, "The Lowdown Hoedown." He was a class act.

Our hearts go out to John's family and former Blues Breakers. Mr. Mayall, we will try our best to carry on what you started. Thank you, sir.

Greg Martin
Glasgow, Kentucky

I first heard Dickey Betts playing in the original Allman Brothers Band, which was a group like no other. Duane played the strong, hard edge, and while Dickey could do the same, he had a mellowness and sweetness to his playing. When the two of them played longer jams, they didn't just stand there and play mindless solos – they played together and off of each other. With the band, they took you on a musical journey.

In later years, Dickey's music always had that flowing sound. He was a master of the guitar electric.

Tom Hord
Fernandina Beach, Florida

SPIDER VIBE

I was saddened to learn of "Spider" John Koerner's passing ("In Memoriam," September '24). In July of 1974, I saw him play solo at Passim's, in Cambridge. It was a good show and the song I remember most is "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum!"

Chris Burke
Boston, Massachusetts

VG – ALWAYS SOMETHIN' EXTRA

I always look forward to the delivery of *Vintage Guitar*. Each issue has such great stories and a lot of information. I'm a big fan of Joanne Shaw Taylor (September '24) and enjoyed her interview. The interview with Henry Garza was awesome! The story behind Los Lonely Boys was really interesting. I'm also a big fan of Dan Erlewine.

These are stories you wouldn't normally hear, and are a big reason I get *Vintage Guitar*.

Geoff Day
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An advertisement for the Tunerette guitar tuner. The image features a close-up of a guitar headstock with a yellow and white Tunerette tuner clipped to it. The Tunerette logo is visible on the headstock. To the right, the text "THE MOST ROCK 'N' ROLL TUNER EVER" is written in large, bold, white letters. Below this, the words "FAST", "ACCURATE", and "RECHARGEABLE" are written in red. In the bottom right corner, there is a box for the Tunerette guitar tuner, which is white with a red and black design. The box has a warning label that reads "WARNING: Not using this may be hazardous to anyone within earshot." The website address WWW.TUNERETTE.NET is printed in large, bold, white letters at the bottom left of the advertisement.



Freddie Joon and Clayton at the first Busk in London hosted by the Gibson Garage.

GIBSON TEAMS WITH BUSK IN LONDON

Gibson has teamed with Busk In London to host a series of weekly live-music performances by buskers at the Gibson Garage.

Busk In London was launched in 2014 by the city's mayor. Now an independently run program, it fosters relationships between artists and the city's grassroots venues and gives performers the chance to gain experience in a professional setting.

The series kicked off September 3 and events take place every two weeks. For more, visit gibson.com/en-US/garage-london and follow @buskinlondon.

D'ADDARIO CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Renowned string and accessories maker D'Addario is marking its 50th anniversary.

The D'Addario family's story goes back more than 400 years, and is now told in detail with a scrollable timeline feature on its website. This retrospective offers a glimpse into the company's evolution from its beginnings in Italy, where it made strings from sheep intestines.

The occasion was also marked with "A World-Class Evening of Classical Guitar," concert in East Hampton, New York, on September 28.

OOPS! DEPT.

A particularly unfortunate typographical error error misspelled the surname of Tony Mottola on the cover of the October issue. VG sincerely apologizes for any confusion it may have created.



DAVE MASON

Now We All Know

In his new autobiography, *Only You Know & I Know*, guitarist/vocalist/songwriter Dave Mason looks back on his incredible life, including becoming a founding member of Traffic, sitting in as a special guest on

classic-rock favorites like the Jimi Hendrix Experience's "All Along the Watchtower," and enjoying a long solo career highlighted by the albums *Alone Together* and *Let it Flow*, along with the hit single "We Just Disagree."

Why did you decide to write the book at this time?

Well, I'm 78, for one thing. But *why* did I write it? I got badgered into writing it, basically. Fans, over the years, have constantly said, "You've got to write a book!" and of course my wife got on my ass about it (laughs). It's been four years putting it together. Thanks to [co-author] Chris Epting, I had some great help, especially with research and the rest of it. I've got a memory like a sieve, and I did not keep a diary.

Mostly what I've tried to do is make it about my personal journey more than just music.

In the book you say you're a private person. Did that make it hard to write?

Well, other than doing interviews, I don't spend much time thinking about who I've played with or what I've done. But once we finished writing the book, it was like, "Wow! Did I do all that?"

Would you say the process was cathartic in any way?

It wasn't cathartic. It was just a process. We thought we were finished at one point, but there were a number of things where I would go, "Oh s**t, you know what? I forgot that." So we'd go back and do it again.

Traffic was an unusual band. It was groundbreaking, versatile, popular, and critically acclaimed. But it doesn't get enough credit.

Well, it wasn't a very long career. It's just too bad that things finished the way they did. Obviously, [Steve] Winwood had major problems with me being in that band, and I write about it. What's unfortunate is that, especially after the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction [in 2004], we didn't all reunite and go out and tour and bring the music back.

You had a topsy-turvy relationship with Winwood and Jim Capaldi.

I would more couch it as they had a weird relationship with me (chuckles). It *was* very odd, which was probably rooted in nothing more simple and stupid than jealousy and egos.

You also mention that you wanted to avoid stardom, and you connect that with quitting Traffic. You write about how you just wanted to make music, but didn't you realize that becoming famous was a possibility?

I wanted success, but I just wasn't ready for what came with it. I was very young and was brought up as basically an only child, with zero street smarts. It was all too much for me.

Did you ever become comfortable with stardom?

I'm *still* not comfortable. I'm not a front guy (laughs). I *have* to be in a band. Anything that smacks of being an extrovert just makes me nervous. I'm essentially a guitar player. That's what I love. Singing and songwriting just came along with the job.

You've played different electrics but seem to favor Stratocasters.

I have a couple of Strats with Lace Sensors and a humbucking pickup on the bridge. One is Mexican, the other is a Hank Marvin model Fender made for me; I removed the Volume knobs. I also have three Telecasters including one of the first made when Fender was bought back from CBS and they used Leo Fender's original plans. They gave one of those to me and one to Steve Cropper.

Which others do you play?

I have a Les Paul goldtop, but it's not an original, and a Cherry Red Les Paul. I love their tone, but they're too heavy for me to play onstage. My acoustics include a Taylor six-string and a really beautiful 12-string hand-made for me by Alvarez.

Do you have any vintage pieces?

I don't. Guitars have always been a tool for me. I wish I still had the Strat I got when I was 16. I was 13 or 14 when I discovered the Strat, played by Hank Marvin. The fact that a radio repairman designed that thing is amazing. That design will still look great a thousand years from now. — **Bret Adams**

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IN MEMORIAM



by George Benson, he was best known for his side-man work with Jimmy Smith, Harry Connick, Jr., and Diana Krall. With word of his death, accolades rolled in.

"We met in Amsterdam in 1993 [and] had wonderful discussions about guitar players including George Barnes, 'Bus' Etri, George Van Eps, and Bucky [Pizzarelli]," said John Pizzarelli. "He played the

RUSSELL MALONE

Jazz lost one of its six-string luminaries when Russell Malone died on August 23, after suffering a heart attack in Japan while touring with bass legend Ron Carter. According to family, he'd been suffering from kidney failure for several years.

Malone's blend of bop phrasing, blues and soul mastery, and flawless technique won admirers all over the world. Initially inspired

hell out of the guitar and we were lucky to be around when Russell Malone was playing it."

"I loved his playing so much," added modern-bop ace Dan Wilson. "When I visited New York, he invited me over to his house to play. We played for hours, going from jazz to blues to gospel. I came back the next day, and we played until about 3 a.m. I'm devastated by Russell's death – but inspired by his life." – **Pete Prown**

Russell Malone: Chris Drukker.

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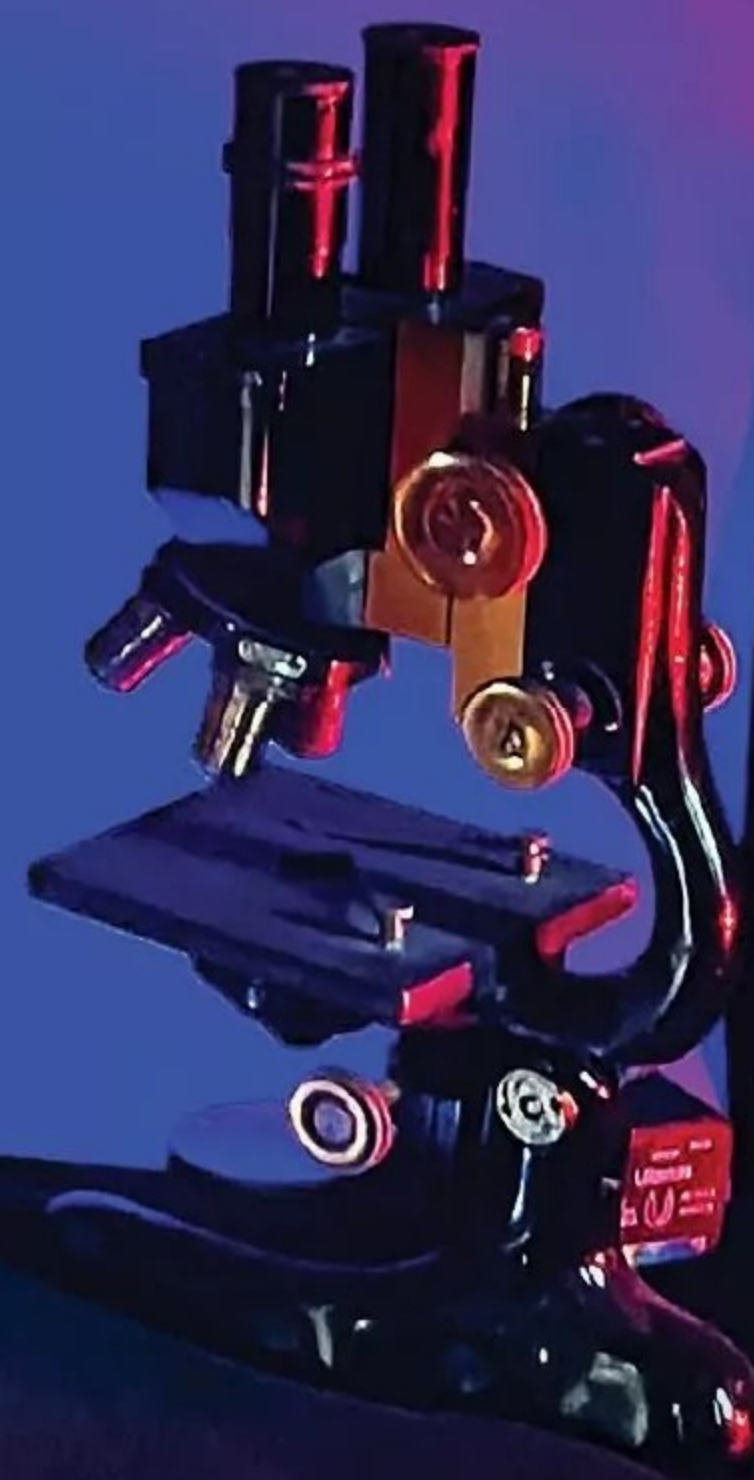
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HAPPY TRAUM

Folk Guru: 1936-2024

On July 17, folk music lost one of its guiding lights with the death of Happy Traum at age 86. A major player in the Greenwich Village and Woodstock scenes, he was best known for his catalog of Homespun instructional videos, boasting an eclectic roster of artists on a variety of instruments.

"He was one of a few left of that breed of artists from the '60s that were the true epitome of folk music," says one such instructor, steel-guitarist Cindy Cashdollar. "They brought forth the discovery and revival of artists like Mississippi John Hurt, and Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee."

Hot Tuna's Jorma Kaukonen echoes the sentiment: "Happy was a major contender in the burgeoning folk scene of the early '60s and onward. He was a heavyweight artist, always, but he never flaunted it. He played and sang with flawless expertise and love. Whenever he made music, the light always shone through. Having studied with the great Brownie McGhee, no one could channel him like Happy, but he had a very distinct style of his own."

Traum was born in The Bronx, New York, May 9, 1938 – his nickname derived from his first and middle names, Harry and Peter. After appearing on 1963's *Broadside Ballads, Vol. 1*, along with Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, and Pete Seeger, Traum's group, the New World Singers, recorded the first versions of "Blowin' In The Wind" that year and "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" a year later. In '71, he backed Dylan on acoustic guitar, banjo, and bass, and sang harmony on "I Shall Be Released" and three other songs that ended up on *Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits, Vol. 2* and the box set *The Bootleg Series Vol. 10: Another Self Portrait (1969–1971)*.

Younger brother Artie was a guitarist, composer, and producer in his own right. The two moved to Woodstock in 1967 and performed together until Artie's death in 2008.

In '72, they recorded and produced *Mud Acres, Music Among Friends*, and three subsequent albums under the collective moniker The Woodstock Mountains Revue. Its core also included Bill Keith, Jim Rooney, John Herald, Roly Salley, Larry Campbell, and Pat Alger.

Happy's first of a dozen instructional books, *Fingerpicking Styles For Guitar*, was published in '65. In addition to becoming editor of *Sing Out! The Folksong Magazine*, he wrote the "Strictly Folk" column for *Guitar Player*.

With wife, Jane, he launched Homespun Tapes in '67, which eventually transitioned from audio cassettes to video. Among its 500 entries are lessons by bluesman John Hammond, Band drummer Levon Helm, banjoist Béla Fleck, and even mandolin icon Bill Monroe.

"It seems as if we were friends for an eternity; he and Jane were that kind of people," Kaukonen adds. "I had spent a number of years dismantling my life and was trying to find my way out of the forest. Happy extended his hand to me in the late '80s and gave me a second chance by inviting me to make an instructional video. The work that he and Jane did in the creation of the groundbreaking Homespun instructionals will never be equaled. I will always be grateful to them for that opportunity. It changed my life."

His first of six solo albums, 1975's *Relax Your Mind*, was produced by Stefan Grossman and featured songwriter Pat Alger on mandolin. For his last album, 2022's *There's A Bright Side Somewhere*, contributors included Campbell, Cashdollar, John Sebastian, and son Adam Traum.

"Happy was one of a handful of people who gave me a chance to prove myself with no strings attached," says Alger. "We met in January, 1970, at the Vermont Folk Festival, and he invited me to stop by Woodstock on my way back to Atlanta. Not long after, my wife and I moved there, and she began working for Homespun Tapes. Happy was uniquely qualified to be a historian of the entire folk movement and the guitar styles they played, but he was also willing to help a 22-year-old kid like me to get started. I played mandolin on his first three solo albums when he could have hired any number of legends, and he also recorded one of my early songs, 'Daddy's Violin,' on *Bright Morning Stars*. In the Woodstock Mountains Revue, he always stopped the show at least once in every set we did. He was a very important mentor, especially because he also treated me as his peer. The confidence he gave me then sustains me to this day."

"If you didn't know him, you felt like you did upon meeting him," Cashdollar adds. "If you knew him, you'd never fathom the day when he wouldn't be a phone call away. He was a huge talent and an educator and innovator who never lost the spark to love, create, and share music."

"Happy had an overriding quality of humanity that is not easy to define," says Kaukonen. "Suffice it to say that he was a true mensch. His like is not soon to be seen again." – **Dan Forte**

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JIM LAUDERDALE

Harder Country

Jim Lauderdale has had three busy years. 2021's *Hope*, which he calls "a very uplifting album," emerged from the pandemic. The follow-up, *Game Changer*, took a more-country/honky-tonk direction, and last year's *The Long and Lonesome Letting Go*, with the Po' Ramblin' Boys, returned to bluegrass.

His latest, *My Favorite Place*, is "a pretty hard country album. It's got a lot of up-tempo stuff on it, rockin' a little bit. I like to alternate between (recording) the traditional country with a twist and bluegrass, the soul thing, singer/songwriter, whatever style."

Recorded with his band the Game Changers and guest pickers, Lauderdale wrote or co-wrote every song including the complex, dramatic romantic ballad "Mrs. Green," a collaboration with guitarist/songwriter Bob Minner. Steve Hinson plays pedal steel.

"One of the wonderful things about co-writing is you go somewhere you probably wouldn't have on your own. (Minner) had the feel of the song and the theme – the woman, the situation. We evolved (it) into 'Mrs. Green.' He's really a great lyricist, strong on melody

and so great on guitar. That's him doing the acoustic-solo break with (Game Changer guitarist) Craig Smith. I loved the way that song turned out. When I do it live, I get kind of emotional."

"Lightning Tree" was a post-mortem collaboration with "Cowboy" Jack Clement, the revered Nashville producer/singer/songwriter who died in 2018. When his children discovered a cache of unfinished lyrics, they invited select songwriters to examine them and consider turning them into completed songs.

Clement wrote "Lightning Tree's" lyrics in the early '60s. "I'd known Jack and it was exciting and meaningful to bring those lyrics to life with a melody. I'm grateful to his daughter and son for letting me put that on the record."

Lauderdale praises the Game Changers, formed in 2017.

"Craig has been playing a lot of lead live through the years. He hadn't been in the studio much, but he's got such great instincts; he really delivers. He also is a human jukebox, knowing so much old stuff he can play it so well."

Jay Weaver plays bass while Lillie Mae

Rische and her guitarist brother, Frank, handle harmony vocals.

Other positions are revolving, such as drummers Dave Racine and Pat Bubert and steel-guitarists Will Van Horn, Tommy Han-num, Steve Hinson, and Russ Pahl.

"Some of these guys did their time playing clubs on (Nashville's) Lower Broadway, where they're constantly doin' the classics and obscure songs. So they're pretty steeped in that world."

Chris Scruggs and Kenny Vaughan are frequent guest pickers. "Talk about somebody totally immersed in history. He's really a creative player," he said of Scruggs. "And, Kenny is in a league of his own."

"I'm A Lucky Loser" featured Vaughan, Scruggs, Van Horn, and guitarist Wes L'Anglois, who played acoustic and draws praise from Lauderdale for being, "...one of the best rhythm players."

Having long wanted to explore country-jazz, Lauderdale took the plunge on "Sweethearts Remember" with Smith on guitar and Van Horn playing steel.

"I was thinking of Jimmy Bryant and Speedy West," he said, adding he considered a Bryant/West-style ensemble break, but Smith ultimately handled the solo alone. "I had the riff – that's what the song was built around."

On the upbeat "You've Got A Shine" with Smith and Scruggs, he said, "The electric rhythms going on really make that song – Micah Hulscher's piano and Jay's playing and that little part Steve Hinson does on the steel. That turned out well."

"Most of the time, I overdub my vocals," added Lauderdale, who rarely plays guitar on his records. "I feel inhibited in some ways around these great players. Sometimes, I'm writing lyrics as we go. When you have some of the world's best, I don't want to mess it up. My part is to make sure the song, lyrically and melodically, and my vocal, can meet the standards of the great people playin' on it."

His onstage guitar is a Collings sunburst HD-28 he bought at Gruhn Guitars in 1994. "I've also used a few different D-18s for a different sound – there's a '55 that was my go-to other than the Collings."

My Favorite Place is still new, but Lauderdale is already on to the next. "I'm about to run in and do another bluegrass album. I like to keep that muscle going – that bluegrass thing."

"I've recorded tracks for other songs in that hillbilly-jazz vein. There are so many country players who are great jazz players, and I want to introduce that to folks who may not be aware of that style. I'm gonna introduce little bits of this as time goes on." – **Rich Kienzle**

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ANDY WOOD

Sonic Identity

Andy Wood is the living embodiment of the modern working guitarist. Straddling the galaxies of country music and shred, he has a savvy online presence that includes guitar instruction, live workshops, and touring. After going toe-to-toe onstage with Brent Mason and Steve Morse, he should receive the Guitar Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery. But more importantly, his latest album, *Charisma*, shows the range of his musical prowess while featuring celebrity guests.

What's the story behind *Charisma*?

This one hit me in an odd place in life. I was on the road touring so hard. Then all of a sudden, Covid happened. We were all locked up with nothing to do. Then, I started working with the online community and Patreon. That spiraled into teaching. I'd get a melody in my head and jot it down. Also, within 13 months, I lost my father and my grandfather. My grandfather got me started playing music. So, I had all that bottled up. I'm not good with

expressing emotions verbally, so making this album was very therapeutic in putting those feelings somewhere. I had 53 demos (laughs)!

Through my guitar retreat, Woodshed Guitar Experience, I became friends with people like Joe Bonamassa, who played a solo on the record. I felt comfortable with that because my career was at a point where I wasn't trying to hitch my career to their wagon; I felt like I had my own voice. So, instead of, "Hey, will you play on my record to prove that I'm good?," it's like I'm inviting a friend over for a beer (laughs). I didn't feel like I needed to do that for validation. It was fun just to say, "Hey, let's hang out."

The emotion on *Charisma* really shines through.

I didn't feel like I was choosing the song with the flashiest guitar playing. I wasn't trying to impress anyone. *Charisma* is about melody and song, first. On Youtube, there's an arms race of guitar players. Everybody has unbelievable chops. If everybody's good, now what? Which leads you back to what it all should be about in

the first place, which is "What's a good song?" Write me a song! Play me a song! I was yelling this to myself in the mirror (laughs).

I tell my Patreon community, "If you could have the Infinity Gauntlet of music and Thanos could give you all the stones for all the musical ability in the world, what would you choose to play?"

The most-important thing is finding your own voice as a musician. Nobody needs to play fast for the 5,000th time (laughs). That's where "Shoot The Sun Down," "Copperhead," and "Cherry Blossoms" comes from. The melodies are what matters. Even on "Free Range Chicken," the chorus is straight out of Leslie West and Mountain-inspired Southern rock. It's got to serve a greater purpose than impress other guitar players.

On "Moaning Lisa," you and Bonamassa show genuine musical chemistry.

He played such a cool and vibey Strat into a cranked Twin solo. It's important to have your own identity. On "Free Range Chicken," with Brent Mason, I could have used the back pickup and did clean chicken pickin'. But why bring sand to the beach? It's cooler when people have their own personalities. What made G3 so special was Satch, Petrucci, Vai, Morse, Paul Gilbert, and Eric Johnson did not sound like each other. That's what's so special about tube amps and that era of the guitar versus the modern era, where everyone uses the same plug-ins. There's not a lot of sonic identity today.

What is your recording philosophy?

I always start with the guitar unplugged. If the guitar doesn't sound good in your lap, an amplifier is just going to make that louder (laughs). From there, it's recording the main riff with different combinations of amps – I'll try a Bogner, a Suhr, or a vintage Deluxe. I'm lucky enough to own one of Eric Johnson's old Marshalls. There's no right answer the same way every time. My flavor for lead tones is the Eric Johnson/Andy Timmons-inspired fat and dark vocal-sounding lead tone. The guitar is the lead singer. For rhythm tones, I think the common mistake is too much gain, too much compression, and too much low-end. When you have all that going on at the same time, it turns into a wall of nothing.

Which guitars did you use?

I used my Suhr Modern T signature model most of the time, as well as a Suhr Classic.

What's next?

I'm hosting the Woodshed Guitar Experience, touring with Gary LeVox, the lead singer from Rascal Flatts, and of course playing solo shows. I'm stoked about the record. It's busy, busy. – **Oscar Jordan**

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JEFF KOLLMAN

Validating Versatility

A perusal of guitarist Jeff Kollman's resumé forces a double take. Alongside decades of studio work and live gigs with artists like Chris Isaak, Lou Gramm, and Glenn Hughes are major projects that seem contradictory. For example, there's his instrumental fusion/metal band, Cosmosquad, of which he says, "The music goes in directions that are unpredictable, and we push the boundaries, harmonically speaking."

Crediting drummer and co-founder Shane Gaalaas' writing input for separating the group's style from his solo work, he adds, "We [make] the music complex but still grooving – dark, heavy, funky, and ethereal."

In 2009, Kollman hooked up with Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith in an ad-hoc instrumental fusion-funk band known as Chad Smith's Bombastic Meatbats. They recorded two studio albums and a live disc

before going on hiatus, but Kollman noted that "...we will do another record when the Chili Peppers machine winds down. I'm hopeful for 2025."

One of the most-improbable matchups for fans of Kollman's music has been his assignment as the touring guitarist for the Alan Parsons Live Project, which happened in 2017 and led to live albums and studio work.

"(Guitarist) David Pack, from Ambrosia, was having dinner with Alan, and insisted he look no further for a singer/guitarist," Kollman said. "Alan needed to fill the slot for a Europe tour in 10 days."

Since then, Kollman has been on four Parsons albums – *The Secret*, *The Never Ending Show: Live In the Netherlands*, *One Note Symphony: Live In Tel Aviv*, and *From the New World*.

Followers might question the compatibility of

Kollman's style – loud, rapid-fire – with Parsons, whose music is melodic, precise, and often orchestrated, but the guitarist begs to differ.

"My solo material is very much melodic, with great detail and attention to structure," he said. "It's true I like a bit of violence in my rock, but I've played in many musical situations and understand harmony similar to the way [original Parsons guitarist] Ian Bairnson did. So, I don't think it's such a musical stretch or odd fit."

Has the association been mutually beneficial?

"It has. We have written some great songs together. We complement each other in the studio; the whole band does. And I feel I've helped contribute offstage by referring a few great industry connections and strengthening Alan's outer circle, which is vital for business."

Kollman's latest release is another instrumental album, *2023 A.D.*, and it features plenty of stinging licks along delicate and melodious songs.

"I mainly used a Gibson SG and a Fender Custom Shop '59 Wildwood 10 Strat with John Cruz custom pickups. I also have a 10/56 Wildwood Strat, which is my favorite with a maple board. I use a Wildwood Gibson Featherweight Les Paul with original 1960 PAFs that sounds stellar and weighs just 7.98 pounds without being weight-relieved. I also used a Hamer Korina V for a few tracks.

"My collection always stays around 60 guitars, but less than 10 made the recording. For '1979,' which is a bonus for the vinyl version, I used a Ramirez 1A from 1979 – the year I started playing guitar. I use a Gene Baker B3 guitar on 'Blue For Miles' and 'Layers.'

"I would say I'm 70 percent melodic, and when I shred, the music is begging for it."

"2 Years Ago Today" was recorded on October 6, 2022, the second anniversary of Eddie Van Halen's passing.

"That was cathartic," Kollman said of the song. "It's not an attempt to play something that sounds like EVH. It's honoring his spirit and the legacy of the great music he left behind. I decided that every year, on the eve of Edward's passing, I would be in the studio, creating music. It's honoring Edward and the gift of music I have been blessed with – and it's a reminder not to take that God-given gift for granted."

Kollman plans to continue working with Parsons and do solo recordings.

"I think [2023 A.D.] has some of my finest work in the sense that the songs flow together and there's a contrast and depth in the compositions. It's certainly my best-sounding solo release." – **Willie G. Moseley**

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ZAC SOKOLOW

LA LA Land

LA LOM rekindles the sound of “psychedelic chicha” – a south-of-the-border reaction to the electrified 1960s. Picture the Ventures or Belairs with the hippest Latin percussion known to mankind.

The trio features Zac Sokolow on guitar, the son of folk journeyman Fred Sokolow. On LA LOM’s debut album, *The Los Angeles League Of Musicians*, he twangs vintage National and Kay electrics with gobs of reverb and tremolo, evoking twang in the style of the bolero, cumbia, and chicha. It’s intoxicating guitarmanSHIP.

Your guitar is essentially the lead vocalist of LA LOM.

When we started, we were mostly background music in a hotel lobby; hardly anyone was paying attention. It took a lot of convincing

to get me to believe that anyone would find our music interesting. We were playing covers and I’d learn the instrument and vocal parts of songs, then try to play them with the right inflection on each section. Now, when we write original songs, I often imagine a voice singing certain parts, or maybe an instrument other than guitar playing part of it.

As a teen, you worked at McCabe’s Guitar Shop. What did you do there?

I did everything from breaking down boxes to stringing guitars, setting up chairs for concerts, and even teaching mandolin and banjo. That’s where I met a lot of musicians I started playing with, including Jake Faulkner, our bassist in LA LOM.

How did you become acquainted with Mexican boleros and cumbia sonidera styles?

I’d hear those songs on the radio a lot,

and they’re very melodic and memorable. I also have a musician friend who collects old records, and he played some much older cumbia recordings of the Vallenato style from Colombia. Those recordings really stuck with me. Later, other friends played music from the ’60s and ’70s of the more-psychedelic “chicha” style from Peru, led by electric guitars. Groups like Los Destellos, Juaneco y su Combo, and Los Mirlo.

There’s a lot of guitar going on within “Angels Point” and “Maravilla,” as if you’re covering several instruments.

When I come up with melodies, I usually have chord progressions in mind and sometimes harmonies that go along with the melody. Being the only guitarist, I have to play parts that will get across the whole picture. As a result, I play the songs pretty differently every time. I’m always changing my mind about which part to emphasize.

Who are your guitar influences?

Jaime Moreyra from Los Shapis, and Bombino is another huge influence. There is an Italian musician from San Jose, California, Tom Marion, who has been a mentor. He showed me the playing of the great Giovanni Vicari.

Your tone is shimmering, just-breaking-up, and surf-ready, as in “El Sereno.” What gear did you use on the album?

I mostly used my red 1962 National Val Pro 82. It’s Jake’s, but he has let me borrow it for years now. I tend to use whatever reverb and vibrato is built into the amp I’m using, but will often add the Boss Analog Delay box my dad used to use back in the ’80s. I’ve used it since I was a teenager and know how to control it very well. On “El Sereno” I was using a Kay guitar from the ’50s that belongs to our producer, Elliot Bergman, along with his Magnatone amplifier.

Do you have any other vintage gear in your collection?

I have a Kay Style Leader from around 1960. There are also a couple Fender amp reissues.

Your father is noted folk musician Fred Sokolow. How did that help shape LA LOM?

A lot of the earliest memories I have are hanging out at my dad’s gigs when I was really little. Once I was old enough, me and my brother started picking up his instruments and, by the time I was 11, I was gigging with him, mostly playing mandolin or banjo. From him, I learned about emphasizing chords and melody. His father grew up in Buenos Aires and moved with his family to Los Angeles. My grandfather described Buenos Aires as a place that was filled with people and cultures from all over the world – similar to the way I now think of Los Angeles. – **Pete Prown**



BRYSON WILLOUGHBY

Mojo Thunder's Collective Consciousness

Kentucky's favorite alternative Southern rockers, Mojo Thunder, extrapolate fresh ideas from disparate genres to produce an album as passionate as it is musically satisfying. The twin-guitar assault of Sean Sullivan and Bryson Willoughby forgo blues-rock clichés in favor of sheets of hard-charging rhythms with melody, while never abandoning their roots. Willoughby tells all.

Who is Mojo Thunder?

We started in 2018, and style-wise I'd say we scrounged through our record collections and found ourselves somewhere between the Kings of Leon and the Black Crowes. That's what we pull from the most, influence-wise. We get labeled Southern rock quite a bit, but we're not necessarily that. I usually tell people the spectrum of southern rock for us is R.E.M. to Lynyrd Skynyrd. Our stylistic cutoff starts from what would be considered traditional Southern rock.

Who are your early guitar influences?

My family, first and foremost. My uncle and grandfather were both players. They were a huge influence on me coming up and getting me into guitar.

My dad has a pretty robust record collection, and he got me started on classic rock pretty early. When we'd visit family back in the day, they would put all the kids to bed at night, but I'd sneak back and listen to them play guitar and tell stories. I wanted to hang out with them; that was my first musical objective.

What kinds of things did they teach you on the guitar?

My uncle showed me my first chord, but I took formal lessons. I'm from southeastern Kentucky, which is geographically the beginning of the Appalachian part. There was an older blues guitarist there who taught me lessons for three years. He was kind of a hippie and very open-minded, especially for a conservative small town. I started out with the holy trinity, which was Kiss, AC/DC, and Aerosmith. For me, Angus Young is Freddie King on 10 (laughs). From there, I got

into this blues CD I received from one of my dad's friends. John Lee Hooker was on it. That was my second great awakening of everything I wanted to play. I did a deep dive into that stuff.

How did *The Infinite Hope* come together?

We were writing songs separate from one another, but there was a collective consciousness by the time we brought everything together. We ended up calling it *The Infinite Hope* because everything we brought together seemed to represent the through line of the title. There's dark subject matter and angst that turns to hope and progress.

"The Sun Still Rises" and "Step By Step" speak to that.

Our drummer, Zac Shoopman, wrote the lyrics to "The Sun Still Rises." I changed two lines and wrote the music for it. He's a very good songwriter. Our singer, Sean Sullivan, is responsible for "Step By Step." He tapped into a kind of loneliness and despair but turned it around into a feeling of hopefulness. It's the simplicity of moving step by step, putting one foot in front of the other, and moving forward. It's our calling card or ethos at the moment.

How do you get that jangly guitar sound on "The Sun Still Rises"?

Those are guitar layers of Sean and me, but I played two Les Paul Traditionals. One is a 2014, the other a 2009. That jangly sound is an Electro-Harmonix Micro Pog. On "Step By Step," it's the same thing during the chorus. I really like octave pedals.

Is that you playing the solo on "Gettin' On a Binge"?

Yeah, that's my Traditional doing the old scooped-mids thing with the pickup selector in the middle and the Tone control rolled back to the middle.

What other kinds of gear did you use in the studio?

I used mostly Fender amps. We used our road gear; I have a Hot Rod DeVille, a Hot Rod Deluxe, and for some stuff I used a Marshall Studio Vintage Combo. I brought in my two Traditionals, but Duane Lundy, the producer, had a Les Paul Standard. I also used a Tele here and there. I took out the single coils and put in two Seymour Duncan Pearly Gates pickups. Sean played through a Vox AC15.

What's on your pedalboard?

A Boss tuner, Cry Baby wah, Micro Pog, Univibe, Boss RV-6 Reverb, the four-knob Keeley Compressor, and a Tubescreamer.

What's next for the band?

We're touring Europe, doing the independent-artist thing. You can call it a tour, but we're pretty much always on the road. We'll take a few weeks off, then come back to the U.S. — **Oscar Jordan VG**



EMPEROR'S OLD CLOTHES

The Tone King Imperial

BY DAVE HUNTER

Over the last 30 years, Tone King founder Mark Bartel has come full circle as one of the originators of the “boutique” tube-amp boom.

The movement of reinventing hand-built tube amps began in the late 1980s and early '90s with creations often referred to as “boutique” in appreciation of the golden-age

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less and TopHat focused on a Vox-inspired vibe with contemporary designs and robust construction. Bartel, on the other hand, approached his amps differently; within stylish, retro-minded cabinets he packaged original circuits that captured his own concept of how the best golden-age tube amps sounded, and cut their own figure on the market as a result.

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'61 Olympic White/Slab Rose neck 100% original in Mint condition
 '61 Dakota Red/Slab Rose neck 100% original. Near Mint condition.
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 '65 Sunburst 100% original, Near Mint condition, Mint-Green pickguard
 '65 Candy Apple Red 100% original, Excellent condition, Mint-Green pickguard
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Vintage Guitar presents *Buy That Guitar*. Hosted by **Ram Tuli**, co-author of *The Official Vintage Guitar Price Guide*, the podcast explores the joy of buying, selling, and collecting vintage and new guitars, amplifiers, and other gear. Join Ram and his guests for a new episode every Tuesday.

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mid-sized 1x12" combo for every occasion, the 20-watt Imperial was a rare channel-switching amp amid the purists on the scene. One channel delivers Bartel's version of a '60s Deluxe-meets-Princeton voicing, while the other strides between cranked '50s tweed and small-format '60s Marshall. Both benefit from those '60s staples for onboard effects – tube-driven tremolo and reverb – while in one nod to the boutique ethos there's no master Volume control (later 20th Anniversary and Mark II versions would carry a built-in power attenuator).

In true American fashion, the Imperial develops its power from two 6V6GT output tubes, with four 12AX7s and one 12AT7 in the preamp, plus a 5AR4 rectifier. But as for the sound they were intended to produce, Bartel tells us that was derived not from any amp in particular, but from the great music they made.

"This amp was built in 1993," he recalls.

"It was the first Imperial completed to production specs, though I didn't mark it with a serial number since I intended to keep it for development purposes. The main objective was to get the sound of old blues records – a sound with a lot of character and grit, a fair amount of compression, and a strong midrange voicing without too much in the upper high frequencies, and a cabinet tuned for a loose, resonant response that would howl like an old vintage amp. New amps at the time just couldn't do that sound authentically. They were way too sterile and tight. The biggest challenge was designing and tuning the cabinet to have that genuine vintage sound. That took a lot of experimenting."

Growing up as an electronics tinkerer with a technician for a father primed Bartel for amp design, but formal study in electrical engineering and an early career designing mainframe computers and semiconduc-

Cabinet design has always played a huge part in Mark Bartel's quest for golden-era tube tone.

tors took his skills over the top. A guitarist himself, the desire to build the kind of amp he describes first came upon him as a hobby while he was still in college, but, given the very thought-out premise for the circuit and sound, the now-iconic Tone King styling followed largely by accident.

"That was not so much by design as just lack of information," he tells VG. "There wasn't an internet back then so I didn't know what an amplifier should look like, but I was into this 'mid-century modern' thing. So I just came up with my own design, logo, and all of that."

Once the ingredients were in place, the interest came pretty quickly.

"I decided to take one to a guitar-and-amp show in New York City. I just walked through with the amp. I didn't know anyone there;



I was just a college kid with this amplifier that looked funny – it was *turquoise* and just so different because there wasn't a lot of boutique stuff out there, so I got a lot of attention. In one afternoon, I hooked up with a couple of dealers and secured a review with *Guitar Player*."

Early orders from high-profile artists like Mark Knopfler and Lou Reed helped further establish Tone King's legitimacy, and their style cut a distinctive swathe through a market that was otherwise rather homogenous. So much so, in fact, that Bartel got a little tired of the guitar world focusing more on the looks than the sound, something he addressed by toning down the styling on the larger Comet model that followed.

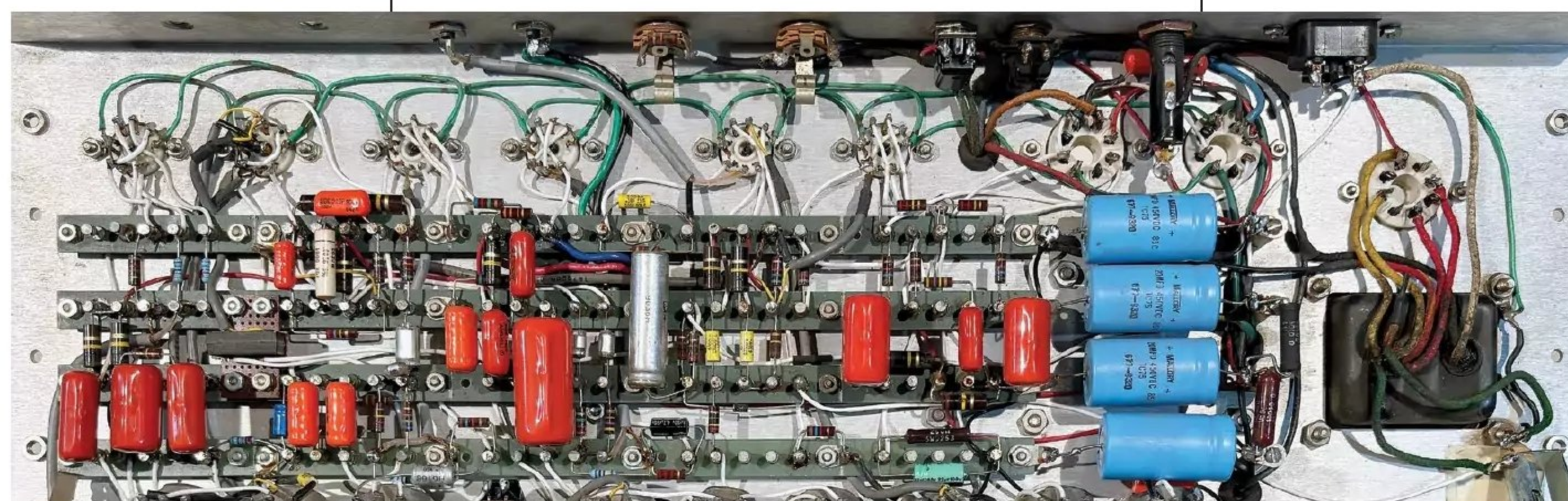
Given his formal training in engineering, Bartel's approach to circuit design has often displayed more originality than some makers in the cloning brigade whose amps largely copy vintage circuits (an approach that plenty of guitarists hungry for vintage-style amps have welcomed, to be sure). The debutante Imperial on display here has an entirely hand-wired circuit constructed across several parallel turret strips, though in the years that followed, Tone King used high-quality printed circuit boards (PCBs) coupled with hand-wiring and construction.

"I did CAD work and had the ability to run the tools and generate a decent board design, so I started [with PCBs] way back in the beginning," Bartel relates. "Only the first dozen or so were fully hand-wired. In the beginning, the use of PCBs was more

a matter of consistency. It's tough to train someone to hand-wire things exactly the way you want it, but with a PC board they don't have a choice."

Having built countless amps over the years using both techniques, Bartel is now confident that neither automatically creates a superior-sounding result – as long as the work is done right.

"What it comes down to is that there is nothing magical about turret boards,



The chassis displays an entirely hand-wired circuit, something applied to only the first 10 or so.

terminal strips, or PC boards. They are all just a means to mount components. The important thing to focus on is the relative location of the components and the location and routing of the wiring. You get this part of the design right, then the actual construction method makes very little difference. In fact, a poorly designed hand-wired layout is just as likely to sound bad as a poorly designed PC-board layout."

Bartel returned to a largely hand-wired circuit for the Limited Edition 20th Anniversary Imperial of 2013 and the first iteration of the larger Sky King model released alongside it, both produced during his association

The Imperial's tube complement and layout is similar to the classic Deluxe Reverb, though the Tone King gets more sonic variety from its two footswitchable channels. Its controls, split across two channels for Lead and Rhythm, define a classic feature set for amps of yesterday and today.

with the Premier Builders Guild (PBG), a manufacturing facility and distributor that produced a number of big-name boutique guitars and amplifiers for several years in the mid 2010s. After the dissolution of PBG in 2016, the Tone King brand passed to the manufacturer Boutique Amplifier Distribution, and Bartel returned to making high-end, highly hand-wrought creations under his own name. Spending time with the first official Tone King provided a welcome trip down memory lane.

"This is practically a vintage amp now since it's over 30 years old, so I'm sure that all the aged and worn-out components are adding to its character. Regardless, it's surprising to compare it to the current Imperial MKII and hear how much the design has evolved. The modern Imperial has a lot more headroom and volume, a lot more attack and presence, tighter bottom-end, and more extended top-end. However, the original really has that midrange howl and funky vibe that makes it fun to play old blues tunes."

Which is to say, perhaps, that the Imperial has traveled full circle, and the emperor's worn-in clothes are looking none too shabby for their travels. **VG**

Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Ram W. Tuli



1959 Fender
Esquire

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1977	Acoustic 125	100 watts, 2x15	\$275	\$425
1970	Ampeg AC-12	20 watts, 1x12 tube, accordion	\$400	\$550
2002	Ampeg SVT-5			
	Pro Bass Head		\$550	\$850
2002	B.C. Rich Eagle Supreme		\$3,500	\$4,500
1977	BC Rich Seagull II		\$2,650	\$3,500
1989	Boss Super Distortion & Feedbacker DF-2		\$150	\$250
2000s	Catalinbread Perseus		\$100	\$130
1990	Collings D3	Brazilian	\$8,500	\$11,000
1937	Cromwell GT-2 Tenor		\$1,000	\$1,500
1959	Danelectro Model 4423			
	Longhorn 4-String	Tweed case	\$2,500	\$3,000
1982	Dean V Standard (U.S.A.)	'Burst plain top	\$3,000	\$4,000
1932	Dobro Model 27 Cyclops	Round neck	\$1,750	\$2,250
1970s	Earth Sound R.	400 watts, 2x15,		
	Original 2000 Model 340	matching	\$550	\$750
1977	Electra Pedal Drive 515AC		\$45	\$55
1960s	Emperador Electric			
	Solidbody		\$250	\$350
1964	Epiphone EA-28 RVT			
	Pathfinder	1x12, reverb, trem	\$475	\$700
2001	Epiphone Les Paul			
]	Ace Frehley	3 pickups	\$900	\$1,125
1941	Epiphone Triumph	Natural	\$2,500	\$3,250
1966	Fender Bass VI	Sunburst	\$6,000	\$7,800
2015	Fender Champion 20	s.s., 20 watts, 1x8	\$70	\$95
1994	Fender Duo-Sonic Reissue	Mexico	\$325	\$450
1959	Fender Esquire	Blond, maple 'board	\$22,500	\$30,000
2005	Fender G-Dec Small cab		\$80	\$100
2002	Fender '64 Jazz (Custom Shop)	Closet Classic option	\$3,000	\$4,000
1965	Fender Jazzmaster	Common Color	\$10,500	\$13,500
1964	Fender Musicmaster	Nitro, red, white, blue	\$1,750	\$2,250
1992	Fender Precision U.S.			
	Deluxe/Plus Deluxe	Rare color	\$1,100	\$1,400
2002	Fender Showmaster FMT (Custom Shop)		\$2,000	\$2,500
1958	Fender Stratocaster	Mary Kaye, gold hw.	\$90,000	\$165,000
2015	Fender '63 Stratocaster (Custom Shop)	Relic	\$3,000	\$4,000
2018	Fender Albert Hammond Jr.			
	Signature Stratocaster	Mexico, MX serial	\$600	\$800
2006	Fender Super-Sonic/60	1x12, blonde/ oxblood	\$850	\$1,100
1966	Fender Telecaster Custom	Custom color	\$22,000	\$30,000
2002	Fender Victor Bailey Jazz		\$1,450	\$1,900
1997	G&L ASAT Classic			
	B-Bender	12 made	\$1,250	\$1,625
1977	Gallagher G-50		\$2,000	\$2,500
1965	Gibson Atlas IV	25 watts, 1x15,		
		piggy, brown	\$625	\$850



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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1955	Gibson Consolette Table Steel	P-90	\$1,000	\$1,500
1957	Gibson ES-125 D		\$2,875	\$3,750
2020	Gibson ES-335 Studio	Memphis	\$1,250	\$1,625
1979	Gibson ES-Artist		\$3,125	\$4,000
1966	Gibson Firebird VII	Sunburst, non-reverse	\$7,500	\$9,750
1965	Gibson GA-55			
	RVT Ranger	4x10	\$675	\$1,000
1966	Gibson J-200N/SJ-200N	Natural	\$6,000	\$7,750
1994	Gibson L-2 1929 Reissue		\$2,500	\$3,000
1991	Gibson Les Paul 40th Anniversary (from 1952)		\$2,750	\$3,500
2011	Gibson Les Paul			
	Eric Clapton 1960	Aged, unsigned	\$9,250	\$12,000
1976	Gibson Les Paul Standard	Sunburst, 4-piece pancake body	\$4,500	\$6,000
1946	Gibson LG-2 H		\$3,250	\$4,250
1981	Gibson SG Deluxe	Various colors	\$1,875	\$2,500
2013	Gibson Sheryl Crow Southern Jumbo Special Edition		\$3,250	\$4,250
2002	Gibson Tal Farlow	Various colors	\$3,750	\$5,000
1960s	Goya Electric Solidbody	Various models	\$550	\$800
1958	Gretsch Double Anniversary Mono (6117/ 6118)	Sunburst	\$2,750	\$3,500
1954	Gretsch Round-Up (6130)	Mahogany (few made)	\$15,000	\$18,000
1967	Guild Bluesbird M-75 (Hollow Body)		\$2,750	\$3,500
1989	Guild G-45			
	Hank Williams Jr.		\$1,375	\$1,750
1989	Guild SB-602	Fretless	\$700	\$1,000
1970s	Guyatone (Tokyo Sound Company)	Sustainer FS-6	\$100	\$150
1965	Harmony H1270 Flat-Top 12-String		\$550	\$750
1965	Hilgen Basso Profondo			
	B-2502	Combo 1x15	\$525	\$700
1989	Hohner Professional Series - TE Custom		\$750	\$1,000
1980	Ibanez Graphic Equalizer GE601 (808 Series)		\$75	\$100
1977	Ibanez Model 700 Series	Various models	\$775	\$900
1989	Jackson Randy Rhoads			
	U.S.A./RR Series	Early Ontario-built	\$2,500	\$3,500
1953	Kay K11/K8911 Rhythm Special	Blond	\$1,000	\$1,500
1989	KMD (Kaman) Effects Pedal	Flanger	\$80	\$120
1989	Kramer ZX Aero Star Series (Import)		\$150	\$300

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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
2008	Larrivee LS-03R	Rosewood	\$1,375	\$1,750
1957	Magnatone Model 213 Troubadour	10 watts, 1x12, v	\$1,300	\$1,825
1965	Marshall JTM 45 Model	45 watts,		
	1962 MK IV 2x12 Combo	Bluesbreaker assoc.	\$7,650	\$11,700
1969	Marshall Model 1992 Super Bass 100-Watt Head	Black, aluminum	\$3,050	\$4,600
1923	Martin 5-18		\$4,375	\$5,625
1996	Martin 000-28GE Golden Era	Sitka, rosewood	\$4,625	\$6,000
1950	Martin 00-18G		\$1,875	\$2,500
1961	Martin 0-18G		\$2,000	\$2,500
1997	Martin D-15/D-15M		\$1,000	\$1,375
2015	Martin D-28 Louvin Brothers		\$2,500	\$3,500
2005	Martin DC-16RGTE Aura		\$1,125	\$1,500
1992	Martin HD-28CTB	Custom Tortoise Bound	\$2,625	\$3,500
2012	Martin OM-18 Special		\$2,750	\$3,500
1989	Martin Stinger FX-1R	mini-stk, 2x10, 15 watts	\$175	\$250
1983	Mesa-Boogie Mark II C/			
	Mark II C + Combo	60 watts, 1x15	\$4,250	\$6,500
1979	Morley Electro-Pik-a-Wah PKW		\$40	\$80
2004	Music Man S.U.B. 1		\$550	\$725
1954	National Model 1120 New Yorker	1 pickup, blond, elec-arch	\$1,125	\$1,500
1950s	Old Kraftsman			
	Electric Solidbody	Various models	\$400	\$550
1961	Panaramic Acoustic-Electric Archtop	Full body cutaway	\$1,125	\$1,500
1980s	Peavey KB-100		\$150	\$250
1950	Premier Bantam		\$800	\$1,500
2008	PRS Mira			
	Maple Top (MT)	Maple over mahogany	\$1,000	\$1,500
2002	Rickenbacker Model 4001C64S		\$2,900	\$3,800
2002	Rickenbacker Model 350V63 Liverpool		\$2,750	\$3,500
1950s	Rickenbacker Model M-14-A	20 watts, 1x12	\$900	\$1,300
1916	Rolando 00-28K/1500		\$10,000	\$13,000
1989	Signature Guitar Company Oracle		\$2,000	\$2,500
1990s	Sovtek (New Sensor) Big Muff		\$300	\$400
1920s	Supertone Acoustic Flat-Top 13	Non-stencil, plain top	\$225	\$300
1997	Tacoma C-1C/			
	C-1E Chief		\$500	\$650
2003	Taylor 714ce-L1	Red cedar, walnut	\$2,125	\$2,750
2002	Taylor NS54ce		\$1,250	\$1,625
1975	Travis Bean TB-500		\$7,000	\$9,000
1994	Victoria Double Deluxe	35 watts, 2x12	\$1,475	\$2,050
1964	Vox Mark VI	England, white, Brian Jones	\$4,000	\$5,000
2006	Xotic Effects			
	Bass BB Preamp		\$130	\$160
2011	ZVex Effects Basstortion		\$95	\$130

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two fingers of his right hand; Ian could do that, too, but normally he used three, and I have always used three."

“We worked on the nuts and bolts of that kind of material, putting it into a nice, comfortable format of fingerpicking guitar and bass,” Casady added. “We both loved that music, and a lot of it sounded much better on fingerpicked guitar. It evolved into a new, orchestrated format.”

Unaware of any other duos with similar instrumentation, they felt they were breaking new musical ground. But...

"We didn't really think about that," Casady said. "It might have looked like it was a complicated scenario, but it really wasn't."

On Airplane tours and other travels, Kaukonen always brought the trusty '58 Gibson J-50 he'd bought at Pop's Music in Dayton, Ohio. In fact, he focused on fingerstyle prior to shifting to rock music in the late '60s. After Hot Tuna started gigging, he drew ire by talking about working more in that style.

“There’s been an ocean of water under the bridge since I made that statement,” he said. “I would rephrase it today in the light of evolving history. Music is just music, rock or not. The licks or modes might be influenced by genres, but the *essence* of music remains the same – melody, harmony, and rhythm. Being a solo fingerstyle guitarist allows one to do all three things at once, much in the spirit of a classical guitarist. When playing in a band, less is always more. That being said, Jack, having the deep musical sensibilities he has, found a perfect way to interact with my abilities at that time. Jefferson Airplane was a six-person band. I had to not only bring back my flatpicking abilities, which I put on hold when I started to fingerpick, but I had to learn to use my thumb and two fingers to play lines, not just thumbpicking

SONIC CONTRAST

Hot Tuna

By Willie G. Moseley

As lead guitarist and bassist for Jefferson Airplane, Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Casady were frontline in pop-music history, propelling the band's loud, dense sound to iconic status on the San Francisco psychedelic scene and performing at Monterey Pop, Woodstock, and Altamont.

So it seemed a contradiction when, just after playing for hundreds of thousands in August of 1969, Kaukonen and Casady set

up at The New Orleans House, a small club in Berkeley, to record their acoustic country-blues offshoot, *Hot Tuna*.

Inspired by fingerstyle players like Reverend Gary Davis, the concept germinated in hotel-room jams while the Airplane was on tour.

“I started playing three-finger style in 1960 at Antioch College,” Kaukonen recounted. “My mentor was Ian Buchanan, who was a friend of Reverend Gary Davis, who used only

rhythmic patterns. Some techniques worked better with some songs than with others.”

Casady’s main bass at the time was a Guild Starfire that had been modified by Frisco sound technician/acid king Owsley Stanley. With it, Casady interpolated his unique chordal approach.

“I had been playing a Fender Jazz, but I discovered that Guild and I really liked the tone of that hollowbody design,” he said. “I could do certain combinations and double stuff on it because it was short-scale. I used Framus flatwound strings and got a really smooth tone. I was trying to get as much of a natural sound as I could out of electric instruments.”

Why did the duo opt for a live album first?

“Because we liked the material we’d been playing, and it was convenient to do it that way,” Casady recalled. “We were comfortable with the interaction, as well.”

The New Orleans House started life as a jazz club, but rock bands soon shifted its focus. Still, Casady said, it was small and intimate.

“The acoustics were decent for a club, and there was space outside for the remote [recording] truck,” Kaukonen added.

The album’s opening track, “Hesitation Blues,” is an exuberant rendition of the tune. Propelled by Casady’s bass, it’s one of several on the album that cranks up the tempo during the instrumental break, adding to the enthusiasm of each performance.

“I learned ‘Hesitation Blues’ from Ian,” Kaukonen said. “I didn’t even know that version was credited to Reverend Davis until much later. I’m often asked, ‘What do you consider your most important contribution in your life?’ I’d say that after my children, it would be helping to make Reverend Davis’ music and name better-known.”

Bolstering the duo was harmonica player Will Scarlett, who had only recently been introduced to Kaukonen by guitarist Steve Mann.

“When we got to the sound check at the gig, Will checked with us and never left the stage,” Kaukonen chuckled. “He stayed for the next couple days. That’s just how we did things back then.”

Only two Kaukonen-penned songs appear on the album, closing the proceedings.

“I wrote ‘Mann’s Fate’ in 1964 or ‘65,” he said. “It was briefly called ‘75½ Wabash

Avenue’ because that’s where I lived when I wrote it. It was inspired by Steve, and there was that book by André Malraux. ‘New Song For The Morning’ was written when I was with the Airplane. I don’t know why it never got recorded on an Airplane project, but I loved the way it finally evolved with Will.”

Through the decades, Hot Tuna evolved through lineups and genres, while Kaukonen and Casady continued to perform in what became known as Acoustic Hot Tuna.

“That isn’t full-circle,” Casady chuckled. “We’ve never stopped!”

Both have positive memories of that first album.

“Jack and I were at the top of our game in that time,” Kaukonen summarized. “I don’t believe we could have replicated the energy and passion those performances invited, had we recorded in a studio. I have made many studio albums over the years, and they’re a different animal. Live is where the rubber meets the road!”

One of Casady’s recollections about the album has a gear-related twist.

“That Guild was stolen from a gig,” he said. “But it was returned to me 46 years later!” **VG**

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James Hetfield (left) and Kirk Hammett onstage in the Netherlands, February, 1984.

L.A.'s Whiskey a Go Go at a concert by his band, Trauma, joined in late '82 on the condition they move to El Cerrito in his native San Francisco Bay Area. The relocated lineup debuted at The Stone nightclub in March '83. In April, guitarist Kirk Hammett replaced Mustaine (who suffered from substance abuse and was prone to violence); he played on the debut album recorded in May.

Released in July on the indie Megaforce label, *Kill 'Em All* epitomized thrash's dynamic approach, distinguished by fast tempos and musical precision emerging from the underground, and paved the way for its more-ambitious, sophisticated successor, *Ride the Lightning*, recorded

at Sweet Silence Studios in Copenhagen with producer Flemming Rasmussen (of Rainbow's *Difficult to Cure* fame). The latter, released in July '84, received overwhelmingly positive critical attention, led to an eight-album deal with Elektra, and catapulted Metallica into the mainstream bolstered by an auspicious performance at Monsters of Rock. The stage was set for their masterpiece.

Master of Puppets, recorded from September through December of '85 at Sweet Silence, was also produced by Rasmussen, though Ulrich originally sought Geddy Lee's supervision. Its music eclipsed thrash/speed metal categorization and embodied Metallica's perfectionism and disciplined work ethic. Avoiding the era's slick production and overreliance on keyboard synthesizers, they pursued a more-organic production laden with extensive guitar orchestration. Motivated to surpass *Ride the Lightning*, primary songwriters Hetfield and Ulrich composed and crafted material in an El Cerrito garage, shaping riffs and ideas to be presented to the band, then arranged and graced with Hetfield's lyrics. To prepare, Ulrich and

GENRE GIANT

Metallica's *Master of Puppets*

By Wolf Marshall

In 1984, *Kerrang* magazine coined the buzzword "thrash," signaling the arrival of an unprecedented heaviness in rock music—not only in volume and aggression, but precision, velocity, complexity, and social messaging.

Alongside fellow seminal thrashers Megadeth, Anthrax, and Slayer, Metallica represented the zenith of the form's evolution, personified by larger-than-life sonics and challenging commentary beyond the machinations of '70s metal bands from which they sprang.

Representing the vanguard of this movement inspired by predecessors Iron Maiden, Motörhead, Tygers of Pan Tang, Saxon, Diamond Head, and the "New Wave Of British Heavy Metal," Metallica made its dramatic debut with *Kill 'Em All* and established their hegemony by

year's end with *Ride the Lightning* and attained preeminence with *Master of Puppets*.

Metallica was formed in '81, when guitarist/vocalist James Hetfield and Danish drummer Lars Ulrich met through an ad in the *The Recycler* and began collaborating on "power metal," a hybrid offspring of NWOBH and punk rock. They recorded "Power Metal," a demo for Metal Blade Records, were sporadically augmented by Dave Mustaine (founder of Megadeth), and in '82 released "Hit the Lights" with lead guitarist Lloyd Grant and Hetfield on bass and rhythm guitar. They recruited bassist Ron McGovney to play their first gig on March 14, 1982; by their second gig, they were opening for Saxon. Cliff Burton, who'd impressed Ulrich and Hetfield with his virtuosic wah-colored bass solo at

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rare Tortoise h'stock



1947 Martin 000-21
rare Tapered Braces



1946 Gibson J-45
rare Mahogany Top



1957 Gibson J-45
really clean original



1960 Gibson J-45
Flat Wide Neck Mint

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1960 Gibson
ES-330TD Dot Neck



1981 Gibson ES-335
Moog Prototype



1935 Vivi-Tone
Lloyd Loar design



1950 Stromberg
G-3 Cutaway 1 of 6



1952 Gibson ES-350N
big Blonde 2 P-90's



1968 Gibson L-7CES
1 of a kind Sharp Cut



1970 Gibson L-5CES
Flamey & Wide Nut



1982 Benedetto 16"
"Oval Hole" Custom



1970 Gibson Les Paul
Deluxe early 1st issue



1978 Gibson Les Paul
25/50 Flamey Top



1978 Gibson Les Paul
Custom Silver'burst



1981 Gibson Les Paul
Custom Gold'burst



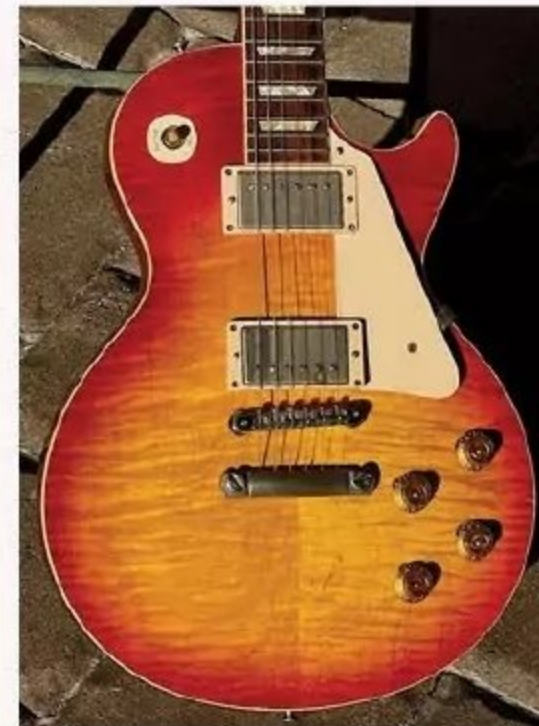
2003 Gibson Les Paul
1-off by Rick Garcia



1984 Gibson Les Paul
"Jimmy Wallace"'59 Re.



1984 Gibson Les Paul
Custom Fact. Kahler



2008 Gibson Les Paul
R8 50th Anv. Murphy



1968 Rickenbacker
366/12 6-12-string



1971 Rickenbacker
331LS Light Show



1988 Rickenbacker
360/12 "BT" Tuxedo



1964 Gibson SG Jr.
Nice "Wide Neck"



1979 Gibson SG
Exclusive Tap Knob



1976 Gibson Firebird
Bi-Centennial Mint !



1978 Hamer Standard
Factory Lefty # 0120



1981 Gibson Explorer
the 1st Korina Reissue



1960 Fender Strat Rare
Fiesta Red Slab Neck



1964 Fender Esquire
C.A.R. "C" width neck



1966 Fender
Jazzmaster 1 owner



1966 Fender Custom
aka "Maverick" Minty



1993 Fender Jeff Beck
Strat Midnight Purple



1994 Fender Strat Custom
Shop Factory Set-Neck



1996 Fender Strat
'57 Cunetto Relic



2000 Fender SRV Strat
Minty w/orig. 'gard



1959 Rickenbacker 4000
Bass Mapleglo 1 of 50



1967 Rickenbacker
4000 Bass Fireglo



1954 Fender Precision
Bass Contour & Bakelite



1961 Fender Precision
Bass nice Slab Neck.



1974 Alembic Series 1
very rare 9 1/2 lbs.



1980 Alembic Series II
Short Scale Zebra wood



1981 B.C. Rich Eagle
rare Fretless Bass



1991 Zemaitis Bass
original Metal Top

A Fast Metal

N.C. (Em) G5 A5 Bb5 A5 G5 A5 (Em) G5 A5 G5 A5

w/distortion P.M.-----|

B Moderately Slow Rock

Em D Cadd2 Amsus2 B7 B7/D#

clean tone let ring-----|

Every Metallica piece offers a wealth of guitar riffs; the nuclei of their music organisms. “Master of Puppets” is a mini symphony, with numerous sections defined by explicit riffs. Two exemplary riffs of differing characters are presented here; exhibiting two distinct sides of their musical persona. Both contain identifiers that pervade modern metal. Note mixed meters in each – $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{5}{8}$ in the first [A], $\frac{2}{4}$ and $\frac{4}{4}$ in the second [B]. The first (0:52) is the driving main riff that dominates the verses. Played

at a 220-plus bpm, it highlights thick, distorted guitar sounds and combines a pedaled low E in steady eighths with slurred power chords. Note the characteristic insertion of the tritone B $\flat$ 5 in the second bar. The second (3:33) occurs over a contrasting mid-tempo rock feel and exploits clean-toned arpeggiations for a pastoral, almost bucolic effect. Note the modal progression Em-D-C-Am-B7 in first-position chords with ringing open strings contributing to the folksy mood.

Hammett studied with instrumental teachers to sharpen their skills – Hammett with Joe Satriani. Almost every piece was preserved on demos, leaving room for only minimal changes before entering the studio; only “Orion” and “The Thing That Should Not Be” had to be completed during recording sessions.

Metallica’s growing complexity was evident throughout. Each song was analogous to a mini symphony, with interludes and instrumental bridges that required considerably more studio time than previous efforts. Their guitar sounds became the de facto metal tone of the era. Hammett played his ’74 Flying V, ’85 Jackson Rhoads, and Fernandes superstrat with EMG pickups. Hetfield favored a Jackson V and Gibson Explorer. Both played Mesa Boogie Mk IIC+ heads (sometimes as preamps) and Marshall cabinets with 65-watt speakers. The Mk IIC+ became the signature Metallica sound and is currently the most-coveted vintage Boogie.

Final mixes were done in January ’86 by producer Michael Wagener (Accept, Dokken, Ozzy Osbourne). Like other works that changed history, such as Miles Davis’ *Kind of Blue*, John

Coltrane’s *Giant Steps*, and John Mayall’s *Blues Breakers*, the band considered it an exemplary but routine recording at the time: “We were just playing music and drinking beers,” said Ulrich. Like its forerunners, it boasted assured mastery and transcended its genre and historic period.

“Battery,” the opener, became a favorite among fans and received numerous covers. Like “Fight Fire” and “Blackened,” it’s a shorter song with terraced dynamics and tempo changes that acts as a prelude to the album’s title track. Beginning with acoustic guitars layered to produce a medieval-consort impression, it proceeds to a heavy reorchestration (0:37) with drums, bass, and distorted guitars, then segues to a fast metal riff (1:06) that establishes a verse figure. The tritone E-B $\flat$, a defining interval since Black Sabbath, dominates the main riff (E-B $\flat$ 5-A5) juxtaposed against requisite low-E gallop rhythms. That mixture and variants are identifiers of Metallica as are odd bars of $\frac{5}{4}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, and $\frac{7}{8}$ punctuating $\frac{4}{4}$ phrases, and Hammett’s thrashing wah-inflected solo that acknowledges the influence of Michael Schenker, an early idol. The storyline’s ethos pledges allegiance

to San Francisco’s familial underground metal scene, a reaction against L.A.’s glam-metal poseurs.

“Master of Puppets” was the album’s sole single. Reputedly composed by Ulrich, the lengthy (8:36) multi-textured sectional piece reaches back to Mustaine’s tenure in the band and was Burton’s favorite track. Exceedingly popular with audiences, it remains their most-played song, with a grim storyline of drug addiction underscored by idiomatic metal mannerisms. Its heavy, muted riffing at 220 beats per minute (a speed-metal standard) includes bars of $\frac{5}{8}$ in the oblong truncated verse phrases executed with machine-like precision. A half-time interlude (3:33) of clean-chorused arpeggiation with inserted $\frac{2}{4}$ bars overlaid with a repeating neoclassical harmonized counterline leads to the first solo (4:10), a melodious medieval-tinged modal statement played by Hetfield. It builds to a heavier ensemble orchestration (4:49) and contrasting Phrygian (F $\sharp$ 5-G5) down-stroke riff (5:10) for an

additional verse before returning to 220 bpm (5:39) to accommodate Hammett’s speedy solo. The latter features Blackmore-like arpeggio riffs as well as tremolo picking, Satch-inspired whammy-bar antics, blues-rock string bending, and metallic shredding. The final section contains a reinterpreted quote from Bowie’s “Andy Warhol” (6:19) as transition riff into the last verse, and an effects-laden coda (8:00) with processed guitar and overdubbed laughter.

“The Thing That Should Not Be” reopened the vault of H.P. Lovecraft, venerated author of weird horror stories about unimaginable creatures from other dimensions; it had earlier unleashed “Call of Ktulu.” Its atmosphere personified metal’s occult imagery with a slower, menacing groove and eerie intervals played by acoustic guitar building to distorted electrics rendering dissonant chromatic and tritone progressions. Metallica enlarged its customary low-end girth by using Drop-D tuning for acoustic and electric rhythm guitars. The brief Hammett solo has an eccentric quality emphasized by wah sounds in conjunction with trills, whammy-bar zaniness and a careening

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harmonized phrase in mid flight.

“Welcome Home (Sanitarium)” was the single’s B side, a masterpiece conveying Hetfield’s heartfelt depiction of madness with progressive tangents, intricate guitar orchestration, and rhythmic fluctuations. The brooding rock-ballad feel supports its hypnotic main theme, comparable to asymmetric prog-rock figures – a cycling arpeggiated riff of 28th notes (8+8+4) rendered on clean guitar and enlarged by Hammett’s theme-conscious solo interludes in E minor illustrating his handling of mixed pentatonic and minor modes (0:47), command of diatonic semi-classical sequences, and modernistic slurred fifth intervals (2:09). An aggressive solo in double time (4:27) develops further pentatonic/modal combinations (Phrygian, Dorian) while a fourth (5:25) at the original ballad tempo explores alternate melodic colors over a harmonized riff. The cohesive arrangement is united by extensive doubled and harmonized guitar parts decorating each episode.

“Disposable Heroes,” a term borrowed from Ray Bradbury’s dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*, trumpeted an anti-war theme about expendable soldiers controlled by superiors. The master take re-created the demo with the exception of a riff cut and moved to “Damage, Inc.” One of the album’s faster tunes, it rivals earlier speed-metal tempos and was another sprawling (8:17) epic replete with unpredictable mood shifts and meter changes: beginning with the intro’s $\frac{6}{4}$ time and $\frac{4}{4}$ verse leading to complex combinations of $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ resulting in 11-beat (4+4+3) phrases at 1:58. A recurring Hammett part in verse endings alludes to old war-movie music while his solo, almost a minute long (4:26-5:24), is a strong personal statement – the epitome of shred-guitar heroics repurposing influences from Page, Blackmore, Schenker, Rhoads, and Malmsteen.

“Leper Messiah” is unflinching social commentary excoriating the greed, subjugation, and hypocrisy of televangelism. Origins remain

Fast Metal

Rhythm figure

The image displays three systems of musical notation for guitar, each featuring a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first system includes a 'w/wah' instruction. The second system includes a 'Repeat rhythm figure' instruction. The third system includes 'P.M.' and 'A.H.' instructions. Each system also includes a tablature staff with fret numbers and a bass staff with fret numbers.

Hammett's ear-catching solos enliven every track on *Master*. "Battery" boasts a definitive flight that captures the energy and abandon of his style. This excerpt (3:29-3:38) finds him building momentum with a series of fast pull-off sequences moving up the fretboard. Each pull-off is a small three-note cell, two of which are fingered while the third is the open third string. These are repeated as ostinatos and

sequenced up in whole-step increments – a synthesis of Angus Young, Randy Rhoads, and Van Halen resulting in interesting chromatic relationships and dissonance. The phrase is answered in measure 5 by a straighter eighth-note melody that acknowledges the blues-rock/modal influence of Michael Schenker, exacerbated by prominent use of the wah as a rocked pedal and EQ filter.

elusive. While Hetfield and Ulrich claim authorship, it has become a Burton trademark song with fans for its instrumental style. Mustaine insisted he wrote the main riff, and in '72, Bowie referenced a "leper messiah" in "Ziggy Stardust." In any case, it sports all the right Metallica ingredients – heavy mixed-mode power-chord verse riff, inserted $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{5}{4}$ bars, extensive chromaticism, feel and tempo changes, section-defining figures, and a concise Hammett solo merging arpeggio ostinato patterns, sequential runs, neoclassic shred, and blues-rock licks.

“Orion” is an instrumental opus intended as an extended bass solo. Written primarily by Burton, it begins with a faded intro of heavily processed bass parts layered to resemble an

orchestra, then revolves around a moody bass line and overdubbed guitars; combining two solos by Burton (one unaccompanied in $\frac{6}{8}$), one by Hetfield and three by Hammett. The title refers to the constellation with its “spacey sounding bridge.” Originally part of “Welcome Home,” it was separated in the studio and remained an instrumental.

The closer, “Damage, Inc.,” begins with atmospheric swelled chords and light guitar harmony suggesting a reinterpretation of J.S. Bach’s sacred song for voice and continuo, “Komm, susser Tod, komm selge Ruh” (“Come, Sweet Death”) (BWV 478). The final track mirrors the terraced dynamics of the opening song in a clever piece of bookending. However, gentleness inevitably gives way to thrash mayhem (1:19).

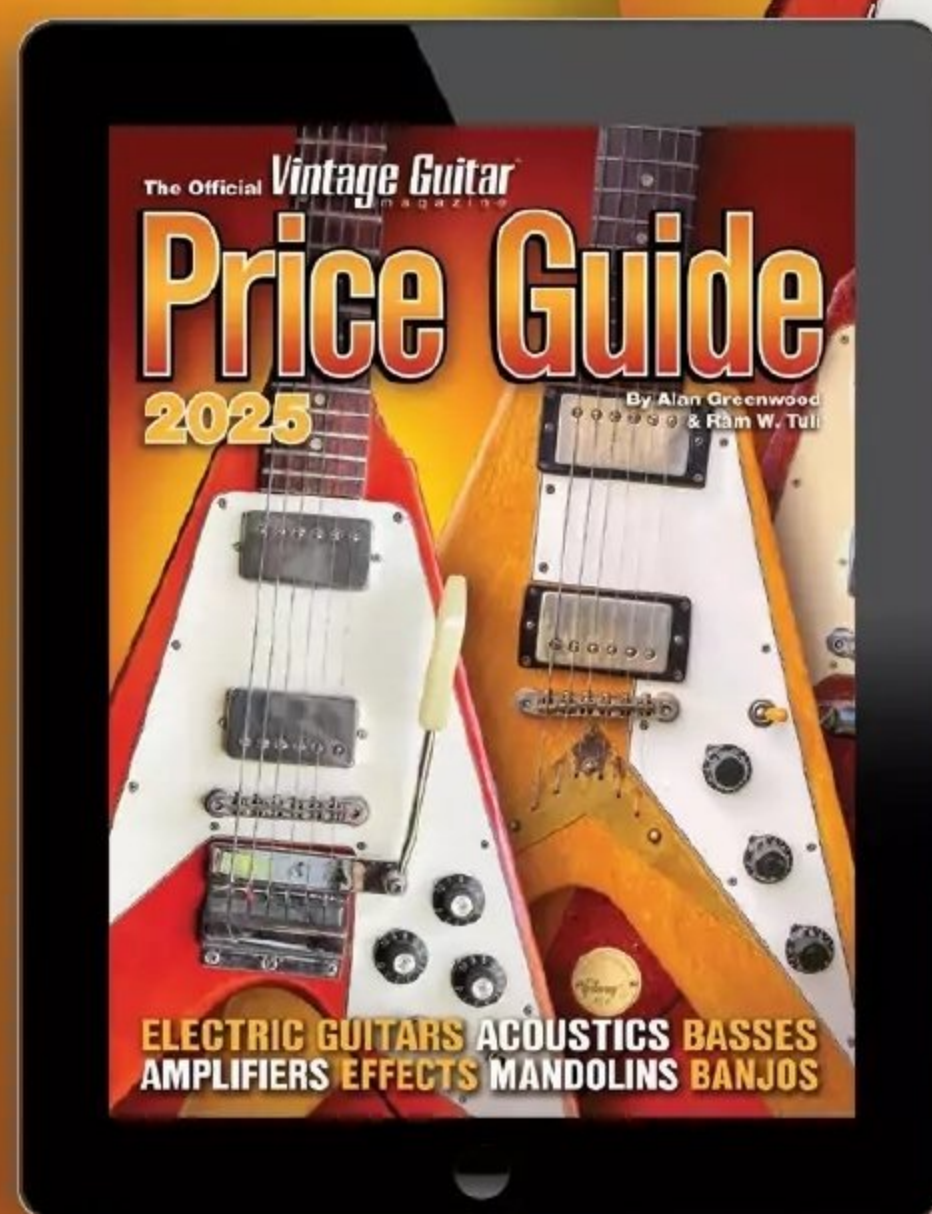
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with a heavy, punctuated metal riff that moves through various modes before establishing the main riff (verse), which spells an E diminished arpeggio in power chords – B^b5-G5-E5. Hammett's solo is emblematic of his style, with Eurometal phrases colored with wah (rocked in time and as fixed filter) but contains some clear references to Rhoads and Van Halen in his closing chromatic patterns and ostinato tap-on sequence (4:27).

Master of Puppets was released on March 3, 1986. It reached #29 on the *Billboard* 200 and #7 on the Top Rock Albums chart, spent 72 weeks on charts and eventually garnered six-times Platinum. Heralded by many as the genre's greatest album – one that redefined heavy metal, it found the band at their creative pinnacle foreshadowing...*And Justice For All*. It was the first metal recording honored by the Library of Congress for its cultural, historical, and aesthetic relevance. In its wake, Metallica toured with Ozzy Osbourne from March through August of '86, increasing their fanbase in metal and mainstream hard rock. Tragedy struck during the European leg of their Damage, Inc. tour when Cliff Burton was killed in an accident that September 27, when their bus rolled off the road and he was thrown through a window. The album remains a triumph but a bittersweet work accorded an even deeper reverence for its connection with their lost bandmate.

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 latest book is *Jazz Guitar Course: Mastering the Jazz Language*. Others include *101 Must-Know Rock Licks*, *B.B. King: The Definitive Collection*, and *Best of Jazz Guitar*. A list credits can be found at wolfmarshall.com.

Fast Metal

[illegible][illegible]

In “Leper Messiah,” Hammett mixes neoclassic shred, chromaticism, and pattern playing with diatonic scalar melody and pentatonic blues rock. This noteworthy solo (3:57) begins with keyboard-inspired arpeggios that have been stylistically correct since Blackmore and Deep Purple. He outlines Em, F,

and G triads in the triplet patterns of measures 1-6. The slurred sequential run in 7-8 alludes to Rhoads in its tonality-defying mix of notes that culminates in E minor. The final passage, measures 9-12, conveys a contrasting bluesy feeling emphasized in its phraseology, string bends, and pentatonic note choices.



Tony Vega



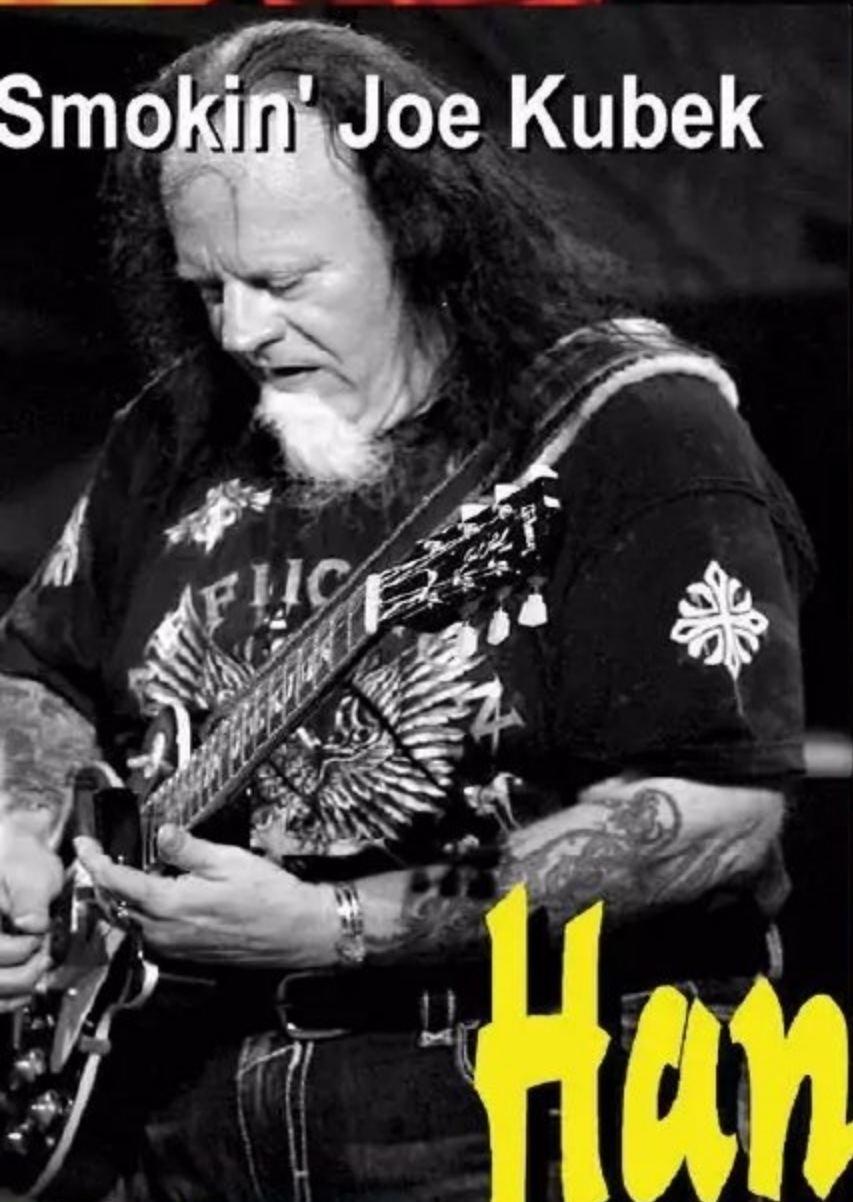
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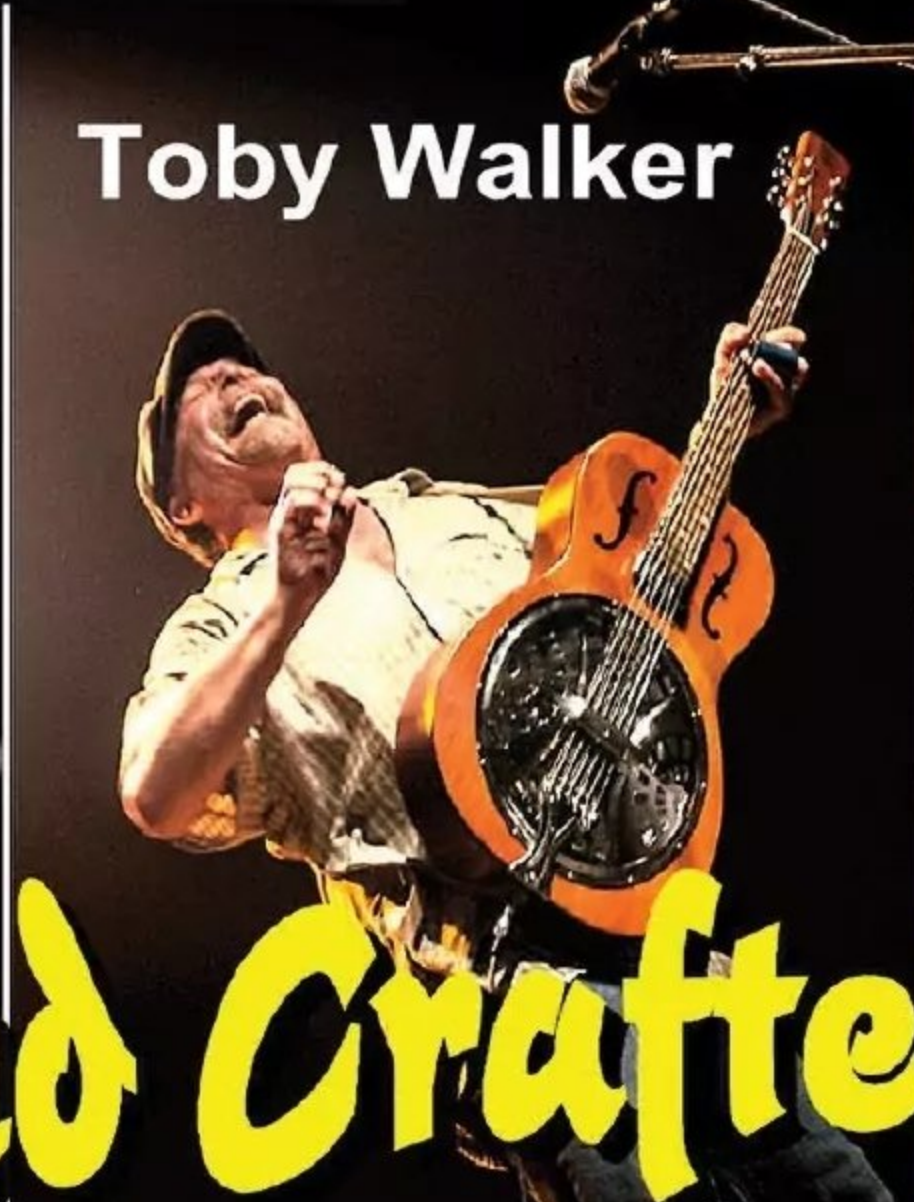
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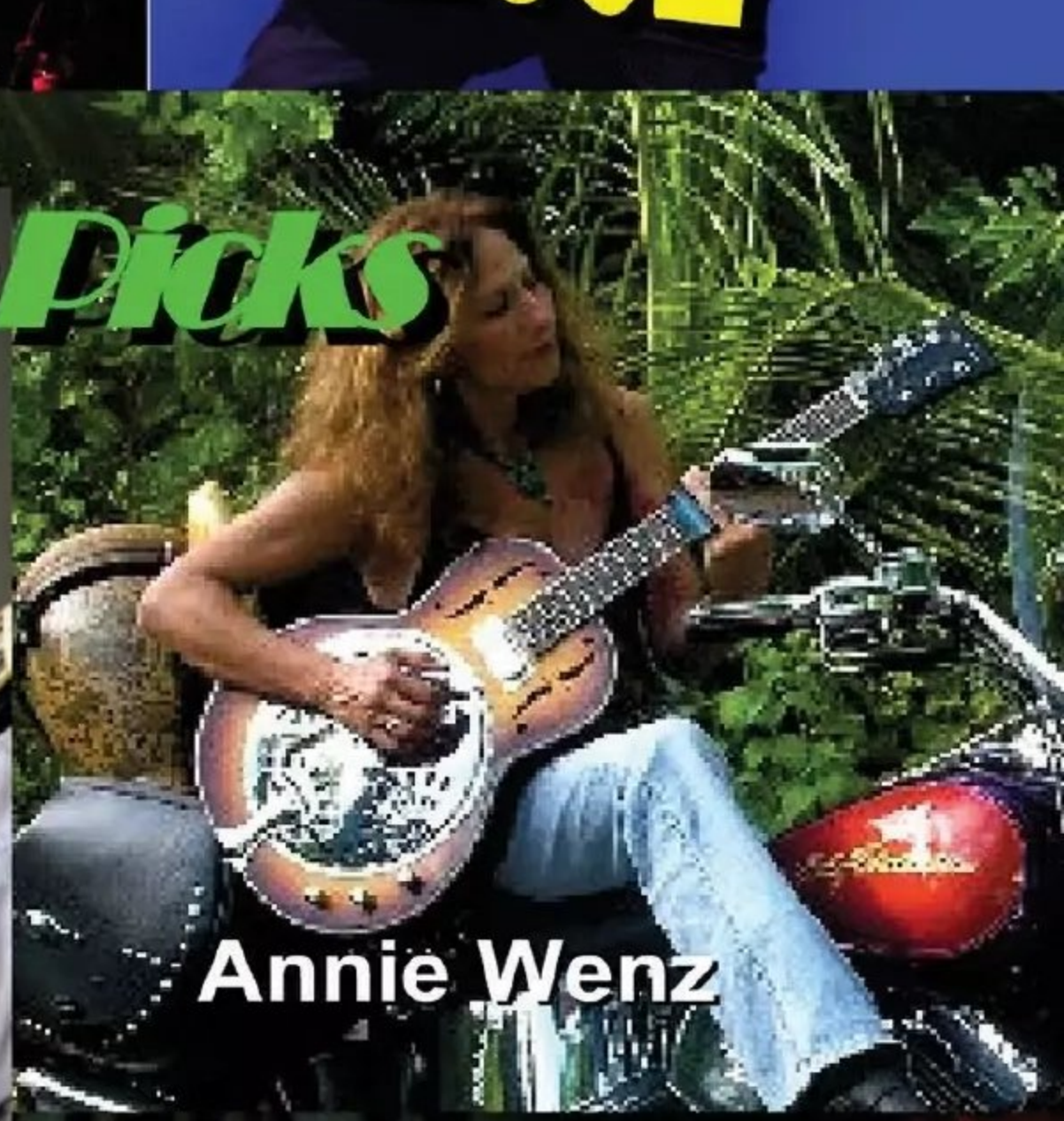
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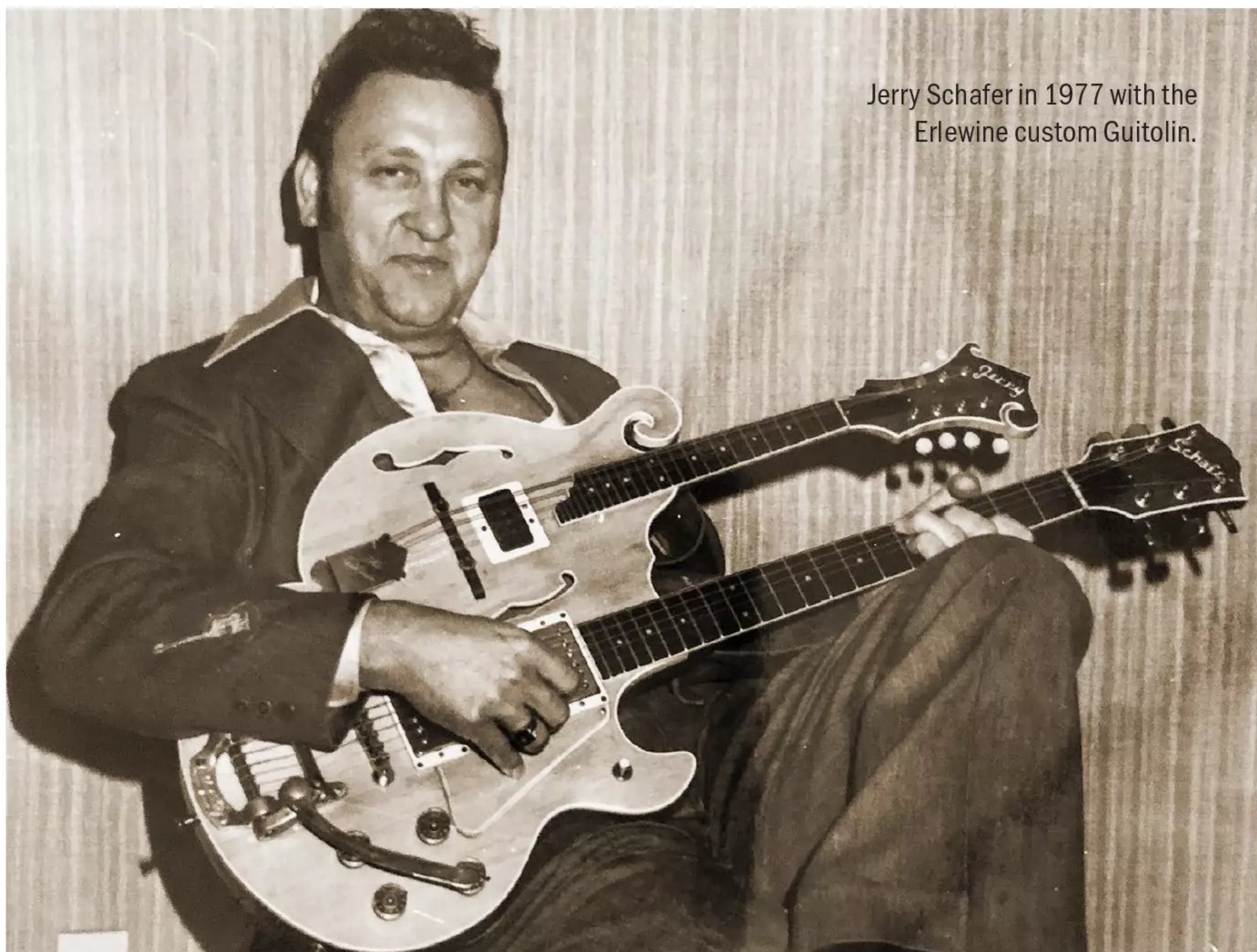
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Jerry Schafer in 1977 with the Erlewine custom Guitolin.

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A Return to Glory for “Jerry”

By Dan Erlewine

In 1977, I was doing guitar repair in Big Rapids, Michigan, and my services included picking up and delivering repair instruments for several stores. One was Schafer Music, in Mount Pleasant; every couple of weeks, I’d stop to grab whatever they had for repair and hang out with owner Jerry Schafer. He and his wife, Bethel, had

seven children and the entire family played instruments.

1) Jerry’s band had many iterations over the years, but a mainstay included his good friend, Ron Flaughter (left), Ron’s wife, Gerda, on drums, Jerry (and his ’63 Gibson EMS-1235), and Bethel on bass.

2) On one visit, Jerry asked if I could make a semi-hollow doubleneck for him, saying he wanted something that sounded better, acoustically, than his 1235. I jumped at the chance, and designed something that paid homage to two legendary Gibsons – the F-style “Loar” mandolin and the ES-335. Five months later, I was tuning it up for delivery. I was thrilled with the results, but Jerry was even more so, and played the heck out of it for many years.

3) I hadn’t seen the “Guitolin” for 47 years before Jerry’s son, Dan, a professional musician in Nashville, sent a photo, knowing I’d appreciate an update. To my surprise, the top had been oversprayed with a nicely executed sunburst. Seeing it gave me the urge to build another, and I asked Dan if he would loan it for measurements, so I wouldn’t have to start from scratch. He was gracious enough to send it, and I discovered it had undergone other changes, some of which I did *not* like. It didn’t take long to decide we had to put “Jerry” back in order.

4) The Tune-O-Matic bridge had been replaced with a piezo pickup that required larger holes for its anchors. That was bad enough, but the worst thing about the mod was it raised string action, and the bridge couldn’t be lowered because of the wires running underneath.

5) I was thrilled to remove its poor-quality/loose-fitting anchors.

6) My shopmate, T.K. Kelly, made new anchors from solid brass. He knurled the outside and threaded it internally to 8-32. Here, the anchor is being screwed onto the post (held gently in the drill chuck). Tune-O-Matic bridges have always been mounted on 6-32 threaded posts with threaded thumbwheels for adjustment. For our shop-made instruments and guitars that aren’t old/collectible, we make our own posts and thumbwheels that are threaded 8-32 (the next



size up). The thicker posts and thumbwheels are hand-machined to tighter tolerances, which make for noticeably better coupling and tone transfer. I started doing this on my Albert King Flying V replicas, and I really like the results.

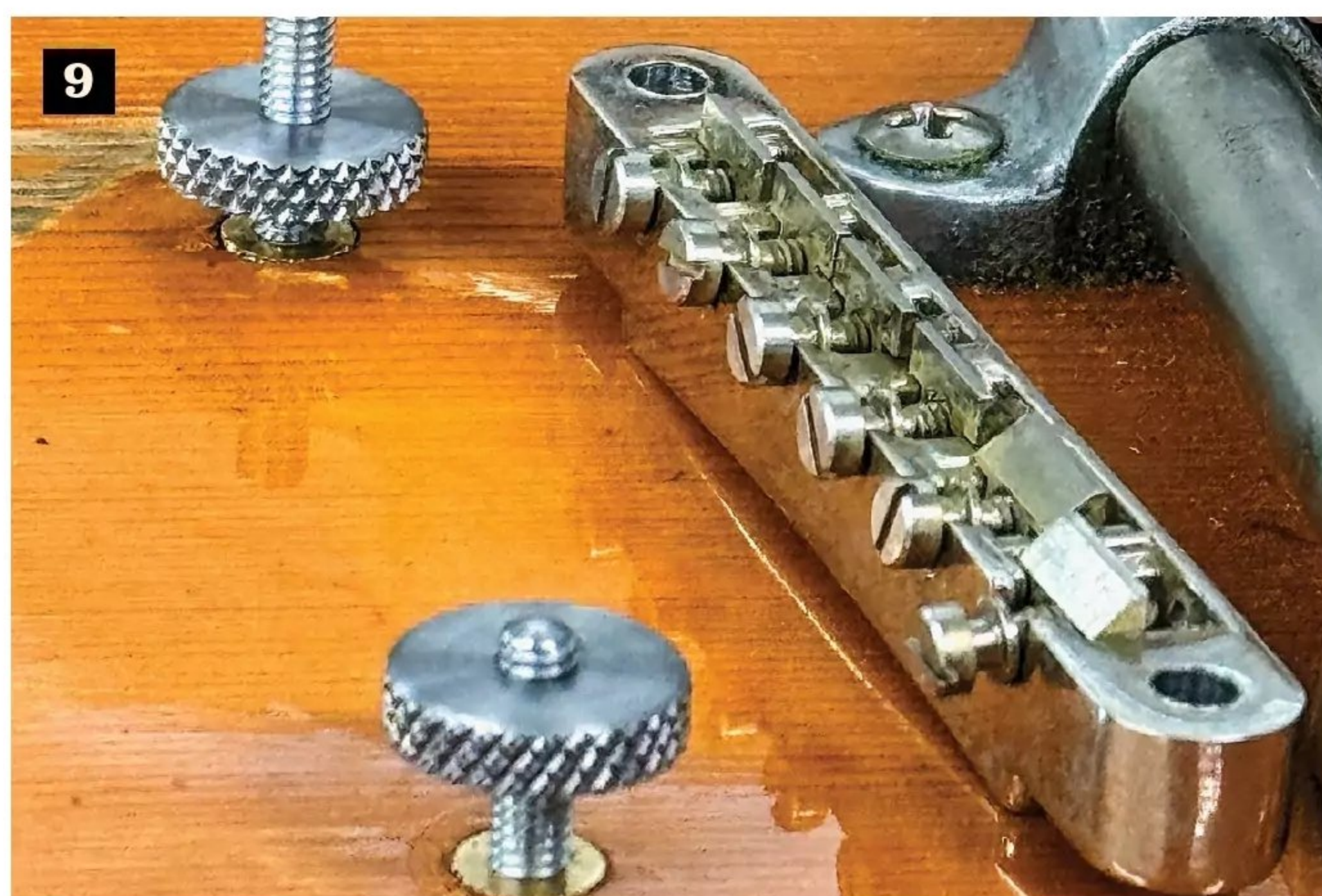
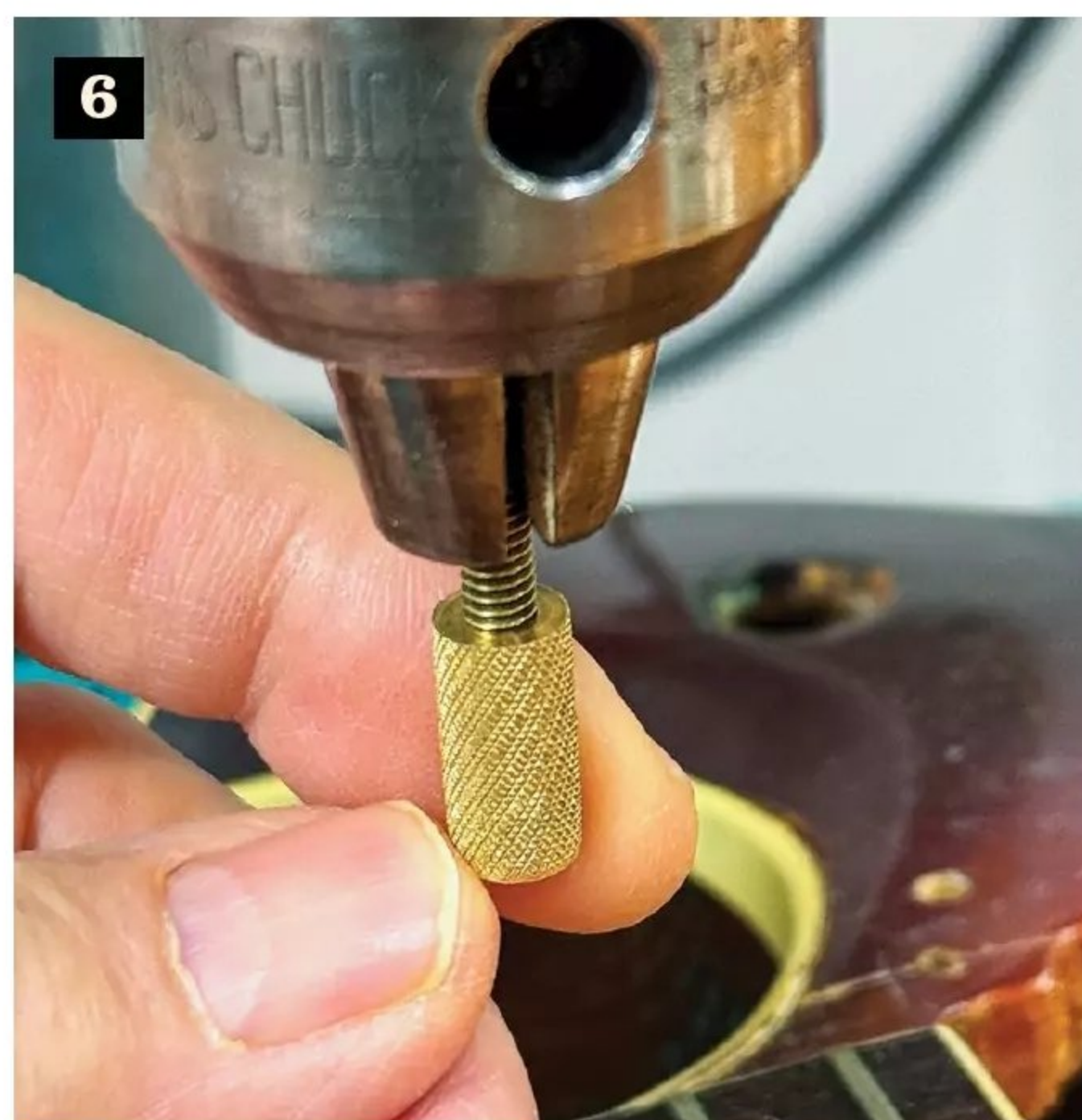
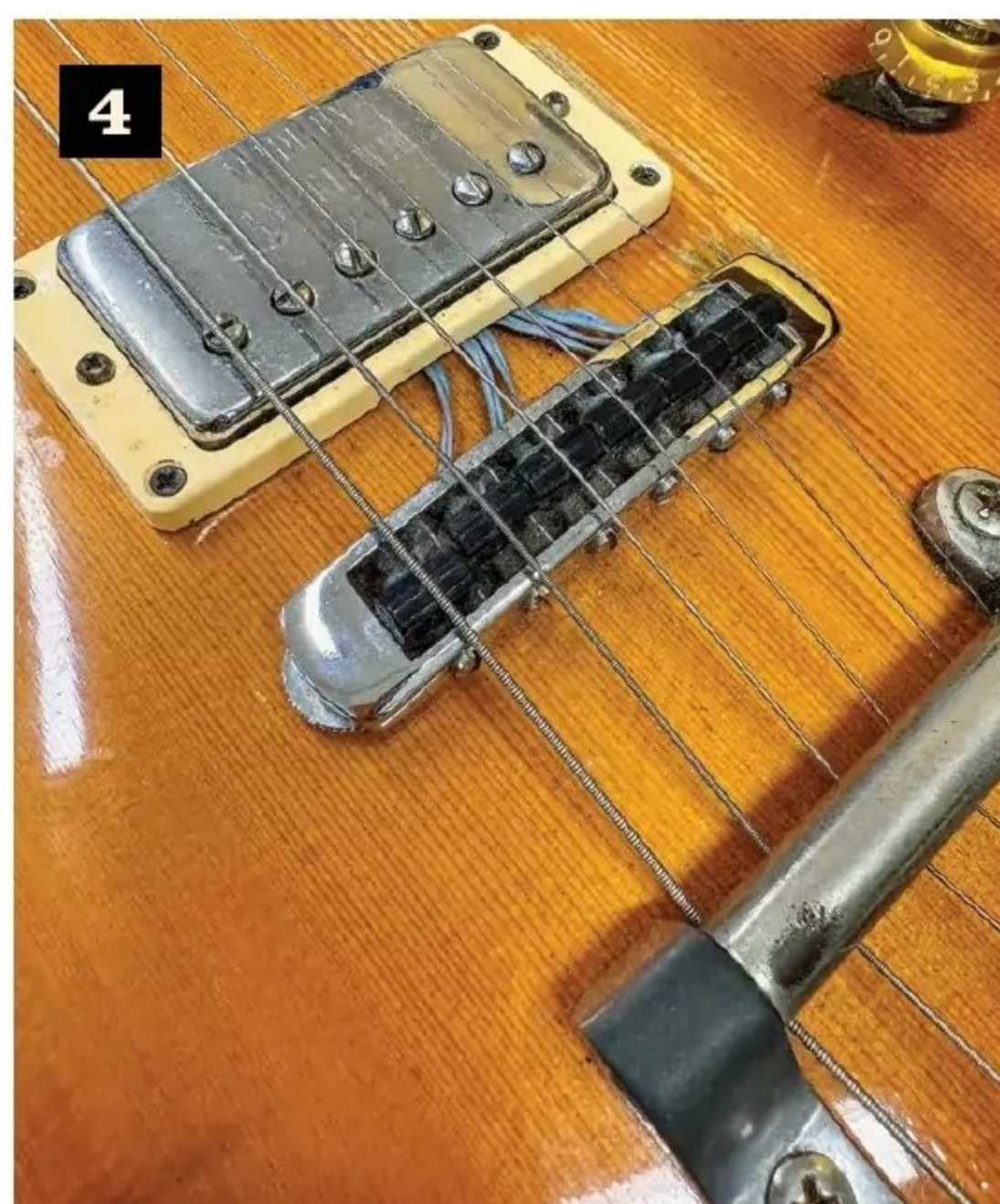
7) With the post still in the closed chuck,

the anchor was pressed into the body with a bit of hide glue applied to it. The knurling accepts the glue in its recesses, making for a stronger connection in the wood and further aiding tone transfer.

8) To make new thumbwheels, T.K. knurled a piece of steel rod to match the new bridge,

which is a Pigtail tune-o-matic in aged nickel. After drilling and tapping the 8-32 thread, he cut the thumbwheels.

9) The new bridge studs and thumbwheels are ready. In part two of this project, we'll show the tricky process of making the bridge's holes larger to accept the new posts.

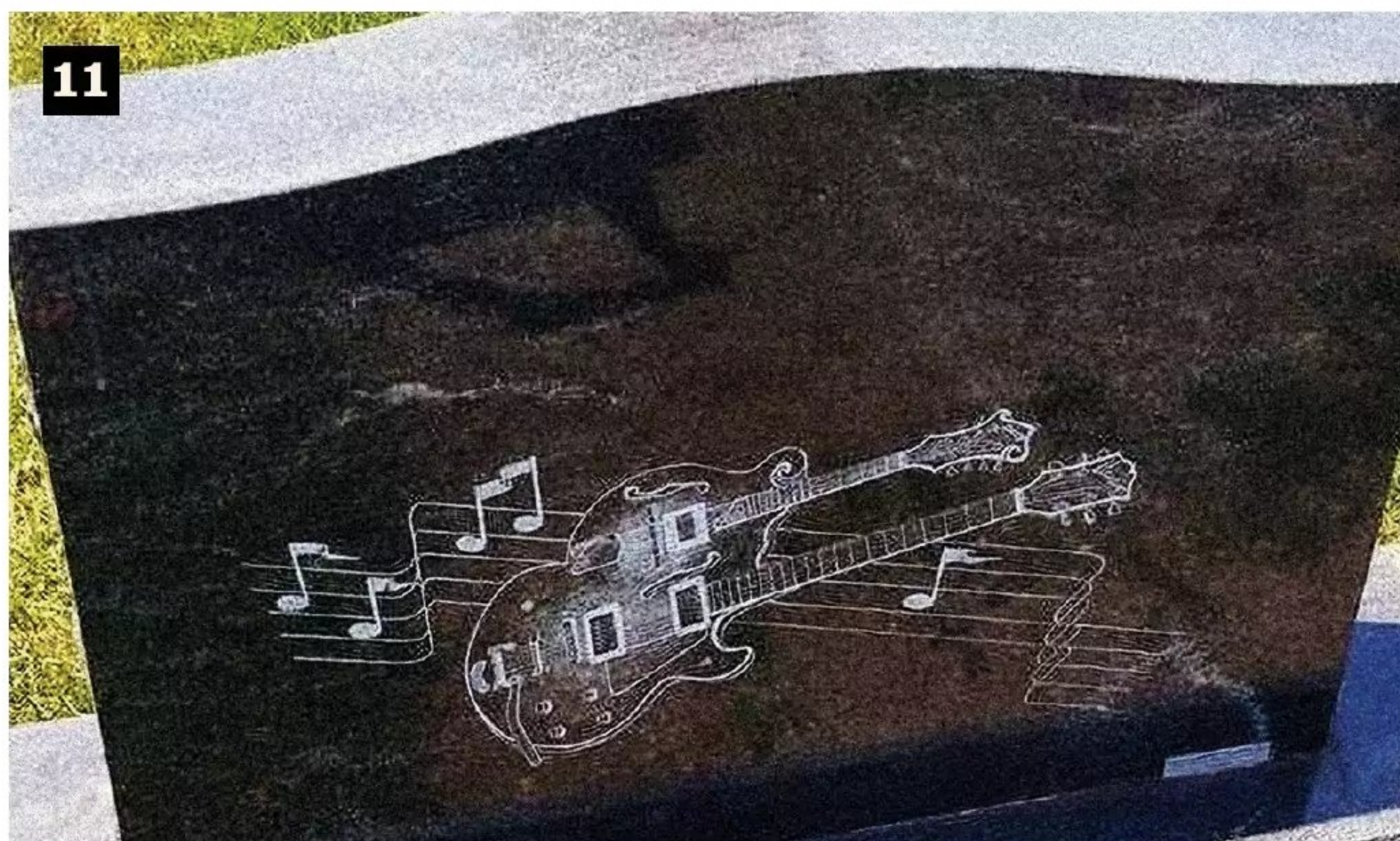


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10) Also in part two, we'll address this jungle of electronics.

11) When Jerry passed away in 2016, his family had the Guitolin's image engraved on the back of his headstone.

Dan Erlewine has been repairing guitars for more than 50 years. The author of three books, dozens of magazine articles, he has also produced instructional videotapes and DVDs on guitar repair. From 1986 through his retirement in late 2019, Erlewine was part of the R&D team, and company liaison for Stewart-MacDonald's Guitar Shop Supply. Today, he operates a repair shop in Athens, Ohio, as well as building replicas of the guitars he made for Albert King and Jerry Garcia in 1972. This column has appeared in VG since March, 2004. You can contact him at danerlewine@gmail.com.



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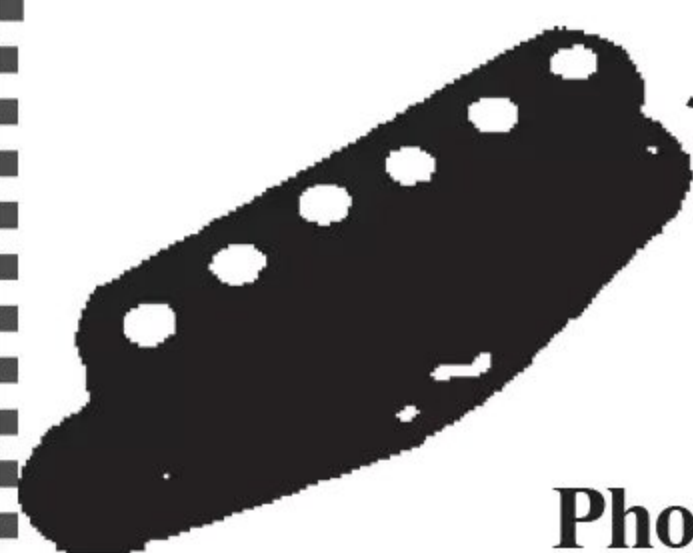
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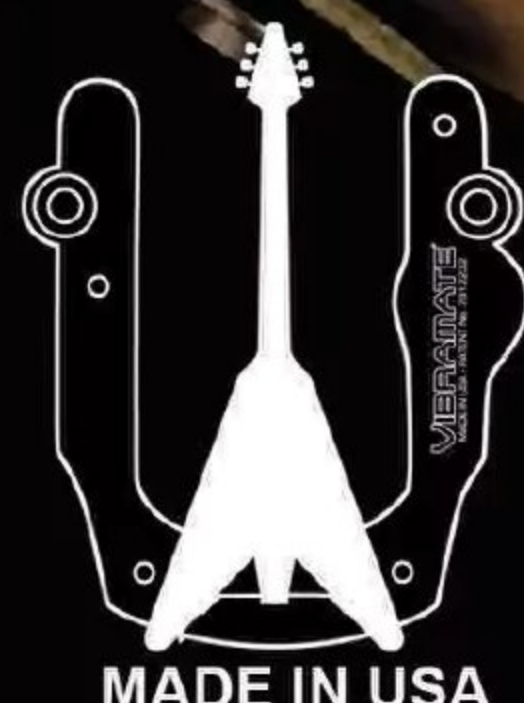
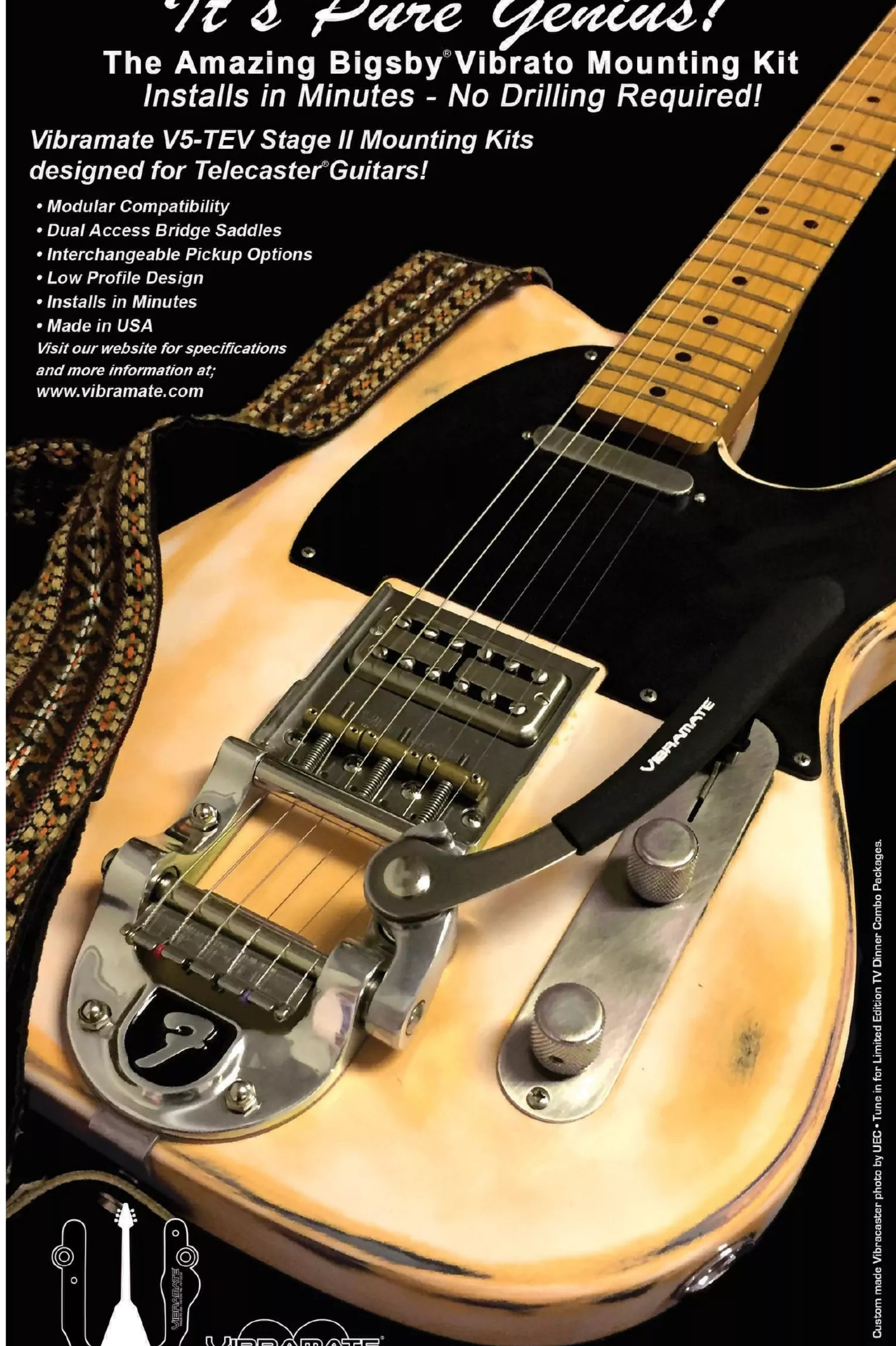
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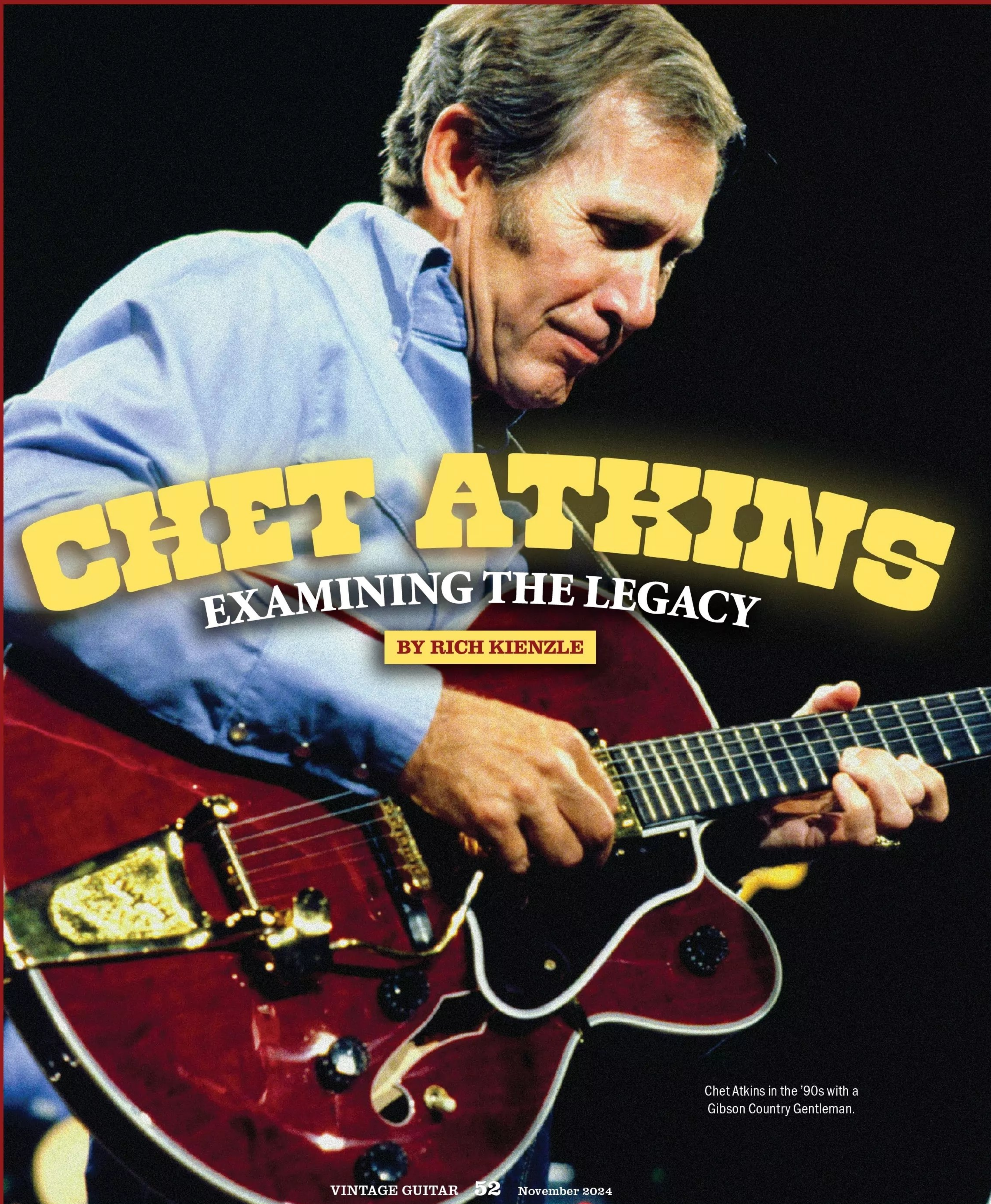


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CHET ATKINS

EXAMINING THE LEGACY

BY RICH KIENZLE

Chet Atkins in the '90s with a
Gibson Country Gentleman.

“Years from now, after I’m gone, someone will listen to what I’ve done and know I was here. They may not know or care who I was, but they’ll hear my guitars speaking for me and maybe they’ll understand something. That’s the way it’s supposed to be.”—Chet Atkins, *Me and My Guitars*

A century after his birth in the Smoky Mountains of rural eastern Tennessee, 23 years after his death, Chet Atkins’ legacy endures in a multitude of ways among musicians and fans spanning generations and genres. Earlier this year, an all-star tribute collection was released featuring everyone from Tommy Emmanuel, Vince Gill, Bryan Sutton, and Steve Wariner to Eric Clapton. But that’s merely one example of his seemingly endless influence.

In a 21st-century era of picker luminaries ranging from Brent Mason to Billy Strings, it’s hard to imagine that country guitarists were once stereotyped as primitive, rudimentary, barely competent players. Chet, his arsenal of Gretsches, his creativity, and decades of influential, inspirational recordings shattered that illusion.

“If it weren’t for Django Reinhardt, George Barnes, Les Paul, and Merle Travis, I probably couldn’t play a note today,” he declared in a 1955 magazine article.

The kid who grew up on a tiny farm not far from the whistle-stop hamlet of Luttrell was the son of a music teacher and half-brother of Jimmy Atkins, an aspiring professional guitarist and singer who was Chet’s first guitar inspiration. While Chet started by playing fiddle, he moved on to guitar and took in every bit of music he could find, including his stepdad’s Blind Lemon Jefferson records.

When asthma forced him to move with his dad to the friendlier climate of Georgia, a homemade radio opened a broader universe in the

days when music was played live. Travis, thumbpicking away at Cincinnati’s WLW, Barnes’ groundbreaking amplified guitar beaming in from Chicago and New York, and the Les Paul Trio with Jimmy Atkins on rhythm guitar

Atkins in 1954 with the Gretsch Streamliner Special that served as a 6120 prototype.

and vocals, set the course for the rest of his life.

Radio would become his first professional workplace in 1942, when, at 18, he joined WNOX radio in Knoxville, Tennessee, as a staff guitarist. When he wasn’t on the air or rehearsing, he’d listen to jazz, classical, and pop he found in the record libraries of the stations where he worked. He moved frequently between jobs in the South and Midwest, not always voluntarily. Some station officials admired him. Others sensed he played “too country.” Still others complained his polished style was “too pop.”

That broader perspective showed up in 1946, during his first stay in Nashville as Grand Ole Opry star Red Foley’s lead guitarist. On his first-ever recording under his name, “Guitar Blues,” he merged blues and country elements with an unexpectedly jazzy clarinet solo in the middle. At KWTO radio in Springfield, one station official, Si Siman, loved his work. But a new manager there, convinced Atkins played too smoothly, fired him.

Nonetheless, Siman spread the word. When Chet

was playing in a Western-swing band on a Denver radio station in 1947, he got a call from Steve Sholes, head country producer at RCA Victor Records. Merle Travis was on a hot streak, recording hit vocals laced with his distinctive guitar. Sholes thought RCA needed its own Travis. Atkins sang on his first records, picking a Gibson with George Barnes (an in-demand Chicago studio musician) playing rhythm guitar.

Atkins returned to WNOX and connected with the comic duo of guitarist Homer Haynes and mandolinist/guitarist Jethro Burns, who backed him on some of his 1949 recordings. All three were Django Reinhardt fanatics, and an exuberant Hot Club of France flavor gushed through on “Gallop on the Guitar” and “Main Street Breakdown.”

Atkins eventually returned to Springfield as featured sideman with Mother Maybelle and the Carter Sisters (June, Anita, and Helen). Working with Maybelle, who was one of his guitar heroes, was



Atkins with close friend George Barnes in a New York City studio, 1956.

a real kick. He accompanied them to the Opry in '51, and this time he was there to stay, and worked his way into the growing number of Nashville recording sessions, where he made an impact playing lead or rhythm guitar on hits by Hank Williams, the Carlises, and the Louvin Brothers.

His sound continued evolving on his own records as he added new flourishes like the tasteful harmonics on his 1951 recording of "Indian Love Call" and occasional use of octaves, something he picked up from Django, as well as open tunings. An habitual tinkerer, he constantly tried new electronic ideas, which would have far-reaching repercussions.

In '54, he purchased an Echo-Sonic amp (with built-in echo unit) from Ray Butts, the Illinois radio repairman who became a friend and collaborator. He'd also use pickups wired out of phase.

From the '40s and into the '50s, Atkins used Gibsons and a D'Angelico Excel that he modified as he did most of his instruments. But in 1954, he began working with Gretsch to create the Atkins signature model 6120 Hollow Body, a design still part of Gretsch's offerings including with Steve Wariner and Brian Setzer signature models. In '55, Gretsch officially launched it and a 6121 solidbody version, each with a "G" brand on the body and kitschy West-

ern embellishments that Atkins found unappealing (see more on Atkins-inspired Gretsch guitars on page 58).

Dissatisfied with the original pickups, he had Gretsch build a one-off seen on the cover of *Finger-Style Guitar*. It was much like a 6120, but the hollow body was closed and given decorative decals made to look like sound holes. The pickups were prototype Ray Butts designs reflecting his first attempts at a "humbucking" pickup, something Chet specifically requested. These became Gretsch's Filter'Trons.

While he was inducted to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1973 (its youngest inductee at the time), it wasn't until 2002, a year after his death, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame got around to inducting him. His place there was warranted for a slew of reasons; as country, boogie, and blues began merging into what became rockabilly, Chet was one of its instrumental building blocks.

It wasn't just Scotty Moore and Carl Perkins who combined Travis/Atkins fingerstyle and single-string picking. Chet influenced Gene Vincent lead man Cliff Gallup and, especially, Eddie Cochran, a capable fingerstyle picker who also played a 6120. The twang might have been the "thang," but Duane Eddy was a proud Atkins disciple for his entire life, and used a 6120 early on.

Those Atkins LPs had impact. Don Wil-

son and Bob Bogle of the Ventures were intrigued by his take on Johnny Smith's jazz instrumental "Walk! Don't Run," from Atkins's 1957 *Hi-Fi in Focus* LP, and in 1960 rearranged it into one of the great early rock-guitar instrumentals.

Across the Atlantic, in Liverpool, young George Harrison had a similar devotion. According to Beatles biographer Mark Lewisohn, in the late '50s, Harrison and Paul McCartney learned the complex "Bouree" from *Hi-Fi in Focus*. Once the Beatles were established, Harrison carried Atkins LPs and a small record player on tour. By 1963, he owned 11 Atkins albums including many American versions sent by relatives in the U.S.

George's first Gretsch was the famous black Duo-Jet, followed by the Atkins Country Gentleman and Tennessean models he used onstage. His solos on "I'm A Loser," "I Feel Fine," "She's A Woman," and "What Goes On" all invoked Chet. In a 2004 interview, John Fogerty said, "I (had) promised myself I was going to be one of the greats, one of the really good guitar players, like Chet Atkins, when I was a kid." And so it went. Atkins' influence on Mark Knopfler, along with their live and recorded collaborations, inspired many. Brian Setzer's 2011 *Goes Instru-mental* album referenced Atkins on "Blue Moon of Kentucky" and his original "Hillbilly Jazz Meltdown."

It was no small irony that, as rockers heard and studied his recordings, Chet and fellow producer Owen Bradley at Decca Records were creating a new, smoother approach to country music intended to appeal not only to its core constituency, but to pop-music fans. Known as the "Nashville Sound," it took an increasing number of country hits to the pop charts, boosting Chet's stature. His growing skills as a producer put RCA Nashville artists Jim Reeves, Don Gibson, Skeeter Davis, and the Browns on both the country and pop charts.

Though he made use of Nashville's storied A-Team session players, he occasionally played on some of the hits he produced—brief solos that remain impressive even today, such as his eloquent intro on Jim Reeves' 1957 Nashville Sound hit "Four Walls" and a brief, incandescent solo on Don Gibson's "Oh, Lonesome Me."

While reaching for a wider audience as producer, he did likewise as an artist. With upscale music fans buying expensive high-fidelity and stereophonic gear in the late '50s, Chet Atkins albums sat on shelves alongside other easy listening "adult" music luminaries from Sinatra to Percy Faith's Orchestra. Most affluent listeners would not have allowed a Merle Travis album anywhere near their turntables.

Legendary journalist David Halberstam was a reporter for the Nashville *Tennessean* in 1959, when he wrote liner notes to Atkins' *Mister Guitar* LP. He noted that "Atkins' records sell better at Nashville's two major record-and-book stores which cater to local eggheads than... the country-oriented Ernest Tubb record store."

It wasn't just Nashville; the 1960 LP *Chet Atkins' Workshop* at one point was one of *Billboard* Top 10 pop LPs.

Though he had an occasional hit single such as 1954's "Mister Sandman," LPs allowed him to stretch out and experiment with homemade electronic wah and chorus effects considered ordinary today, but revolutionary at the time.

On his 1959 album, *Teensville*, he recorded "Django's Castle," a Reinhardt original both tasteful and innovative.

Not only did he use tremolo, but a foot-operated Volume pedal he adapted to alter tone. Steel guitarists used Volume/Tone pedals earlier, but Chet brilliantly integrated his homegrown unit to create a pleasing and distinctive performance, as heard on "Hot Toddy." He had one more significant hit single in 1965 with "Yakety Axe," a guitar adaptation of Boots Randolph's signature tune "Yakety Sax." The LP would remain his primary medium.

Gretsch expanded the Atkins line in '58 with the double-cutaway 6122 Country Gentleman and single-cut 6119 Tennessean. Both were far less flashy.

Atkins' responsibilities at RCA Nashville grew after Sholes was promoted to head of the label's pop operation – a reward for signing Elvis in 1955, before his potential was clear. As his producer duties increased, he saved most of his guitar energy for his own albums, and didn't always do them at RCA.

Home studios, so common today, were anything but when Atkins built one in his second Nashville home in 1952, followed by a larger basement facility in his third and final residence in '58 (seen on the cover of *Workshop*). He'd cut backing tracks with

members of Nashville's A-Team at RCA, then record his own parts at home.

As the '60s progressed, Atkins gradually reduced his onstage performing except for select dates with friends and A-Team members pianist Floyd Cramer and tenor sax man Boots Randolph. Despite that, his

protégé, future country superstar Jerry Reed, who became both a member of the A-Team and an RCA singer/instrumentalist. Merle Travis largely picked with his right-hand thumb and index finger. Atkins also utilized his middle finger. Reed, however, often used his thumb and all four fingers to create a different style,

exemplified by his early signature tune "The Claw." When Atkins began recording Reed's instrumentals for his own albums, he adapted his picking accordingly. Albums with Reed forced Atkins to double down as he and his friend swapped licks.

He appreciated jazz, particularly the swing playing of Django, George Barnes, and Les Paul that influenced him so much. He also came to admire the work of fellow A-Team players he worked with every day, such as Hank Garland and Harold Bradley.

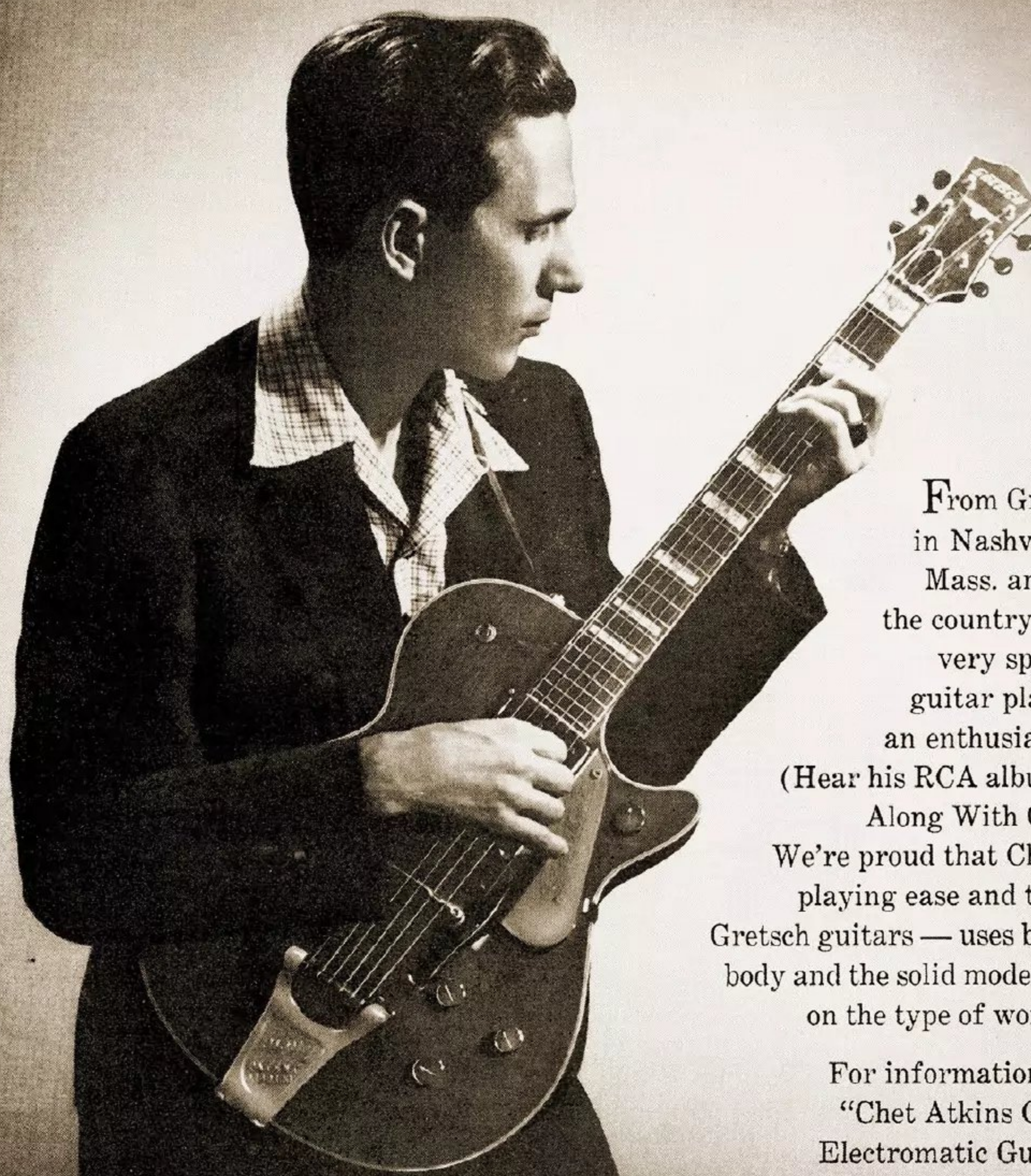
Later, however, when he'd record jazz numbers, he handled them as he did "Walk! Don't Run" – with an eye toward accessibility. His 1964 *Progressive Pickin'* LP reflected that approach. Backed by a rhythm section, he offered light, pleasing renditions of "Gravy Waltz," "So Rare," Johnny Smith's "Satan's Doll," and the recent Toots Thielemans favorite "Bluesette" with minimal improvisations.

His belief in jazz players, however, and his love of the music, remained deep. He signed the brilliant, troubled thumbpicker turned jazz virtuoso Lenny Breau

to RCA and tried to help him overcome the self-destructive instincts that ultimately took his life. Many jazz players made no secret of their admiration. He recorded two best-selling albums with old friend Les Paul, and counted George Benson and Earl Klugh among his admirers. He'd record with both.

Atkins was never content to pursue the status quo for long. In 1968, RCA appointed him Vice President in charge of Nashville Operations. By then he was overseeing a sizable operation including a number of other RCA producers. A couple years earlier, amid the Civil Rights movement, he and higher-

America's big favorite CHET ATKINS raves about his new Gretsch Guitars



From Grand Ole Opry in Nashville to Boston, Mass. and clear across the country, Chet Atkins' very special brand of guitar playing has won an enthusiastic audience. (Hear his RCA album, "Stringin' Along With Chet Atkins".) We're proud that Chet praises the playing ease and tone of his two Gretsch guitars — uses both the hollow body and the solid models, "depending on the type of work I'm doing".

For information on these new "Chet Atkins Country Style" Electromatic Guitars, write to FRED. GRETSCH, Dept. MJY 55 60 Broadway, Brooklyn 11, N. Y.

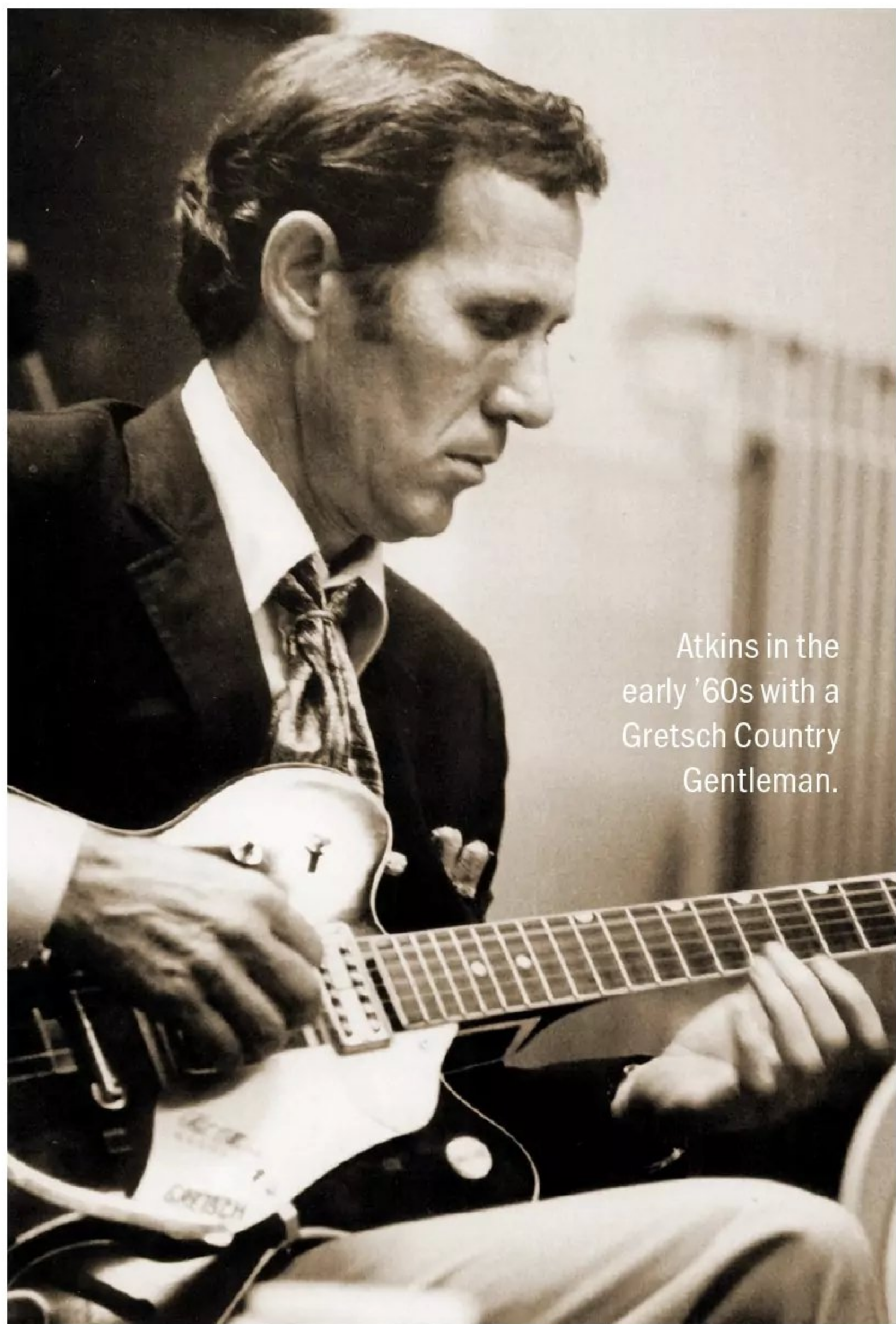
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Atkins in a 1955 Gretsch ad highlighting his endorsement of the company's new Western-themed guitars including the 6130 Round Up.

musically inquisitive nature never ended. As he had during his radio days, he listened to everything he could find, and some of what he heard emerged on records. His original composition "Slinkey" (from *Mister Guitar*) began by quoting James Burton's immortal riff from the Dale Hawkins rockabilly hit "Oh! Suzie Q."

An obsessive perfectionist, Atkins refused to quit growing, even taking cues from his



Atkins in the early '60s with a Gretsch Country Gentleman.



Atkins at RCA in the late '40s, playing the D'Angelico Excel he modified with a neck pickup and Vibrola.

ups at RCA utilized skillful marketing to successfully launch Charley Pride, country's first African-American superstar.

Things began to change after a 1973 cancer scare. Realizing that his executive duties added considerable physical and emotional stress, he eased out of management and began to work harder on his own music. At the same time, however, he grew restive. Changes at Gretsch made him less-satisfied with the guitars they marketed under his name.

He had desires to record a broader range of material, including a jazz album, and his fearless nature continued. One of his final RCA albums, 1979's *The First Nashville Guitar Quartet*, was done in a classical format and teamed him with longtime friend John Knowles, classical luminary Liona Boyd, and John Pell. The material was, as usual, diverse, ranging from "Londonderry Air" to "You Needed Me," "Washington Post March," and James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout," all superbly played.

The new generation of RCA executives resisted him, particularly on the jazz idea. That he'd done it in the past made no difference. By the early '80s, he'd signed with Columbia Records and had a new endorsement deal with Gibson. He also created the title "C.G.P." (certified guitar player), which he bestowed upon players he admired.

Every one of his country-guitar disciples

discovered him in a different way. Steve Wariner, interviewed for a 2019 VG cover story, recalled his dad, amateur musician Roy Wariner, introducing him to Travis and Atkins. The Atkins favorite "Windy and Warm" was Wariner's first exposure.

"I would sit and listen to Travis and Chet records and slow those records down and try to learn what I could," he said.

For others, it was much the same. Wariner, however, wound up not only mastering Chet's playing style, but meeting Atkins in Nashville, where he moved to launch his own career. Not surprisingly, he had warm memories of his former boss, noting he was "...really kind to teach me anything I wanted." Wariner, like Tommy Emmanuel, earned the coveted C.G.P. from his former boss, as did John Knowles. Atkins remained open to new material; after hearing Wariner play "Sails" and Blondie's "Heart of Glass," he recorded both.

Chet continued to record, and expanded his onstage performing. He was a regular guest on Garrison Keillor's public-radio show "A Prairie Home Companion," and "Hee Haw" featured him as a guest with the show's fabled "Million Dollar Band," with Roy Clark and other guest pickers. His Columbia albums remained diverse as he interacted with younger players such as Mark Knopfler. 1994's *Read My Licks* included cameos from Knopfler, Eric Johnson, George Benson, Wariner, and

longtime thumbpicker/Atkins sideman Paul Yandell.

He was similarly welcoming to new talents like Emmanuel. The two had a musical chemistry that burst forth on their 1997 collaboration, *The Day The Finger Pickers Took Over the World*. It was full of energy and vitality in many ways, showing Atkins, the master, and Emmanuel, part of a new generation of Chet disciples, coming full circle.

The cancer returned more than once, and by the time *Finger Pickers Took Over the World* appeared, it had returned again, this time proving more difficult to treat. In 2000, a year before he passed, a statue of Chet with guitar in-hand was unveiled at Fifth and Union Street in downtown Nashville. He attended the ceremony but said little as friends praised him. The statue now resides in Nashville's Musicians' Hall of Fame.

Late in his career, Chet uttered the reflective comments at the beginning of this piece. Today, he would have been 100, and people continue listening to his music in formats beyond even his imagination, fully aware of the long shadow he continues to cast over both guitar and popular music. They play and collect guitars bearing his name. So it's safe to say they understand, and continue drawing inspiration from, the monumental, transcendent legacy of Chester Burton Atkins.

That, too, is the way it's supposed to be. **VG**

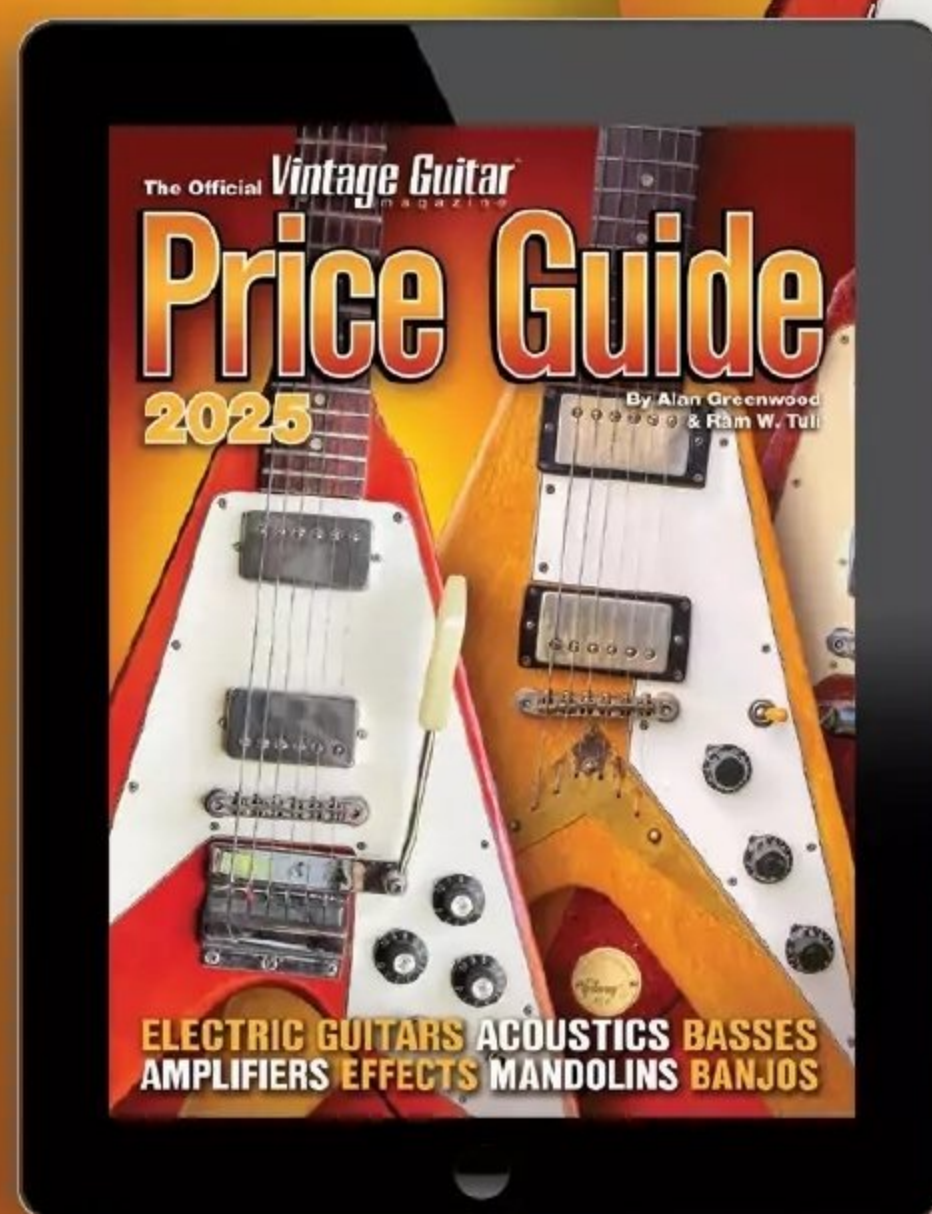
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CHET ATKINS

THE ATKINS INFLUENCE ON GRETSCH GUITARS

BY WARD MEEKER



Initially rejected by the rising-star endorser for whom it was created didn't stop the Gretsch 6120 from becoming a classic.

Introduced in 1955 as one of four guitars dressed to fit in with cowboy culture popular at the time, the 6120 Hollow Body and its 6121 solid-body sibling stood apart from the 6022 Rancher flat-top and 6130 Round Up solid-body in one key way – Chet Atkins' signature on the pickguard.

Trailing in sales and market share, Gretsch – having seen the success of Gibson's Les Paul – approached Atkins to discuss a guitar bearing his name and looking to capitalize on his growing reputation as a flashy fingerpicker in RCA's Nashville

'55 Round-Up: VG Archive. '53 Gretsch 6120: Curt Wilson/VG Archive. Guitar courtesy of Fred Stucky. '58 Gretsch Chet Atkins 6120 tenor courtesy of George Gruhn.

'55 Gretsch 6130 Round-Up (left).

In 2013, Gretsch collector Fred Stucky went public with the third known 6120 prototype. Once owned by Bobby Cochran, nephew of Eddie Cochran, its unbound headstock matches the other two prototypes, its label is stamped "6120," and it carries serial number 13767, certifying its origin to the development of the model.

1958 Gretsch Chet Atkins 6120 four-string tenor.

studios and backing the Carter Sisters on KWTO. Their plan was to offer an instrument that would fit his playing style while also updating his performance aesthetic.

The Rancher, Round Up, and Chet Atkins Hollow Body were all given Gretsch's "cowboy" treatment – Amber Red (a.k.a. "Western Orange") finish, tortoiseshell pickguard with engraved steer head, "Gbrand" logo on the lower bass bout, "cows and cactus" inlays, and steer-head inlay on the headstock.

Listed in catalogs as 16" across the lower bout (but actually closer to 15½"), the 6120 had a spruce top, laminate-maple back and sides, two-piece maple neck,

Brazilian rosewood fretboard with 24½" scale, brass nut, Bigsby vibrato, tooled-leather strap, and matching case.

The 6120 was an immediate and undeniable success even though it carried a big price tag – \$385 – compared to the Les Paul, which retailed at \$225, and Fender's Telecaster at \$189.50. And while its look was great for sales, Atkins wasn't enamored with it, at one point calling its cosmetic touches "Western junk." Folks at Gretsch's Brooklyn headquarters, he figured, were pandering to the "cowboy market."

His attitude put the builder in a pickle; it finally had a guitar making a splash, but the guy who helped get it there was... displeased. Players – especially the rockabilly set – instantly took to the bright-orange finish, but Atkins found it garish. The G brand (now beloved by collectors) and "yee haw" ornamentation drew attention, but Atkins thought it undignified. And while its DeArmond Dyna-Sonic pickups made sounds unlike anything by Gibson or Fender, their overwound pole pieces, Atkins argued, sounded too bright and

lessened sustain from the bigger strings. Plus, they were noisy.

Wanting to placate Atkins, Gretsch almost immediately began to make changes to the guitar. By the end of '55, its fretboard-marker engravings were gone, replaced by plain blocks. Simultaneously, the steer's head on the headstock became a horseshoe. In '56, fretboard inlays became "humped" blocks. By mid-'57, the G brand was gone.

Tossing the dressy elements was cool by Atkins, but he was even more concerned with the way the guitar sounded and played; from the start he would modify any 6120 sent to him, and his "adjustments" spurred Gretsch to change specs along the way.

Arguably the important

'55 Gretsch 6120 Chet Atkins Hollow Body and the '55 Gretsch 6022 Rancher that "co-starred" with Robert Duvall in the 1983 film *Tender Mercies*.



shift came with the end of Gretsch's agreement with pickup supplier DeArmond. Welcoming the chance to update the guitar's tone, they set Atkins to work with electronics engineer Ray Butts, and together they designed a double-coil humbucker that Gretsch could build in-house. All parties were thrilled with the result, which they licensed as the Filter'Tron and introduced on the '58 6120, when they also added a Tone selector switch to the control layout and replaced the compensated Bigsby bridge saddle with an arched brass bar. Other changes made at Atkins' bequest included the guitar's 2³/₄"-deep body being made thinner by about 1/₈" (a trend that continued until it rested at slightly more than 2") and a revamp of its internal bracing to include top-supporting soundposts.

Also that year, an ebony fretboard replaced rosewood, "thumb-print" inlays replaced the humped blocks, the brass nut shifted to bone, and a zero fret was added.

In 1961, the 6120 became a double-cut that, while it carried all of Atkins' refinements, was unrecognizable next to the original. Gretsch spent the '60s expanding on its popularity with its best-selling 6119 Tennessean and 6122 Country Gentleman.

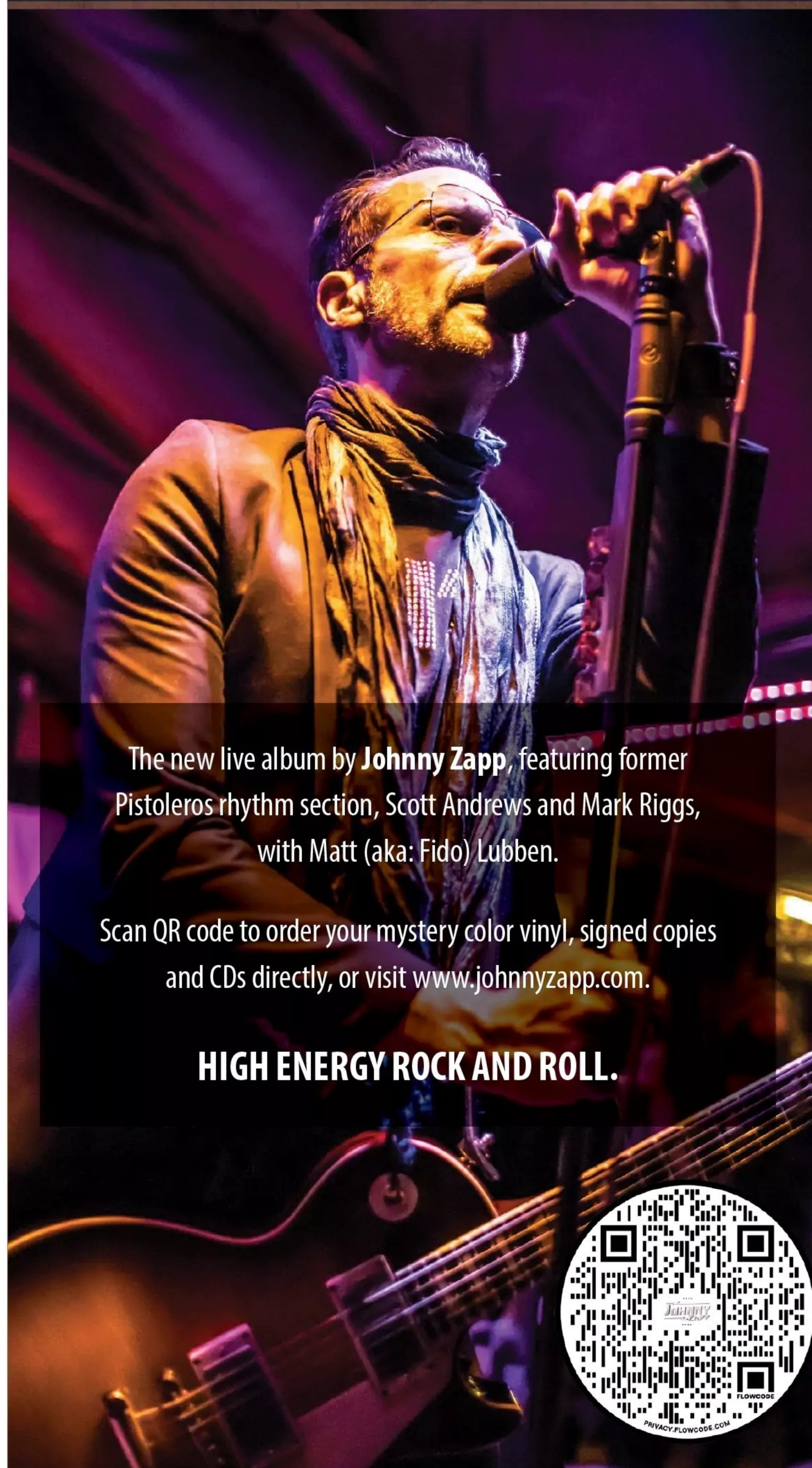
Despite Atkins' lukewarm appreciation of the guitar, today the 6120 is one of the most-popular collectible guitars thanks to its use by Eddie Cochran, Duane Eddy, Brian Setzer, Pete Townsend, George Harrison, and others.

For more on the 6120, go to VintageGuitar.com to read Edward Ball's examination of a 6120 prototype, Peter Stuart Kohman's feature on the PX6122 Country Gentleman, George Gruhn's look at a rare 6120 tenor, as well as stories on the 6130 Round Up and a 6022 Rancher that Robert Duvall played in *Tender Mercies*.

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Ferris State University Music Instrument Swap, Sunday October 20, 2024 from 10am-4pm at the Interdisciplinary Resource Center (IRC), 1301 S State St. Big Rapids, MI 49307. Contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or visit www.musicinstrumentswap.com

Saratoga Springs Guitar Show, Sunday October 20, 2024 from noon to 4pm at the Holiday Inn, 232 Broadway, Saratoga Springs NY. For more info call Peter Occhineri (860) 983-6774, NortheastGuitarExpo@gmail.com, or www.NortheastGuitarExpo.com

SonicSoundGuitarandRecordsExpo, October 26-27 from 10am – 5pm at the Greenville Shrine Club 119 Beverly Road, Greenville, SC 29609. For more information contact Chris Hall at somicsoundexpo.official@gmail.com or visit www.SonicSoundExpo.com

Everything Rock & Roll Guitar Show, Sunday October 27, 2024 from 11:30am-4pm at the CFS Bank Event Center, 111 Gallitin Rd., Belle Vernon PA 15012. For more information contact Scott Talarico at 412-716-8411 or guitarshowusa.com

NOVEMBER

Great American Guitar Show(Fall Philly), November 2-3, 2024 at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center - Hall A, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA. For more info contact Bee 3 Vintage at (828)298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com. (See Advertisement on page 62.)

Ann Arbor Music Instrument Swap, Sunday November 3, 2024 from 10am -4pm at the Eastern Michigan University Student Center, 900 Oakland St., Ypsilanti, MI 48197. Contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or visit www.musicinstrumentswap.com

Las Vegas Guitar Trade Show, November 8-10, 2024 at the Veil Pavilion, Silverton Casino, Clark County, NV. For more info go to LVGTS.com or lasvegascuitartradeshow.com

Big Als' Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, Sunday, November 10, 2024 at Renninger's Florida Twin Markets, 20651 Hwy 441 Mt. Dora FL. Hours 8- 3 For more info contact Allen at info@lcmsm.com, (352)735-0025 or visit www.lcmsm.com

Chicagoland Guitar Show, Sunday, November 10th. 9am to 4pm at Atlantis Banquets

1273 N Rand Rd., Arlington Heights, IL 60004. Sponsored by Midwest Buy & Sell and Rock & Roll Vintage. Booths \$100. \$5 admission. For information contact mw-buynsell@sbcglobal.net or 773-545-2020.

The "American Guitar Show," at SHIBUYA Stream Hall in Tokyo. November 16-17, 2024. 11.16 sat. 2:00pm-8:00pm / 11.17 sun. 11:00am ~ 4:00pm. Contact Nobuyuki Hayashi at +81-3-6823-2385

Midwest Music Gear Swap presents its Fall Swap meet, Sunday November 17 at Emidio's Event Center, 48 E Bath Rd, Cuyahoga Falls, OH from 10am to 4pm. Contact Corey at midwestmusicgearswap@yahoo.com or 330-753-5050

DECEMBER

Rose Quarter Guitar Show, Sunday December 8th, 2024. 10am-3:30pm Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 300 N Ramsay Wy, Portland, OR 97227. Contact: bruceadolph@mac.com www.westcoastguitarshows.com (See Advertisement on page 62.)

2025

JANUARY

Amigo Bay Area World Guitar Show, January 11-12, 2025, Marin Center Exhibit hall, 10 Avenue of the Flags, San Rafael, CA. For more info call Larry Briggs, 918-288-2222, amigoshow@stringswest.com, www.amigoguitarshows.com.

2025 Winter Ohio Guitar Show, Sunday, January 12, 2025 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 or go to guitardigest@frontier.com, www.ohioguitarshows.com. Ohio Guitar Show on Facebook and Instagram

Big Als' Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, Sunday, January 12, 2025 at Renninger's Florida Twin Markets, 20651 Hwy 441 Mt. Dora FL. Hours 8-3 For more info contact Allen at info@lcmsm.com, (352)735-0025 or visit www.lcmsm.com

Amigo SoCal World Guitar Show, January 25-26, 2025, OC Fair & Event Center, Arlington & Fairview St., Costa Mesa, CA. For more info call Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshow@stringswest.com, www.amigoguitarshows.com.

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, January 31, February 1-2, 2025 at the Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL. Public hours Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4. For more info contact Britt Keen at 850-294-5537, orlandoguitarexpo@outlook.com Morty Beckman www.guitarexpo.net

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Upcoming Events

MARCH

CarolinaGuitar Show - Asheville, March 8-9, 2025 at the WNC Ag Center I-26, Exit 40, 1301 Fanning Bridge Rd., Fletcher/Asheville, NC 28732. For more info, call Bee3 Vintage at 828-298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com

Illinois Guitar & Gear Expo, Sunday March 9, 2025 at the Kankakee County Fairgrounds 213W 4000S Rd. Kankakee, IL 60901, 10am - 3pm For more info, visit: <https://www.illinoisguitarexpo.com>

Cincinnati Guitar Show, Sunday, March 16, 2025 from 10am - 4pm at the Sharonville Conv. Cntr, 11355 Chester Rd, Sharonville, OH 45246. Contact Denny 513-503-1072 - more info at cincyguitarshow.com & FB.

KC Guitar Show, Sunday March 16 from 11am to 5pm at the Embassy Suites KCI, 7640 NW Tiffany Springs Pkwy, Kansas City, MO 65153. Contact Mark at 816-520-8430 or visit kcguitarshow.com

APRIL

The Indiana Guitar Show, April 12-13, 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

MAY

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, May 3-4 at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, PA. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleaemarket.com

Sarasota Guitar and Amp Show, May 16th - 12pm - 5pm (dealer day), May 17-18, 9am - 6pm at the Sarasota Municipal Auditorium 801 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34236. Contact: Kevin Wood at 941-993-3098 or visit Sarasotaguitarshow.com

JUNE

2025 Summer Ohio Guitar Show, Sunday, June 8, 2025 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 or guitardigest@frontier.com, www.ohioguitarshows.com. Ohio Guitar Show on Facebook and Instagram

SEPTEMBER

Amigo SoCal World Guitar Show, September 13-14, 2025, OCFair & Event Center, Arlington & Fairview St., Costa Mesa, CA. For more info call Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshow@stringswest.com, www.amigoguitarshows.com, amigoshow@stringswest.com, www.amigoguitarshows.com.

Illinois Guitar & Gear Expo, Sunday Sept 14, 2025 at the Kankakee County Fairgrounds 213 W 4000S Rd. Kankakee, IL 60901, 10am - 3pm For more info, visit: <https://www.illinoisguitar-expo.com/>

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, September 20-21, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, PA. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleaemarket.com

If you have information regarding upcoming guitar shows or events, visit <http://www.vintageguitar.com/guitar-show-submission> or e-mail james@vintageguitar.com. All submissions must be received by the 10th of each month, or they will appear in the next available issue. This listing is done as a service to our readers and we reserve final determination as to its contents.

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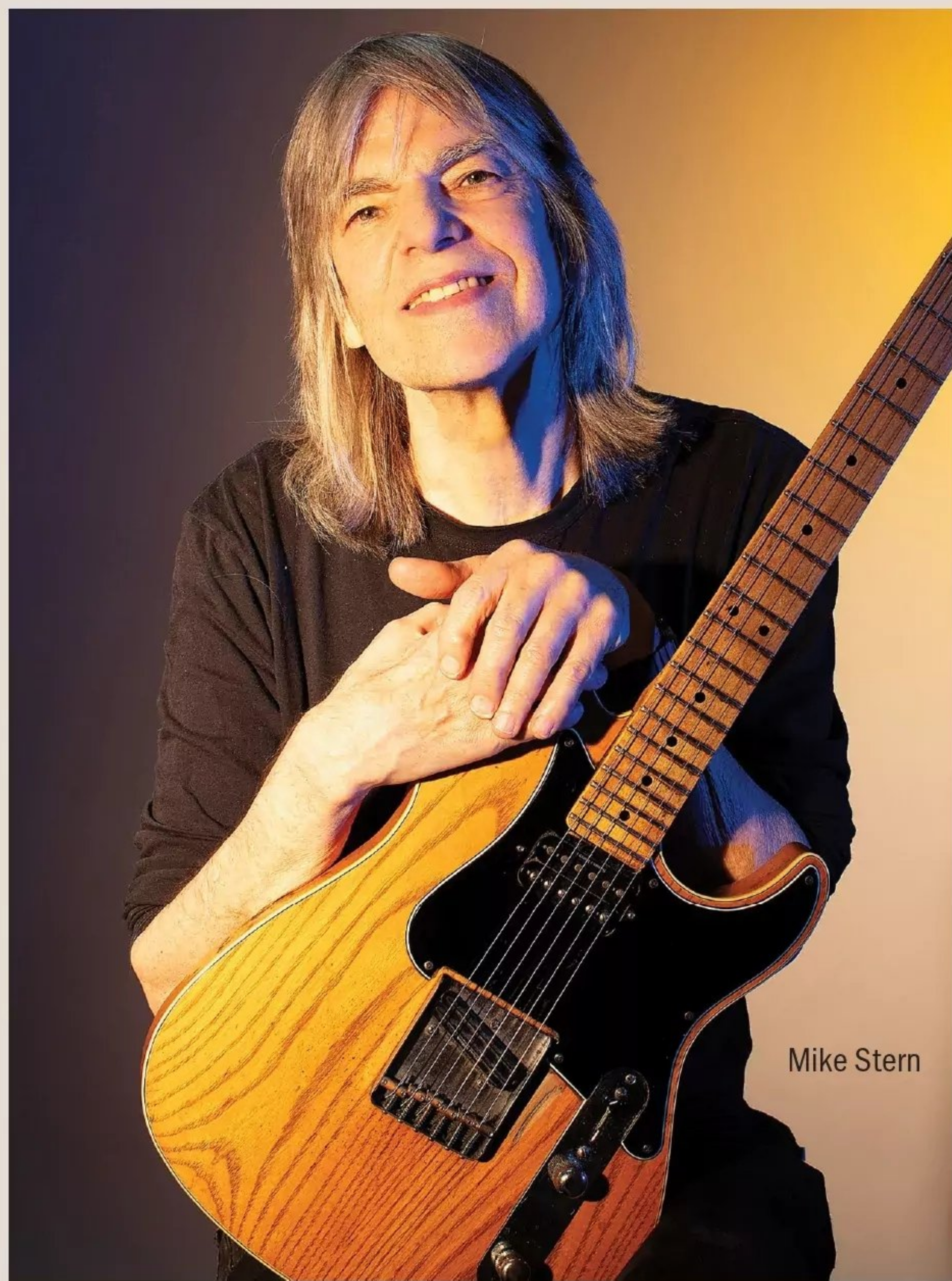


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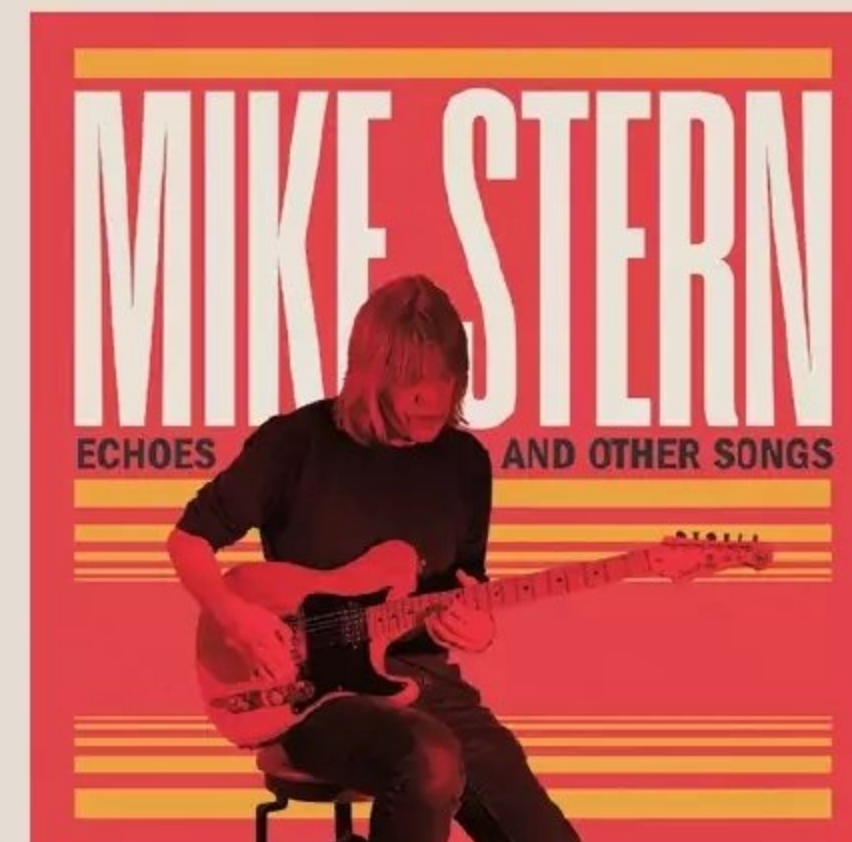
Mike Stern

ANOTHER NOTCH

Mike Stern's smokin' new album is the last with longtime keyboardist and producer Jim Beard (Steely Dan), who died in March. Thus, *Echoes* becomes the capstone to a near-40-year collaboration.

Then there's the music itself. You can hear Stern's trademark hard-bop shred mixed with sick blues bends on "Connections." "Where's Leo" starts with a speedy snake-charmer riff, evoking a North Africa-meets-flamenco vibe. "Space Bar" has the New York groove that Mike, along with John Scofield, helped pioneer in the '80s – a nasty, funky response to the rise of icky smooth jazz. "Could Be" is another example of his Big Apple fusion; it's modern funk, yet mindful of the early bop of Monk, Bird, Miles, and Diz.

Stern's guitar tone deserves special note. While earlier albums could exhibit harsh amounts of chorus, his sound here is warm and silky, perfectly balancing



Mike Stern

Echoes and Other Songs

overdrive and modulation. Also dig Richard Bona's hard-charging bass lines. Speaking of four-stringers, Grammy winner and bassist Christian McBride appears on "Stuff Happens," weaving in and out of Stern's blues phrases.

Echoes doesn't radically break from earlier Stern albums, yet it's another notch in a thrilling career. It also illuminates his underrated gifts as a composer of guitar music. – **Pete Prown**



Canned Heat
Finyl Vinyl

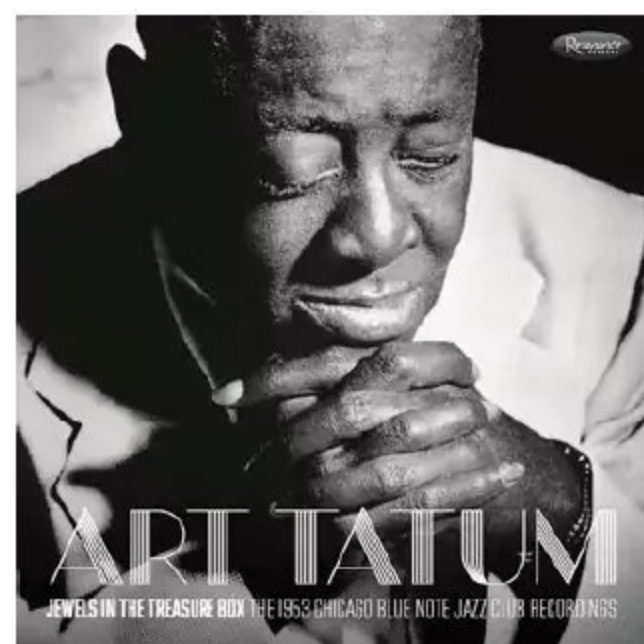
In the mid/late '60s, the top American groups of the Blues Revival were Chicago's Paul Butterfield Blues Band and Los Angeles' Canned Heat.

The latter's original incarnation featured Bob Hite, Henry Vestine, and Alan Wilson – record collectors and blues scholars turned rock stars. Drummer Fito de la Parra joined for the 1968 sophomore release, *Boogie With Canned Heat*, and has been the one constant, despite a raft of personnel changes.

Taking the guitar chair in the current edition is the ubiquitous Jimmy Vivino, known for his work with Al Kooper, John Sebastian, Conan O'Brien's house band, and the Beatles tribute Fab Faux. It's a good fit, as Vivino shares lead, production, composing, and vocal duties, with "One Last Boogie" continuing the band's Hooker-esque calling card.

Guests pop up in the form of Joe Bonamassa, providing fat-toned aggression on "So Sad (The World's In A Tangle)," and Dave Alvin, singing and playing on "Blind Owl," a tribute he wrote for Wilson. The intriguing, Arabic-tinged "East/West Boogie" was adapted from the theme of the TV series *Tehran*, while Vivino's slide complements Dale Spalding's harp on "When You're 69."

This is too good to stop now. – **Dan Forte**



Art Tatum
Jewels In The Treasure Box: The 1953 Chicago Blue Note Jazz Club Recordings

It's a wonder how never-released recordings continue to emerge – in this case, an engagement led by jazz piano virtuoso Art Tatum. Upon seeing the pianist enter a club he was playing, the great Fats Waller once announced, "God is

in the house" – so prodigious were Tatum's technical skills and musicality.

Having fronted a popular trio featuring tenor guitarist Tiny Grimes, Tatum lucked into a worthy replacement in Everett Barksdale, who previously worked with jazz violinists Erskine Tate and Eddie South. With a bright, round tone, he solos on nearly all of this triple-CD's 39 tracks, such as a bouncy "Stompin' At The Savoy" and a brisk "Air Mail Special," penned by Benny Goodman and Charlie Christian. Bassist Slam Stewart's bowing-and-humming style is also featured.

The repertoire is all standards ("Tenderly," "Stardust," "Body And Soul"), so with a little searching it's instructive to compare Tatum's approach to what Oscar Peterson, George Shearing, or Mary Lou Williams might have done. Likewise, one can investigate how Barney Kessel, George Benson, or Tal Farlow would tackle the same tunes as Barksdale. Even though it's 71 years since this gig and 38 since his death, the six-stringer redeems himself admirably. – **DF**

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Woody Jackson

FEELING JAZZY

By Dan Forte

Jazz guitar is one of my main loves, whether it's Eddie Lang's work with Bing Crosby in the early '30s or Rick McRae playing at an Austin restaurant next week. But to be honest, much of what I hear these days bores me. Too much is an empty display of chops or arrangements that lack imagination and personality. Thankfully, some new music avoids those pitfalls.

Equally at home playing bebop or Brazilian jazz, Israeli **Yotam Silberstein** surrounded himself with a hard-to-top group of jazz stalwarts for *Standards*. Tenor saxophonist George Coleman was a member of the early-'60s Miles Davis Quintet, drummer Billy Hart is an alumnus of Davis' early-'70s albums, and bassist John Patitucci has worked with Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and Michael Brecker, among numerous others.

Appropriately, one of the standards getting a brisk workout is "Little Willie Leaps," written by Davis and recorded by Charlie Parker. Everyone solos on Tommy Flanagan's "Eclypso," with Hart's tom-toms supplying a Latin groove before lifting to swing rhythm.

Coleman guests on his angular composition "Lo-Joe" and the ballad "Never Let Me Go." The test of any standard is to give your own spin, and with the latter that's a tall order in light of great existing interpretations by Dinah Washington, Bill Evans, and Nat

King Cole. But Coleman weaves around the melody beautifully as Silberstein supports with lush chords and a succinct solo. Silberstein's music is new to me, though this is his tenth album as a leader, and he has recorded with Dizzy Gillespie, Monty Alexander, and others. I intend to dig deeper into his catalog.

When one thinks of Latin jazz, it's usually bossa nova from Brazil, and I'll use the cliché "close enough for jazz" to include this next artist. Millions of listeners were introduced to Cuban "son" music in the '90s by the Buena Vista Social Club and tres player Eliades Ochoa. But, Kiki Valera's family pre-dated that phenomenon on the important 1987 compilation *Antologia Integral Del Son Volumen*.

Vacilon Santiaguero by **Kiki Valera y Su Son Cubano** is Valera's second U.S. release after years as director and fourth-generation member of La Familia Valera Miranda. The repertoire is spirited and infectious, featuring Valera's virtuoso picking on cuatro – a four-course guitar, as opposed to the three courses of the tres. He also plays bass, and the rest of the group consists of trumpets and lots of percussion (conga, bongos, claves, maracas), with lead vocalist Carlos Cascante of the Spanish Harlem Orchestra.

Stretching the jazz theme undoubtedly outside the genre is **Woody Jackson**. In addition to two solo albums, the guitarist/producer/

composer has recorded with singer/violinist Petra Haden (on their 2008 duo album *Ten Years*), Hotel X, Money Mark, Doyle Bramhall II, Daniel Johnston, Eleni Mandell, and David Holmes (on the soundtrack for *Ocean's Thirteen*). He was also a member of Friends Of Dean Martinez with steel-guitarist Bill Elm, with whom he composed music for video games including "Red Dead Redemption." His work with Daniel Lanois for "Red Dead Redemption 2" won the 2018 Game Awards for Best Score/Music.

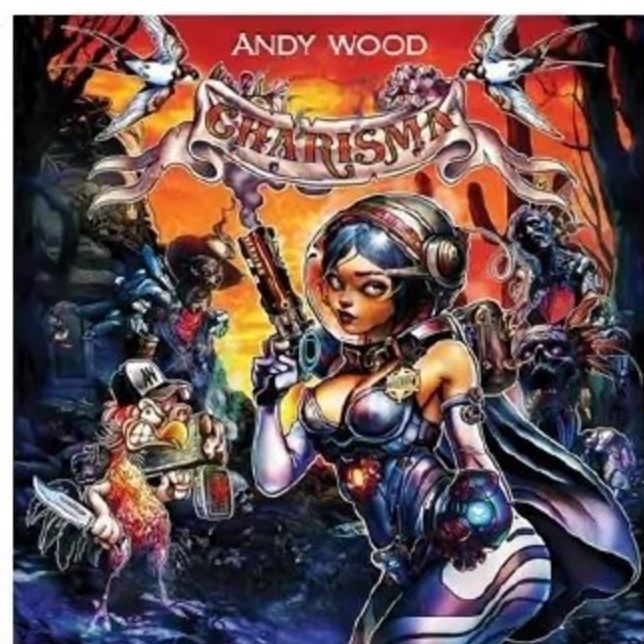
Jackson owns Electro-Vox Recording Studio in Hollywood, a facility that houses his mind-boggling array of vintage guitars, amps, pedals, keyboards, and things like the drum kit previously belonging to Jim Gordon of Derek & the Dominos. He also owns several instruments that belonged to L.A. studio legend Bob Bain, including a '32 Gibson L-5. On his 50th birthday, his wife, Sharon, gave him the gift of a lifetime – the '53 Telecaster Bain played on Henry Mancini's themes for *The Pink Panther* movie and "Peter Gunn" TV series. As Jackson says, "She pulled off the unattainable dream." It was featured in VG's May '12 cover story.

Besides Mancini, Jackson's influential film scorers include Ennio Morricone's spaghetti Westerns, Angelo Badalamenti's work on "Twin Peaks," and Masaru Sato (*Throne Of Blood*, *Yojimbo*). One of his favorite jazz guitarists is Gabor Szabo. The 54-year-old describes the style of his new solo effort, *Cowboy Yoga*, as "ambient Western." In addition to the Bain '53, he plays mandocello, six-string bass, vibraphone, Guitorgan, cello, and viola da gamba.

An unabashed minimalist, Jackson says, "I love to write music that makes musicians play less." So who better to add to the mix than Bill Frisell (VG, July '24), another guitarist with an appreciation for space? Also guesting is the unpredictable Marc Ribot. All three guitarists intertwine on "Theodora Roosevelt," with at least one sounding backward. The title track features Frisell's specialty, folk-jazz. It's a study in theme and variation, with drummer Jay Bellerose and bassist Jennifer Condos slowly building dynamics.

Speaking of slowness, Friends Of Dean Martinez hardly ever did an uptempo song. Their 1997 album, *Retrograde*, has one cha-cha, a swinging shuffle, and 10 slow numbers. I highly recommend it.

2024 Dan Forte; all rights reserved by the author.



Andy Wood Charisma

On Andy Wood's fourth solo effort, the Nashville guitarist combines imaginative compositions with guitarman'ship that merges technical ability, emotion, polish, and feel. Bear witness to the swift country chromatics, soul-tugging ballads, blues-rock, pastoral atmospherics, and the bombast of prog-tastic shred.

The seduction begins with the slow, pulsating groove of "Shoot The Sun Down." Here, sustaining guitar echoes within a ballad that blends beautifully stacked harmonies and effortless 64th notes. Brent Mason guest stars on "Free Range Chicken," where fiery Telecaster pickin' and banjo coexist in a galaxy of beguiling country prog – like Dream Theater meets the Dixie Dregs.

Wood covers "Rooster" by Alice In Chains, gets neo-classical on "Master Gracey's Manor," enters Satriani's world on "Hylia," and has a play date with Joe Bonamassa on "Moaning Lisa." Edgy alternate-picked pentatonic sequences ensue as Wood and Bonamassa trade bars and licks with post-Eric-Johnson zeal and intravenous sriracha for extra spice. *Charisma* is a well-manicured guitar album with solid compositions. – **Oscar Jordan**



LA LOM The Los Angeles League of Musicians

It's Latin, it's surfy, it's twangy – okay, what the heck is it? LA LOM is an instrumental trio that mines a vein of electric South and Central American music known as "chicha." With sometime-folkie Zac Sokolow picking National electrics, this album is strangely transcendent; the opener, "Angels Point," is a good example, the perfect mix of groove and twang.

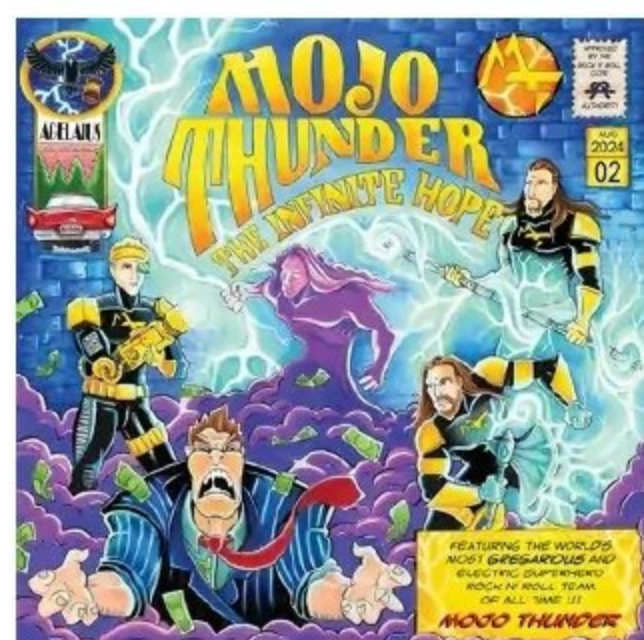
"Figueroa" exudes rich amp tremolo, allowing Sokolow to explore an uncanny attack of single notes and chords, which he navigates intuitively. LA LOM's upright-bass-and-drum rhythm section works hard to nail the vibe, while Sokolow has the difficult task of making his guitar into the lead and harmony instrument at the same time. No mean feat, it's heard best on



Mojo Thunder's Sean Sullivan and Bryson Willoughby.

"Maraville." The influence of '60s soundtrack music is also critical, notably the spaghetti-Western soundtracks of Ennio Morricone. "72 Monte Carlo" even conjures a melody for motorheads who dig vintage sounds.

Somehow, *The Los Angeles League of Musicians* is a soundtrack in itself. Sokolow and company have created a unified statement from beginning to end, as any good album should. LA LOM further reflects the cultural melting pot of Los Angeles – here, through the joy of twangy guitar music. What more could you want? – **PP**



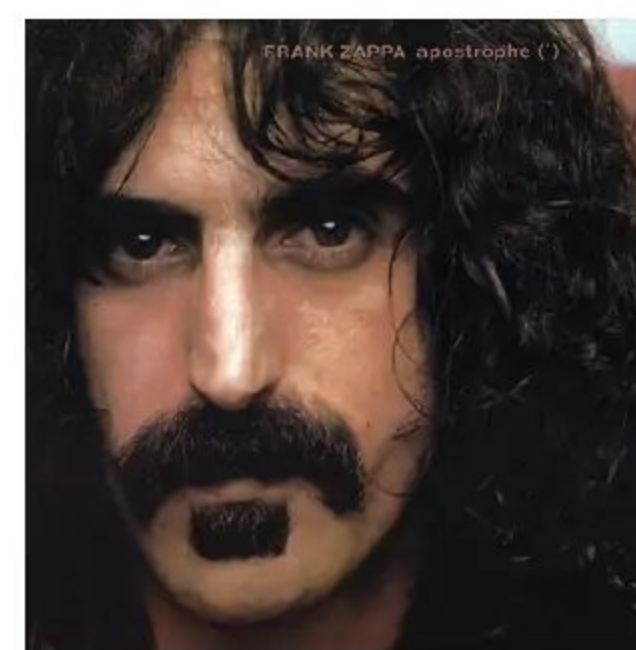
Mojo Thunder The Infinite Hope

The rockin' Kentucky outfit is back with stomping tunes, passionate lyrics, and a charismatic double-guitar assault. Drummer Zac Shoopman, bassist Andrew Brockman, lead guitarist Bryson Willoughby, and rhythm guitarist/vocalist Sean Sullivan, share sonic duties with Duane Lundy in the production chair. Sagas of the South, tragedy, justice, and plight of the working class provide weighty narratives for an ensemble that strives for a middle ground between classic southern rock and '90s alternative.

"The Sun Still Rises" begins the proceedings with careening vocals, jangling solid bodies, and half-time grooves that morph into dramatic breaks and heavily driving rhythms. Their single, "Step By Step," offsets uptempo, jubilant pop-rock drumming with lyrics about anxiety, hopelessness, and

seclusion. The fretboard efforts of Sullivan and Willoughby lean into chugging chord work and tasteful ornamentation, rather than single-note-solo ripping. Songs like "Memphis" get mileage from ensemble twists and turns rather than pentatonic lick fests, though "Gettin' On a Binge" yields a muscular solo.

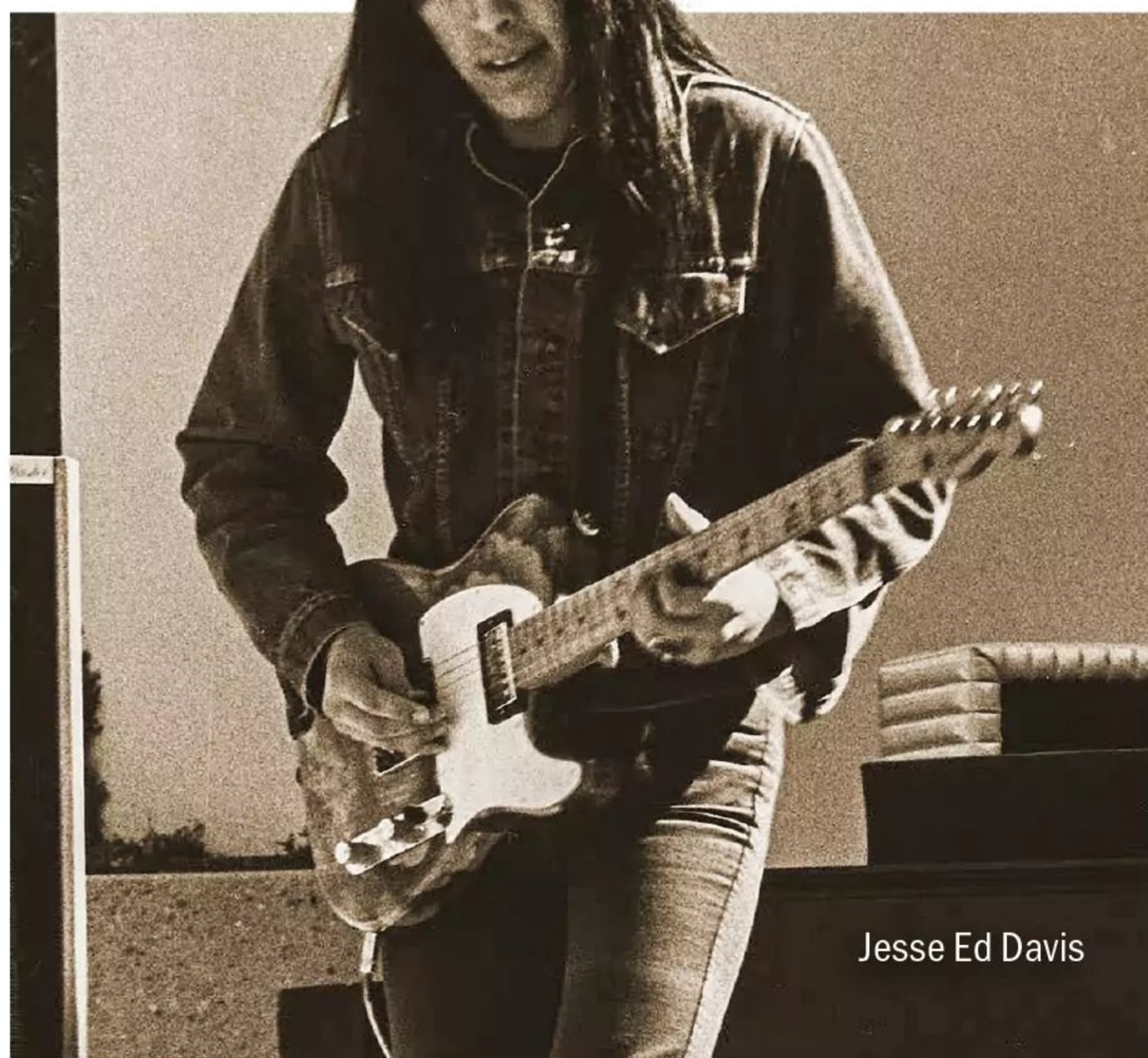
Clever arranging, intelligent use of dynamics, and chordal embellishments serve the sentiment of songs like "Let It Fall" and the throbbing mid-tempo rocker "Caroline." Heavy guitar highlights include the memorable "Holy Ghost" and "Greetings From Western Art." – **OJ**



Frank Zappa Apostrophe (?) 50th Anniversary

Great googly-moogly! Frank Zappa's potty-mouth masterpiece is a half-century old and now fêted with a 75-track box set. The original LP has been expertly remastered to increase separation between tracks without sacrificing analog warmth. Audibly improved, Frank's wah-wah shred on "Nanook Rubs It" and "Cosmik Debris" still eviscerates after all these decades.

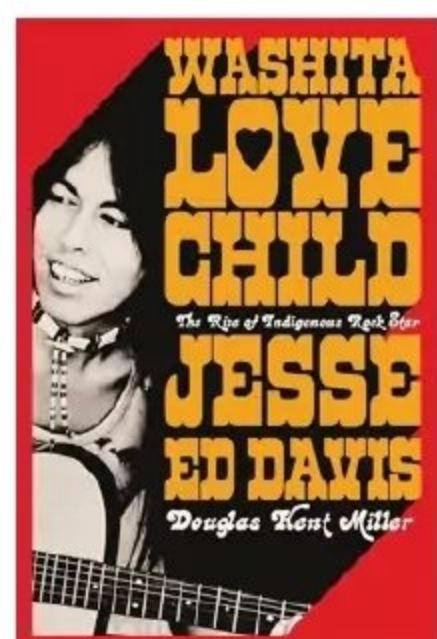
Beyond the LP tracks are nine studio outtakes. Cream superhero Jack Bruce delivered fuzz-bass nirvana on the original title track; now, enjoy the unedited version featuring an 11-minute jam between Frank, Jack, and drummer Jim Gordon. There's a fresh take of Zappa's R&B piano gem "Uncle Remus" – inevitably, FZ stomps on his fiery fuzz.



Jesse Ed Davis

Also look for *complete* '74 Mothers of Invention concerts from Colorado and Ohio. Frank's crack band and guitarman-ship are in full glory; listen to "Approximate" for ruthless power chords and fusion runs. Zappa torches "Montana" with fat crunch tone, and takes a particularly magnificent solo on "Stink-foot" from the Dayton show. Here, he deploys that trademark DI-guitar tone and mix of Dorian and Lydian modal ideas.

While there are endless 50th-anniversary boxes, this one is on the money. Zappa was a genius of American music, and this updated box proves it conclusively. – **PP**



Douglas K. Miller

Washita Love Child: The Rise of Indigenous Rock Star Jesse Ed Davis

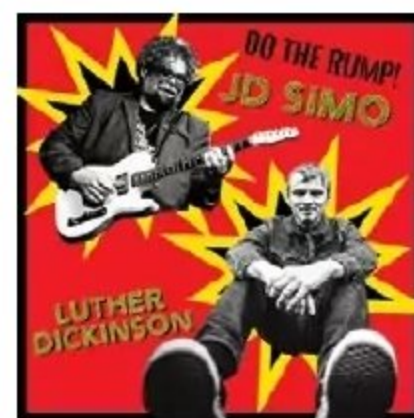
"(Jesse Ed Davis) is the cream of the crop; he's better than Clapton and Hendrix put together," said Gram Parsons. How's *that* for an endorsement? Davis, a brilliant guitarist

whose playing was loved by millions, was largely unknown outside the business. In this fascinating biography, Miller, a professor of Native American history and former touring musician, digs into Davis' complicated life, cut short by a heroin overdose in 1988 at 43.

Davis didn't want to be defined simply as a Native American; his otherworldly playing spoke for him. He worked with Conway Twitty, Taj Mahal, George Harrison, John Lennon, and Bob Dylan. Typically wielding a Telecaster, he ended up on so many L.A. sessions he couldn't remember them all. That's his exceptional electric solo on Jackson Browne's "Doctor My Eyes" and silky acoustic on Rod Stewart's "Tonight's the Night (Gonna Be Alright)."

Davis released three solo albums, barely making a dent despite an astonishing number of A-list guests. He nearly joined the Rolling Stones, but instead landed with Stewart and the Faces. Tales of Jesse Ed Davis' guitars and playing techniques can be found throughout this bio, which offers remarkable insight on a troubled soul gone too soon. – **Bret Adams VG**

extra. EXTRA



JD SIMO & LUTHER DICKINSON

Do The Rump!

Grammy-winner Luther Dickinson of the North Mississippi Allstars and sideman extraordinaire JD Simo, guitarist in the biopic *Elvis*, join forces for an album of fuzz-laden blues covers. Notable highlights include John Lee Hooker's "Serves Me Right To Suffer" and J.J. Cale's "Right Down There." Sparse instrumentation and inspired Afro-beat drumming complement superior slide-guitar work. – **OJ**



NICK LOWE

Indoor Safari

Lowe kicks off his first album in 11 years backed by Los Straitjackets. His easygoing vocals dovetail with the tight, ultra-retro guitar work by Eddie Angel, Chris Townson, and bassist Pete Curry. On the rocking "Tokyo Bay" and "Went To A Party," they twang and throb around him, then effortlessly move to lounge mode on Lowe's ballad "Different Kind of Blue." – **Rich Kienzle**



THE GRINGO PISTOLEROS

The Rise And... Subsequent Fall Of The Texas Alien

This Austin country quintet is non-commercial in the best sense of the term – old-school but not nostalgic. Cory Grinder splits lead-guitar space with pedal-steeler "Tebbs" Kearney (additional six-string ammo by Michael O'Connor, Austin Stambaugh, and Larry Wilson) on solid originals, Tom T. Hall's smooth two-stepper "That's How I Got To Memphis," and the Dead's "Dire Wolf." – **DF**



CODY DICKINSON

Homemade

Stepping away from the North Mississippi All Stars, Dickinson plays all the instruments on this earthy, home-recorded solo effort. His skillful bass, lead, rhythm, and slide work infuse the right amount of zest into "Goodbye Albuquerque, Tuesday Night" and "Homemade Blues." His lead riffs and breaks on "As Fast as It Comes," "World-wide," and "Easy" are taut, tasty and never overbearing. – **RK**



AQUARIAN BLOOD

Counting Backwards Again

Is "psych-folk" a genre? If the shoes fits, as the saying goes. Stricken with brachial neuritis, a degenerative nerve condition affecting range of motion in his right arm, Memphis punk J.B. Horrell developed a rolling fingerpicking style. With warbling wife Laurel, the pair wrote 11 oddly catchy originals, and there's even a cover of Monkee Peter Tork's "No Sympathy." – **DF**



BILL WYMAN

Drive My Car

His first album since 2015, the former Rolling Stones bassist delivers a blend of R&B, '50s rock, and roots music. Wyman's whispered, raspy vocals render a rough charm, while lively guitar work from Terry Taylor and Hans Theessink delivers sparks. Dylan's "Thunder on the Mountain" is a bouncy shuffle. More catchy highlights: the title track, "Bad News," and "Rough Cut Diamond." – **BA**

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ROCK-AND-ROLL SCREAMER

The Weller El Dorrado

Tucked away in southwest Illinois near St. Louis, luthier Steve Weller is making interesting instruments. His El Dorrado model is a solidbody with nods to the angular shapes of the Firebird, Explorer, and Icedman, but amped-up with the kind of detail and precision you expect from a custom plan.

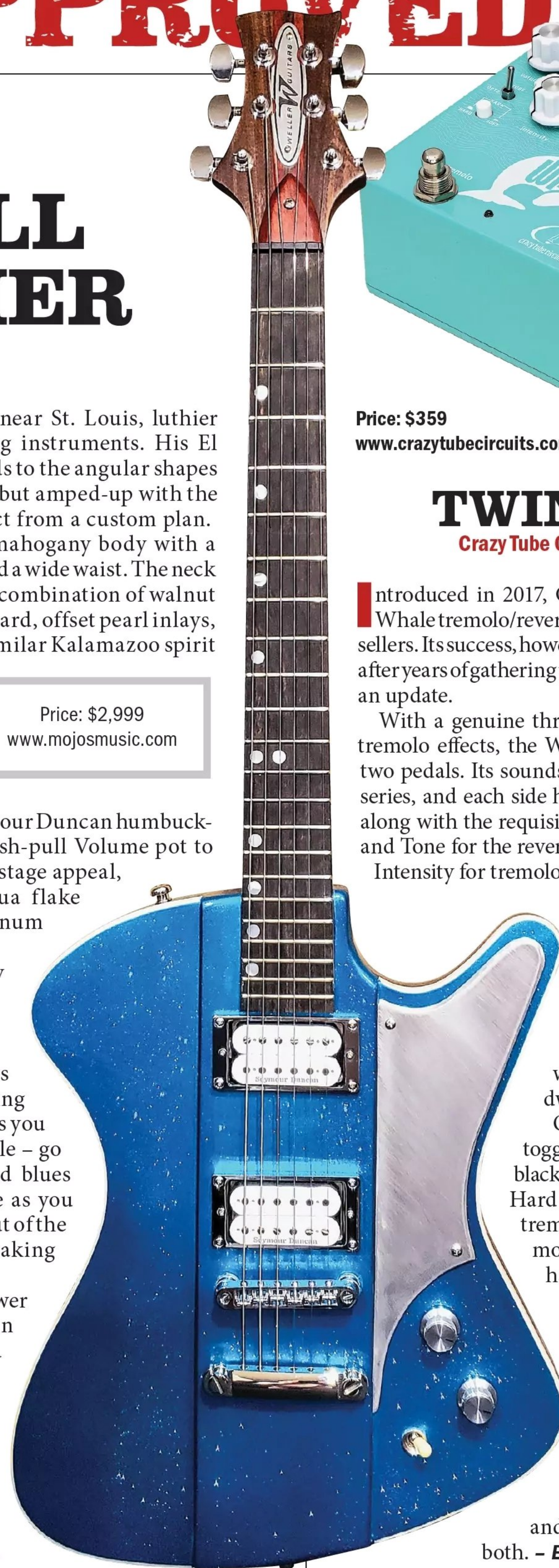
The El Dorrado has a three-piece mahogany body with a raised center section (like a Firebird) and a wide waist. The neck is a nitrocellulose-finished, five-piece combination of walnut and padauk with a 22-fret ebony fretboard, offset pearl inlays, and a Gibson-style scale of 24.75". In similar Kalamazoo spirit is a tune-o-matic-style bridge and stop tailpiece, though Weller uses an original three-and-three head-stock shape with Kluson tuners and a swank padauk truss cover.

Electronics include CTS pots, a Switchcraft three-way toggle, and Seymour Duncan humbuckers – Jazz neck and JB bridge with push-pull Volume pot to split to single-coils. For glam-tacular stage appeal, Weller offers two poly finishes (Aqua flake and Black flake) and a brushed-aluminum pickguard.

As you might suspect, a solidbody with a mahogany body that weighs about 8.7 pounds is going to prefer rockin' tones, and the El Dorrado delivers in abundance. The neck carve is a shallow D on the upper frets, becoming rounder (ergo, more vintage-feeling) as you go down; it's a truly comfortable profile – go ahead and play your hottest rock and blues licks, with as much or little overdrive as you want. Setup on our tester was perfect out of the box; the builder obviously spent time making sure every detail was right.

The El Dorrado loves crunchy power chords, sustain, and piercing Gibson screams, so don't be surprised if you can't put it down. But also play with the coil tap to access glassier P-90 sounds.

Whether riffing in the style of Johnny Winter, Billy Gibbons, Aerosmith – or licks all your own – the Weller El Dorrado is a serious custom guitar with exquisite craftsmanship and drop-dead good looks. – **Pete Prown**



Price: \$2,999
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Price: \$359
www.crazytubecircuits.com

TWIN TONES

Crazy Tube Circuits' White Whale V2

Introduced in 2017, Christos Ntaifotis' original White Whale tremolo/reverb became one of his company's best sellers. Its success, however, didn't breed complacency, and after years of gathering user input, they recently introduced an update.

With a genuine three-spring reverb and a variety of tremolo effects, the White Whale V2 is no larger than two pedals. Its sounds can be used independently or in series, and each side has a soft-click/true-bypass switch along with the requisite controls – Volume, Mix, Dwell, and Tone for the reverb, along with Volume, Speed, and Intensity for tremolo.

Running between a dual-humbucker guitar and a small tube amp, the benefits of the additional selections became very apparent. The reverb side has a three-way mini toggle for Long, Short, and Medium duration, which makes it much easier to dial-in dwell and mix.

On the tremolo side, the three-way toggle selects tube bias shifting between blackface-style optical (labeled Opto) and Hard or Soft brownface-type harmonic tremolos; Hard has a wider range and more-pronounced sweep, while Soft has a smoother sweep and gentler peak. The Pre/Post toggle selects which effect runs first. CTC added to the pedal's versatility with input jacks for a remote pedal and an expression pedal, to enhance control of reverb mix and tremolo speed.

In all, the White Whale V2 provides warm, all-analog reverb and tremolo with precise control of both. – **Bob Dragich**

FLOWER POWER

Gibson's Theodore Standard

Named in honor of Ted McCarty, the Theodore is based on a design the legendary Gibson president penciled into a sketchbook back in 1957. Ted was angling for more radical solidbody designs at the time, departing from the curvy Les Paul and entering a phase that would soon yield the Explorer and Flying V. With the Theodore Standard, Gibson captures a transitional moment in its history as it brings Ted's sketch to life.

The distinctive tulip-shaped body is a slim cut of mahogany that tucks up comfortably whether you're seated or standing, plus it's lightweight and has a rounded edge where your forearm crosses the lower bout. The Theodore would have been Gibson's first double-cutaway, being a year ahead of the Les Paul Junior, and can be imagined as a precursor to the SG (especially in the deep Vintage Cherry finish of our test model; other options are Antique Natural and Ebony). The rounded "scimitar" headstock shape, as seen on the Explorer, is a counterintuitive pairing with the pointed Florentine cutaways but contributes to the guitar's good balance.

There's no mistaking that you're pulling up to a Gibson neck; 22 frets on a 24.75" scale, a set neck joint, bound mahogany, and trapezoid fret markers on an Indian rosewood fretboard. With its SlimTaper profile, the neck has satisfying girth to fill your palm while also enabling an easy reach across the strings all up the neck.

The Theodore roars thanks to the 57 Classic (neck) and 57 Classic Plus (bridge) pickups. Spec'd to match the vaunted Gibson PAF, the set delivers that thick, harmonically rich overdrive that makes for a soft "woman tone" at one extreme and aggressive Angus Young chunk at the other. A bit of air in the tone brings the SG again to mind, though it's also capable of LP creaminess.

Gibson offered a previous iteration of the Theodore in a limited 2022 run before arriving at all new specs for this namesake production of McCarty's idea. Now, what else is in that sketchbook? – **Rich Maloof**



Price: \$1,999
www.gibson.com

GEARIN' UP



TECH 21 KILLER WAIL WAH V2

Tech 21's Killer Wail v2 uses potentiometer-free light-sensor switching and, instead of band-/low-pass filters, has a proprietary filter that simultaneously changes frequency and Q (sharpness). It runs on a 9-volt battery or Tech 21's DC power supply.



SEYMOUR DUNCAN HADES GATES HUMBUCKERS

Seymour Duncan's Billy Gibbons Hades Gates signature humbuckers use Alnico II magnets and offer higher output than the company's Pearly Gates set. They have four-conductor cable and are available in Nickel, Gold, Black, or Raw Nickel with gold mesh covers, as well as uncovered Zebra, Reverse Zebra, White, and Black.



LERXST BLAH BLAH

Lerxst has teamed with Morley and guitarist Alex Lifeson on the Lerxst Blah Blah wah. It uses Morley's switchless optical wah circuit with adjustable Pitch filter and LED indicator. It runs on 9-volt DC.

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

ALL-PURPOSE AXE

The Knaggs Chena A

Many guitars are a blend of common styles, but few have gone as far as the Knaggs Chena A, a hollowbody in the shape of a Telecaster... sort of.

Sporting a hollow one-piece mahogany body with integrally braced/arched spruce top, ebony fretboard, and gold hardware, the Chena A lends a

certain visual impression enhanced by its gorgeous Violin Honeyburst nitrocellulose lacquer finish.

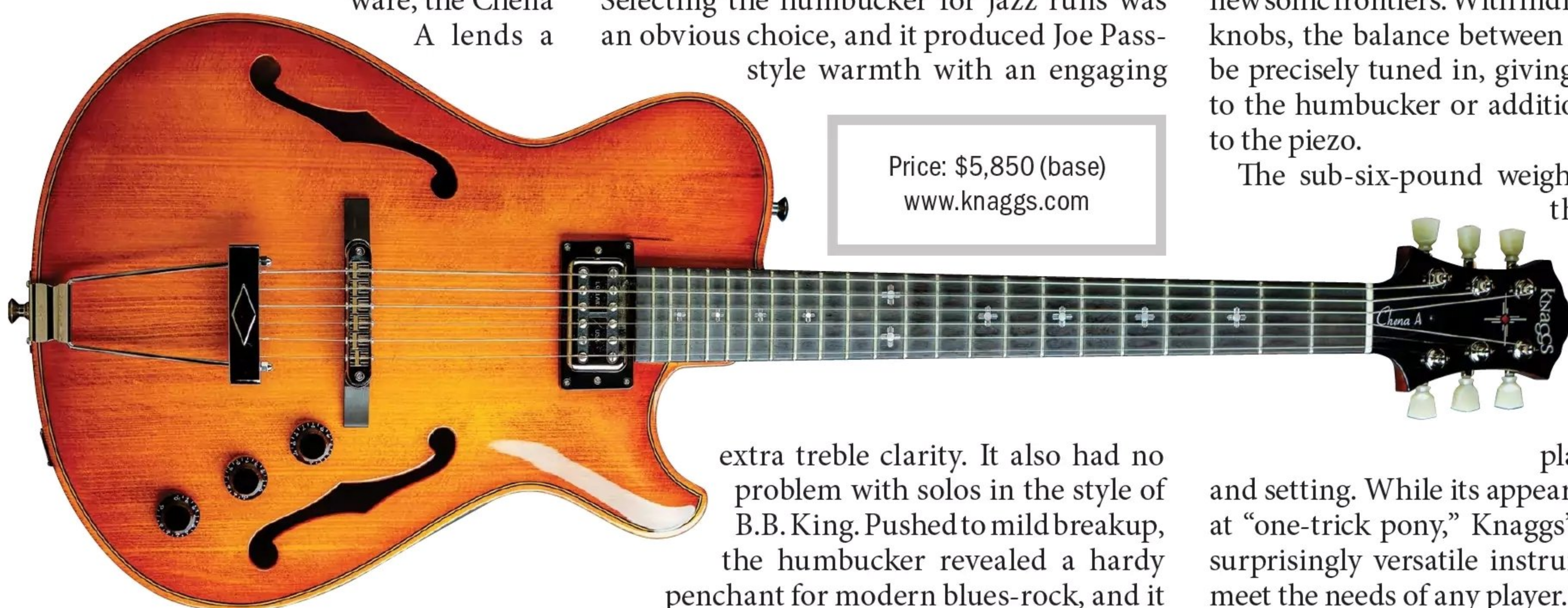
Plugged into a low-watt tube combo, the Chena A revealed tonal versatility that belied its “jazz” aesthetic, thanks to a neck humbucker and Fishman P2 piezo pickups. Selecting the humbucker for jazz runs was an obvious choice, and it produced Joe Pass-style warmth with an engaging

was easy to get full-on rock tones by simply picking closer to the bridge.

Hovering the pick almost over the bridge helped the Chena reveal the Telecaster elements of its personality. Country licks were very convincing and bolstered by increased upper midrange. The hollow body made acoustic tones from the piezo pickup much more realistic than a similar system mounted to a solidbody guitar. Strumming ballads stolen from folk-rockers became a foregone conclusion.

Combining the two pickups opened all-new sonic frontiers. With individual Volume knobs, the balance between the two could be precisely tuned in, giving extra sparkle to the humbucker or additional substance to the piezo.

The sub-six-pound weight, relief along the back edge of the body, and gentle C-shaped neck make the Chena a pleasure to play for any style and setting. While its appearance may hint at “one-trick pony,” Knaggs’ Chena A is a surprisingly versatile instrument that can meet the needs of any player. – **Bob Dragich**



Price: \$5,850 (base)
www.knaggs.com

extra treble clarity. It also had no problem with solos in the style of B.B. King. Pushed to mild breakup, the humbucker revealed a hardy penchant for modern blues-rock, and it

LEGACY-WORTHY

Epiphone's 1963 Firebird V

Looking to up the ante in the market battle with Fender, in October of 1962, Gibson CEO Ted McCarty asked retired auto designer Ray Dietrich to sketch some ultra-modern guitar designs. Nine days later, Dietrich brought eight ideas, the last of which McCarty saw and exclaimed, “That’s the one!” It became the Firebird.

Epiphone recently set out to build an accurate re-creation

of that guitar with its Inspired by Gibson Custom 1963 Firebird V.

True to the original, it sports a nine-ply mahogany/walnut neck-through body with mahogany wings, Kluson planetary-gear “banjo” tuners, a Maestro Vibrola, and Gibson USA mini-humbucker pickups with Alnico V magnets. Other touches include hand-wired CTS pots, Mallory capacitors, and a Switchcraft three-way pickup selector toggle. With the exceptions of the laurel fretboard

Plugged into a low-watt all-tube combo, the mini-humbuckers showed the focus on upper-midrange and treble for which they are known and allows them to cut through a mix. This particular pair is well-balanced both in volume and tone. With the toggle in the middle position, neither one dominates. Clicking to the neck increases the lower mids but retains the essential mid-position tone. Going to the bridge pickup raises high-end response but retains the overall mid-position sound. The Tone knob for the bridge pickup can be rolled off all the way to three before the sound becomes unusably muddy, easily controlling the treble output and making it very versatile.

Offered in Frost Blue, Ember Red, Cherry, and Vintage Sunburst, fit and finish on our tester were (like the Greeny Les Paul we reviewed in March '24) flawless, with no hint of bleed on the binding or sharp fret ends. All told, the 1963 Firebird V is worthy of the model’s legacy. – **Bob Dragich VG**



Price: \$1,699
www.epiphone.com

and polyurethane finish instead of the rosewood and nitrocellulose of the original, the Epiphone is true to form.

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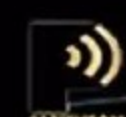
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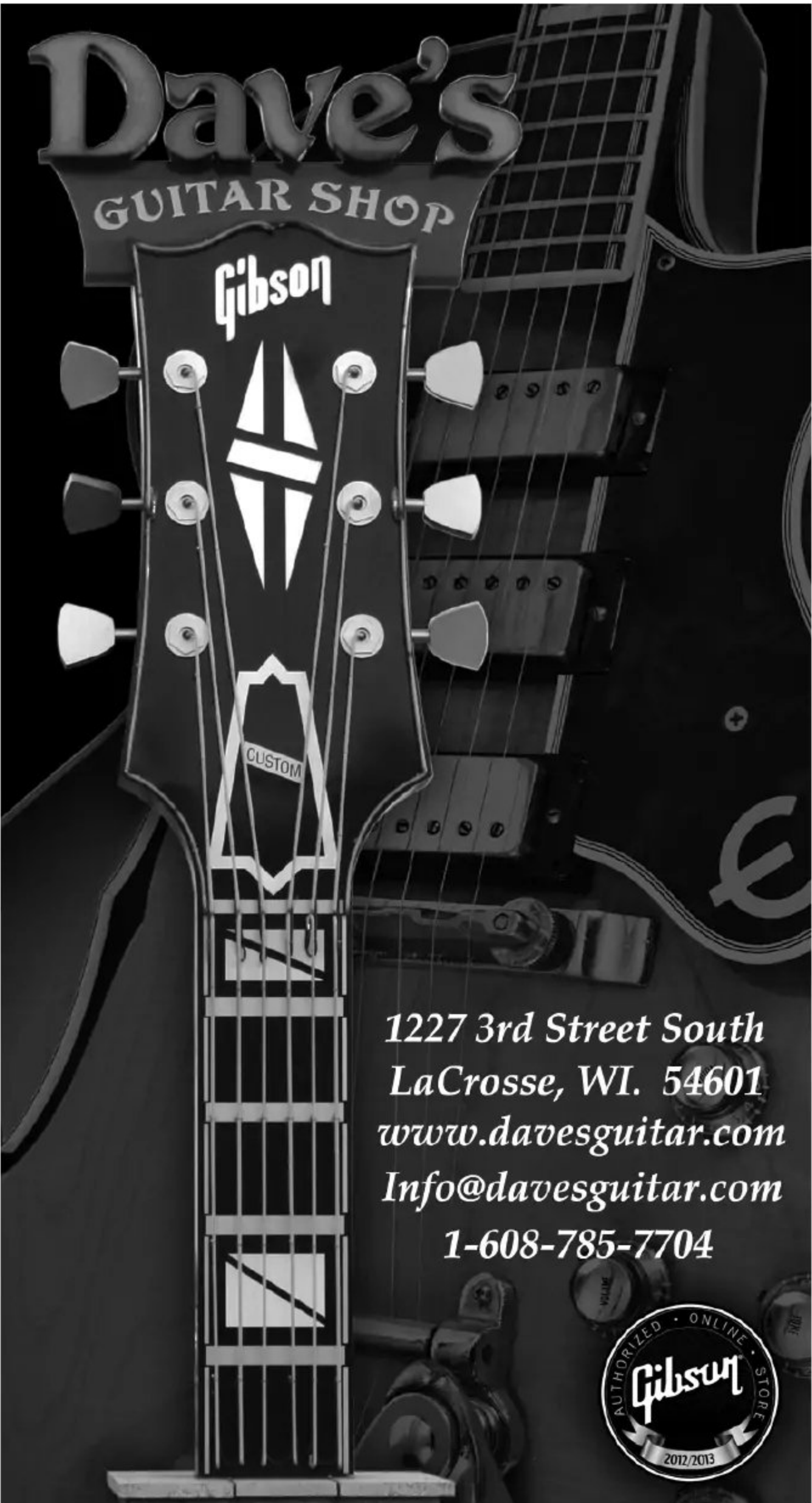


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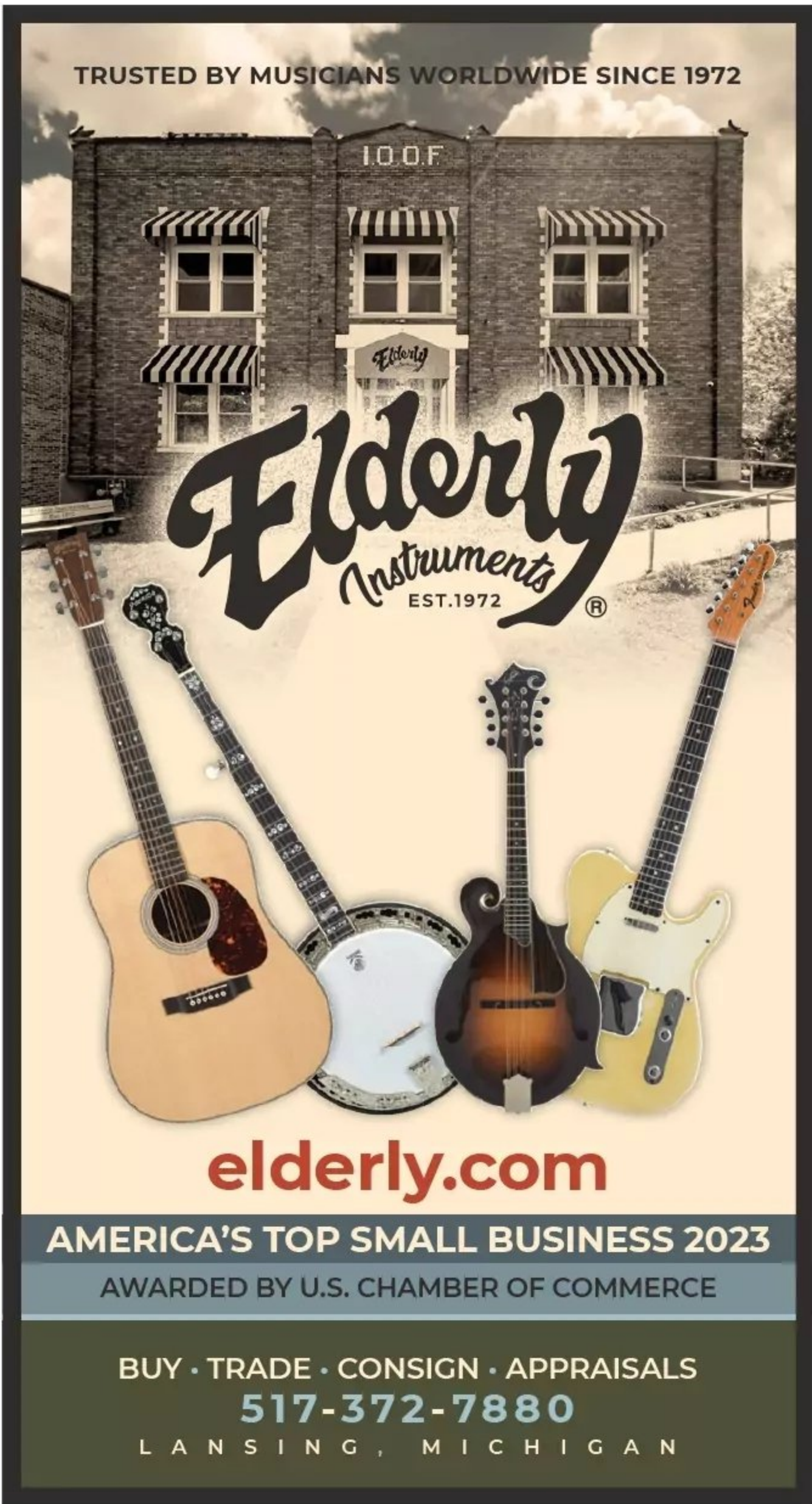


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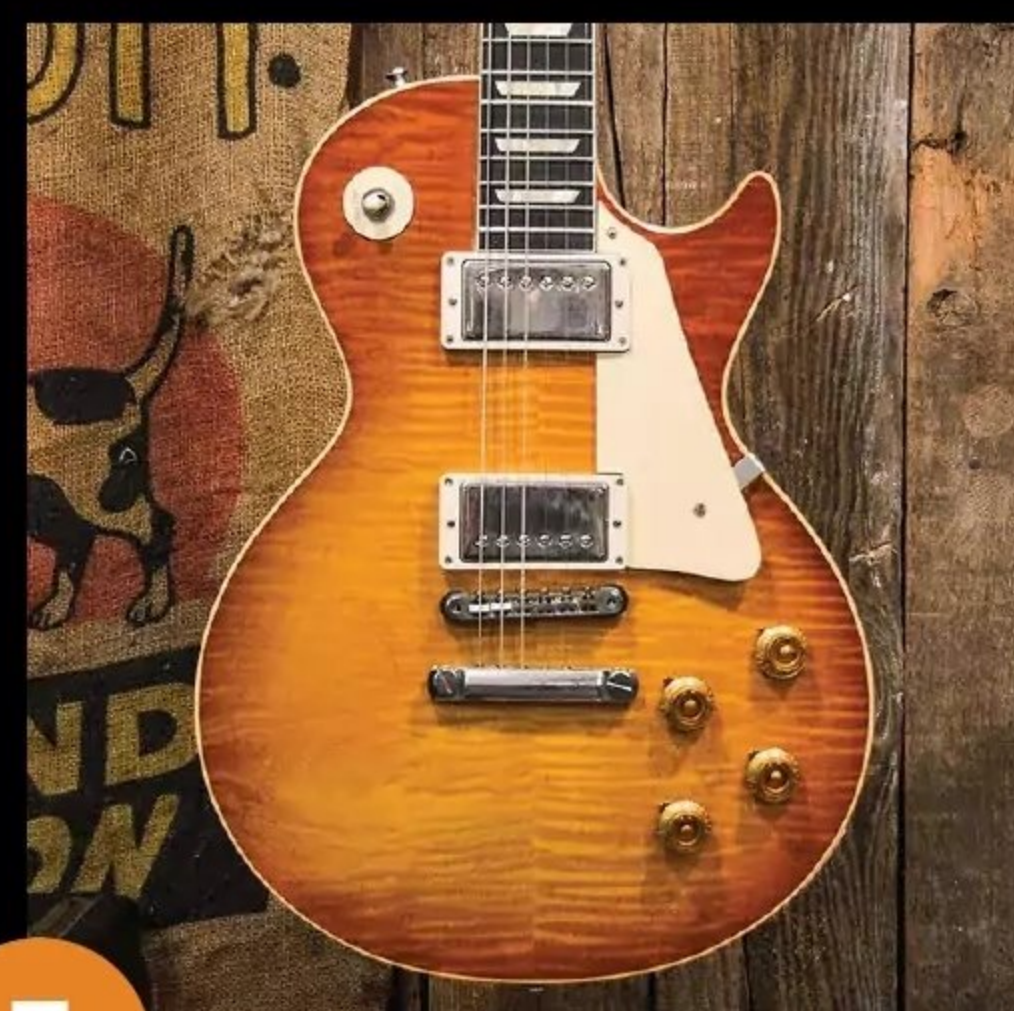
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01 Christian Roebling's jumbo-sized beauties are (left) a Gretsch Hawaiian, Martin HJ-38 Stefan Grossman, Gibson J-200, L-200 Emmylou Harris, and a Guild JF30. "I'm going to need a bigger couch pretty soon!" he says.

02 Longtime subscriber Bill Beals gathered his Fenders for this family grouping. On the shelf are his practice amps – a Mini Twin (top), black and tweed lunchboxes, a tweed Mini Twin, and a blond Mini Tone Master. The big-kid amps include a Super Champ XD and a Deluxe Reverb Tone Master, and the guitars are (from left) a sunburst two-knob Strat from '83, a U.S.-made Telecaster in natural, and an American Deluxe Strat in Olympic Pearl.

03 Have a look at Joe LaMore's pride and joy! In front (from left) are a 2005 6120, '58-reissue Les Paul Junior, '59-reissue Les Paul, '63 Jaguar, '63 Duo-Sonic, '93 Strat, and a Tele copy made from parts. On the wall are his two Ben Wasser Guitarworks Shaft models.

04 James Supernor scored one of the new Epiphone Firebird V models (check this month's "Approved Gear" for our impressions) and has been jamming with it through his Marshall Origin 20 combo.

05 James Richardson is handling the low-end for us this month. Through a nice assortment of amps he plays (from left) a Kramer Duke, Jerry Jones Longhorn, Fender P-Bass Lyte, and a '78 Music Master.

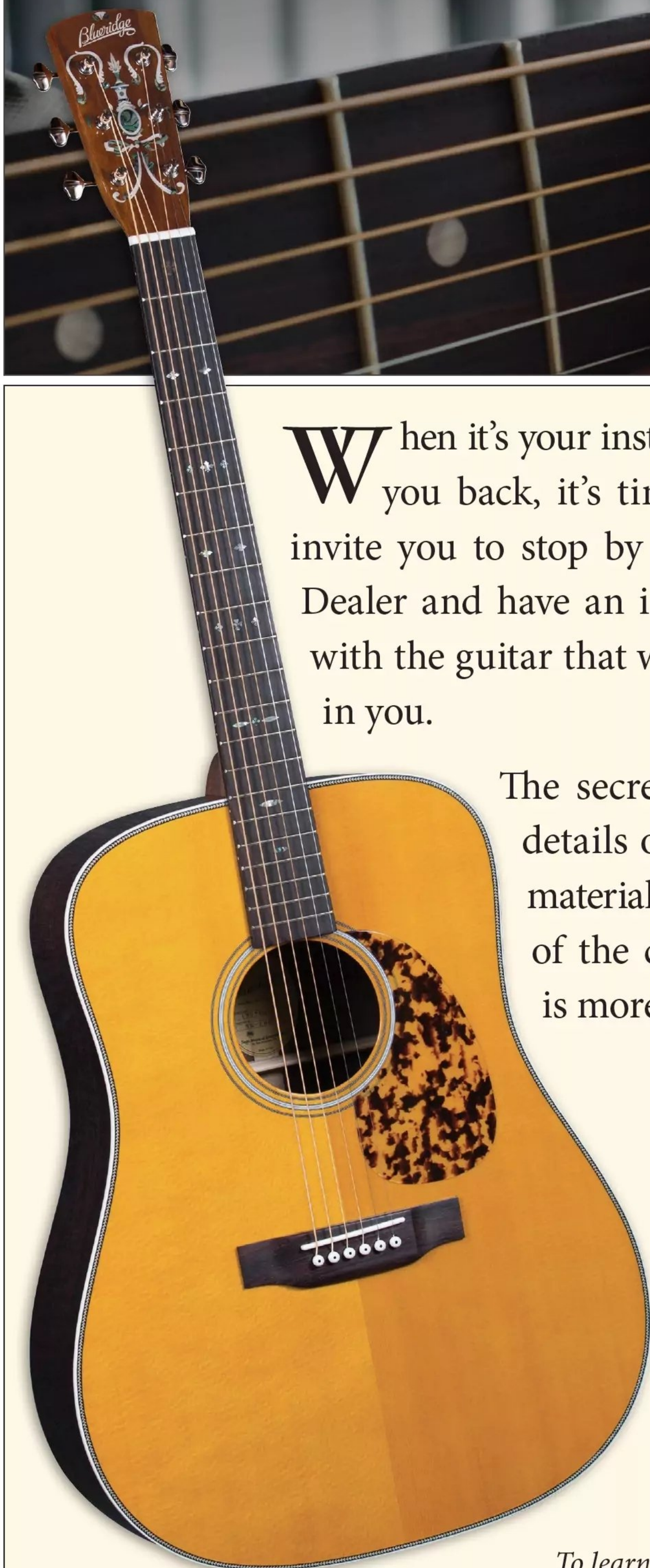
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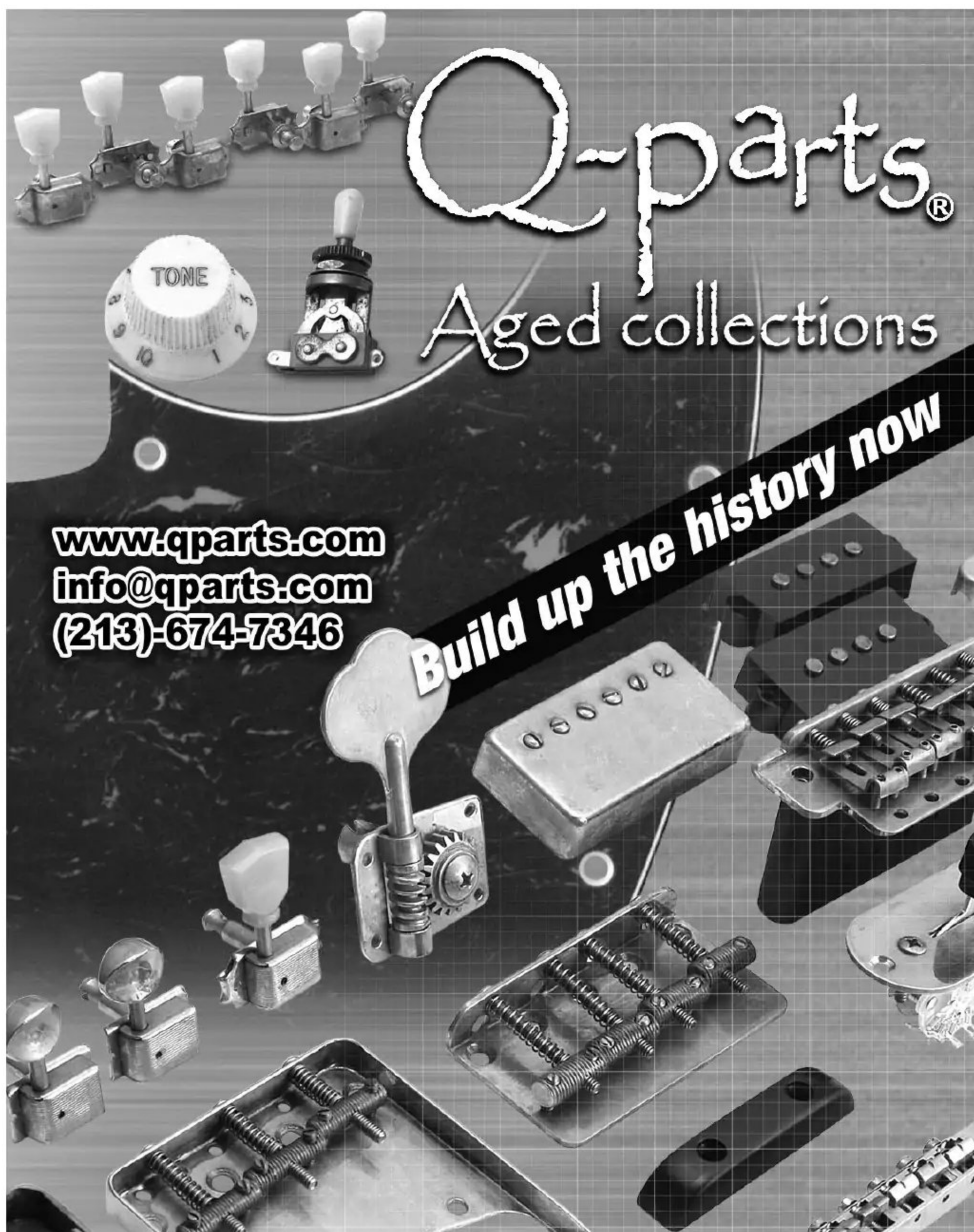


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