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ISBELL**

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OLD GEAR**



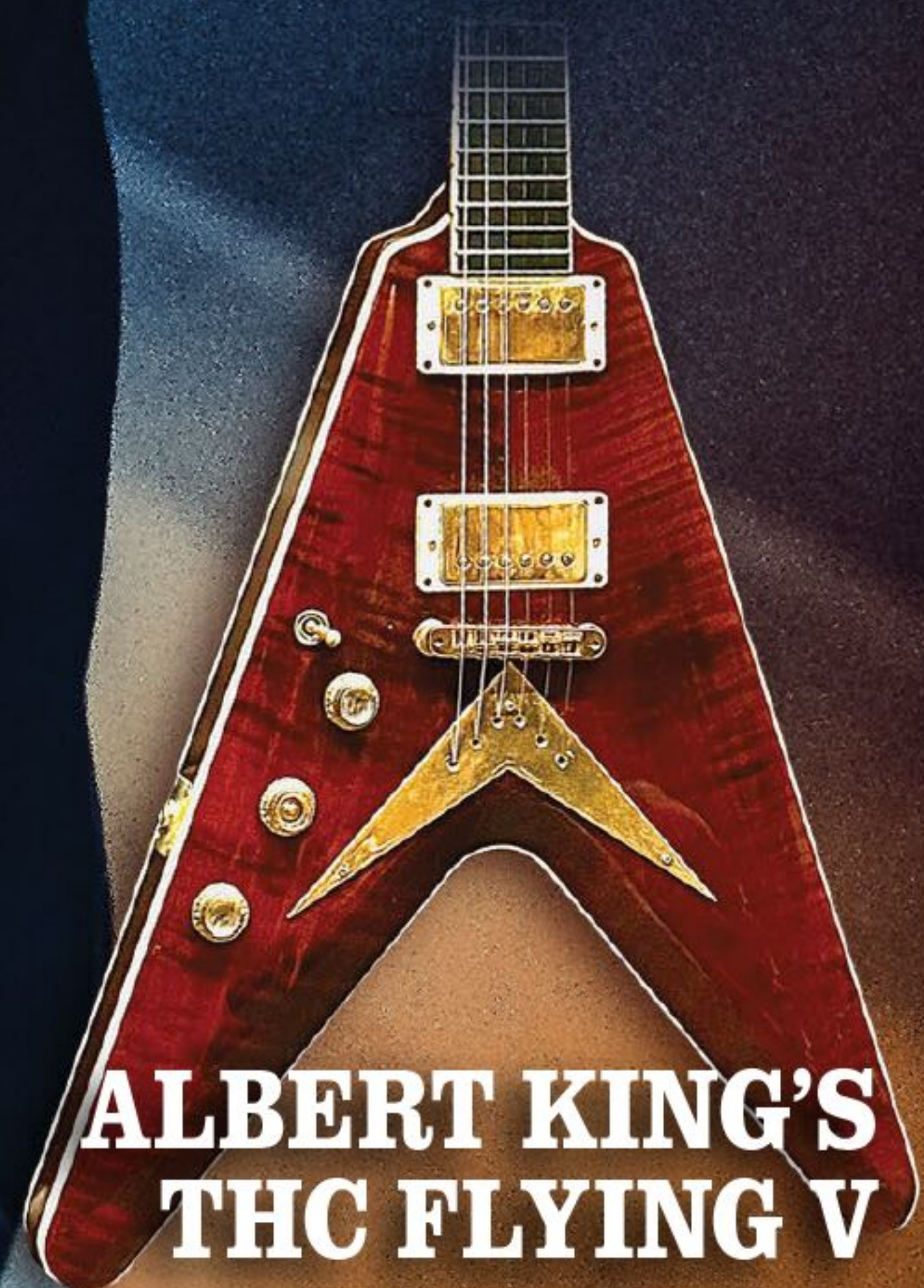
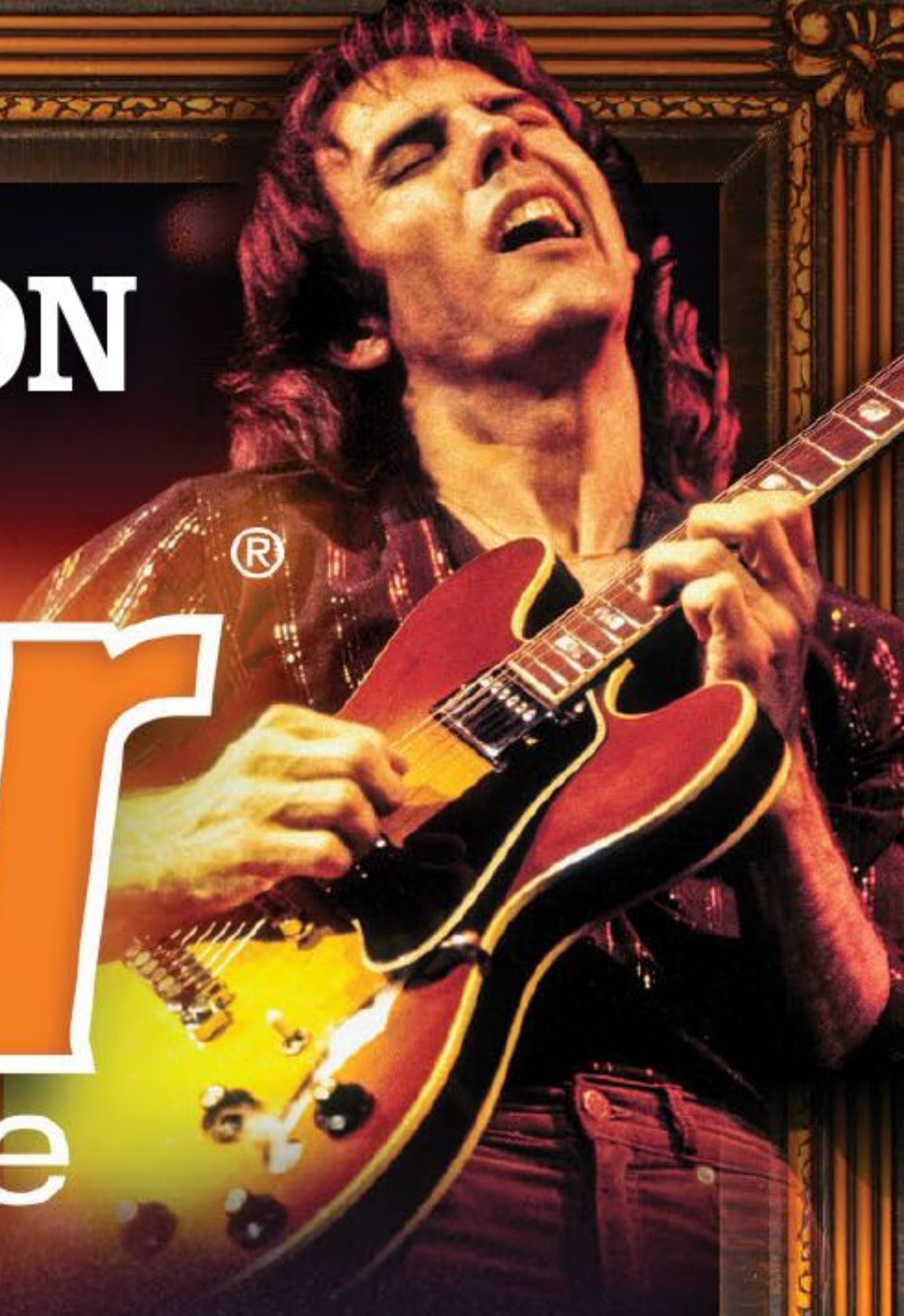
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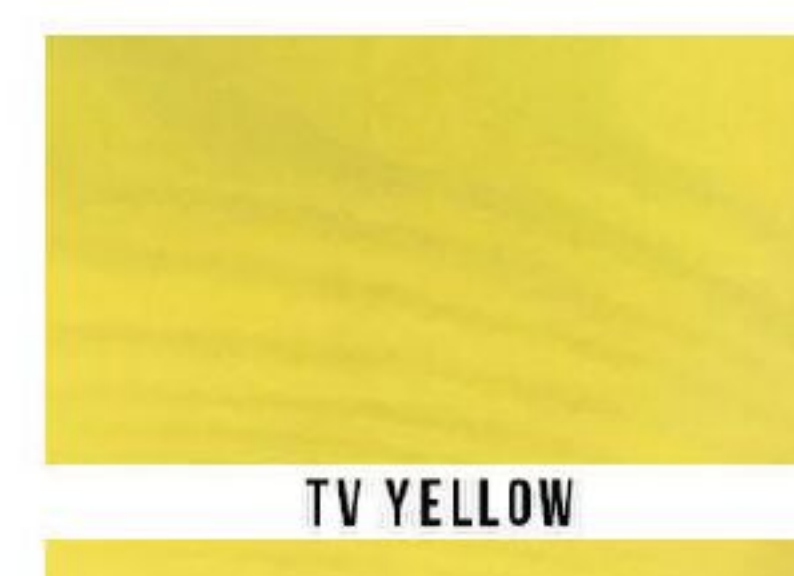
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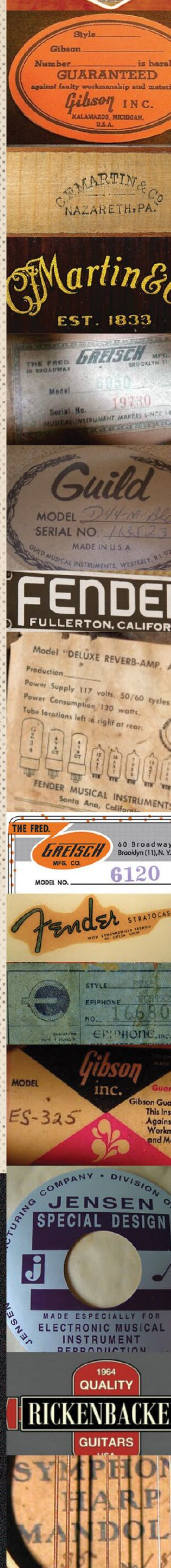
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Allen Hinds

26 COTERIE COMPLETE Albert King's THC Flying V

In the spring of '71, Albert King was recording at Muscle Shoals, backed by the Swampers. Signed to the troubled Stax Records, after he wasn't paid per their agreement – cash in a shoebox – he walked out. Fifty-two years later, when music producer/guitar collector Robert Johnson bought one of King's famous guitars, it inspired him to “finish” the songs with help from a heavy-hitter accomplice.

| **By Willie G. Moseley**

30 PRUNE JUICE “Boogie Mod” Dual Showman

Randall Smith's legendary Boogie circuit started as a prank before he applied it as a mod to small Fender amps. What did one player do when the blackface Bandmaster he bought sight-unseen turned out

to have one? He celebrated, then traced its history.

| **By Dave Hunter**

50 GIBSON'S “SG” LES PAUL Classic Shape That •Filled Big Shoes

Though it became one of Gibson's most-successful solidbodies and the rock guitar of the late '60s, the double-cut Les Paul had an inauspicious start. | **By Baker Rorick**

54 JASON ISBELL New Vistas, Old Gear

One of America's most-respected singer/songwriters, he is a charismatic performer with an eclectic style that melds country, blues, and Southern rock. As his success grew, vintage gear played a larger role in his approach. That includes *Foxes in the Snow*, his new solo acoustic album. | **By Rich Kienzle**

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COVER PHOTOS: Jason Isbell: Joshua Druding. Larry Coryell: Clayton Call. Steve Vai: Larry DiMarzio. Gibson “SG” Les Paul: VG Archive. Albert King THC Flying V courtesy of Robert Johnson. **THIS PAGE:** Allen Hinds: Johnny Buzzario.

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JANUARY JAMBOREE

I loved Dave Hunter's feature on the HeathKit TA-16 Starmaker amp ("Basement Jams & Blown Speakers: The Heathkit TA-16 Starmaker"). I built a number of Heathkits as a teenager, mostly radios and test gear, and have played guitar since the late '60s. I graduated from college in 1976 with a degree in electrical engineering and have always modified my guitars.

I first built an amp in 2012 – a 5F6A Bassman clone – and have since built others based on a 5F1 Champ, a Trainwreck Express, and a 5E8A "low-power" tweed Twin head. I also modified a Fender Champion 600 reissue to 5F1 specs, and rebuilt a Fender Blues Deluxe Reissue closer to a 5F6A Bassman.

My wife and I live in a small community in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, where I can crank my guitars and amps as much as I want without bothering our neighbors.

Bill Haegele
Natural Bridge, Virginia

I have been playing guitar and bass for 45 years and still have so much to learn. I like all styles of music, from classical to ancient Spanish, and have bought new music based on your reviews. Your coverage of "old" gear is very entertaining; my dad and I used to frequent Lafayette Electronics for Heathkit amps. His first store-bought amp was a Fender Twin Reverb, my first guitar was a Harmony acoustic archtop before I got into Dad's green Country Club. VG is great!

Louis Larios
Topsham, Maine

I greatly enjoyed the January issue, especially the interview with Wes Beech ("Wes Beech: Life in the Plasmatics"). At the time, I was not a fan of the band; I enjoyed heavy metal, but the Plasmatics seemed *way* too extreme! But, in September of 1980, I was drawn in by the spectacle when the band promised to smoke Pier 62 while sinking a Cadillac. Perched on a hilltop on the opposite side of the Hudson River with a pair of high-powered binoculars, I

observed the proceedings. The band arrived via helicopter and took the stage with its grinding guitars and screaming vocals echoing across the water. Then, the moment of truth as Wendy O. Williams drove the Caddie into the stage and it all blew up, sending the car into the murky Hudson, well-done!

And, that Moderne that Wes holds on Page 50... Wow!

Joseph Atkins
Arlington, Texas

Thank you for the deep dive on Led Zeppelin ("Fretprints: Led Zeppelin IV-Play") and Wes Beech. I loved the Rossington SG feature and the fact that I can go to Chicago Music Exchange and actually *see* these guitars!

I do check out some of the records you review, and I love the old amplifier info, along with repair tips and hints. Nothing beats a tube amp (solid-state amps still suck!).

Scott Turner
Holmen, Wisconsin

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The advertisement features a black background. On the left, the headstock of a light-colored wooden guitar is shown, with a yellow and white Tunerette clip-on tuner attached to the headstock. The Tunerette logo is written in red script on the headstock. To the right of the guitar, the text "THE MOST ROCK 'N' ROLL TUNER EVER" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Below this, the words "FAST ACCURATE RECHARGEABLE" are written in red capital letters. In the bottom right corner, there is a white box for the Tunerette guitar tuner, with the brand name "TUNERETTE" and "GUITAR TUNER" visible. A white cable is plugged into the side of the box. A warning label on the box reads: "WARNING: Not using this may be hazardous to anyone within earshot." The website "WWW.TUNERETTE.NET" is printed in large white capital letters at the bottom left of the advertisement.

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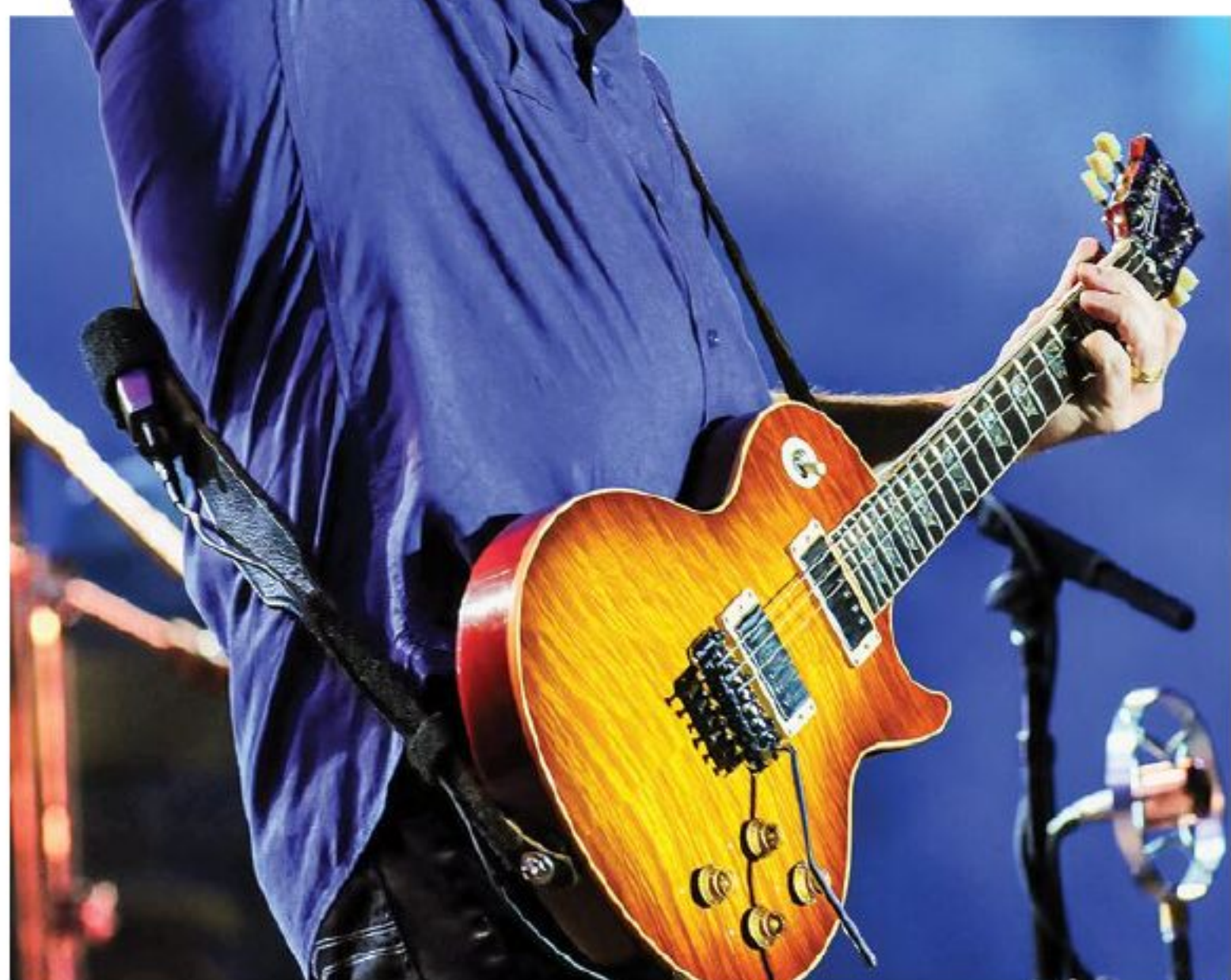
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Alex Lifeson

NGM HONORS LIFESON

The National Guitar Museum has honored Alex Lifeson with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

A founding member of Rush – known for its extraordinary musicianship and crafting experimental and progressive-rock epics – Lifeson has appeared on more than 30 albums since 1974.

“Alex’s playing has inspired countless guitarists to push the boundaries of what the guitar can do,” said H.P. Newquist, NGM’s executive director. “It’s hard to put his playing in a category – calling him a rock guitarist doesn’t begin to cover it. Catchy riffs, intricate instrumental passages, classical flourishes, jackhammer chords, brilliant tone... that’s just the start of what Alex does as a guitarist.”

Lifeson is the 15th recipient of the award.

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Through March 31, customers at all Guitar Center stores and online can round their purchases up to the nearest dollar, with all donations going to assist those affected.

Anyone can donate by visiting guitarcenterfoundation.org/fires, clicking the Donate button, then selecting “Disaster Relief” in the pull-down.



STEVE VAI

Taming The Hydra

After finishing a sold-out tour with Joe Satriani and Eric Johnson for the G3 Reunion concerts, Steve Vai joined Adrian Belew and Tony Levin to perform interpretations of the ’80s King Crimson albums *Discipline*, *Beat*, and *Three Of A Perfect Pair*. The band is called Beat, and the result is mind-altering. All this, and there’s a fire-breathing new single from the new *G3 Reunion Live* album.

How does playing the music of King Crimson affect your playing?

I was a fan of ’80s King Crimson. That music was fantastic, and as soon as Adrian asked me, I saw myself playing it. I’m playing Robert Fripp’s guitar parts. It’s a challenge because his style is very different than mine. But I knew it would be fun and felt I could navigate it appropriately and effectively.

Steve Vai: Larry DiMarzio.

Playing that music, you get to see me working, as opposed to just playing melodies and solos.

You integrate your personality but remain faithful to the tunes.

There's a beauty and cleverness within the interlocking guitar parts. Approaching it as a guitar player, I had to study Fripp. I got into his disciplinary style. There were two spots where I had to reconnoiter things. On "Frame By Frame," there's that relentless cross-picking riff that's simply outside of my wheelhouse, especially at my age. I didn't feel like I could play it consistently every night, so I needed to figure something out. So, I took it into my wheelhouse, which is tapping. That worked. It's reflective of the original, but removed.

On a couple of the riffs on "Elephant Talk," I decided to hammer instead of pick. Everything else falls within my ability. When it comes time to take a solo, it doesn't make sense to sound like Fripp. Fripp said, "If I were sitting in the audience, I wouldn't want to see you trying to do my kind of solo. I wanna see Steve Vai go crazy!" So, that's what I do. Adrian and I add a dynamic that's perfectly balanced for the music. We're so different, yet we come together on many things within the show.

"Zeus in Chains" is the first single from the new G3 Reunion Live album.

It's got those big chords, and I love playing that song. Whenever I perform it, I feel like I'm in a trance. If a musician is connecting with their instrument, they're merged with the notes, and it's a beautiful thing. I have a guitar by my bed. When my wife's getting ready at night, I sit there and tinker about. Sometimes, something comes up that has some energy in it. I knew it was good because I heard my wife from the bathroom say, "That's a good one (laughs)!"

You're using harmonizers more than ever.

A lot of that is with the DigiTech Whammy. That has the most authentic, heavy, clear, harmonized sound with integrity. When I use outboard gear like the Fractal, it's for other types of harmony things – it's good for upper-end harmonies like a fifth above or creating a chord. DigiTech doesn't do that. With Beat, I use the DigiTech, but there are songs, like "Industry" or "Thela Hun Ginjeet," where the outboard gear works better. On "Industry," I have a five-note chord coming from one note.

What's the story behind your Hydra guitar?

I wanted to create something that was musical and meaningful. The idea was to create an instrument that I could carry an entire piece of music with. I wanted a bass neck, a 12-string neck, a seven-string neck, harp strings, a guitar synthesizer with Sample and Hold features, and Sustainers.

In the movie *Mad Max: Fury Road*, there's a scene where a guy is playing this wild-looking guitar with flames coming out – steampunk! That's what the guitar was going to look like. It's a style I really like. The Ibanez guys in Japan went to the wall and built it from scratch. The process took years. When I got the final version, I nearly had a heart attack. The name of the guitar comes from the movie *Jason and the Argonauts*. The Hydra is a mythical three-headed dragon creature. If you cut off one of the heads, another will grow.

As I was finishing the *Inviolable* album, I needed one more track, and the Hydra was standing there. It said to me, "Okay, now it's my turn (laughs)." It took me six weeks of 15-hour undisturbed days to write and record. Everything you hear is the Hydra in one take. You can watch "Teeth of the Hydra" on Youtube.

What's next?

I've been working with Joe Satriani on a new record. In the summer, we'll do a European tour called *Surfing with the Hydra*. We'll play some of the new songs, and the record will follow the tour. – **Oscar Jordan**



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MARK SAMPSON

Back Cat

Epitome of the restless designer/tinkerer, Mark Sampson has co-founded four guitar-amplifier companies, two of which – Matchless and Bad Cat – are indelible figures in the trade whose original builds draw perpetual interest from collectors, especially the Matchless DC-30 and SC-30, which are prime examples of “boutique.”

Sampson started Bad Cat in 2000 with Rick Perrotta, James Heidrich, and Joe Allrich. His departure five years later was less than amicable, but the decades that followed saw both parties flourish.

In the run-up to this year’s winter NAMM show, Bad Cat announced it was reuniting with Sampson on a new design called the Era 30. We spoke with him just prior, as he dealt with challenges outside the shop; ping-ponging between Mason City, Iowa, and Cleveland while settling his father’s estate, he was also in regular communication with two of his adult children who were minding his L.A. home as the Pallisades Fire approached from three sides.

“They were in a tough spot,” he said. “We’ve lived through fires and I knew they could handle it, but when we talked, I heard the cracking in their voices.”

Fortunately, the fire did not reach the house.

What spurred your return to Bad Cat?

Well, John Thompson, who has owned the company since 2011, tried for awhile to get hold of me before [L.A. guitarist/producer/

songwriter] Joel Whitley connected us. John offered everything I wanted if I came back, including the ability to keep working on other projects, because I love working in studios. In fact, I’m right now working on a patent for two condenser mics and I don’t want to have to set that aside or get too strung out by dealing with the business end of making amps.

I also didn’t want to be involved in the work of bringing an amp to the manufacturing level, because it’s one thing to build a prototype that works well, but it’s another to make the drawings and employ people for a production line. John and the crew at Bad Cat now are also much more in-tune with the internet and modern marketing. Getting up to speed on all that isn’t what I wanted to do again.

Anyway, John mentioned that it was about to be 25 years since Joe Allrich and I started Bad Cat, so he wondered if I’d be interested in a 25th-anniversary amp. I pondered it for a while then asked, “What do you really want? Something with one knob, five knobs, 10 knobs?” I wanted to be in sync with his thinking. He said, “You could do an updated version of the original Black Cat 30 with an active effects loop...” and they’ve named it the Mark Sampson Era 30. I built a prototype and let them take it from there. They’ve made a half a dozen and the workmanship is great; I was impressed and we’ll be demoing them at NAMM.

What is its configuration?

It has four EL84s with a 5AR4 rectifier

tube, four 12AX7s, and an EF86. It’s a little different; it’s got one input jack that feeds both channels with a relay switch between them controlled with a silent footswitch that has LED channel indicators. You can also bypass the relay and feed both channels at the same time.

And the control layout?

The EF86 channel has a passive rotary Depth switch for low-frequency roll-down, and, like a tweed Fender, a high-frequency roll-down; it’s a simple Tone control. The other channel is sort of a Top Boost AC30, with Volume, Bass, Treble, and Gain. It has an active effects loop that is hardwire-bypassed, which is one of the things I insisted on and will never get away from because I like the pure sound of an amp with no pedals in the middle or in front of it. I want to just hear the amp, especially for recording; in that world, all the extras just get in the way and add noise. You’re better off tracking clean and dry and then doing whatever effects post-recording.

In terms of function, what sets it apart?

Well, each channel has its own Volume, and the channels are no longer out of phase, so you can blend and mix them to your heart’s content without worrying about phase. Also, there’s an overall Master volume so you can play it in a bedroom with each channel set to the gain and distortion you want, then set the overall volume down if you need to. Each channel Volume is pre phase inverter, and the overall Master is post phase inverter, so you can overdrive the phase inverter a bit and get shading of distortion and gain.

While working on the circuit, we eliminated a lot of the mechanical problems with EF86 tubes rattling because of how their grids are made, which is important.

Have you and John talked about other amps?

I’m working on others for him based on existing models that just didn’t sound amazing to me, but there are no firm plans.

What does your ear want to hear that most amps don’t offer?

Well, I *always* want to hear as much harmonic content as possible and a pure, clean tone that adds space around the note. On top of that, it’s got to sound good whether it’s really clean or well-distorted.

There’s a lot of listening and some compromising when I’m developing an amp. I spend days at my workbench, soldering iron in one hand, a guitar across my lap, just trying things in the circuit. – **Ward Meeker**

To read an extended version of this interview, visit VintageGuitar.com and enter “Mark Sampson” in the search window.



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STEVE HACKETT

No Limits

Steve Hackett is one of the busiest guitarists around, regularly issuing new studio and live albums. His latest, *Live Magic at Trading Boundaries*, focuses on his classical/acoustic compositions. Included are solo guitar pieces and group performances featuring music from his time in Genesis during its beloved '70s "progressive" era.

Trading Boundaries is an intimate venue in Sussex where you often perform during the holidays. How far back do the recordings for this album go?

It might be as much as 10 years. Most of it is newer, but I didn't want to itemize. I'm happy to cherry pick across things that worked best with what grew into a five-piece team from a

three- or four-piece band when we started. It includes my brother, John (flute), Roger King (keyboards), Rob Townsend (flute/saxophone), and Amanda Lehmann (guitar/vocals).

For years, recording acoustic music was a guilty pleasure for me. There were howls of protest from Charisma Records, so my first acoustic record, *Bay of Kings*, instead got signed to Lamborghini Records, which was in the music business for about five minutes. Having been told that this sort of stuff only sells 5,000 copies, the nice thing was that it sold in excess of 20,000. It gives you an idea of the power of acoustic music.

I try not to fall into the trap of doing music that's too proficiency-based. My concern is that yes, you're showing your dexterity, you've

learned your lessons, and you might be the fastest gun in the West. But it might be a big-willy contest! In my long-winded way, what I'm trying to say – and I don't want to sound too much like Batman lecturing Robin here – it's the idea of composition versus mere virtuosity.

Do you try to get in a specific mindset to write classical music versus when you're working on songs for a rock record?

I think so, yeah. I tend to have an acoustic guitar at hand and an electric guitar or two. What I'm finding is that I've got a tuning for nylon guitar that I'm particularly fond of. Of course, the nails have got to be right and conditions have got to be right. Your hands have got to be warm. The guitar's got to be warm.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Genesis' *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*, there's a new box set with a concert and demos. What do you think about the album now?

I've got a different take on it. Other than Peter (Gabriel), most of the guys in the band disparage it and tell you everything that's wrong with it. I think it's very good and has a tremendous amount of merit. What you *do* have to contend with is the fact we were a band in turmoil putting that together. There was an obvious contest between keyboards and vocals apart from anything else, leaving very little room to do anything but join one side or the other, or "Okay, I'll join the bass line." How is there room to do a counterpoint melody?

I *did* do a counterpoint melody on the fast arpeggios that accompany "Carpet Crawlers." I had the idea of the guitar as a distant violin. It was so quiet on the original mix that it's practically inaudible, so you think, "Something's going on in there." I've recorded a lot of versions of it myself, and I make the guitar audible, but very distant. That's because there was a Yardbirds track called "Turn into Earth" on *Roger the Engineer* with a guitar part that Jeff Beck did that sounded practically inaudible, like a distant violin. It had tremendous mystique and majesty. For me, it was absolutely magic.

Which guitars do you play on *Live Magic at Trading Boundaries*?

There's a Yamaha for some of it, which has an onboard reverb and chorus that are rather nice. But my favorite is a Yairi and I've been playing those for years. They tried very hard to copy the Ramírez sound, and did a very good job. The Yairi is a cutaway that you can plug straight in; I go through a Fishman Aura acoustic modeling simulator and a mic, as well. We make it as authentically acoustic as possible. – **Bret Adams**



ALLEN HINDS

Flowing

On *The Good Fight*, guitarist Allen Hinds finds the sweet spot between melodic fusion and good, earthy music for the soul. Joined by a stellar rhythm section, Hinds is a black-belt legato master and slide stylist with an ear for excitement. Strong songs prevail, but his influences go much deeper than your run-of-the-mill jazz guitarist.

The Good Fight mirrors all the things you do so well.

I just got a nice e-mail from Mike Stern. He told me how much he loved the record. It's life-affirming to have someone of that stature take the time to listen to your music. There are good performances on the record, and the mix is great.

You have great players...

Bassist Travis Carlton and drummer Donald Barrett sound great. Pat Bergeson, who played chromatic harmonica, sounded pretty badass on "Webster's Lake."

What runs through your mind when you're composing?

I kind of flow and try to get out whatever feelings I'm having in a song. I finish the project and see if it makes sense. I still have something to offer in the guitar world that may not have gotten enough attention; I came up after Scott Henderson and Frank Gambale, so I'm in that vein, but my stuff is more grassroots and appeals to more than just guitarists. If it can push an emotion and people remember it twenty years from now, that's what I go for.

I write like a pop songwriter. I don't write fusion with lots of complicated chord changes. I have pop formats in my writing because that's what I grew up with – listening to The Beatles, Stevie Wonder, and James Taylor. I come from a pop background, more so than jazz. I like harmony and things that change and surprise. My goal is to keep stuff flowing.

Parts of the album sound like Americana-prog-fusion.

People think I'm a fusion guy who listens to Holdsworth and Coltrane 24 hours a day. The stuff I put on for pleasure is old Chris Whitley or Jeff Buckley, and Joni Mitchell. I like songs. Little Feat was one of my favorite bands when Lowell George was alive.

Speaking of Lowell George, you have a lot of slide on the album.

I grew up in Alabama, where *all* the slide comes from. If I'm not playing slide on the record, I'm playing a part behind myself in an open tuning. I'm no Sonny Landreth or Blake Mills, but when I got out of high school, everyone had to play some Duane Allman. I was never into the open-tuning thing because I only had one guitar and my action is super low because of the legato. I find myself writing with slide because it's so emotive. Using the right notes in the right place can sound like a great singer.

I've always loved pedal steel and acoustic guitar. I'm a big fan of guitarist John Leventhal, and I would rather do a gig like his, backing Shawn Colvin, than some hard-fusion gig. Having said that, I like playing tunes where it's a good jigsaw puzzle to figure out. Like soloing over "Giant Steps." When I went to the Musicians Institute, I went from the Duane Allman, Little Feat stage, to Robben Ford and Allan Holdsworth. I loved the sound and excitement of Holdsworth's legato style. Harmonically, I was listening to pop from the '60s, '70s, and '80s.

Your legato technique brings guitar nerds to the party.

When I go to Japan, they have five cameras on my fingers trying to figure out what I'm doing (laughs). It wasn't something I planned. You make up for what you can't do, which becomes your style. In my head, I wanted to be like Steve Morse. When I was growing up, he lived 50 miles away and I saw the Dixie Dregs all the time back when Steve was just burnin'.

Xotic Guitars built a signature guitar for you.

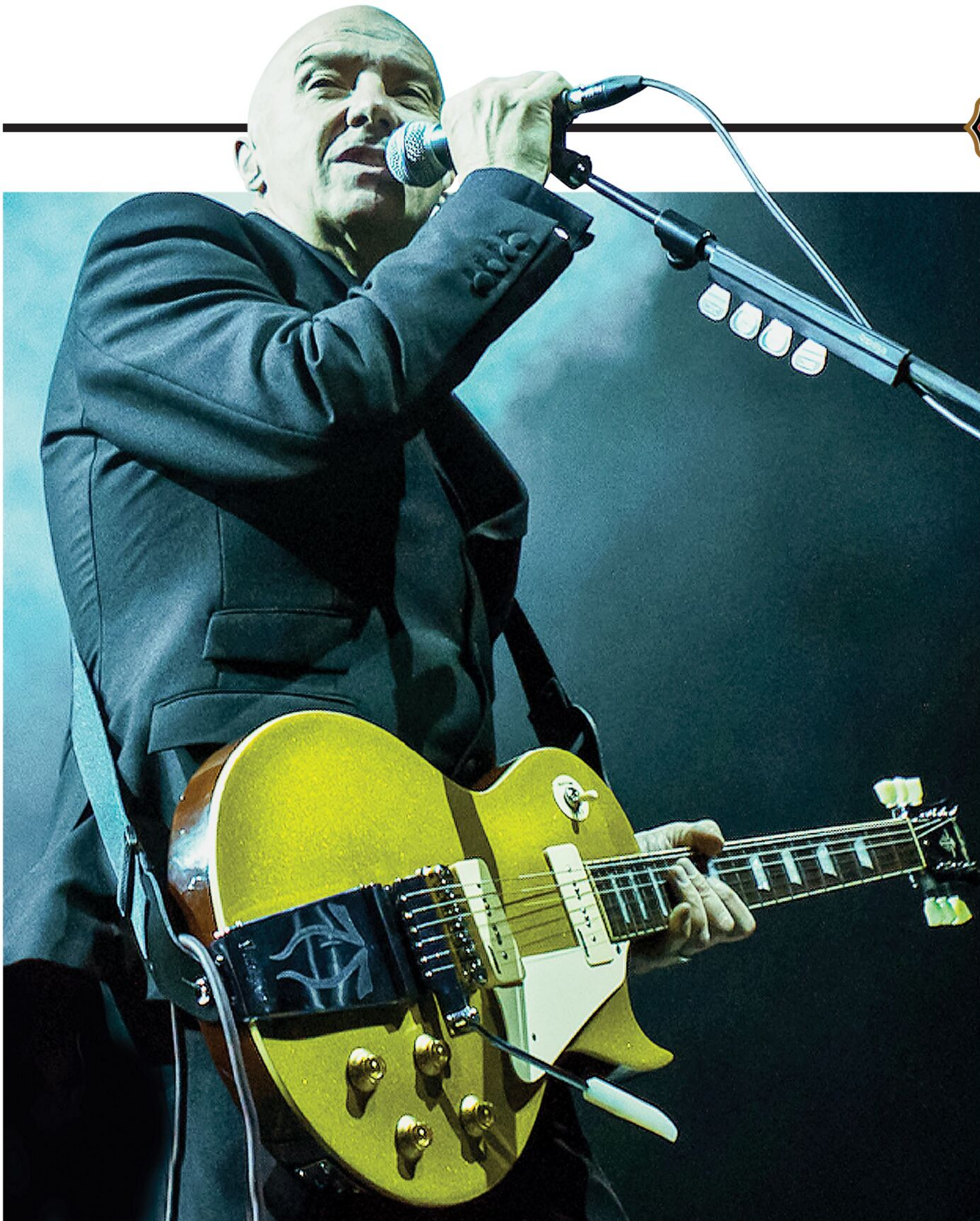
The guitar I compare everything to is my '52 Esquire. Xotic measured it with calipers and computers and re-did it. It's as close as you can get. They also made a Strat copy for me with two single-coils, a humbucker in the bridge, and a maple neck. Their pedals are really good, too.

Do you have a favorite amp?

When I need a defined, overdriven solo, I use the Red Plate BlackLine. It has EL-34s and a Marshall-y overdrive channel. It sounds like a really nice overdriven Eric Johnson Marshall.

What's next?

I have a new lesson book, *Modern Blues Slide Guitar*, add I'm writing new music – and playing a lot of tennis. – **Oscar Jordan**



MIDGE URE

The Unexpected Retrospective

While guitarist Midge Ure was a member of Visage and was briefly in an early version of Thin Lizzy, he's best known as the front man of the British power-prog band Ultravox.

Ure has enjoyed an active solo career since Ultravox split three decades ago, and the recent three-CD/three-LP *Royal Albert Hall 04-10-23* is a thorough overview of his career, including a performance of the entire 1980 Ultravox album *Vienna*.

Ure turned 70 in the same month the concert was recorded, but that was unplanned and other concerts were being recorded during his Voice and Visions tour.

"It wasn't until the tour was nearing an end that the idea of the birthday concert was born," he said. "These days, you can record as many

shows as you like [on] digital mixing desks. The problem is finding time or enthusiasm to listen to them all."

He didn't expect that particular show as an option, due to expenses.

"I honestly didn't know we were recording it," he said. "There's a huge cost to video or record in the Royal Albert Hall, so it came as a surprise to find we had captured that amazing evening. A deal was struck with the venue and this is the result."

The concert opened with a primarily acoustic set that comprises the first CD. The second includes *Vienna* and other fan favorites with Ure supported by his backing aggregation, Band Electronica, with Cole Stacey on bass, Joseph O'Keefe playing keyboards, and Russell Field using electronic

drums. Stacey played mandolin on "Guns and Arrows."

Guest musicians for the show were pianist Ty Unwin and cellist Caroline Dale.

"The songs were a combination of the previous two tours, including the entire *Vienna* album. I wanted to include that, as Ultravox never managed to perform at Royal Albert. The acoustic or cello Viking songs had to be arranged, of course, but the brilliant Ty Unwin, who arranged my *Orchestrated* album, did those for me."

Ure admitted that selecting the appropriate songs from the various eras of his career was an arduous process.

"It took a while, much to the poor musicians' annoyance," he said. "But I wanted to play some of the deeper songs alongside the commercially successful hits."

Ure discussed the instruments he played at the concert.

"I have a pair of matched limited-edition Taylors that I was given in Germany many years ago. They are the best acoustics I've ever owned, not just because they sound great, but they have great electronics and the best necks ever."

He played one of his signature Vintage V100MU models and a Stratocaster he's had since his Ultravox days.

"I had an ebony fretboard fitted with wide, Gibson-like frets, so it's completely black."

Asked which song had the most-unique arrangement for the concert, he zeroed in on the title track from his fourth solo album, released in 1996.

"I was very pleased with 'Breathe' – a very stripped-down acoustic arrangement but still had a sense of drama."

Now a septuagenarian, his voice, while still strong, sounds different to longtime fans.

"Vocal cords age the same way and at the same speed as everything else, so it has matured and breaks in different places. It's also not as pure, but that's something you earn."

More touring is in the offing for the United Kingdom and Europe in 2025. And while a cover of a Thin Lizzy song doesn't appear on *04-10-23*, that's not the case now.

"On the current tour, I'm touching areas I've never delved into, and that includes 'The Boys Are Back In Town.'"

10-4-23 opens and closes with songs that allude to spirituality – "Dear God" starts the concert while "Hymn" concludes it – but their placement doesn't have hidden meaning.

"I have my opinions on what people do in the name of fixed religions and I write a lot about it, but that was nothing intentional."

– Willie G. Moseley

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HERITAGE AUCTIONS



DAVID HAMBURGER

Top-Tier Tutorial

Whoever said, “Those who can’t do, teach” has never heard David Hamburger.

Among his two dozen instructional books and videos, *Beginning Blues Guitar*, awarded Best New Educational Book or Video at NAMM in 1994, boasts more than 100,000 in sales. In addition to supplying music for advertising and TV, the 60-year-old has recorded with Freedy Johnston, toured with Joan Baez, and played Dobro on Bruce Springsteen’s remake of “The Ghost of Tom Joad,” featuring Pete Seeger.

Following his 2022 solo album *Beautiful Scar*, the singer, songwriter, and acoustic fingerstylist released the instrumental *Parisian Blues* last year.

The Boston-area native moved to Brooklyn after college, and now makes Austin his home.

When did you take up guitar?

When I was 12, I took lessons from Lucille Magliozzi, a bluegrass player. I was learning folk guitar while my friends were learning Van Halen and Jimmy Page. In high school, a teacher taught me “Anji” by Davy Graham; at Wesleyan University I studied jazz, which taught me about improvising and knowing the instrument. But most of what I learned was from records or other people. An upper-classman named Steadman Hinckley played

slide guitar. So I’d take classical guitar every Thursday and then play slide with Steadman in the stairwell – Duane Allman licks and open tunings.

I was also teaching at the National Guitar Workshop in New Milford, and whenever a blues guitarist came in, I’d host. The first year we had Gatemouth Brown, and we had Duke Robillard twice. I started taking notes because I wanted to remember what he was showing us, like the Freddie Green comping stuff. So the students said, “Can we get those notes?” I also took a half-dozen lessons from Emily Remler. I tried to figure out how to combine the things that I liked.

Who are your fingerpicking influences?

My earliest influences were Mississippi John Hurt and folk-revival guys – Stefan Grossman, Roy Book Binder, Dave Van Ronk, Jorma Kaukonen, Ry Cooder, and Guy Van Duser. I had a jazz CD, *Commodore Piano Anthology*, that was very influential, as well as House Of Blues’ *Essential Blues Piano*.

Beyond the original guitar influences, when it comes to solo instrumental guitar, I’m thinking more about pianists Jelly Roll Morton or James Booker. Ray Bryant’s solo piano records are like a bebop guy who still had a two-handed conception of how to play blues, infiltrating it with jazz harmonies.

What made you decide to do an instrumental album?

The mission was to groove and have that underpinning, and it also had to have improvisation. What I always wanted to do was improvise while playing solo guitar. There’s not a lot out there on how to do it. Everybody will teach you how to play arrangements of tunes, so fingerstyle blues is taught like a repertoire, almost like classical music – not playing a tune and soloing, like piano players do. There was also a hugely influential book called *The Art Of Ragtime Guitar*, by Richard

Saslow, which had a flexi-disc and covered all kinds of cool chords and licks. I couldn’t sit down and play Robert Johnson or Gary Davis songs note for note, but eventually I figured out my own thing that drew from those second-generation sources. I’ll have an arrangement, but it’s not all worked out. I want there to be places where I can improvise and take solos.

Some of the instrumental tunes were written for students, like the title cut, which was a True-Fire lesson that I extended and developed. A few originals were written for my “Fingerstyle Five” Fretboard Confidential online membership. “Mueslissippi Ibis” is a repackaging of “Mississippi Blues” by Willie Brown.

My producer, Bret Boyer, was interested in the kind of stuff I play around the house, and I don’t really listen to that much blues anymore. I put on jazz records because that’s what speaks to me. My grandfather loved Broadway tunes, and my dad studied classical piano. The standards, like “After You’ve Gone,” are things I heard him play.

Which guitar did you play on the album?

I used the ’56 Martin 00-18 I got in the late ’90s. The first record I ever made was at a studio in Brooklyn, and the engineer had a 1930s OM-28 he let me use. Afterward, I started looking for a good acoustic and found the 00-18 at Mandolin Brothers.

Which guitar do you use on gigs?

My main performing guitar is a Collings OO2H that I bought at the factory in Austin in 2001. I discovered that I like short-scale (24⁷/₈”) guitars. It’s got a K&K piezo pickup in the saddle and a Fishman Rare Earth pickup in the sound-hole. It’s wired in stereo and goes into a dual-channel Red Eye analog DI. Dick Dubois in Austin did the work on it. I also have Empress parametric EQ and a TC Electronic tuner.

With the internet, I can just teach fingerstyle blues guitar. I don’t have to teach Led Zepelin or Gary Davis or anything I don’t want to. – **Dan Forte**



MICHAEL MANRING

Bass Convergence

Most music fans who learn that the eclectic trio 3Below is all bass players will react with, “You gotta be kiddin’!” However, musicians who appreciate the unusual will stay for a listen, especially given the lineup – Michael Manring, Trey Gunn, and Alonso Arreola.

Spearheaded by Alonso on his six-string or a hybrid ascoustic, their music is further dressed by Gunn (formerly of King Crimson) on a touch guitar/bass built by Warr, and Manring with his signature Zon Hyperbass. Each brings a highly personal element; Arreola occasionally drives the beat (on a Taylor GS Mini or Yamaha TRBX 604, both running through an EBS Micro Bass pedal) while Manring’s Zon has a massive cutaway that allows access to notes not usually heard on bass.

“Alonso is an enormously creative guy and very tuned into the cultural zeitgeist,” Manring told *VG*. “He felt it was time for a fresh perspective on bass and there would be interest in Mexico to see the three of us play together. I’m a great admirer of both guys and they are good friends, so it was a no-brainer for me.”

With 3Below, Manring counts on two basses.

“Although my signature is the Hyperbass, my main instrument is a Zon Sonus hybrid fretless,” he said. “It has some of the characteristics of the Hyperbass, but works well as a standard fretless whereas the Hyperbass is designed more for solo music.”

Their latest album, *Live in Mérida*, was recorded in Mexico on November 5, 2023, and features fascinating tones, arrangements,

and interplay with their unique instruments, interpolating unexpected genres such as funk.

“We like to push our technical limits, mix genres and cultural influences, subvert conventional roles, and so on,” said Manring. “Riding the line between improvisation and composition is one of those boundaries we like to blur. There’s a point in ‘Versos’, for instance, where the whole thing is supposed to unravel. We don’t know exactly what will happen until Alonso brings us back into the composition.”

Oud player Emmanuel Pina was a guest on the tour.

“Emmanuel is a wonderful musician with a beautiful musical sensibility, so he fit right in,” Manring recalled. “Alonso, Trey, and I have always been interested in bridging musical traditions, so having an oud in the mix provided a perspective that we love.”

Fans of veteran progressive-rock bands might compare the album to King Crimson’s *Meltdown*, from 2017.

“Well, we certainly don’t mind being compared to those maestros!” Manring enthused. “We talked about that wonderful recording, both before and during the tour. We love King Crimson, and in addition to Trey’s extensive experience with the band, they’ve been a great source of inspiration.”

He is enthused about the fidelity of 3Below’s debut.

“It was mixed and mastered by Trey, who brought a musician’s sensibility to the process” he said. “I can’t think of anyone better to have done it!”

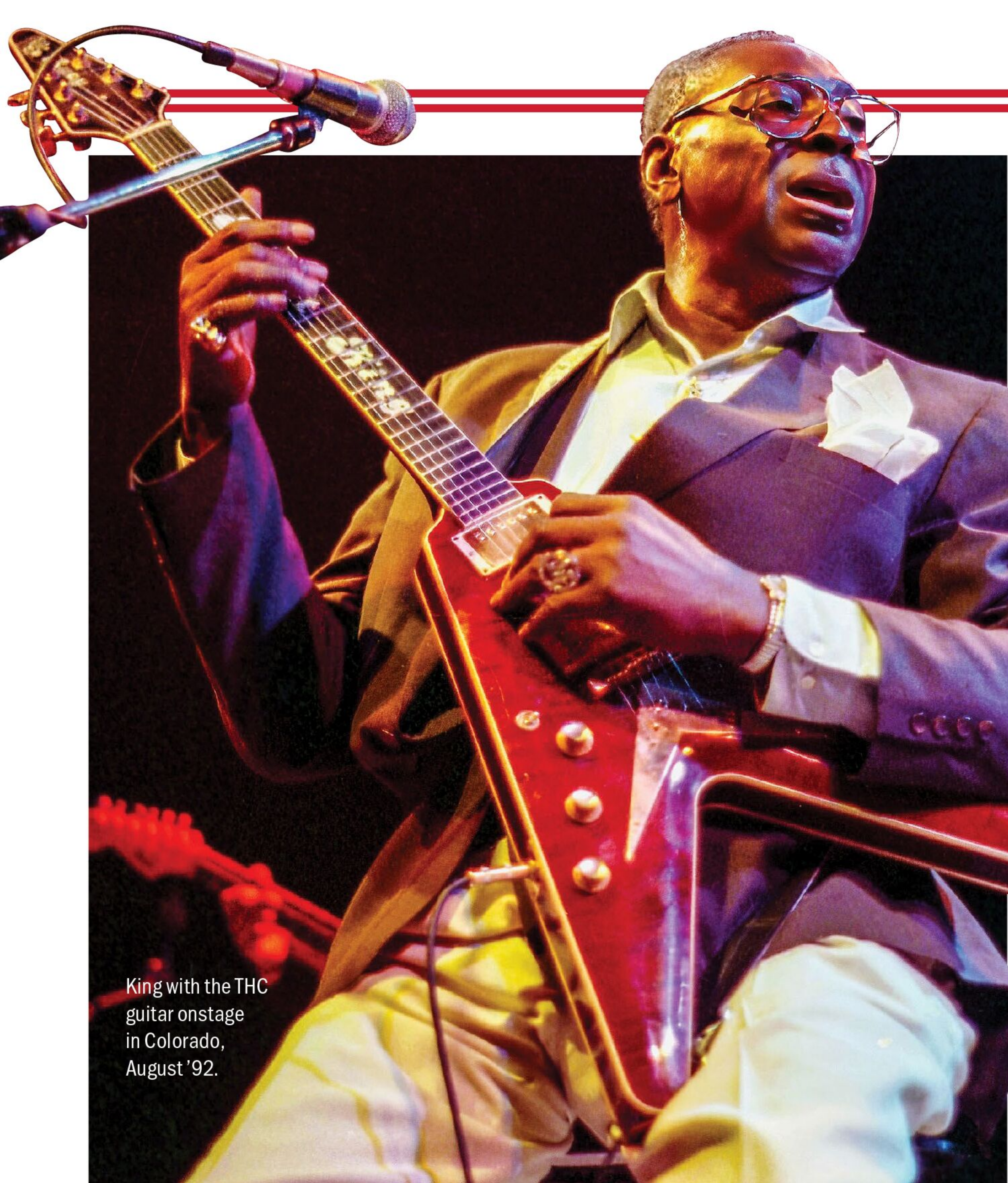
Asked to pick an outstanding song, he cited the lead track, penned by Arreola.

“‘Relamparia’ is probably my favorite,” he said. “Alonso is a gifted composer and he brings a world of interesting influences to his process. This one has a cool, dramatic arc that isn’t like any other music I can think of. That makes it quite fun to play.”

He appreciates that 3Below’s music is highlighted by the songwriting of all three.

“We admire each other as composers and get inspiration from one another’s work. When you’re in the outer perimeters of an art form, it’s helpful to have other folks to bounce ideas off of because there are few preconceptions to fall back on. Sometimes the other guys will give me freedoms I wouldn’t allow myself as a composer. That’s something I need to work on.”

“Alonso and Trey are advanced musicians, so they write challenging music. For us, that’s the fun of it. We like to push ourselves to open up, creatively, and give the best we have. Hopefully, that comes across to the audience.” – **Willie G. Moseley VG**



King with the THC guitar onstage in Colorado, August '92.

COTERIE COMPLETE

Albert King's THC Flying V

— BY WILLIE G. MOSELEY —

Robert Johnson has been a fixture in the vintage-guitar community for more than a half-century. As a player and music producer, he has collected an assortment of instruments and music memorabilia, particularly related to his home town of Memphis. One of his guitars recently became part of a recording project that began at the renowned Muscle Shoals Sound Studio more than 50 years ago.

In the spring of 1971, Albert King was recording at Muscle Shoals, backed by members of its legendary band, the Swampers – studio co-founder/producer Jimmy Johnson on guitar, bassist David Hood, drummer Roger Hawkins, and keyboardist Barry Beckett. King was signed to Stax Records at the time, but the company was in trouble.

“Stax had money problems,” Robert Johnson noted. “And when Albert didn’t get his cash – in a shoebox, as promised by the label – he left and drove back to Memphis.”

The Swampers kept cutting tracks, thinking finances would be sorted and Albert would come back to finish. In all, they recorded eight songs, but King had done guitar and vocals for just four of them. The follow-up sessions never happened and the tapes languished in storage until Johnson bought them two decades later.

“Stax did not own the masters, as they never paid for the sessions, studio time, or musicians,” he said. “Jimmy kept them, and (singer/songwriter/producer) Don Nix had the safety copies.”

A month or so after obtaining an '86 Tom Holmes Company (THC) left-handed V that

Through the years, King owned several Vs he dubbed “Lucy.”



Albert King 1992: Bill O'Leary. Guitar photos by Robert Johnson.

Willie's American Guitars

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Strange True Story

Working late we saw a bright light then a spaceship.
A little grey guy said: "You guys play"? Then swoosh
we time traveled to 1964 they hand us these 2 Fenders
and danced to Chuck Berry and yelled "Voyager". We
mostly played the Fiesta Strat but kept the Dakota
Red Jazzmaster mint so they'd believe us back home.

In a blink we're back in Willie's parking lot. Leaving,
we heard them say: "We forgot our gee-tars"!

Weird huh?

Bizarre story of 2 factory original '64 Fenders.

One \$48K the other \$29K

Billy F Gibbons commissioned for King's birthday in 1987, Johnson decided to "finish" the album, and called upon Gibbons to create the guitar and vocal parts for the incomplete songs.

Recorded at Brook Sutton's The Studio Nashville, the sessions were enhanced musically and attitudinally by the Holmes V, which was used most of the time, though they also tried a '59 Les Paul Standard dubbed "Early Gates" by Johnson and Gibbons.

"Billy played Early on one song, but the Holmes V actually sounded better, so we switched. That didn't surprise me – Tom makes a superior guitar."

"When I first started building, I made three small-bodied Vs that were three-quarter size with a full scale and arched tops," Holmes told VG. "Then I built a full-size with an archtop. The one built for Albert was the fifth."

Arched tops on angular, modernistic guitars might seem a contradiction, but Holmes made the concept work.

"I've always thought archtops were pretty cool and I like the looks of the Flying V, so I thought I could come with a new combination," he chuckled.

When Gibbons ordered the V, Holmes referred to a '58 Gibson that happened to be in his shop for repairs.

"I traced it and made everything exact, even the neck joint," he said. "The only thing different was the top."

Accordingly, the THC V has the same 24.75" scale. It sports a mahogany body and neck, ebony fretboard with mother-of-pearl inlay, gold Grover tuners, and a brass tailpiece. The body is bound front and rear, the neck is bound, and the pickups are Holmes originals.

Other than installing the

knobs and jack on the opposite side of the body, Holmes didn't do any "reverse" work on the guitar due to the fact that it's a left-handed instrument strung right-handed.

"It's the most-decorative guitar I've made," he summarized. "I was more into pickups and guitar styles, not really show guitars. I did it because Billy wanted it."

The southpaw King played the V for the last six years of his life; it was seen and heard on an HBO special "B.B. King & Friends – Live in L.A.," recorded in Los Angeles on April 15, 1987 – 10 days before Albert King's birthday. Other players included Stevie Ray Vaughan and Eric Clapton, and the concert was produced for sale on CD and DVD, though it was not initially sold in the U.S.

"It's all there," Johnson said appreciatively. "Incredible playing and singing on everybody's part. Albert's playing is stunning and his tone is the best it had been since the korina V sound on 'Born Under A Bad Sign.' The Holmes is strong and rich."

Over the years, Johnson has researched King's many V guitars, most of which he called "Lucy."

"I came up with six bona fide Lucys, and there may even be seven or eight of them," he said.

The list begins with the original '59, followed by one made by VG contributor Dan Erlewine in '72, one by Bradley Prokopow in 1980, an '80 Gibson called Lucy Blue because of its aqua-burst finish, Pink Lucy, made by John Bolin in '86 on commission from Gibbons with a magenta-sparkle finish, and the Holmes.

"Between 1967 and '70, Albert played a '67 Cherry Red Gibson, then in '70 or '71 he had a rare Walnut-finish '68 that was bought for him by a promoter in Detroit," Johnson notes. "I do not have



Billy Gibbons and Robert Johnson with the THC V and Johnson's '59 'Burst, Early Gates.

any references to these guitars being named, but they might be the adopted stepchildren of Lucy," he chuckled.

Johnson has also seen photos of King playing a '69 sunburst Gibson in England, but believes it was a rental; to date, he hasn't found a photo of King playing it in the U.S.

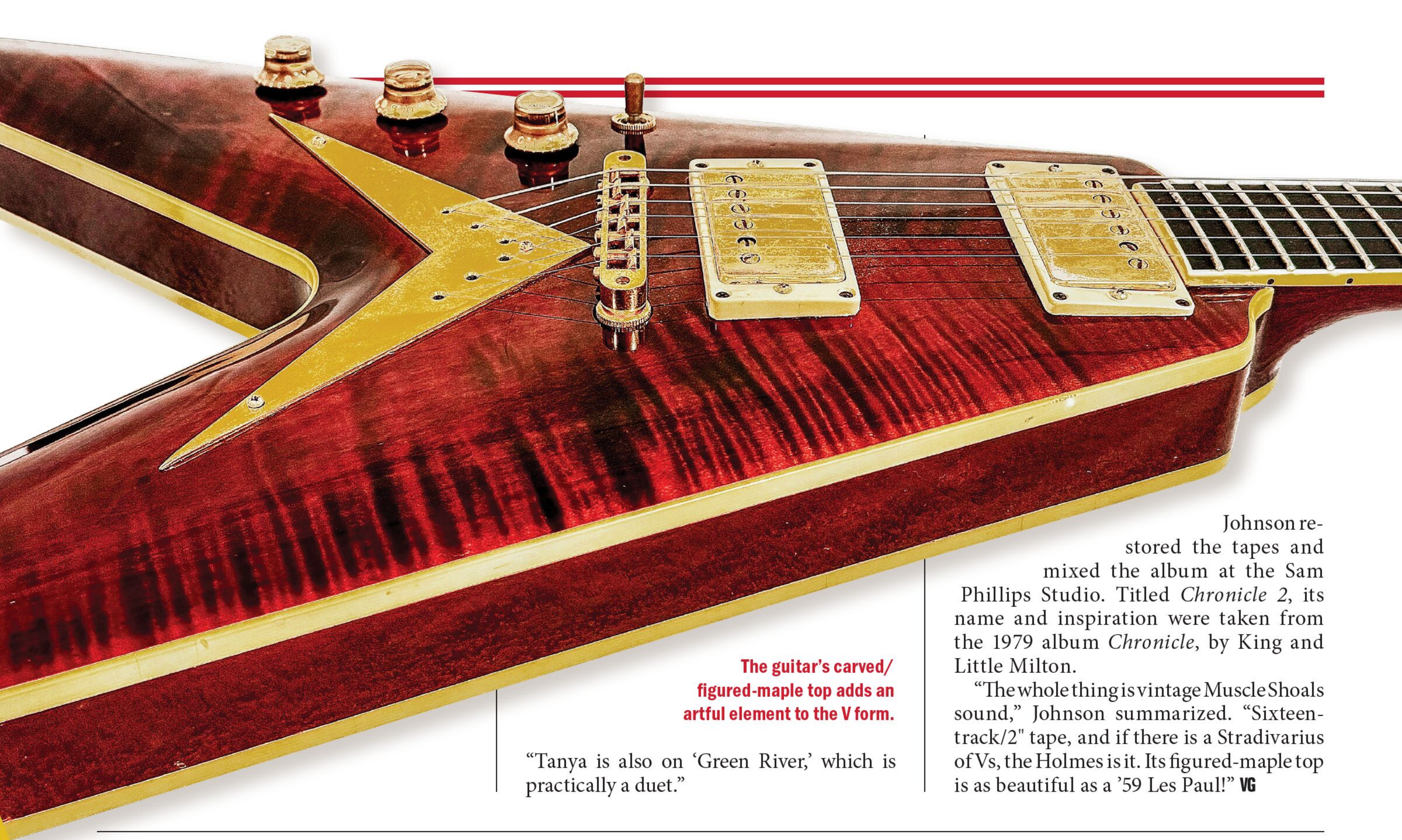
King died on December 21, 1992.

"One week before, he gave the Holmes guitar to his adopted cousin, Lee King, who was in Albert's band and was Freddie King's first cousin," said Johnson, who acquired it in December of '23, just before it inspired his decision to arrange the sessions with Gibbons. He also called upon some notable vocalists to assist.

"Ann Wilson and Tanya Tucker sang backup on 'Jumpin' Jack Flash," he said.



The master tapes, recorded in 1971.



The guitar's carved/
figured-maple top adds an
artful element to the V form.

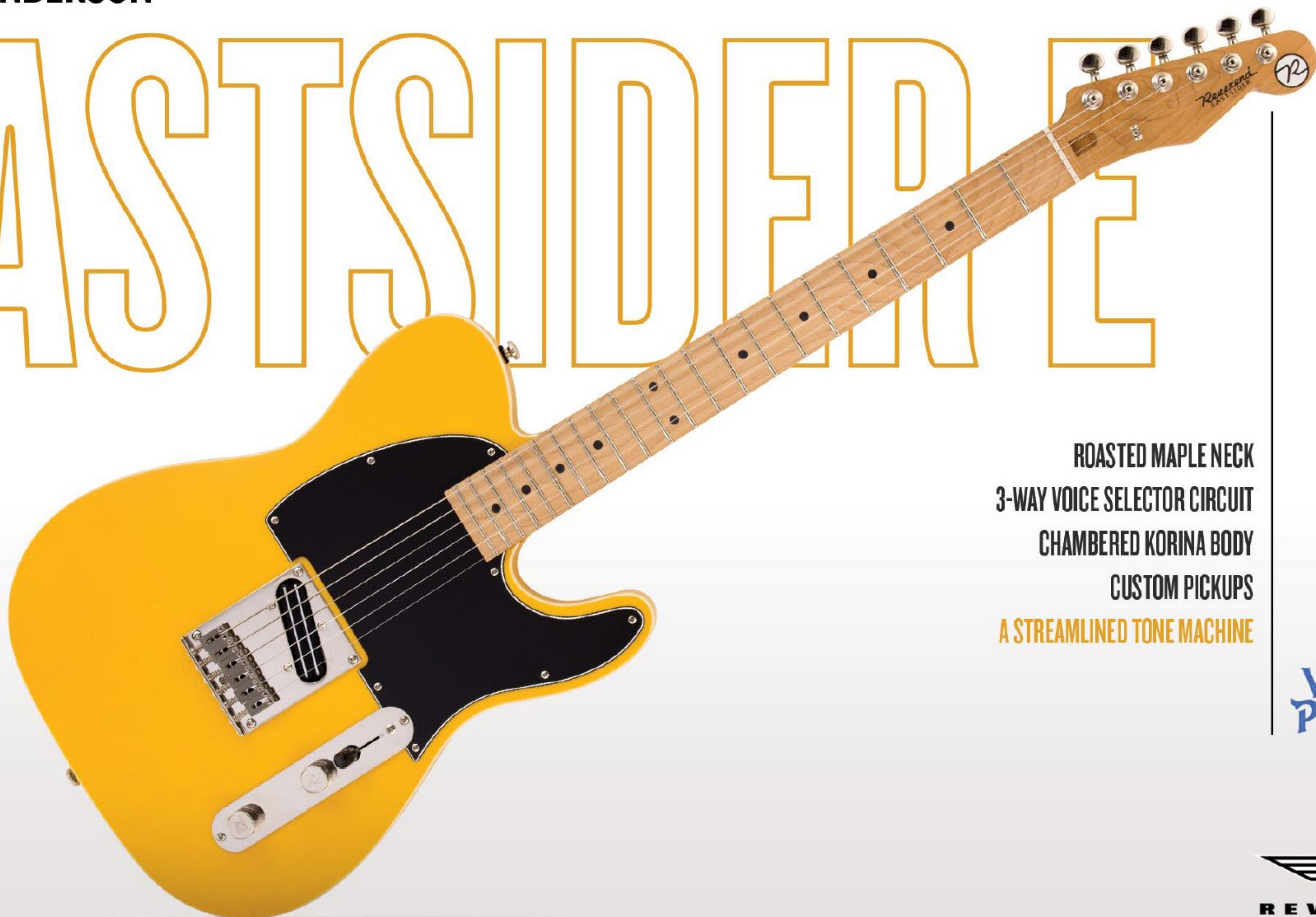
"Tanya is also on 'Green River,' which is practically a duet."

Johnson re-stored the tapes and mixed the album at the Sam Phillips Studio. Titled *Chronicle 2*, its name and inspiration were taken from the 1979 album *Chronicle*, by King and Little Milton.

"The whole thing is vintage Muscle Shoals sound," Johnson summarized. "Sixteen-track/2" tape, and if there is a Stradivarius of Vs, the Holmes is it. Its figured-maple top is as beautiful as a '59 Les Paul!" **VG**

THE PETE ANDERSON

EASTSIDER



ROASTED MAPLE NECK
3-WAY VOICE SELECTOR CIRCUIT
CHAMBERED KORINA BODY
CUSTOM PICKUPS
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A “Boogie Mod” Dual Showman

BY DAVE HUNTER

What do you do when the humble blackface Bandmaster you acquired sight-unseen turns out to harbor one of rock’s hottest lead circuits? Celebrate! And then go tracing its connection to California’s seminal high-gain guitar amplifier.

Randall Smith’s legendary Boogie lead circuit started as a prank played on an unsuspecting client before he applied it as a modification to smaller Fender amps – mostly Princeton combos. The origins of the circuit were born out of Prune Music in Mill Valley, just north of San Francisco. Co-founded by Smith, who was also its resident amp-repair guy in the late ’60s and early ’70s, Prune was the go-to shop for guitarists in the Bay Area rock scene, and a frequent hang for the likes of Mike Bloomfield, Carlos Santana, Neil Young, Archie Williams, Barry Melton, and others.

Even after his Mesa/Boogie venture took off and Smith had moved into his “doghouse” workshop in Lagunitas, his successor in the amp department at Prune Music continued with the mods that made the shop famous, some of which live on within unsuspecting Fender chassis.

Such was the discovery made by Seattle-based VG reader Ivan Molton, who had been seeking a vintage Fender Dual Show-

man out of his love of a certain type of California-born music when he slammed headlong into this high-gain throwback.

“I’d always wanted a blackface Fender Showman after reading that they were created by Leo Fender when Dick Dale complained that he couldn’t get enough volume to satisfy his screaming fans at the mid-sized venues of the time,” Molton tells us. “These amps were a surf-rock staple and used by some of my favorite bands, like The Mermen. I learned that Fender made two versions in the blackface era – a Showman and a Dual Showman. The only difference was the output transformer, with one at eight ohms designed to push a single 15” speaker, and the Dual at four ohms designed to push two 15” speakers.”

A prolonged search eventually turned up a promising head online, and with some tech chops under his belt, the listing’s “not working” disclaimer didn’t put Molton off.

“The seller said he found it in a storage locker and knew almost nothing about it. Of course, I noticed modifications in the

The Normal channel’s controls function as from the factory, while the Vibrato channel has been converted to a Boogie Mark I lead circuit.

1966 FENDER “BOOGIE MOD” DUAL SHOWMAN

- Preamp tubes: four 12AX7 (including one additional, two of which aka 7025), one 12AT7
- Output tubes: four 6L6GC (Mesa STR 415)
- Rectifier: solid-state
- Controls: Normal channel: Volume, Treble, Bass; Vibrato channel: Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Speed, Intensity (the latter two acting as Vol 2 and Master)
- Output: approximately 100 watts RMS

photos and thought I’d just have to gut them. But hey, it was cheap!

“When it arrived, I was surprised to see that the mods included an additional 12AX7 and complete elimination of the Vibrato circuit. I was also surprised by the quality of the modifications, which were done with great attention to detail and a very skilled hand. It came with a rare matched quad of Mesa STR 415 power tubes, but one was shot. I installed a new fuse and a new 6L6, then hooked up the Variac and brought it slowly to life... It worked perfectly!”

Molton set about the routine maintenance and replacement of worn-out components that an old amp inevitably requires, while planning to remove the modifications. Then he noticed a faded silver sticker on the back panel: “Prune Music, 10 Locust Ave, Mill Valley, CA.” Aware of Prune’s connection to Randall Smith, he probed the mods further, only to find that the date codes on several components pointed to the late ’70s, several years after Smith had departed to start Mesa Engineering.

Internet sleuthing led Molton to Larry

Amp and photos courtesy of Ivan Molton.

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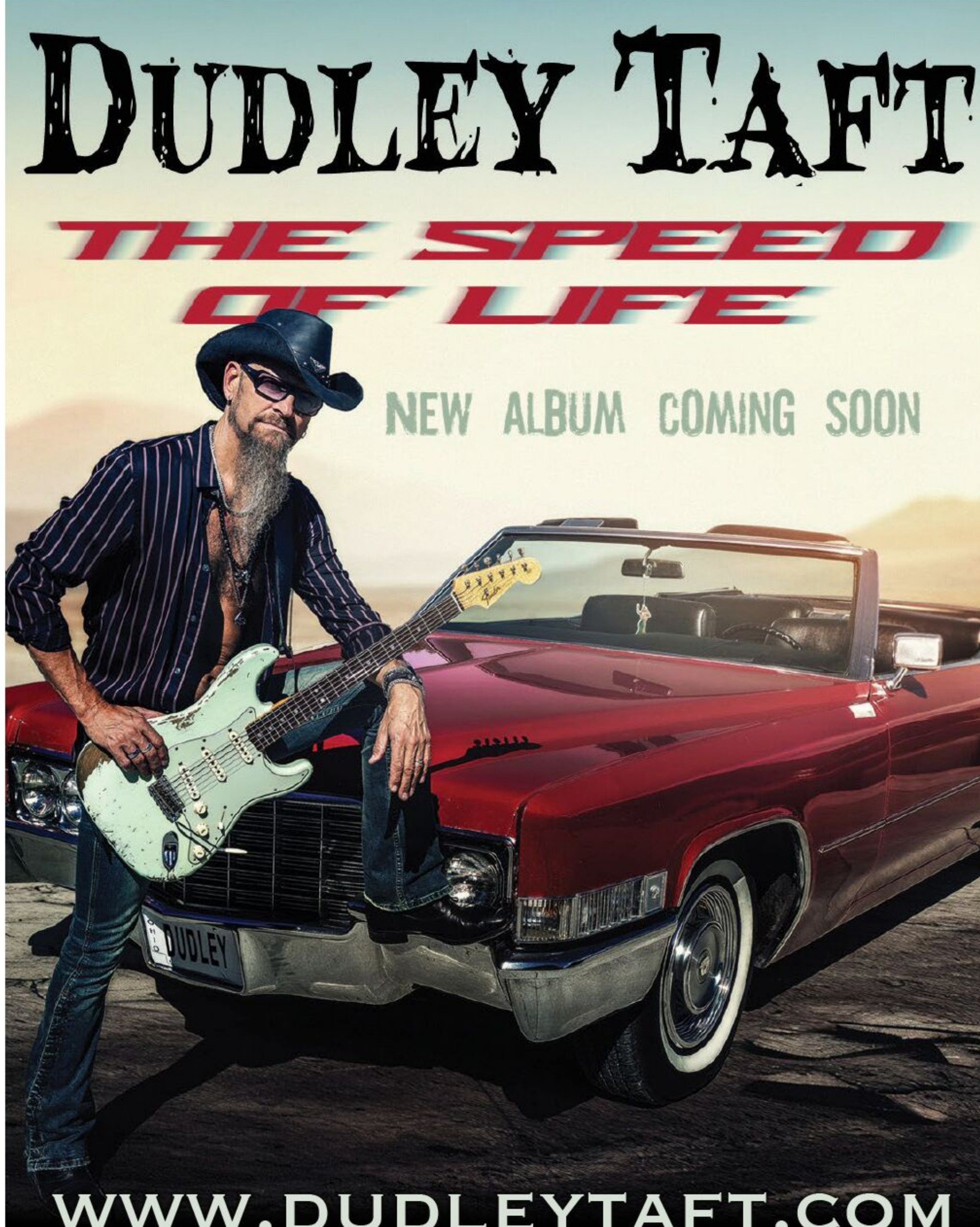
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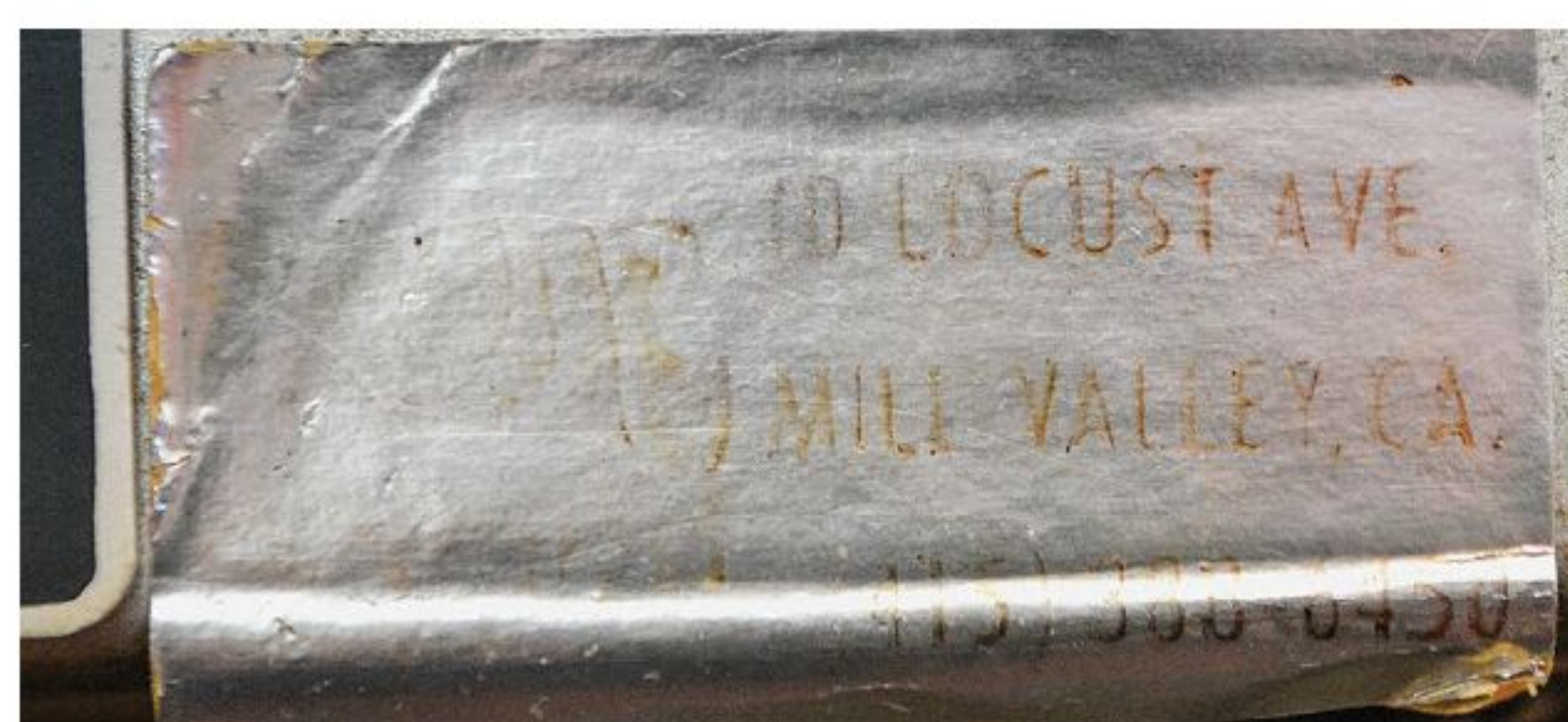


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Cragg, an early employee of Prune Music and, later, guitar tech for Neil Young. Cragg confirmed that Smith had moved on from Prune by the time of these mods, but guessed the work might have been done by his successor, Sal Trentino, a Brooklyn native who had headed west to the fertile Bay Area music scene in 1970. In addition to taking over repairs at Prune after Smith's departure in '74, Trentino joined Cragg on Young's team as an amp tech. For some, he's best-known as the inventor of the "Whizzer," the electro-mechanical device that automatically changed the control settings on Young's tweed Deluxe when he performed live, and later built amps for Pearl Jam and others.

Added circuitry on a tag strip behind the preamp tubes and differently routed coaxial cables tip off the extensive Boogie modifications.



A faded "Prune Music" stickertip off this Showman's hot-rodded link to high-gain history. Its text lists Prune Music's address and phone number.

"I then reached out to Mike Bendinelli at Mesa Boogie, who also worked at Prune," says Molton. "At Mesa, he's described as the 'Museum Curator,' so I thought he might be able to help with the mystery. Mike confirmed that these were indeed Sal Trentino's modifications and were very similar to a Deluxe Reverb he once owned. Essentially, the mods make the Vibrato channel like a Mark I Boogie,

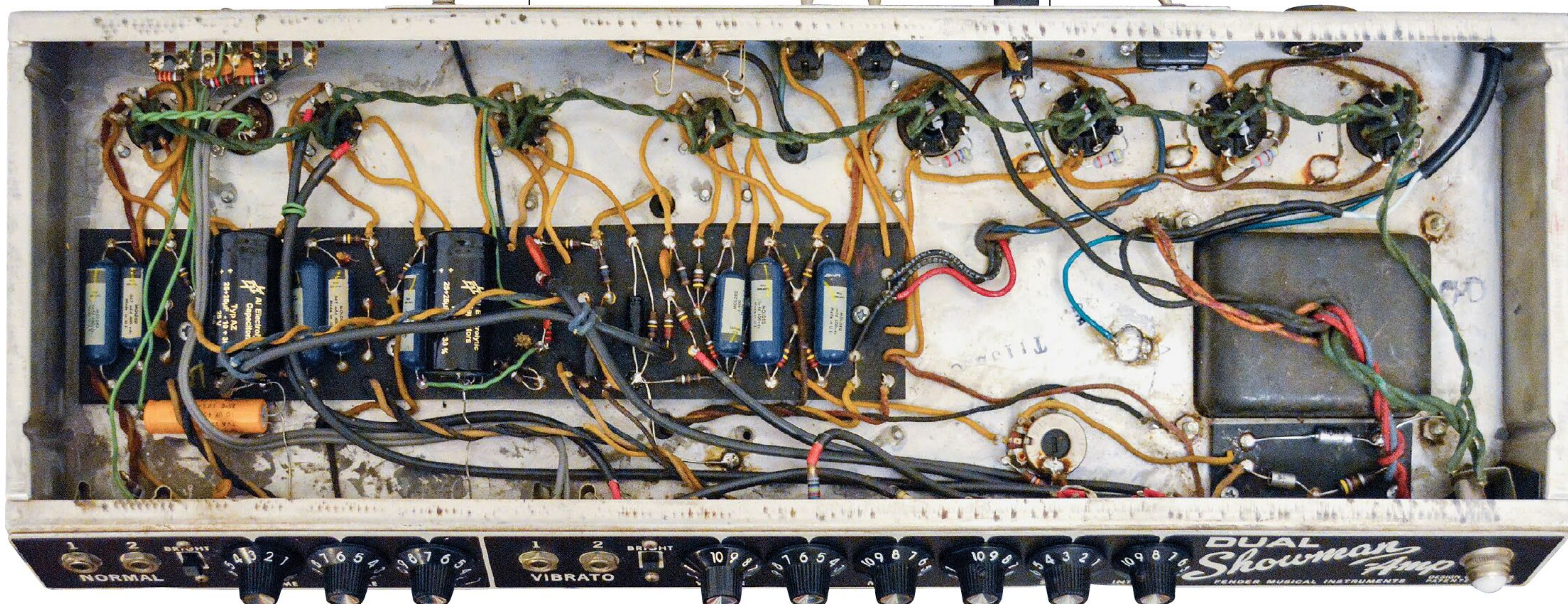
There's little visible on the back of the '66 Showman to reveal its internal modifications, other than an additional 12AX7 squeezed between the first two preamp tubes for added gain.

with knobs for Gain, Vol 2, and Master.

"The former Bright switch is effectively a gain boost in that it lifts the ground on the low end of the Middle pot and leaves a 100k resistor to ground, which is like turning all the tone pots to 13. Unfortunately, Sal passed away in 2009, so we can't get his perspective."

Having gone in search of a vintage Dual Showman to emulate the surf-rock sound of the '60s, Molton turned up something very different indeed. But as you might suspect, he's pleased with the results.

"The amp plays beautifully. It has the usual Fender sparkle on the Normal channel, with tons of chiming



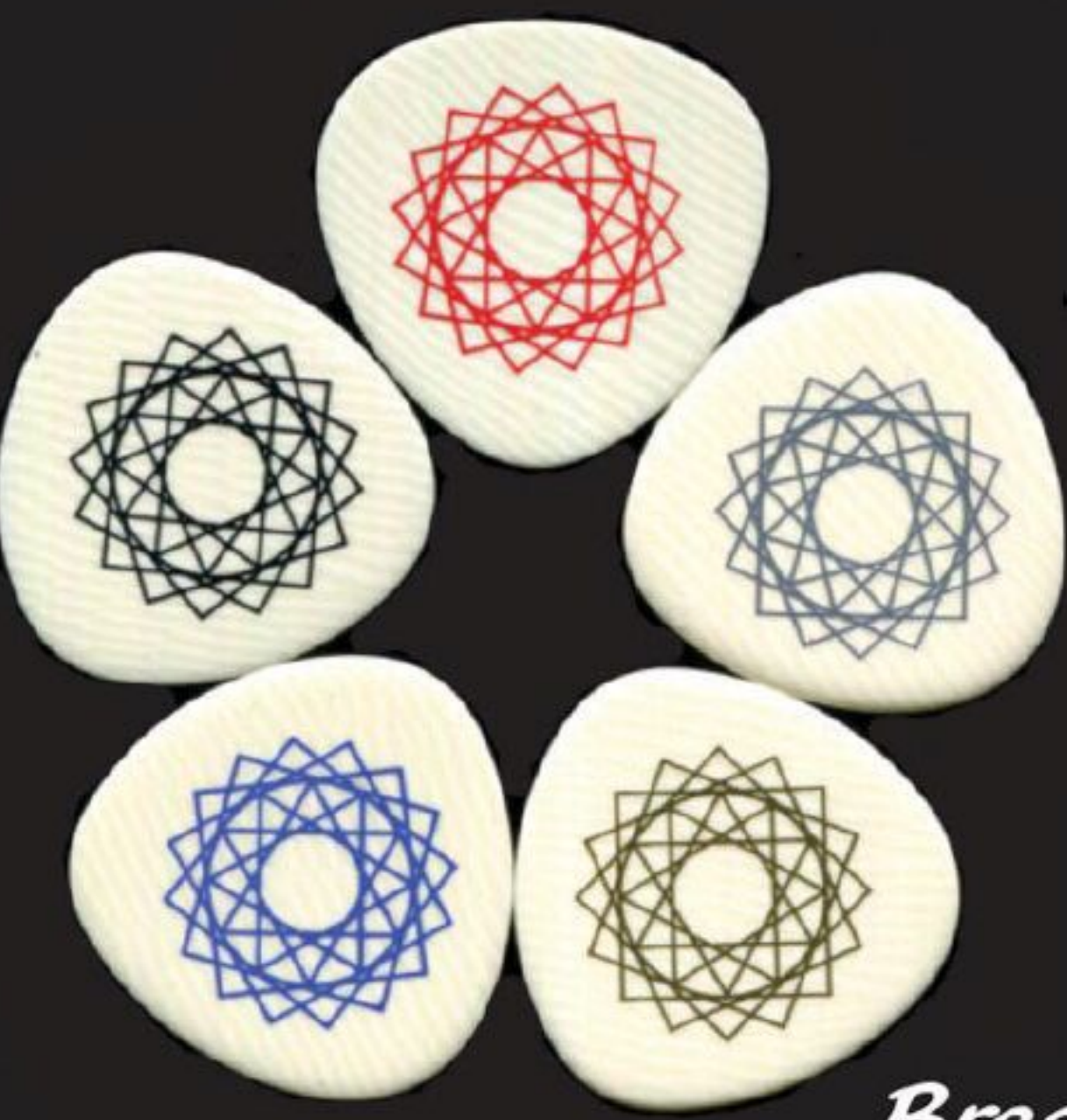
high-end and very little sag. I also love the sound of the Normal channel for bass. The Vibrato (high-gain) channel is really flexible and depending on the relative settings of the Bright switch, Gain, Vol 2, and Master, can produce anything from a smooth blues overdrive to a squarish fuzz, going all the way to the kind of endlessly sustaining high-gain tone you'd hear in stoner rock or doom metal. I love the versatility and all the sweet spots you can find in this channel. For me, it's like having a Bassman and a Mesa Boogie Mark I in the same head."

All that, and it's a fascinating piece of Bay Area guitar history wrapped up in a vintage Fender head that reminds us of the true origins of the high-gain revolution – the mod shop. **VG**

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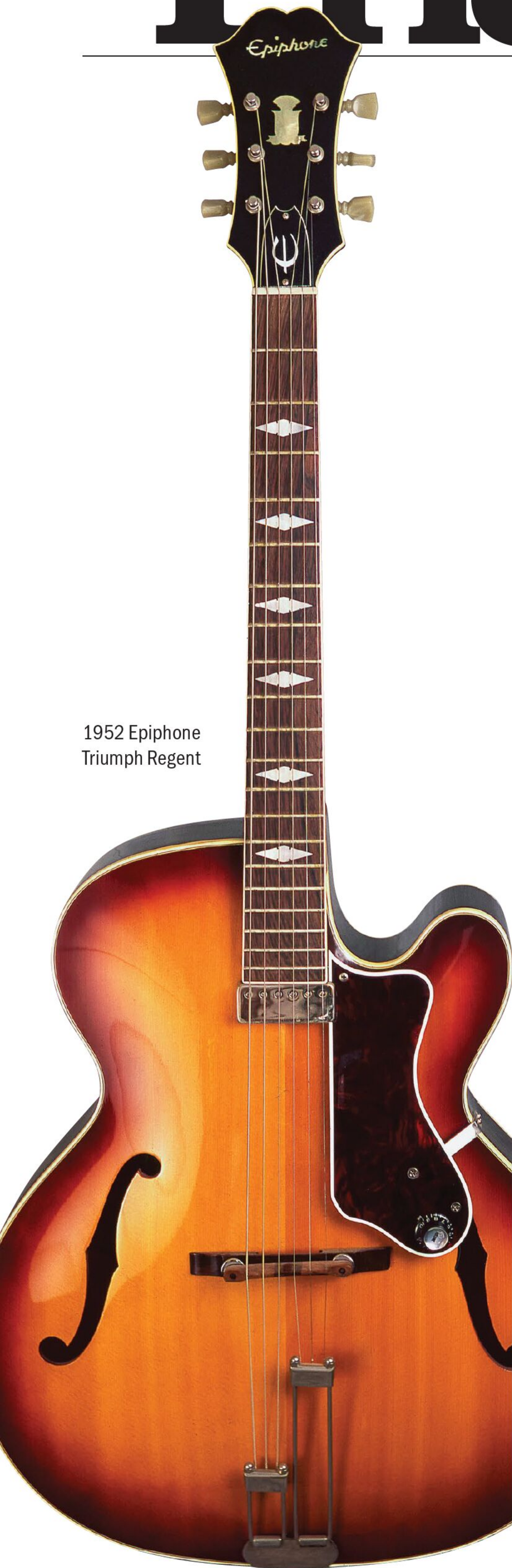
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Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Ram W. Tuli



1952 Epiphone
Triumph Regent

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1987	Boss Digital Metalizer MZ-2		\$125	\$250
2004	Damage Control TimeLine		\$425	\$550
1961	Danelectro Model 3412			
	Standard (Shorthorn)	Seal 'guard, 6-string	\$1,500	\$2,000
1936	D'Angelico Style A	Sunburst	\$10,000	\$13,000
1930s	Dobro Lap Steel			
	and Amp Set		\$750	\$975
1967	EKO Dragon	Single cut arch	\$1,000	\$1,500
2001	Electro-Harmonix			
	Octave Multiplexer Pedal		\$40	\$45
1980s	Elektronika Jet-Phaser		\$100	\$200
1953	Epiphone Emperor Cutaway	Sunburst	\$8,000	\$10,500
1952	Epiphone Triumph Regent	Sunburst	\$4,000	\$5,000
1961	Epiphone Windsor			
	(2 Pickups)	Natural, mini-hum	\$3,000	\$4,000
2012	Fender Acoustasonic	100 watts, 2x8		
	100 Combo	+ tweeter	\$300	\$400
1982	Fender Bassman 20	1x15	\$525	\$675
1959	Fender Duo-Sonic/ Player Duo-Sonic	Maple neck	\$4,000	\$5,000
1969	Fender Esquire	Sunburst, poly	\$12,000	\$15,500
1962	Fender Esquire Custom	Sunburst, curve	\$30,000	\$40,000
2005	Fender '50s Esquire (Mexico)		\$600	\$800
2015	Fender Roadworn '60s Jazzmaster		\$800	\$1,125
2018	Fender Parallel Universe			
	Jazz-Tele		\$1,500	\$2,000
1956	Fender Princeton	Narrow panel, larger cab	\$4,250	\$6,500
2018	Fender Hot Rod Pro Junior IV	15 watts, 1x10, tweed	\$375	\$500
1957	Fender Stratocaster	Sunburst	\$50,000	\$60,000
2002	Fender Highway One			
	Stratocaster/HSS	SSS or HSS	\$700	\$950
2020	Fender American			
	Acoustasonic Stratocaster	Cocobolo top	\$2,250	\$3,000
2004	Fender Eric Clapton			
	Stratocaster (Custom Shop)		\$3,000	\$4,000
1990	Fender James Burton Telecaster	Frost Red or Pearl White	\$1,250	\$1,625
2017	Fender Richie			
	Kotzen Telecaster	DiMarzio pickups	\$1,000	\$1,375
2014	Fender Rosewood			
	Telecaster Limited Edition	CS, Limited Ed. neck plate	\$4,500	\$5,500
1962	Fender Super	Brown, tan/wheat		
		grille, 6G4	\$3,100	\$4,700
1972	Fender Vibrosonic Reverb	100 watts, 1x15, silverface	\$950	\$1,250
1959	Gibson EB-2	Sunburst	\$5,500	\$7,150
2001	Gibson ES-335			
	Limited Edition (P-90s)		\$2,625	\$3,500
1985	Gibson Explorer 83			
	or Explorer (Adler)	Standard finishes	\$1,750	\$2,250
2014	Gibson Flying V '59 (Custom Shop)	Pelham Blue, 20 offered	\$3,500	\$4,500



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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1999	Gibson GA-15			
	RV Goldtone	1x12, round baffle hole	\$500	\$750
1962	Gibson GA-8 Discoverer	10 watts, 1x12	\$600	\$925
2005	Gibson J-185 EC Custom		\$2,000	\$2,500
1993	Gibson J-60 Curly Maple		\$2,250	\$2,750
1965	Gibson L-4 C	Sunburst	\$3,250	\$4,250
2006	Gibson Les Paul 50th Anniversary 1956 Les Paul Standard Goldtop		\$3,000	\$4,000
2011	Gibson Les Paul			
	Eric Clapton 1960	Aged, unsigned	\$9,250	\$12,000
1991	Gibson '60 Les Paul	Flametop/Standard '60s	\$6,000	\$7,500
1962	Gibson Les Paul	Cherry, side		
	Standard (SG body)	vibrola, pat. #	\$15,000	\$19,000
1958	Gibson Les Paul			
	Standard (Sunburst)	Minor figured	\$330,000	\$450,000
2004	Gibson Les Paul			
	Studio Platinum		\$1,250	\$1,750
1935	Gibson Super 400	Early, highly flamed	\$18,000	\$23,000
1957	Gibson Super 400 CESN	PAFs	\$24,000	\$30,000
1979	Gibson The SG	Walnut or mahogany	\$1,000	\$1,500
1967	Gibson Thunderbird IV	Sunburst, non-reverse	\$7,800	\$9,900
1981	Gibson Victory			
	MV X (MV 10)	3 humbuckers	\$1,500	\$2,000
1965	Gretsch Astro-Jet (6126)		\$2,500	\$3,000
1955	Gretsch Streamliner			
	Single Cutaway (6190)	Sunburst	\$2,500	\$3,250
1984	Guild SB-502 E	2 pickups	\$950	\$1,300
1986	Guild SB-604 Pilot		\$700	\$1,000
1967	Guild Starfire II	Black	\$2,500	\$3,300
1960s	Haynes Jazz King II		\$425	\$650
1989	Heritage Gary Moore		\$2,000	\$2,500
1985	Heritage H-140 CM	Curley maple	\$1,250	\$1,625
1970s	HiWatt SA 212 Combo	50 watts, 2x12	\$3,500	\$5,325
1980s	Hohner Panther P-12	12 watts	\$70	\$100
1999	Ibanez Delay Echo			
	DE7 (Tone-Lok)		\$100	\$125
2007	Ibanez Flying Pan			
	FP777 Reissue	777 made	\$275	\$350
1956	Kay K22 Artist Spanish		\$675	\$875
1960s	Kingston Cougar PB-5			
	Bass Combo		\$100	\$150
1960s	Kingston Lion			
	2000 Piggyback		\$225	\$325
2007	Larrivee PV-09	Maple	\$1,500	\$2,000
1978	Legend A-30	30 watts, 1x12	\$425	\$600

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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1999	Line 6 DM-4 Distortion Modeler		\$90	\$165
1970	Maestro Echoplex EM-1 Groupmaster	Without stand	\$1,300	\$2,400
1961	Magnatone Model 413 Centaur	18 watts, 1x12	\$1,200	\$1,850
1990	Marshall JCM 900 Model 4101 Combo	50/100 watts, 1x12	\$775	\$1,200
1973	Marshall Model 1964 Lead/Bass 50-Watt Head		\$975	\$1,500
1969	Marshall Model 1987 50-Watt Head	Custom color, aluminum	\$5,300	\$8,125
2007	Martin 000-28 Perry Bechtel	Indian	\$3,750	\$5,000
1997	Martin 000-M		\$650	\$850
1950	Martin 0-18		\$4,500	\$6,000
2009	Martin D-16 Adirondack		\$1,675	\$2,125
2020	Martin D-18E Modern Deluxe		\$2,750	\$3,500
2008	Martin D-41 Porter Wagoner	Indian rw	\$3,000	\$4,000
2006	Martin D-42 Flamed Mahogany	30 made	\$7,000	\$9,000
1985	Martin J-65/J-65E/J-65M		\$2,250	\$3,000
2012	Mesa-Boogie Mini Rectifier Twenty-Five Head	10-25 watts	\$850	\$1,250
1969	Microfrets Wanderer		\$1,750	\$2,250
1976	Mossman Southwind	Indian rosewood	\$2,500	\$3,250
1980	MXR Micro Chorus		\$125	\$300
1961	Old Kraftsman Value Leader	1 pickup	\$400	\$550
1970s	Park Model 1239 50W Master Volume Reverb Combo	50 watts, 1x12	\$2,450	\$3,750
1980s	Peavey Vegas 400		\$325	\$450
1985	Pensa (Pensa-Suhr) Suhr Standard		\$2,000	\$2,500
1994	PRS Artist Limited		\$3,500	\$4,500
1995	Ramirez R4 Classical	Cedar, rosewood	\$1,500	\$2,000
1992	Rick Model 2030GF (Glenn Frey)		\$2,000	\$2,600
2003	Rocktron Vertigo Vibe	With power supply	\$60	\$80
1990s	Sovtek (New Sensor Corporation) Big Muff		\$300	\$400
2012	Strymon Flint		\$200	\$250
2005	Taylor 210		\$600	\$800
2020	Taylor AD17e		\$1,125	\$1,500
2007	Taylor GA3-12		\$900	\$1,125
1963	Traynor YBA1 Bass Master Head	45 watts	\$675	\$1,050
1970s	Ventura Acoustic Flat-Top		\$475	\$650
1963	Vox AC100 MK I		\$4,275	\$6,500
1970s	Vox V-846 Wah		\$400	\$500
1970s	Yamaha GC Series (Classical)	Higher-end	\$1,250	\$1,625
1966	Yamaha SA (Super Axe) Series	Lower-end	\$550	\$750
1976	Yamaha SG-1000		\$1,375	\$1,750
2002	ZVex Effects Lo-Fi Loop Junky		\$150	\$200

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Outlaws onstage in Amsterdam, 1976: Frank O'Keefe (left), Hughie Thomasson, Billy Jones, and Henry Paul.

RISING TIDES

Outlaws

By Bret Adams

By the mid '70s, Southern rock emerged as one of the most-exciting and successful genres in pop music, thanks to the Allman Brothers Band and Lynyrd Skynyrd. Another important early Southern-rock band making its mark with country influences was Outlaws – the Tampa group nicknamed “Florida Guitar Army.”

Rhythm guitarist Henry Paul, lead guitarists Hughie Thomasson and Billy Jones, bassist Frank O'Keefe, and drummer Monte Yoho set themselves apart from contemporaries with three- and four-part

vocal harmonies. Their 1975 debut album, *Outlaws*, rose to #13 on *Billboard* and sold more than 500,000 copies propelled by the explosive guitar-jam anthem “Green Grass & High Tides” and the rousing hit single “There Goes Another Love Song.”

Paul recalled that the band's musical personality was forged in bars where crowds wanted to hear cover songs, even as they compiled a list of original music.

“The difference between Outlaws and some of the more-popular Top 40 cover bands was that we would not allow ourselves

to veer off this imaginary course we were on,” he said. “There was a price you paid for being an original band. You didn't get as much money, you didn't get as many dates. We did cover songs of the Allman Brothers Band, Cream, and Eagles so that when we stooped to pick up the dime, we at least stayed in character.”

Though known for its three-guitar lineup, vocal harmonies were crucial to the group's sound, the influence coming from Buffalo Springfield, The Byrds, and Eagles.

“The country-music character primarily came from me, and in part my collaboration with Hughie, because he had the ability to play a Strat in a way that mimicked steel guitar. We'd sing together and it was really cool; I had this bluegrassy, nasally, piercing voice while he had that raspier, thicker, lower voice. With Billy's clear high-tenor harmony, we created the foundation for our

Outlaws 1976: Gijbert Haneke/Alamy.

vocals and were a very good hybrid of those West Coast vocal-harmony bands and Southern-rock dual-lead-guitar bands.”

Legendary music executive Clive Davis signed Outlaws as the first rock act on Arista Records. Bob Johnston, Bob Dylan’s producer, was first in line to helm their debut, which thrilled Paul, who was a Dylan-fanatic folkie. After Johnston declined, they approached Paul A. Rothchild, who was hot for his work with The Doors, Janis Joplin, and many folk acts.

“He came to see us in Chicago at a weird little show bar,” Paul remembers. “He made a profound impression on us – me, in particular, because I knew of his work. We felt very comfortable, given that he was so successful and knew exactly what he was doing. It was a huge learning experience.”

“There Goes Another Love Song” features Thomasson’s Stratocaster riffing, a catchy chorus, and two guitar solos – all in a tight three minutes.

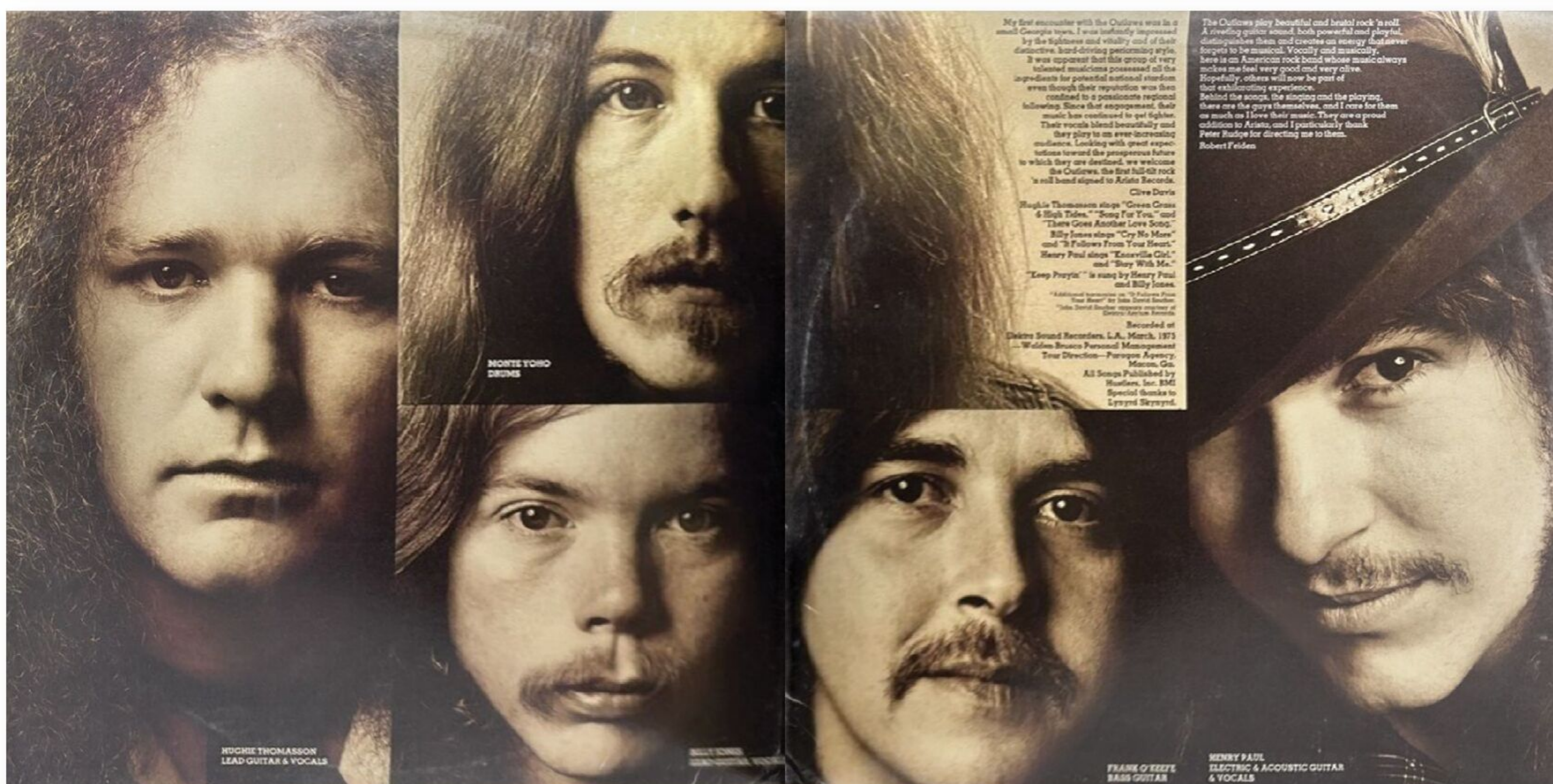
It reached #34 on the *Billboard*’s Hot 100 singles chart – quite respectable in the era of disco and soft rock.

“Hughie and Monte collaborated on that,” Paul said. “It had a very commercial appeal, and it’s one of our more-recognizable songs. Rothchild did a remarkable job creating a radio record.

“There’s a funny footnote,” he adds. “When we were sent the test pressing, none of us had a good stereo system, so we took it to the high-end stereo shop in Tampa. We sat in their demo room and were like, ‘Holy s**t! This is really good! I can’t believe we did this!’ It was a testimony to Rothchild’s professionalism and talent.”

The hyperactive two-minute instrumental “Waterhole” started as a song co-written by Paul for his previous band, but Outlaws gave it new life.

“We would play it at the end of our set



(in the bars). It was a very bluegrass-tempo thing,” said Paul, who played an ES-330 and D-28 on *Outlaws*. “The group re-wrote and arranged it and made it their own. You’ll notice that everybody got (songwriting) credit because it was a group effort.”

“Green Grass & High Tides” closes *Outlaws*. Arguably the band’s definitive song, today it stands as a bona fide rock classic. Paul recalled how the band was at first taken aback as Rothchild worked the tape.

“Everything was done with a razor blade and there was miles of 2” tape on the floor – someone’s solo – so it went from a 13- or 14-minute song down to a 9:46 version,” he said. “But he consolidated the essence of the song with brilliant edits; it sounded like it was perfectly conceived.”

Sadly, three original Outlaws have passed – Jones and O’Keefe in 1995 and Thomasson in 2007. Paul leads the current Outlaws lineup

and also continues working with BlackHawk, the successful country group he co-founded in the early ’90s. In ’25, he plans to release an autobiography, a solo album, and an Outlaws album with new material and covers of classics by their Southern-rock peers.

Fifty years down the road, Paul said *Outlaws* is where it all began.

“I see a record that was transitional – from being a dreamer to living the life that dream represented. It was integral in that process and will forever be the most-important record I’ve ever made because it got me out of the clubs and on the road; it took us from a rough-and-tumble club band – a good one – to a polished national recording act.

“It was such an amazingly magical time, and Rothchild (d. 1995) was incredibly important in making it happen. The excitement and what it did for us – and where it took us – is indelibly etched in my heart.” **VG**

PARLOR MYSTERY

Plus, a Pro's List of Repair Glues

My neighbor has an old parlor guitar that he asked me to clean up after years in storage. Inside the sound hole it reads "The American No. 5" and there is no other identifying script. The bridge is a pyramid-type. We're curious about its age and manufacturer; I'm guessing Lyon and Healy from the 1920s. – **Chuck Risser**

In the late 19th and early 20th century, there were all sorts of guitar makers in New York and Chicago who contracted with distributors like Buegeleisen & Jacobson, CMI, and Targ & Dinner. I thought this might be an Oscar Schmidt, but I asked guitar/amp historian Mike Newton, who pointed out two odd things: 1) It's very plain yet has a pin bridge from a time when almost all plain guitars had trapeze tails and floating bridges; 2) There are no fretboard position markers when practically all inexpensive guitars had at least three dots.

Mike's guess is it dates from the 1890s to pre-1910, which sounds plausible because, by the '20s, guitar bodies were getting larger and fuller-shaped. – **Michael Wright**

Lyon & Healey used the brand American Conservatory in the early 1900s, while Bruno had a line called American circa 1910 (and possibly earlier), but neither listed a model No. 5, though they might also have used that earlier. Because it's so plain, it's difficult to track details, but it's a lower-end/beginner instrument likely made by a jobber and branded by whoever sold it. – **Peter Stuart Kohman**

I've always wondered about the real-life differences in sound and feel between a solidbody guitar with a one-piece body and one that is laminated. For that matter, how about laminated necks versus one-piece necks? – John Mackey

I don't think feel has much, if anything, to do with a one-piece body or neck. However, sound quality is different in solid wood compared to laminated wood, though that difference is subjective.

Many modern guitar builders use machines to test woods for sound transfer, and while they show differences between solid and laminate, they're not as overtly audible as the differences between wood types. – **Dan Erlewine**

I've learned so much from Dan Erlewine's "Guitar Rx" column over the years that I've

become confident enough to take on certain repairs. I've seen him use a variety of glues and often wonder how many types he keeps at hand, and which are used for specific tasks. – Nate Scott

I use a number of glues, which I gathered to give you a look. Those I use most are in the middle row:

- Titebond Original Wood Glue, a standby in every repair shop that can be used for wood-to-wood repair or building.
- Behlen Ground Hide Glue, which is dried and granulated. You put the granules in a jar, add water, and heat it into a liquid. Hot hide glue is my choice on all structural repair and building when I can accomplish the task within one or two minutes. Typical uses are neck resets, fretboard and bridge repair, cracksplints, bridge pads, peg-head overlays, and frets. It cleans up with water, which is a big plus.
- Glueboost accelerator speeds up super

Though branded The American No. 5, this guitar's origin is a mystery.



glue drying time of its matched superglues (in front).

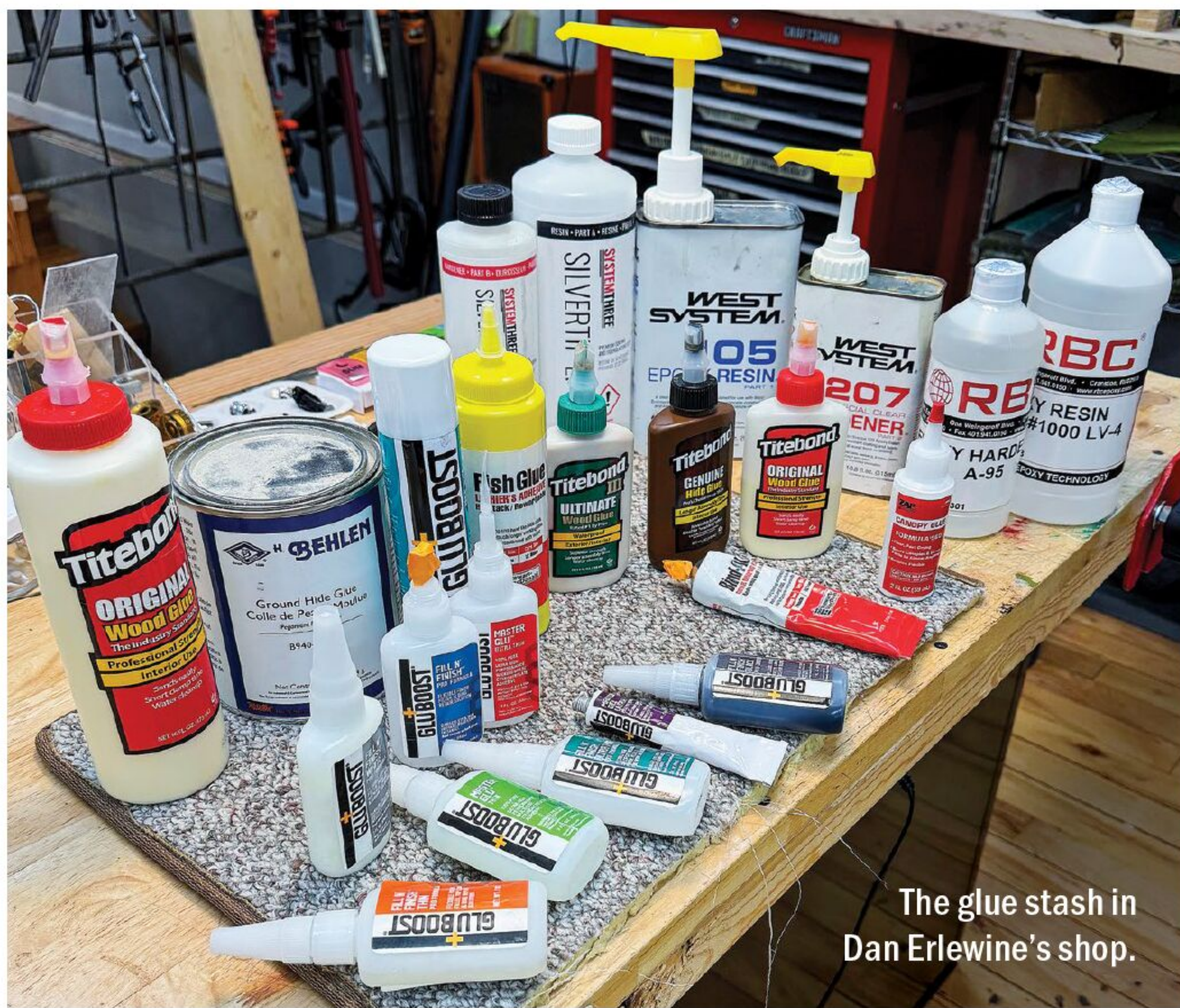
- Fish Glue Luthier's Adhesive is used like hot hide glue for repairs that I can't work fast enough. Like hide glue, it dissolves in water and will rejuvenate glue areas that were previously bonded by hide glue.
- Titebond Ultimate Wood Glue is a stronger version that allows more work time before it starts to set.
- Titebond Genuine Hide Glue is pre-mixed and good for certain tasks.
- Zap Canopy Glue Formula 560 is used in model making and is excellent for gluing plastic binding to wood. It cleans up with water.
- Bind-All Guitar Binding Glue is StewMac's solvent-based glue. I use it on binding repairs because it's strong, melts the plastic, and sets quickly. Being a solvent (which melts plastic), it's better for the experienced user.

In front:

- Glueboost superglues are made in several viscosities, basic colors (black, white, grey), and in the squeeze tube is a thick gel glue. Understanding what each is best for requires trial and error, but I use all of them every day.

In back:

- System Three Silvertip Epoxy is one of several long-cure epoxies I like. It sets faster than others, dries very hard, and is crystal-clear once dry.



The glue stash in Dan Erlewine's shop.

- West System 105 Epoxy Resin is another favorite glue of all of the luthiers I know.
- RBC Epoxy Resin and Hardener are mixed to create a clear, hard epoxy. – **Dan Erlewine**

This column addresses questions about guitar-related subjects, ranging from songs, albums, and musicians to the minutiae of instrument builds, manufacturers, and the collectible market. Questions can be sent to ward@vintageguitar.com with "VG Q&A" in the subject line. **VG**

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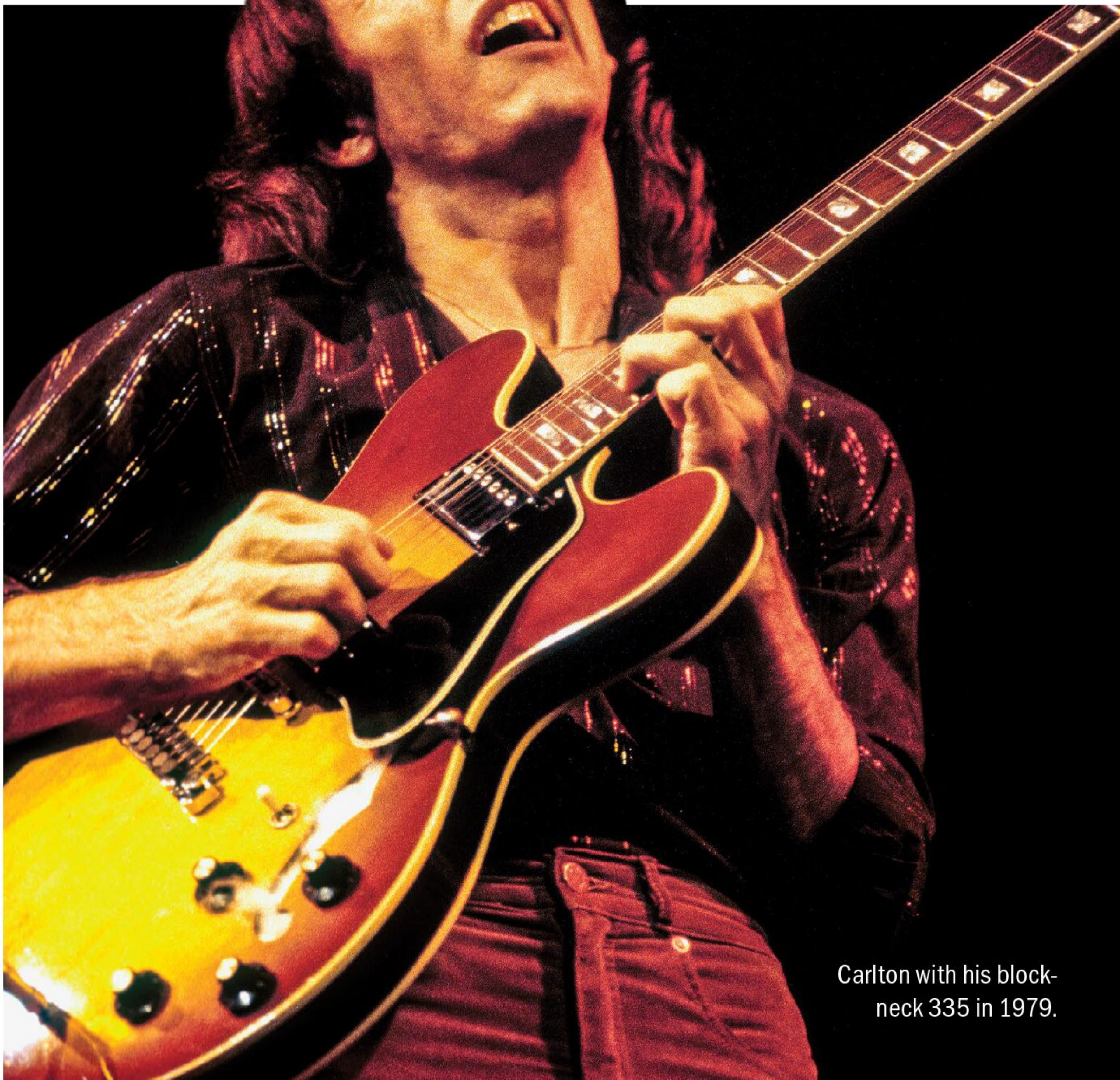


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Carlton with his block-neck 335 in 1979.

LARRY CARLTON

Revisiting Room 335

By Wolf Marshall

In 1978, Larry Carlton was atop the unforgiving environs of L.A.'s music studios, where technical prowess, precision, creativity, tone, and groove are minimum requirements and mere competence promises a short work day.

Carlton's grasp of myriad styles, inventiveness, versatility, inimitable phrasing, distinctive sound, and taste ingratiated him to discriminating artists, producers, and band leaders in a context where he himself attained celebrity status. Jazz and fusion fanatics were captivated by his playing with Tom Scott's L.A. Express and Steely Dan, while pop, rock, and R&B audiences were treated to his special touch on recordings by Joni Mitchell, Ray Charles, John Lennon, Dolly Parton, Jerry Garcia, Linda Ronstadt, Michael Jackson, Billy Joel, Barbra Streisand, et al. He averaged 500 dates per

year as a triple-scale A-lister elevating music across genres.

Carlton's influence as an instrumentalist is staggering. Boasting a command of jazz, rock, blues, pop, funk, and country idioms, he forged a powerful, succinct, and thoughtful guitar style that reconciled the bluesy melodicism of Jeff Beck, harmonic/melodic sophistication of bebop, soulfulness of B.B. King, and fusion pyrotechnics of John McLaughlin. Dubbed "Mr. 335," he was responsible for the shift away from Les Pauls and Strats by founding a school of session stars who brandished Gibson thinlines that includes Lee Ritenour, Jay Graydon, Carlos Rios, and Robben Ford, while fostering the "335 cult" that dominated the '70s and early '80s.

How did he get there? Born in Torrance and raised in Southern California, Carlton began playing at six then studied music read-

ing and guitar technique with a local named Slim Edwards until he was 14, simultaneously training his ear by learning licks from rock records. As a teen aspiring to be a jazzier, he idolized Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass, but his earliest professional work was with surf band Eddie & the Showmen in the mid '60s, which led to meeting contractors and producers. A barrage of recording dates followed by '69; following Tommy Tedesco, Glen Campbell, and the Wrecking Crew, he represented the new breed of studio musician. Like Howard Roberts, he distinguished himself as sideman extraordinaire and solo artist, escaping the anonymity of a stereotypical studio craftsman. While burnishing jazz credentials and increasing his visibility with The Crusaders from '72 to '77, he became one of the most sought-after musicians in a scene teeming with talented specialists.

Commensurate with his guitar skills was Carlton's evolving sound. Moving from a Broadcaster, Telecaster, Stratocaster, Jazzmaster, and Les Paul Custom to an ES-175, he ultimately settled on a 335 that he said, "...felt like a jazz guitar but didn't have to sound like a jazz box." It also addressed numerous studio demands.

Is the thinline 335 semi-acoustic or semi-solid? Carlton answered the eternal question by listening to it unplugged and advised players to search similarly. From several, in 1970 he chose a '68 model at Mr. B's For Music, in Palos Verdes. He replaced the trapeze tailpiece with a Gibson TP-6 bridge/tail piece positioned lower on the body, and upgraded to Schaller M6 tuners. Its ice-tea sunburst was called "Carlton Burst" when the guitar was reissued by the Gibson Custom Shop in 2005 as the Larry Carlton ES-335.

Compared to contemporaries, his sound is relatively unprocessed, emanating from small tube combos overdriven for distortion. He favored the purest 335 sound and rarely used rack effects synonymous with the genre, preferring Fender Princetons and a particular '58 Deluxe in the studio, then employed Mesa-Boogie Mark I amps live. His Sho-Bud volume pedal is his most-obvious effect, heard prominently with The Crusaders, Joni Mitchell, and Tom Scott. He applied the device to control dynamics and enhance instrumental passages with volume swells that became a signature (and oft-copied) sound. "So Far Away" and "Keep That Same Old Feeling" bear definitive examples that affected countless players.

On the heels of his successes, Carlton resumed a solo career in '68 and revisited it on *Singing/Playing* in '73. He then signed to Warner Brothers, fully equipped as artist/producer to create the 1978 landmark opus *Larry*

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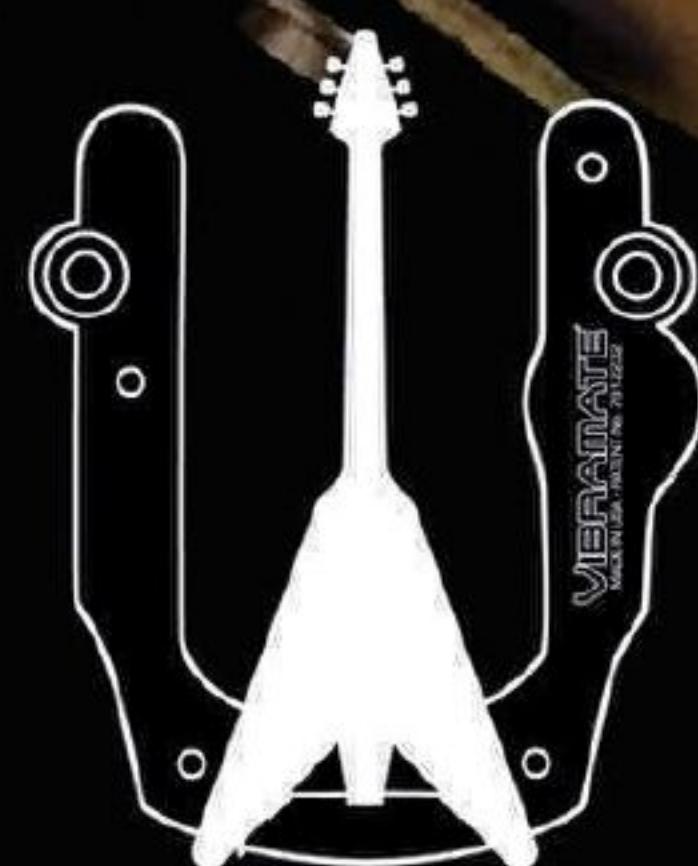
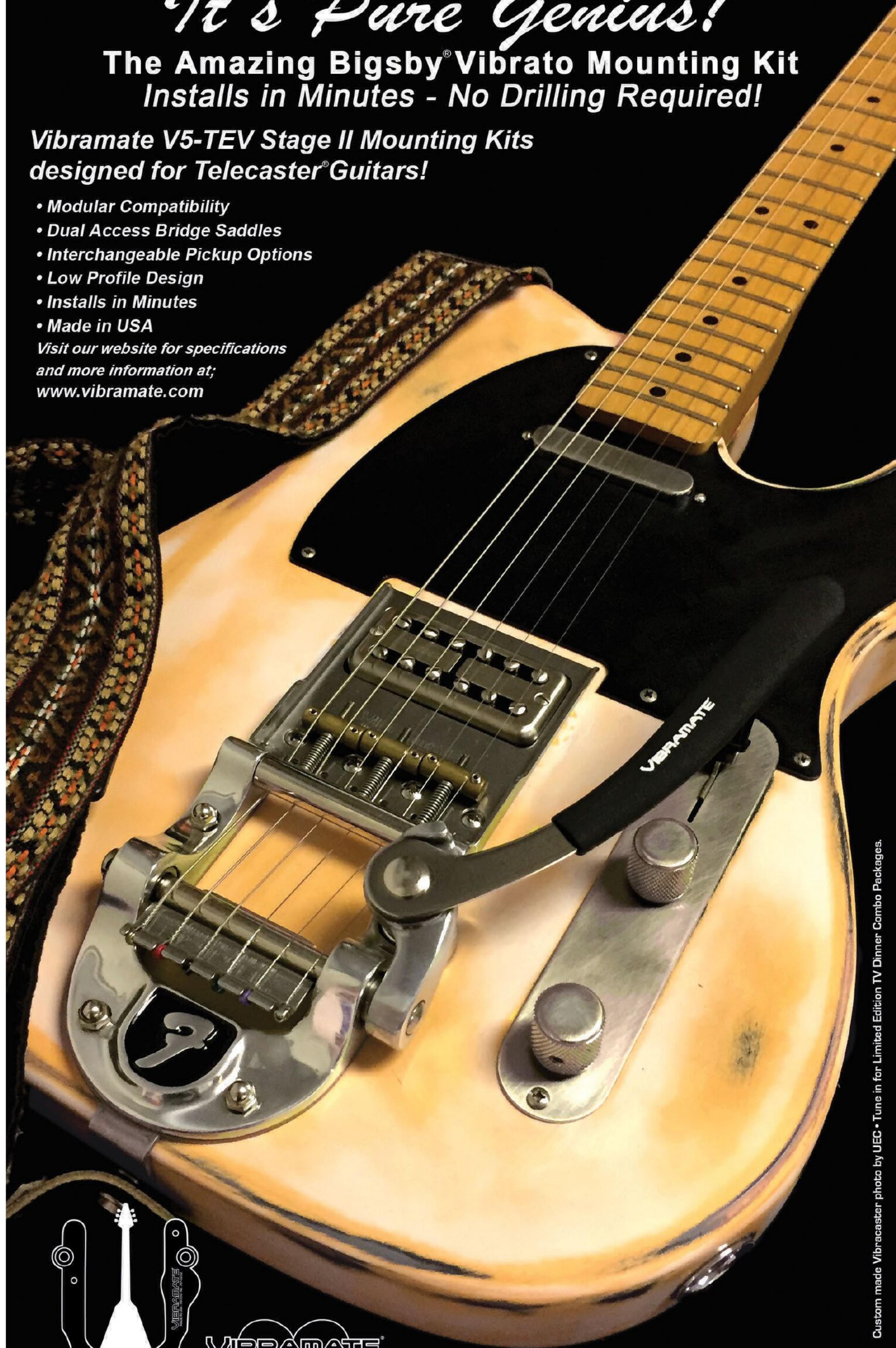
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Carlton. Recorded in Room 335, his 24-track home studio in Hollywood, he engineered the tracks (aided by brother Steve) and wrote the material except for two vocal cover songs. The band consisted of studio stalwarts Jeff Porcaro (drums), Greg Mathieson (keyboards), Abraham Laboriel (bass), and Paulinho da Costa (percussion) augmented with backing vocals by William D. “Smitty” Smith. Strings, engineered by Paul Dobbe and conducted by concertmaster Gerry Vinci, were overdubbed later at Western Studio #1.

In his years as an apprentice, Carlton learned to think like an arranger, acquiring strong commercial instincts. However, *Larry Carlton* eschewed “fuzak” – the smooth-jazz precedents that plagued others of his ilk. And, spontaneity was maintained throughout; there were no demos and only “Room 335” and “Nite Crawler” were written before the date. The eight-song program was beautifully balanced with a variety of grooves and styles – Latin rock, slow ballad, uptempo fusion, blues/rock shuffle, two moderate pop tunes, danceable funk, and slick jazz-rock. The album cemented his reputation as the leading voice of the genre at the apex of L.A. fusion.

Quintessential Carlton, “Room 335” sets the tone with his warm sustaining 335 sound throughout. First called “Room 314” it was recorded (but not released) for a project with Michel Colombier, Jaco Pastorius, and Steve Gadd. It has enjoyed subsequent incarnations, including one with Steve Lukather (on *No Substitutions*). The catchy theme and Carlton’s soloing are models of his clarity and cohesion as composer/player and present many of his sophisticated harmonic concepts. Carlton explained his melodic principles originate from a singer’s approach, saying “Breathing, phrasing with vocal sounds (by

sliding, bending, slurring)” to guide improvisation on a subliminal level. Allusions to Steely Dan’s “Peg” are unmistakable, yet “Room 335” remains his career-defining tour

de force and demonstrates why he was such a sought-after stylist.

“Where Did You Come From?” is a “Smitty” Smith/Eric Mercury vocal pop tune enlivened

Moderate Rock

(Bm7Amaj7) Eb9#11 Fmaj7 Em7#5 Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 Em7#5

Dm7 D/E Dmaj7 C#m7#5 Bm7C#m7 Dmaj7 D#m7b5 D/E

Fmaj7 F#m7b5 F/G Gmaj7 G#m7b5 G/A

Dmaj7 F#7b9 Bm7

“Room 335” finds Carlton generating the same kind of magic heard in his famed “Kid Charlemagne” solo. His ability to create inventive, melodious and moving improvisations through uncommon chord changes is legendary and a sonic identifier. This excerpt from the second A section into the bridge (1:52-2:16) boasts several telling traits. The modulation in measures 1-2 from D to F major starts with stepwise flurries

in call-and-response form. Carlton plays a slick voice-leading melody highlighting chord tones in 3-5, and applies three iterations of a Charlie Parker-inspired bebop line to define D-F-G tonal areas in 8-10. The bridge heads to B minor and he responds by playing a tasteful sequence phrase decorated with legato mordents in 13, using the B Harmonic Minor over F#7b9 – a traditional strategy in jazz.

Moderate Rock

Chord progression: Dmaj7, C#m7#5, Bm7, Amaj7, Eb9#11, Dmaj7, C#m7#5

Chord progression: Bm7, C#m7, Dmaj7, C#m7#5

Chord progression: Bm7, Amaj7, Eb9#11, Dmaj7, C#m7#5

Chord progression: Bm7, C#m7, Dmaj7, C#m7#5

Chord progression: Bm7, Amaj7, Eb9#11, Dmaj7, C#m7#5

Carlton changes gears in the “Room 335” outro solo; playing over a vamp of the “Peg” chord figure in D. His approach is decidedly groove-oriented with rhythmically displaced riffs in 1-2 and 9-10, and vocalesque phrasing in bends, slides, legato dominating several phrases, all

gathering energy and momentum – definitive “building” of a solo. Check the overt blues line in 6-7 over chords that are not typical blues sonorities. The excerpt closes with insistent pentatonic riffing and a strong rising A major-pentatonic line as a climax.

with guitar harmony that suits Carlton’s funk-informed rhythm playing and “sweet style” of soloing associated with his work on soft-rock dates. His expressive approach to improvisation (which Mitchell called “his editing”) is evident in the performance, particularly the outro solo (2:57), which elevates what would be saccharine in lesser hands. Carlton credits the influence of guitarist Louie Shelton, an early mentor who inspired his emphasis on simplicity, economy, and taste.

“Nite Crawler” was written while he was with The Crusaders and first appeared on *Free as the Wind*. The gospel-tinged jazz/funk number was reimagined through Carlton’s prism. The tempo is slightly faster, the feel funkier with Porcaro’s solid groove and Laboriel’s popping bass line, harmony guitars supplant and sweeten the original pentatonic horn melody, resulting in an Allman Brothers-meet-Crusaders impression, and Mathieson’s synth orchestration adds modern color. Carlton delivers one of his bluesiest and most impassioned solos, with an occasional reference to the slurs, bends, and aggression of jamming buddy Robben Ford, offset by jazz-inflected lines over the modulating sections of the changes.

“Point It Up” is a blistering jazz-rock composition that blends modal and post-bop tonal elements decorated with Larry’s famed volume-pedal licks in the intro and solo entrance. The head consists of brisk guitar flurries as theme over a static G-minor modal center. A half-time/triplet-dominated interlude redirects the arrangement and supplies variety in feel and harmony with a cycling progression of polychords. His lengthy, virtuosic “blowing” solo is energetic and florid, revealing another side of his persona, hinting at the inspiration of Coltrane and

the “sheets of sound” concept with long, intricate modal lines laced with chromaticism.

“Rio Samba” melds Latin rock with fusion and personifies spontaneity. The head melody, over a vamping Cm7-F7 and its neighbor E7, is simple, concise, groove-oriented, and given guitar-harmony treatment on the repeat, leaving synth and organ to deliver the contrasting bridge theme in B^b. Carlton’s improvisations balance elegant modal lines with distinctive vocalesque phrasing, well-placed double-time passages and thematic development over F7 and E7, and depict his advanced harmonic perspectives in navigating the fluid bridge changes.

“I Apologize” is the second Smith-Mercury vocal tune, a bluesy power-pop song propelled by the rhythm section’s slow, solid rock pulse. Carlton toughens the number with distorted, soulful fills in verses and, thinking like an arranger, allows the languid chorus to sway gently with a half-time feel using processed Rhodes pads and vocal-harmony backing. Word-painting the remorseful storyline on guitar, Carlton generates angst with wide string bends and vibrato, his execution notable for its accurate intonation, delivery, and application on extended and altered chords.

“Don’t Give It Up” elaborates on Jeff Beck’s influence in fusion. The driving shuffle in G combines blues, rock, and jazz in the spirit of “Freeway Jam”; its angular, ear-catching guitar riff exemplifies polytonal concepts and triad-pairs (G/F and B^b/C) thinking endemic to modern jazz, yet conveys a blues-based sound expanded with a related theme and chord change to B^b (replacing the C IV chord) and syncopated ensemble accents on D-C changes that Carlton catches with rhythmic string-bend motifs, deepening the blues feeling. His clever arrangement subjects blowing choruses of a repeating 20-bar-blues structure to a series of modulations. He takes his first solo (1:23) in

Moderately Fast Shuffle (12/8 feel) ♩ = ♩³

“Don’t Give It Up” is Carlton’s blues extravaganza. Every improvised line is noteworthy, but this excerpt from the first solo is particularly telling. As a showcase for his blend of swing-jazz and blues-rock fusion and unique handling of traditional shuffle blues, it’s a veritable glossary of reimagined blues melody and artful string bending. In measure 2 over B, he plays a tasty half-step bend into A (the 7th). Note the pedal-tone line – a

Carlton staple – in 5, use of common tone D^b (C[#]) to return to Ab, sophisticated major and minor blues-scale combinations in 7-8 and 11-13 (tastefully adding in the colorful 6th and 9th tones), and held-and-articulated bends in 9. The winding triplet phrasing of eighth-note passages convey blues-guitar allusions to T-Bone Walker, B.B. King, and Buddy Guy while Larry’s saturated horn-like sound imparts rock modernity to the solo.

A^b (a half step higher), recalling a time-honored practice of playing improvisations in another key. This solo captures some of his most spirited and technically proficient blues on record, but,

after the organ solo in A, is taken to greater heights with another equally powerful solo (3:23) in B^b over stop-time figures. The next section (3:53) modulates to E, reverts to the

original ensemble feel, and recalls the theme, accompanied by a second guitar playing fills in spaces between riffs. The closing section (4:22) retains the theme as a background figure, and finds Carlton stretching out over an E chord with energetic blues-rock licks. The coda (5:35) modulates to F, eliminates the band, and leaves him playing improvised lines with only a loose boogie-driven rhythm guitar as accompaniment into a fadeout. The piece remains required listening for those interested in reshaping blues clichés.

The slow, hypnotic closer "It Was Only Yesterday" showcases the hollowbody qualities inherent in a 335 magnified by Carlton's touch, sensitive phrasing, and melodious string bending that adds another dimension to modern blues, rivaling Santana's "Europa" and Gary Moore's "Still Got the Blues." Varied dynamics, gradations of timbre, and infinite shadings of attack convey understated facets of Carlton's technique, evoking the tone of an archtop. Intimacy is emphasized by the guitar's placement in the stereo mix, allowing instrumental subtleties and nuances to become events in themselves. The arrangement builds from Larry's subdued rubato melody statement, accompanied by sparse electric piano, to a lush orchestral setting with full band, string sweetening and smoldering guitar solo (2:35) darting through the changes, to a dissolving coda in free time.

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.



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'59 Red/Slab Rose neck Original custom color, 100% original.
'60 Sunburst/Slab Rose neck 100% original in EX+ condition
'60 Olympic White/Slab Rose neck 100% original in Mint condition

'61 Olympic White/Slab Rose neck 100% original in Mint condition
'61 Dakota Red/Slab Rose neck 100% original. Near Mint condition.
'62 Blond Refret, changed nut in "Beat-Up" condition, Player's dream!!
'63 Sunburst Refret, changed nut in "Beat-Up" condition, Player's dream!!
'65 Sunburst 100% original, Near Mint condition, Mint-Green pickguard
'65 Candy Apple Red 100% original, Excellent condition, Mint-Green pickguard
'65 Olympic White 100% original, Excellent condition, Mint-Green pickguard
'65 Olympic White 100% original
'65 Olympic White "Tortoise Shell Pickguard" Gold Hardware 100% original

'65 Olympic White "Tortoise Shell Pickguard" 100% original
'66 Sunburst We have 3 in stock, Super clean!!
'69 Blond/Rose neck 100% original, Amazing tone!!
'70 Sunburst/Rose neck 100% original in Near Mint condition, We have 2 in stock.
'71 Olympic White/4 Bolt Rose neck only refrets changed nut, Super clean!!
'72 Natural 1Strings tree Maple neck 100% original in Mint condition, Super rare!!
'72 Sunburst 1Strings tree Maple & Rose neck We have each in stock.
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GIBSON'S "SG" LES PAUL

**CLASSIC SHAPE THAT
FILLED BIG SHOES**

— BY BAKER RORICK —

In 1961, Gibson replaced the single-cutaway Les Paul with a new line of lighter, thinner, mahogany double-cut solidbodies. Developed under the aegis of Ted McCarty and introduced as the “new Les Paul,” it exemplified the company’s reinvigorated marketing emphasis.

According to Les Paul himself, it was designed and introduced without his consultation or knowledge. In mid/late '62, when his agreement with Gibson expired, he removed his endorsement and the line was renamed “SG” – a simple factory designation for “solid guitar” – and the side-pull Vibrato was replaced by Gibson’s new Vibrola on the Standard model.

There are, of course, anomalies and transitional exceptions like '62 Les Paul SGs with Vibrolas and '62 SG Standards with side-pulls. Players commonly replaced both with stop tailpieces.

The SG became one of Gibson’s most-successful solidbodies and was *the* rock guitar of the late '60s, especially popular with West Coast groups like The Doors, Quicksilver Messenger Service (John Cipolina was the master of the side-pull), The Grateful Dead (Jerry Garcia), Big Brother & The Holding Company (two SGs and an EB-3) and Country Joe & The Fish (Barry Melton). But the British loved it, too; an “SG” Les Paul was Clapton’s guitar of choice with Cream, Townshend abused one when The Who played Woodstock, and we must not forget Deep Purple and Black Sabbath. Other manufacturers,

including Guild, Hagstrom, and Yamaha, introduced SG-style guitars, as well.

The '61 Les Paul Standard had such a distinctive neck profile – thin with a wide fretboard – that Gibson made it fatter in '62 because its shape was one of the main gripes heard from Les and other players. Also, the necks were prone to breakage at the headstock and often had problems where the heel joined the body at the 22nd (last) fret, making original unrepaired examples hard to find. It also had Patent Applied For humbuckers; mixtures of PAFs and “patent number” pickups are common in '62 models, and later Standards had two patent-number humbuckers, though an occasional PAF has turned up in '63 models.

These guitars share many of the features and trimmings as their predecessors, including Kluson Deluxe tuning machines, nickel-plated hardware, and bound-rosewood fretboards with trapezoidal inlays. The headstock veneer has a crown-pattern (a.k.a. “Holly”) inlay and a bell-shaped truss cover engraved with “Les Paul” instead of the “Les Paul Model” decal found on earlier Standards, though the SG-bodied Les Paul Standard in the

'62 catalog shows the old-style decal and a plain truss cover.

In *American Guitars*, Tom Wheeler called the white '61 you see here “extremely rare.” Normally, only SG-body Les Paul Customs were dressed in Polaris White (with a white pickguard) as standard finish, with gold-plated hardware and three humbuckers. This one was ordered by someone who wanted something that would stand out, but without the fancy trappings of a Custom, and the contrasting black pickguard shows off its batwing shape.

Another extremely rare and tasteful example of a factory finish '61 is this black one with a contrasting white pickguard meant for a three-pickup Custom. Black is a not-uncommon color for SGs, and is popular on refins because it masks neck repairs so well. Black SGs usually have black pickguards.

In '63, Gibson unveiled its new Firebird line, available in 10 DuPont Duco Custom Color finishes for an additional \$15. This was a direct response to competition from Fender and the custom-color craze of the times. These fancy finishes were offered only on Firebirds and Thunder-



1962 Les Paul Standards
in Black (a standard color)
and Polaris White.

birds, but other models were special-ordered by stores and individuals in custom colors, and for some reason, Pelham Blue seems to be the most common.

The SG shown here is from '65 and illustrates not only some of the changes made starting in '62, but characteristics that personify the early-'60s Standard. Most apparent is the Gibson Vibrola, with its unadorned trapezoidal baseplate and plastic-tipped arm. Not a great vibrato, with a very basic design that simply tightens or relaxes string tension from the tailpiece, the Vibrola was easier and much cheaper to manufacture and install than the "SG" Les Paul's sideways nightmare. Hardware is chrome, and the neck profile

is similar to other Gibson six-strings of the period – a normal width and not as much "meat" as SG necks from '62/'63.

In '66, Gibson redesigned the SG line, changing the neck/heel arrangement and enlarging the pickguard to cover most the face while surrounding the pickups, eliminating the need for mounting rings. This was done for production reasons – primarily, ease of wiring and assembly. A large cavity under the pickguard allowed them to use the same body blanks for all models and pickup configurations, including the inexpensive Melody Maker, which had been given the SG shape in '65 and came in two standard finishes, Fire Engine Red and (strangely enough) Pelham Blue. The character of the instruments had changed and nothing compares to the sound and feel of the first "SG" Les Pauls, with their PAFs and super-fast necks. For collectors, they represent a period of growth and innovation in Gibson his-

tory. Buyers would do well to beware, though, as many examples are "restorations." PAFs had a way of disappearing from Les Paul SGs in the '70s for use in goldtop-to-Standard conversions, and those "Les Paul" truss covers also migrate pretty easily.

The transitional "SG" Les Paul had its issues, but now tells a great story. And what other original Les Paul Standard can be had for a fraction of the price of a 'Burst?

This article originally appeared in *VG Classics* #6 (March '96). All copyrights are by the author and *Vintage Guitar* magazine. Unauthorized replication or use is strictly prohibited. **VG**

A '65 SG in Pelham Blue and
'61 Les Paul in Cherry.



Photo: VG Archive.

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JASON ISBELL

NEW VISTAS, OLD GEAR

BY RICH KIENZLE

Jason Isbell's powerful songs, compelling vocals, and formidable guitar skills have made him one of America's most-respected singer/songwriters. A charismatic performer, his critically-lauded albums, solo and backed by the formidable 400 Unit, have earned six Grammys and nine Americana Music Awards. With an eclectic style melding country, blues, and Southern rock, his appeal transcends genres.

Nearly all of Isbell's collection sees time onstage. One of the rare exceptions is his '34 000-28.



As his success grew, a collection of older gear has played a major role in his approach, both in the studio and onstage. That includes his latest effort *Foxes in the Snow*, his first solo acoustic collection.

"I've never done it before and it didn't seem silly," he says of the new album. "It seemed like a challenge – a good way to make sure I remain focused on the craft of songwriting and don't build things to hide behind, like big production or loud

guitars. I love all those things, but it's very easy, especially in a period of change in your life and a point of vulnerability, to look for things to hide behind. I wanted to do the opposite."

"I knew I was going to be recording with just a guitar, so I wrote songs with that in mind. It made sense to keep it very personal; I didn't want it to sound like I'd

written a bunch of rock-and-roll songs that I just decided to strip down for whatever reasons. From the beginning, I wanted to make a record that sounded small and open and vulnerable."

Recorded at New York's Electric Lady Studios, his animated picking complements both vocals and lyrics, all done on his mahogany 1940 Martin 0-17, "Just a little

Jason Isbell's '61 ES-335, '53 Les Paul with a Bigsby installed by Larry Cragg, and a '61 Les Paul.

guy. It does sound really good. It's a good example of a pre-war mahogany Martin. [Co-producer and engineer Gena Johnson] did a lovely job of miking everything."

The title song's delicate, complex finger-picking required added effort.

"I had to practice that one before I went in to record it. I'm not a great fingerstyle player; I do a hybrid thing where I'll use the flat pick and a couple fingers. That's what I'm doing on that."

He cited the acoustic influences of Michael Hedges, Charlie Hunter, and Hunter's hero, veteran blues fingerpicker Mance Lipscomb, adding, "I think my favorite has been Leo Kottke – the way he can create multiple parts and really accompany his own playing."

The final recording day tested both singer and instrument, when he had to switch studios at Electric Lady.

"It was cold in there," he said of the second room. "When we turned the space heater on, it affected the tuning, so we had to basically leave it off while I was tracking. It got really difficult to play those parts because my fingers kept getting cold."

A son of northern Alabama, Isbell grew up in one of America's most-fertile musical regions. Born in 1979, he lived in Green Hill, near the iconic southern-music locales Florence and Muscle Shoals, home to both Fame Studios, the birthplace of countless soul, R&B, pop, and country hits, and the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio.

Music was everywhere. His parents were serious music consumers, and his paternal grandfather, Carthel Isbell, a Pentecostal preacher who played guitar, mandolin, banjo, fiddle and Dobro, taught him to play mandolin, which fit his small hands.

"He did that with my dad and my uncle when they were kids. Dad didn't keep it up, but my uncle still plays guitar."

After growing a bit, he moved to guitar, mostly his grandfather's Takamine copy of a Martin.

"He would teach me to accompany him and I would sit and play for hours at a time. I really enjoyed it from the beginning and became obsessed with it. I have that Takamine still."

His own first guitar was an Electra Les Paul copy and a Gorilla practice amp he was given for Christmas. Much like the Tak, he says, "I could never pull myself away from it."

Given his home region, it's no surprise he embraced Southern rock and country.

"The Allman Brothers were all over the place and Dickey Betts had some serious country sensibilities. Gregg and Duane

were from Nashville, originally. It was pretty easy for me to combine those two things. You'd call them a rock band, a hippie band, a country band, and it would all fit."

Hearing his uncle play Lynyrd Skynyrd and Neil Young material in a cover band blurred the country-rock lines even more.

"I couldn't really tell if it was a country song or a rock song. So those were my first and biggest influences: artists who really didn't seem to care what genre they fell into."

Allman and Betts were early guitar heroes, but by no means Isbell's only.

"Hendrix was huge for any of us who started out playin' electric guitar and listening to rock radio, along with Jimmy Page and Clapton. I eat all that stuff up. My dad had a lot of those records. Then I went back and started listening to more blues artists."

"Albert King hit me very hard. Listen to Albert and you're like, 'Oh, I see what you can do with one note if you're really, really meaning what you're saying. Clapton did it with tone. He was blasting a hole in the wall to motivate himself to get that kind of emotion.'"

Like many who discovered the blues through Clapton, Isbell sought out the artists who inspired his hero, which led to musical and emotional power of pre-war acoustic blues.

"I just wanted to know where that had come from and wound up with Robert Johnson and Blind Lemon Jefferson and all the stuff nobody else in the third grade in Alabama was listening to."

Johnson left an especially powerful impact. His grandfather bought the *Complete Recordings* vinyl box and dubbed cassettes for him, withholding the raun-

chier tunes until Jason was a bit older. He remains in awe of that discovery.

"I studied that stuff, and it scared the hell out of me – and it scares me more now than when I was 10 years old (laughs).

That's terrifying music – there's so much emotion going on and it's really, really hard to focus on anything else while that's playing."

At 16, he played both the Grand Ole Opry and Nashville's Wild Horse Saloon with a Muscle Shoals band that included his best friend, 16-year-old Chris Tompkins (now a top-tier Nashville songwriter), playing mostly country covers.

Blues and rock greats weren't his only inspiration. His compositional range expanded by delving into the greatest country singer/songwriters.

"Growing up in the South, there was something about the classic era of songwriting. I think Merle Haggard wrote as good a song as anybody. There are a lot of things I do where I'm writing a song where it pretty quickly becomes obvious that the challenge is not to sound like I'm ripping off John Prine."

"I read Tom T. Hall's songwriting book and studied his songwriting. I feel the economic use of language and conversational way Tom T. wrote songs really speaks to me. You don't feel like you're listening to a songwriter

that's trying to impress you. You're listening to a man tell a story, and that really appeals to me.

"Listen to Kristofferson, Tom T., Dolly – some songs were so dark that if you just try to describe them, it's

the most depressing thing you ever heard. But when you hear the

song, there's humor in it.

That humor and sort of irony gave country music, the ability

to go deeper in subject matter without depress-

ing the hell out of everybody.





“As I go forward as a songwriter, I’m trying to figure out ways to get humor in the songs, because I’ve been writing really heavy s**t for a long time. Even *I* get depressed by it sometimes, so it’s nice to find a way to interject humor to keep a bit of distance from the reality of what’s goin’ on in the songs. Roger Miller was a genius, just an unbelievable musician and songwriter and singer. The wit!”

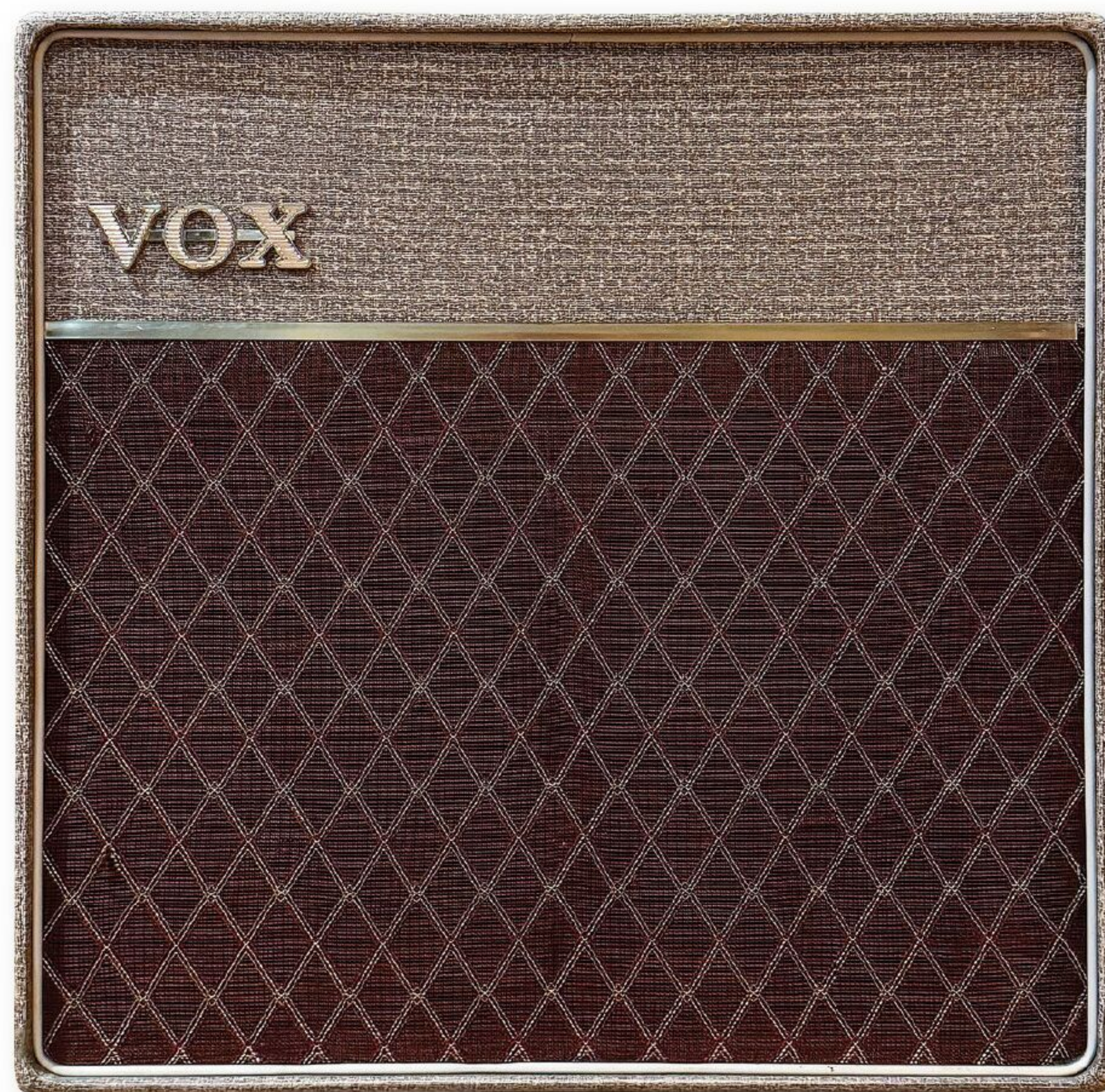
Those blossoming songwriting skills

Isbell’s ‘63 Firebird, the Takamine dreadnought that belonged to his grandfather and was the first guitar he learned to play, and a ‘54 Tele.

connected him with Fame Studios, as iconic then as Memphis’ Stax and Sun studios, or Motown in Detroit. Isbell began writing for their publishing company and got to know local session musicians who played on so many hits at Fame.

In 1969, four core members of that group calling themselves the Muscle

Shoals Rhythm Section departed Fame and opened the competing Muscle Shoals Sound Studio. Isbell got particularly close to that group, including guitarist Jimmy Johnson (1943-2019), electric bassist David Hood, keyboardist Barry Beckett, and drummer Roger Hawkins. Their approach left a mark on Isbell’s musical philosophy.



Isbell's '64 Marshall "Bluesbreaker" and '61 Vox AC15.

"The thing about all those musicians I grew up around... there was not much ego at all," he reflects. Johnson gave him insight to the secrets of rhythm guitar.

"Jimmy's rhythm playing is legendary for a reason. He played with the mindset of a producer and really served the song."

He heard identical qualities in Hood, who added a memorable (and, for him, rare) bass solo to the 1972 Staple Singers hit "I'll Take You There."

"It took a lot of work to get David to play that," he explains. "That's not the kind of musician David is or ever was. Most people with half of the ability and technical knowledge as David has would be more than willing to play a solo at any point in time."

Putting the song first, Isbell adds, "... was something Jimmy had, David had. (Keyboardists) Spooner Oldham and Donnie Fritts shared his absence of ego. That's what led to them being first-call, and such an important part of musical history. They knew the song was really the breadwinner. I learned so much from followin' those guys around."

Hood's son, singer/guitarist/songwriter Patterson Hood, was another close friend of Isbell's and a member of the edgy Southern-rock band Drive-By Truckers. In 2001, Isbell replaced Truckers guitarist/songwriter Rob Malone. Hood, Isbell, and guitarist/songwriter Mike Cooley maintained the band's original front line of three singing/songwriting guitarists.

"What we were doing was kind of punk-rock at that time. And it was so loud. We played small rooms with big Marshalls, and

it was painful to be in those rooms but it was so much fun and there was something about playing guitar in a band that had two other guitar players, and writing songs for a band with three songwriters, where I could really bear down and just give 'em three or four of my best songs for each record, and not have to sing all night."

With Drive-By, he used a Gretsch Chet Atkins Tennessean and a wine-red Les Paul. The Tennessean now resides with the Truckers' former tour manager. "The Les Paul was stolen. Both were from the '90s; the Les Paul I kind of miss. I had to have something with an easily adjustable bridge I could put big strings on so the tension would be good enough."

"I had two amps, but the one I really settled on was a Marshall JCM 800 and a 4x12 with greenbacks; I took the back off so it would be louder – a 100-watt Marshall wasn't quite loud enough (laughs). Patterson had this silverface Twin and Cooley was using a Sound City 50-watt head, so there was a lot of volume comin' off that stage."

He left the Truckers in 2007, but remains proud of their legacy and influence. He is "... very, very lucky to have been in that band, because I learned from them. If I hadn't joined, I don't know what I'd be doing now. I might be writing songs for other people or playing guitar in somebody else's band, but it wouldn't have worked out like it did."

Sirens of the Ditch, Isbell's solo debut, appeared in '07 and he formed the 400 Unit later that year; it was first heard on his '09 self-titled follow-up. The band name came from a designation once applied to the psy-

chiatric section of Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital, in Florence, where country star George Jones was briefly treated in 1979.

Southeastern (2013), a solo effort, was Isbell's breakthrough. Produced by Dave Cobb, who works with Sturgill Simpson, Brandi Carlile, and Chris Stapleton, among others, the record employed only a few sidemen.

"There was something that worked really well about how quiet and small and sort of acoustically driven that record was," he recalls. "I love to play guitar and I love electric guitar as well as acoustic, but as a songwriter, sometimes it works best when you just strip everything back."

The Muscle Shoals session players' philosophy Isbell admired heavily influenced his ideas for shaping the 400 Unit's role in his music. It's reflected in the powerful sound of the current lineup of lead guitarist Sadler Vaden, keyboardist Derry deBorja, drummer Chad Gamble, guitarist-percussionist Will Johnson, and bassist Anna Butters.

"I had to get folks who played for the song first, people who understood me and what I was trying to say with my music and were willing to let their own ego go. It's changed a bit over the years – not too much. Most of us have been together for quite a while."

"Sadler and I, the whole band, we studied [Muscle Shoals music]. With the exception of Anna, who's from Australia and didn't really grow up with it, Sadler and I spent

hours and hours sittin' around learning solos and chord changes."

He cites Vaden as a player and real student of music. "He spends so much time listening and learning things and still goes back and learns old songs. For somebody to be a professional guitar player and spend time trying to figure out how Billy Gibbons played something... it's really impressive."

Isbell's growing success finally allowed him to indulge his desire to acquire and play older gear.

"I simply couldn't afford that stuff before," he says. "I bought a D-18 from the mid '50s, where you can't exactly tell what they used for the top that sounds really, really good. That was the first good old guitar I had. I bought a '61 ES-335 from Dave Cobb soon after."

As his success has grown, the collection has continued expanding. Most of it is meant to be played onstage, with one specific exception – a '34 000-28.

On tour, he carries Martin Modern Deluxe 00-28s and a dreadnought designed to work with a full band. "I'm not gonna take the 0-17 and pre-war Martin out on the road," he says.

As for electrics, he'll take whatever he's into at the moment.

"I don't consider myself a guitar collector as much as I just like to have everything I might need, and I can feel and hear little differences between all those guitars."

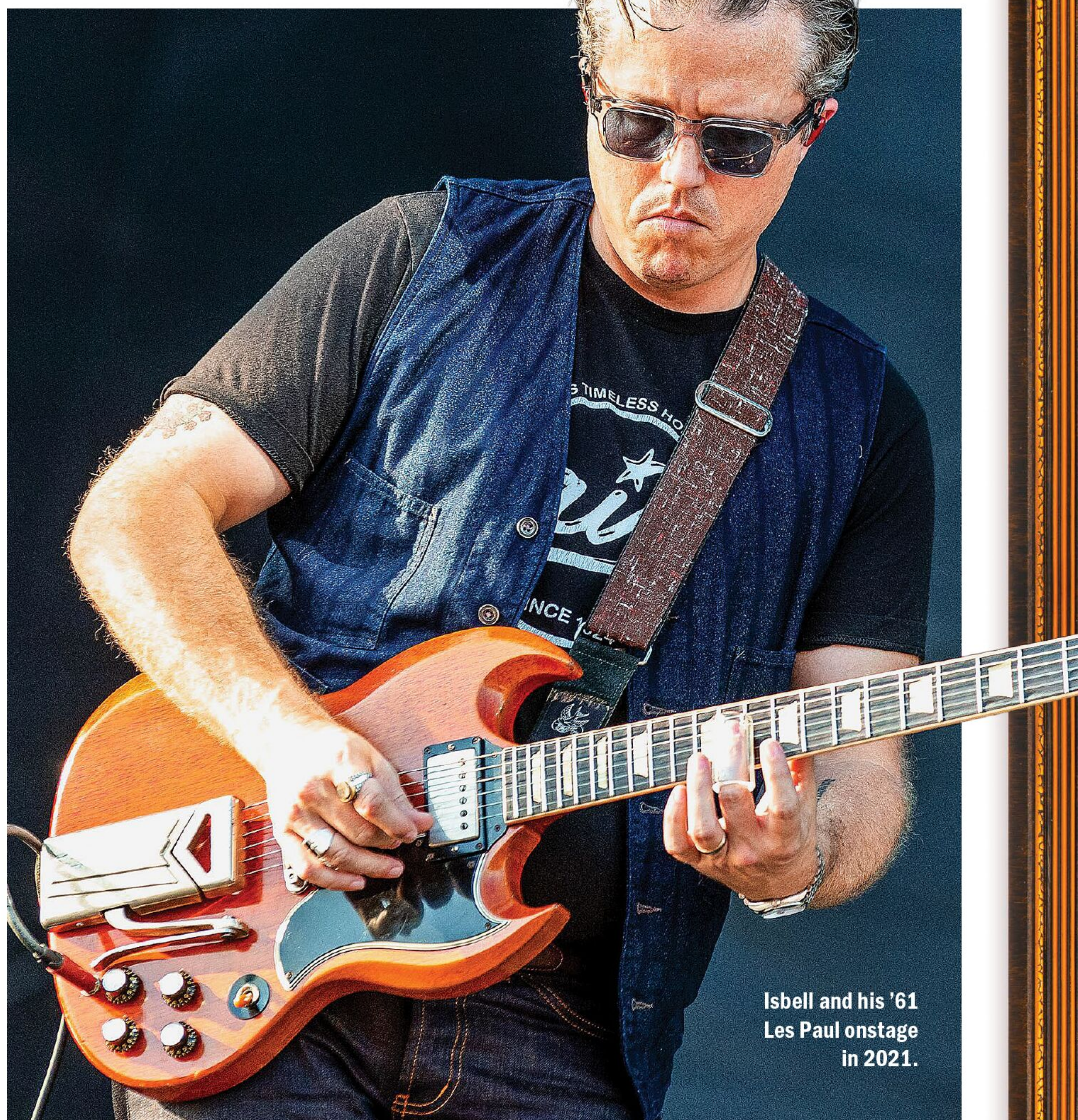
His core lineup, along with the 335, includes the '53 blackguard Tele he used on the *Live at the Ryman* albums. He uses a signature Tele Custom as well, calling it a direct descendant of his beloved '65 Candy Apple Red Tele, with its neck profile and customized bridge pickup.

"I guess somebody took a mallet and tried to flatten the pole pieces early on, and they knocked part of the bottom off the pickup cover. It's a really hot, microphonic pickup, which I love. When it started to come unwound, we took it to Tim Shaw and he rewound it, but we were very adamant that he didn't fix it.

"I have one great example of everything I might need – a '65 Candy Apple Red Strat, a '58 Strat with a maple neck – actually, it's a '57 with a '58 shipping date – a '60 slab-board Strat, a '59 Les Paul and a '60 Les Paul Custom that's red. A '53 goldtop with a Bigsby. Larry Cragg put the Bigsby on that before I got it. And I have red '63 Firebird."

His '61 Les Paul Standard is "a great guitar. It's still got the side-pull [vibrato], but it's just for balance. I don't touch that thing (laughs). That guitar's really good."

Amp-wise, his Dumble Overdrive Spe-



Isbell and his '61 Les Paul onstage in 2021.

cial with serial number 22, formerly owned by guitarist/producer Dennis Herring, is always with him.

"I've got a tweed Twin, a high-powered tweed Twin, a '64 Vibroverb and a couple Magnatones that are a couple of years old, but they hang in there with all those classic amps."

When he has time, Isbell still enjoys listening to older and current guitarists. "I think Julian Lage is fantastic. We were playing the same venue in Europe recently and spent a little while chatting afterwards. He's a wonderful person and a genius player.

"I like what [Umphrey's] McGee is doing with this self-recorded, down-tuned guitar stuff. Blake Mills, obviously, is incredible. I like Celisse's playing a whole lot. Grace Bowers is a great guitar player. There's no shortage of really, really good guitar players right now."

He calls Billy Strings, "An explorer. I love that about him, coming from a flat-picking bluegrass background to spread out like that."

With 400 Unit – the solid, intuitive ensemble he envisioned – he takes pleasure in working with the band and swapping licks and ideas with Vaden, especially in concert.

"Sadler had a pretty similar musical upbringing, and if you find somebody who is attuned to your creativity in the right way, there's an unspoken language. And he has the same goal of live performance that I do.

"There's some things you have to hit to make the song be the same song, but in between that you get a lot of space to roam and to improvise. And it just keeps you more interesting. We play a lot of shows, and I would get bored if we did the same thing the same way every night." **VG**

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2025

FEBRUARY

Best Guitar Show. February 23, from 10am to 4pm at the Blair County Convention Center, 1 Convention Center Dr., Altoona, PA 16602. Contact Mike Pencak at 724-448-5907 or michaelsauto903@yahoo.com

Smoky Mountain Guitar and Music Expo, February 22, 2025, from 10am-5pm at the Smoky Mountain Convention Center, 4010 Parkway, Pigeon Forge, TN. For more information visit <https://www.facebook.com/share/1BUBrPKd1P/?mibextid=LQQJ4d>

MARCH

The Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, Sunday, March 2, 2025 CFS Bank Event Center 111 Gallitin Rd Belle Vernon, PA 15012. Show hours 11-4. For more info contact Scott Talarico at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net or visit www.guitarshowusa.com. (See Advertisement on page 60.)

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday March 2, 2025, Holiday Inn, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove Village, Illinois. 9am to 3PM. For More infor-

mation Contact Beverly Bakes, R&B Productions 847-931-0707, Bakesguitar@aol.com or, Chicagovintageguitarexpo.com

Lansing Music Instrument Swap. Sunday March 2, 2025 from 10am -4pm at the Causeway Bay Convention Center, 6820 S Cedar St., Lansing MI 48911. Contact Shawn VanSteelnd at 517-410-6409 or visit www.musicinstrumentswap.com

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 (See Advertisement on page 63.)

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

Big Als' Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, Sunday, March 9, 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

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 t 5pm at the Embassy Suites KCI, 7640NW Tiffany Springs Pkwy, Kansas City, MO 65153. Contact Mark at 816-520-8430 or visit kcguitarshow.com

Mid Atlantic Guitar Show & Swap Meet, March 21-23 at the Atlantic Sands Hotel and Conference Center, 1 Baltimore Avenue Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971. Presented by Frantic Music Project a 501c3 charitable organization. More info 302-402-3055 or email contact@franticmusic.org www.midatlanticguitarshow.com (See Advertisement on page 64.)

Amigo Nashville Guitar Show 2025, March 22, 10-5 and March 23, 10-4. Williamson County Ag EXPO Park, 4215 Long Lane, Franklin, TN. For more info contact Ruth Brinkmann (817) 312-7659 ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Larry Briggs (918) 288-2222, shows@amigoguitarshows.com, Dave Crocker, davelcrocker@gmail.com (417) 850-4751. www.amigoguitarshows.com. (See Advertisement on page 62.)

APRIL

The Indiana Guitar Show, April 12-13, at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds 1900 E. Main St. Danville, IN. For more information contact Eddie



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Upcoming Events

at (317) 272-5222 or visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com. (See Advertisement on page 60.)

MAY

Dallas International Guitar Festival, May 2-4, 2025 at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX. For more info visit www.guitarshow.com. (See Advertisement on page 61.)

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@jakesfleamarket.com

Big Als' Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, Sunday, May 11, 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

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

The Las Vegas Guitar Trade Show, May 30-June 1, 2025 at the Silverton Lodge, 3333 Blue Diamond Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89139 from 10am - 5pm daily. More information at lasvegasguitartradeshow.com

JUNE

Elmira Vintage Guitar Show, Sunday, June 1st from 11am-4pm at the Woolrich Memorial Centre, 24 Snyder Ave S, Elmira, ON N3B 1K8. For more info, visit www.elmiravintageguitarshow.ca.

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, 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.

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.illinoisguitarexpo.com/>

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, Sep-

tember 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@jakesfleamarket.com

The Indiana Guitar Show, September 27-28 2025, at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds 1900 E. Main St. Danville, IN. 10:00 to 5:00 on Sat & 10:00 to 3:00 on Sun For more information contact Eddie at (317) 272-5222 or visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com

NOVEMBER

Ann Arbor Music Instrument Swap, Sunday November 9, 2025 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

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.



Here at North American Instrument Company, Inc., we have been working to complete the very first two prototypes of our newest model series, "The Frontiersman - PineCaster Series". This retro-look series is reminiscent of the great 50s Western-style guitar designs. We believe that this is the guitar that never was... But should have been! These guitars have that played and worn look, just bustin' with character.

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Rough Rider
Frontiersman - PineCaster Series

Eldorado Gold
Frontiersman - PineCaster Series

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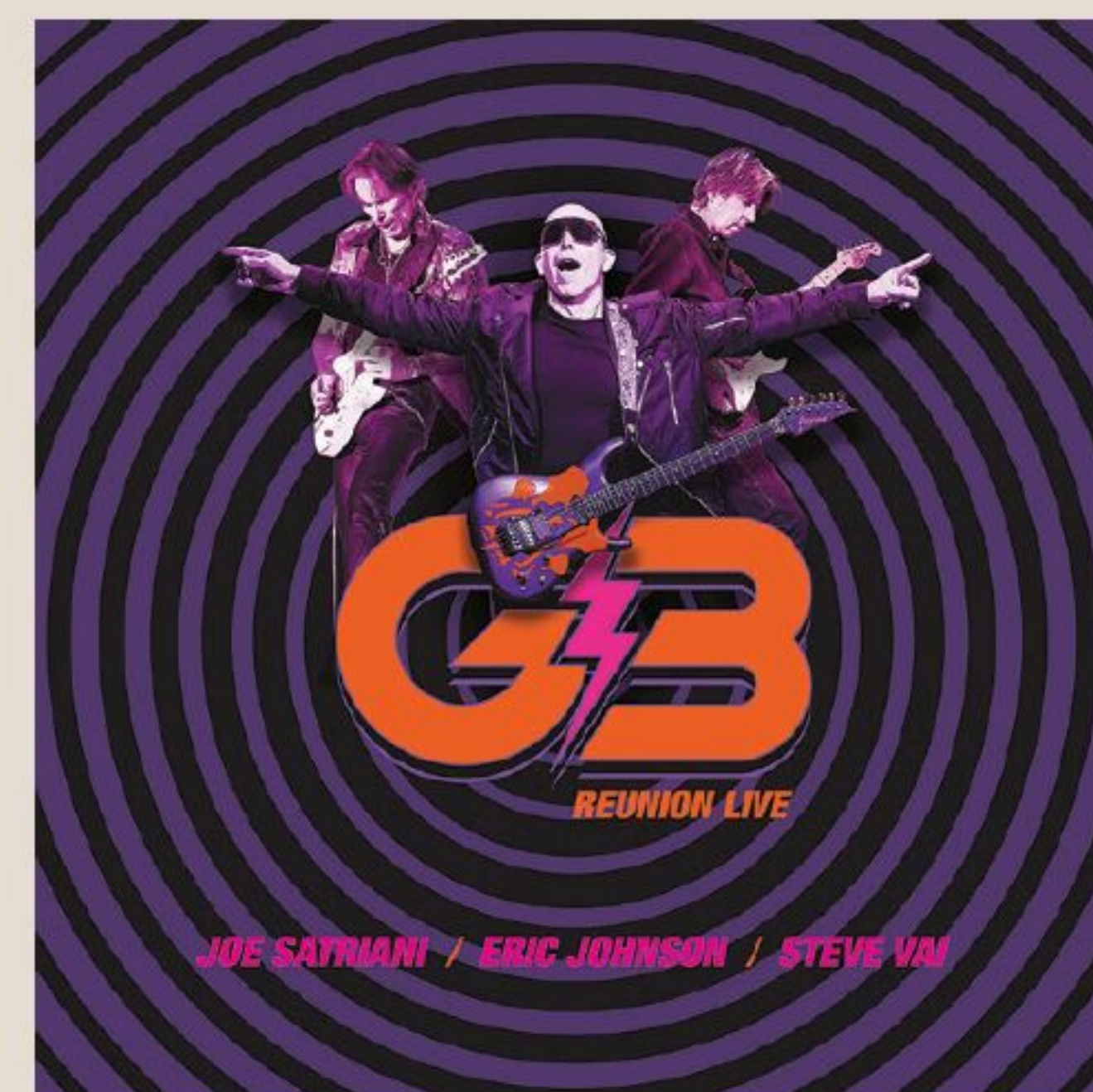
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G3 OGs – Joe Satriani and Steve Vai.

jam capture the energy and passion of the performances, packaged here as two CDs, a 16-page photo booklet, four LPs, and a 64-page coffee table book.

Set one features Steve Vai in all his mind-blowing glory, opening with “Gravitas” and “Avalancha.” Vai has never sounded better, wielding his mastery of the instrument, tones, and effects. His band is also a juggernaut. Eric Johnson realigns molecules in the second set with “Land of 1,000 Dances,” then performs the classics “Righteous,” “Desert Rose,” and “Trail of Tears,” dedicated to



Joe Satriani, Eric Johnson, Steve Vai G3 Reunion Live

Native Americans. Set three is full-on Satch opening with “Raspberry Jam Delta-V.” His mastery, polish, and ability to connect is stunning on “Big Bad Moon,” “Sahara,” and “Satch Boogie.”

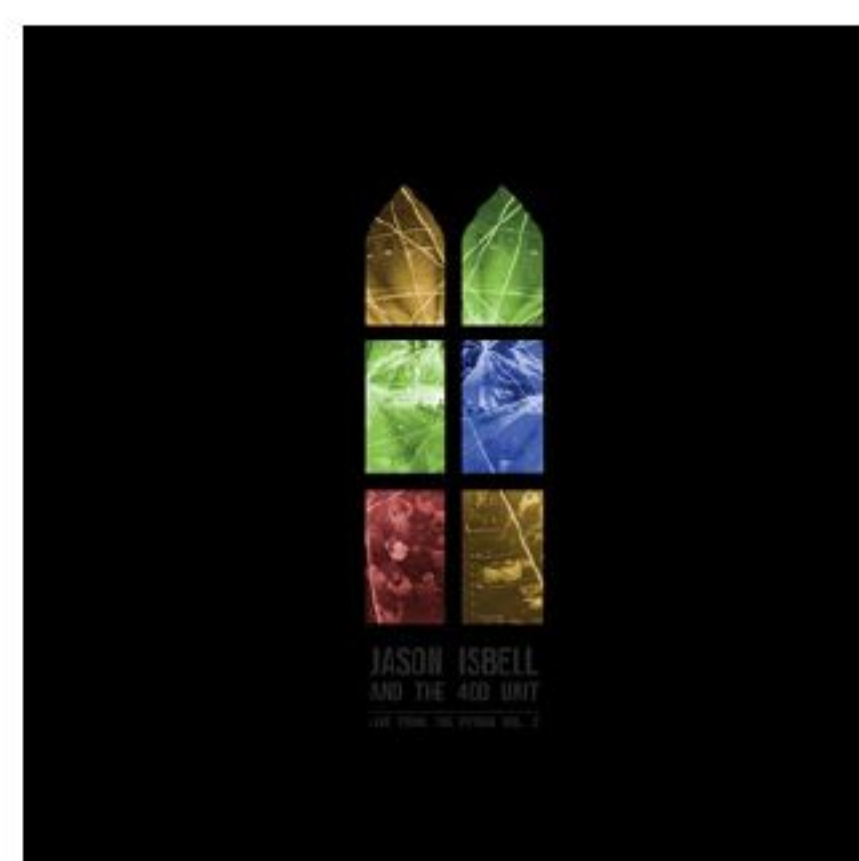
The encore jam unites the virtuosos trading bars and locking together on “Crossroads,” “Spanish Castle Magic,” and “Born To Be Wild.” *G3 Reunion Live* is wonderfully entertaining and the perfect remedy for any guitarist who’s ever been told to turn it down. – **Oscar Jordan**

TURN IT UP!

Recorded at the Orpheum Theatre in Los Angeles on their 2024 U.S. tour, *G3*

Reunion Live reunites the virtuosos who started it all. Three sets plus the encore

Dances,” then performs the classics “Righteous,” “Desert Rose,” and “Trail of Tears,” dedicated to



Jason Isbell & the 400 Unit Live From the Ryman, Vol. 2

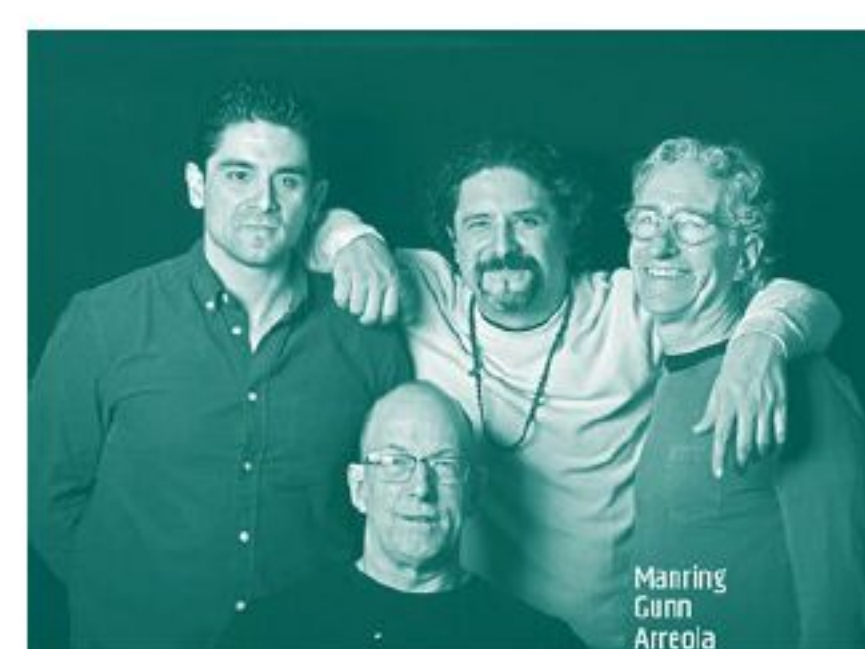
Nashville’s Ryman Auditorium is a special venue for Isbell & the 400 Unit. As their stature has grown beyond roots music, they’ve performed on that vaunted stage more than 50 times in the past decade and recorded a previous album there. This new collection reprises material from their most-recent albums, *Reunions* and *Weather Vanes*, with a couple of additions.

Vocals and songwriting skills aside, the former Drive-By Truckers is a first-rate guitarist, working alongside 400 Unit guitarists Sadler Vaden (VG, May ’20) and Will Johnson, supported by bassist Anna Butters. A compelling and emotional vocalist, Isbell, Vaden, and Johnson’s guitars flawlessly wrap around each tune with powerful, crashing chord work and subtler rhythm licks. The pair unfurl blistering,

feverish breaks on “King of Oklahoma,” the second exchange closing the song.

A reflective take on Tom Petty’s ballad “Room at the Top” begins with Isbell’s guitar before the entire band joins in. Vaden and Isbell swap leads at one point. Slamming rhythms from both kick off and drive “When We Were Close” the whole way through. Isbell’s steady acoustic launches the potent “Cast Iron Skillet.” On every performance, voice, lyrics, and guitars are in perfect sync.

– **Rich Kienzle**



3Below Live in Mérida

The members of 3Below mostly play in the bass clef. You may know names like fretless master Michael Manring (Michael Hedges) and “touch guitarist” Trey Gunn (King Crimson), but Mexican fusioner Alonso Arreola is

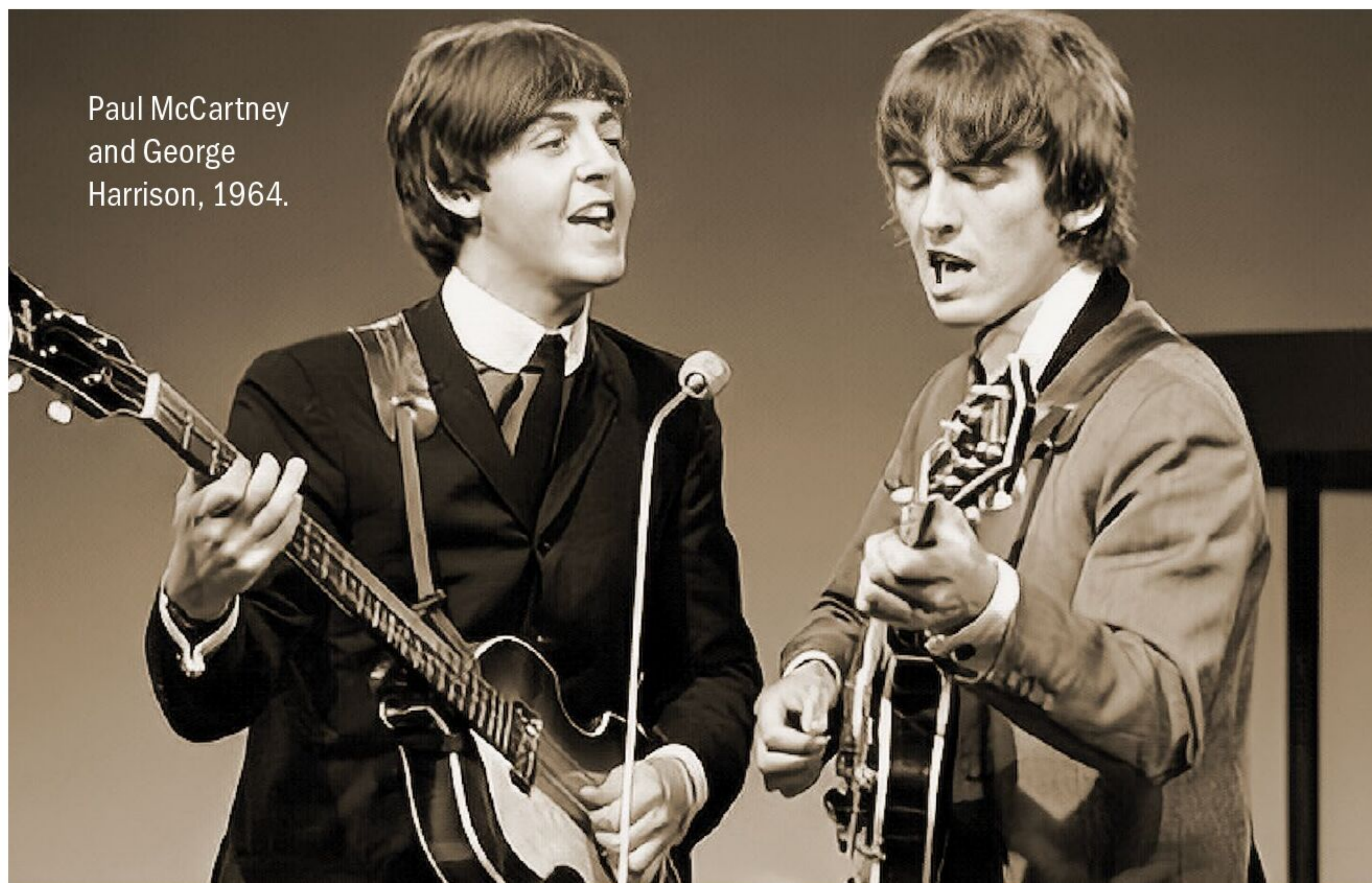
a wondrous addition. Together, they play world-inflected music rife with virtuosity, fresh sounds, and intoxicating results.

Accompanied by Emmanuel Pina on middle-eastern oud, 3Below frequently conjures music of sheer beauty. The first part of *Live in Mérida* has an accent on acoustic sounds, as on “Relamparia.” You can hear the King Crimson influence, with snaking bass/oud harmonies and off-kilter time signatures. Gunn’s rhythmic two-handed tapping kicks off “Hard Winds,” topped by Arreola’s slap and Manring’s fretless and fuzz-lead lines. All the players deploy effects pedals, adding to the expansive sonic stew.

Fully electrified, “Lake of Fire” has crazed pitch bends, harmonies, and riffs, à la Robert Fripp. Pina’s oud launches “Area” before the bassists dive in for wild tail-chasing. Also pay attention to Gunn’s use of a Warr Guitar (somewhat similar to a Chapman Stick) and Manring’s Zon HyperBass, with its ability to change tuning on the fly. These are sounds from the future of bass. – **Pete Prown**

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Paul McCartney and George Harrison, 1964.

A YEAR IN THEIR LIFE

By Dan Forte

Recently, I stumbled onto one of those “reaction” videos by a New Zealander named Courtney, who wasn’t sure if she’d ever seen footage of the Beatles or even heard their songs. This shouldn’t be surprising. The video she watches of the Fab Four, playing “All My Loving” on Ed Sullivan in 1964, was created probably 40 years before she was born. What shocked and disappointed me was that, while absolutely bug-eyed about the screaming girls, she says virtually nothing about the actual music.

Unfortunately, Martin Scorsese’s new *Beatles ’64* documentary also focuses more on the mania than the music. A better introduction, or revision, is *The Beatles: 1964 U.S. Albums In Mono* vinyl boxed set. The group released a whopping six albums on Capitol that year, with the sheer quantity outstripped by the genuine quality.

Most Beatles fans know that U.S. albums were configured differently from their English counterparts. I’ll not dwell on that, other than to point out that *Introducing The Beatles*, released on indie Vee-Jay in January ’64 was eventually repackaged by Capitol as *The Early Beatles*, included here. The box also has *Meet The Beatles*, *The Beatles’ Second Album*, the soundtrack to *A Hard Day’s Night*, *Something New*, and *Beatles ’65*. Four of them reached #1, and by that April, John

Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr (thereafter known by their first names) occupied the top five slots on the *Billboard* singles chart.

The fact that those six American albums were analog-cut from the original mono master tapes is extremely significant, because mono is how most people heard records back then. It’s how early Beatles albums were crafted; stereo versions were an afterthought with vocals clumsily panned hard to one side.

Covers of American material constituted half of *Introducing/Early*, though “Please Please Me” was Lennon-McCartney’s first chart-topper in the U.K. George’s first songwriting contribution, “Don’t Bother Me” (on *Meet*), is a simple song but has some very cool guitar parts and a 10-second solo rave. And while you’d think “Till There Was You” (from the Broadway musical *The Music Man*) would be corny, George’s jazzy gut-string solo makes it a keeper.

Harrison wasted no time employing the electric 12-string that Rickenbacker gifted him during their first tour of the States. John carves up an aggressive solo on “You Can’t Do That,” though George came up with the opening and closing riff. Then there’s “A Hard Day’s Night,” with its huge opening chord that baffled musicologists for decades. In a 1984 press conference, George

explained, “It’s an F with a G on the first string, with the little finger. Sounds better on the 12-string.” More specifically, it’s an Fadd9, to which was added John’s acoustic, producer George Martin’s piano, and Paul playing a D on bass.

While much has been made of the feedback that opens “I Feel Fine,” John and George played the opening lines together, on a Gibson J-160 and Gretsch Tennessean, respectively. On the Carl Perkins covers “Honey Don’t” and “Everybody’s Trying To Be My Baby,” George pays homage to his idol with some rockabilly licks.

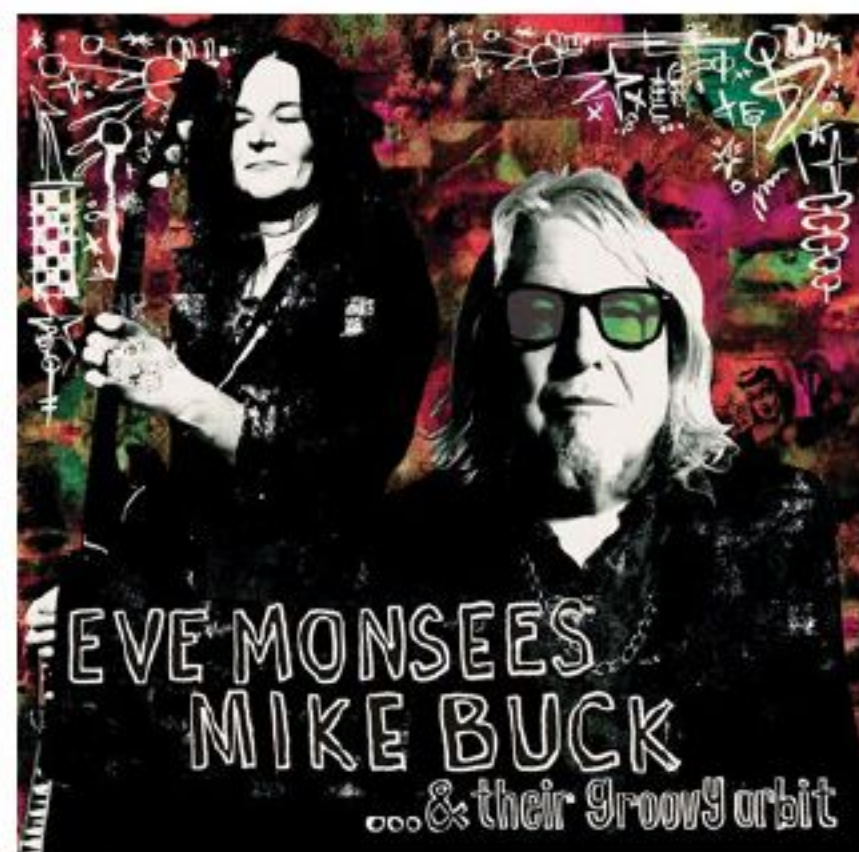
When I interviewed George in ’87, he said, “I’m not trying to put myself down, but the reality is I’m okay. I mean, I’ve sat with people who are just learning the guitar and showed them some chords and a few things – and I realized I do know quite a lot about guitar; I’ve absorbed quite a lot over the years. But I’ve never really felt like I was a proper guitar player. You see all these guys with their chops together, with charts showing how they did it. In the sense of being a guitarist who works and plays, and who could just pop in on anybody’s session and come up with the goods, I’m not that kind of player. I’m just a jungle musician, really.”

I have to disagree. Considering the Beatles’ stylistic range, most bands today would need a half-dozen session guitarists to deliver the way he did. People get snobbish over worked-out solos, but George’s ability to come up with hooks was uncanny. The four-note intro to “And I Love Her” is classic, as is his solo – obviously worked out. Just two years later, with *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, the world’s most commercial band became one of its most experimental.

Scorsese’s film has its moments, but I’d recommend the 2017 documentary *How The Beatles Changed The World*. The title may be overblown, but musically, it’s inarguable. Dylan wouldn’t have gone electric when he did. The Byrds were formed after folkies Roger McGuinn and David Crosby saw *A Hard Day’s Night*. No telling how many bands sprang up in their wake. To date, has anyone exerted influence remotely comparable?

Meanwhile, *Billboard* has declared Beyoncé “Pop Star of the 21st Century” – yes, *century*. I’ve got to wonder if there will be a reaction video in 50 years, after a 20-something checks out an oldie like “Texas Hold ’Em.”

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Eve Monsees and Mike Buck & Their Groovy Orbit

This is not a solo album as much as an anthology of Austin artists and styles – from blues to country to '60s garage and psych, demonstrating the versatility of singer/guitarist Monsees (Eve & the Exiles, Blue Bonnets) and her husband, drummer Buck (LeRoi Brothers), as producers/organizers.

The tracks span three years, but the names encompass decades, from stalwarts such as Lou Ann Barton, Steve Doerr, and Speedy Sparks to current scenesters Joe Emery (Ugly Beats) and Mike's daughter, Billie Buck (Sailor Poon).

Guitarist John X. Reed, a veteran of Freda and the Firedogs and Doug Sahm, provides honky-tonk, while Derek O'Brien gets bluesy on "Sonny Boy" with Hook Herrera.

"Jukebox Songs" acknowledges a Louisiana connection, courtesy Tommy McLain and six-stringer C.C. Adcock. Bluesmaster Omar Dyke singing "Purple Haze" wouldn't occur to most, but somehow it makes perfect sense.

Buck is as close to a legend as any Texas drummer, and Monsees, recently onstage with high-school classmate Gary Clark, Jr., excels, be it the blues of Sunnyland Slim's "Highway 61," the 13th Floor Elevators' "Tried To Hide," or slide on her NOLA-tinged original "Alleyway." It all amounts to a 40-minute chamber of commerce. – **Dan Forte**



Thin Lizzy The Acoustic Sessions

Thin Lizzy's first studio release in decades, this album reimagines tracks recorded 50+ years ago by the trio of vocalist/bassist Phil Lynott, guitarist Eric Bell, and drummer Brian Downey. The songs are from Lizzy's first three albums – 1971's *Thin Lizzy*, '72's *Shades of a Blue Orphanage*, and '73's *Vagabonds of the Western World*. Recently, Bell overdubbed fresh acoustic – and electric – parts, making the album's title not entirely accurate; his updated playing is combined with Lynott's and Downey's original parts.

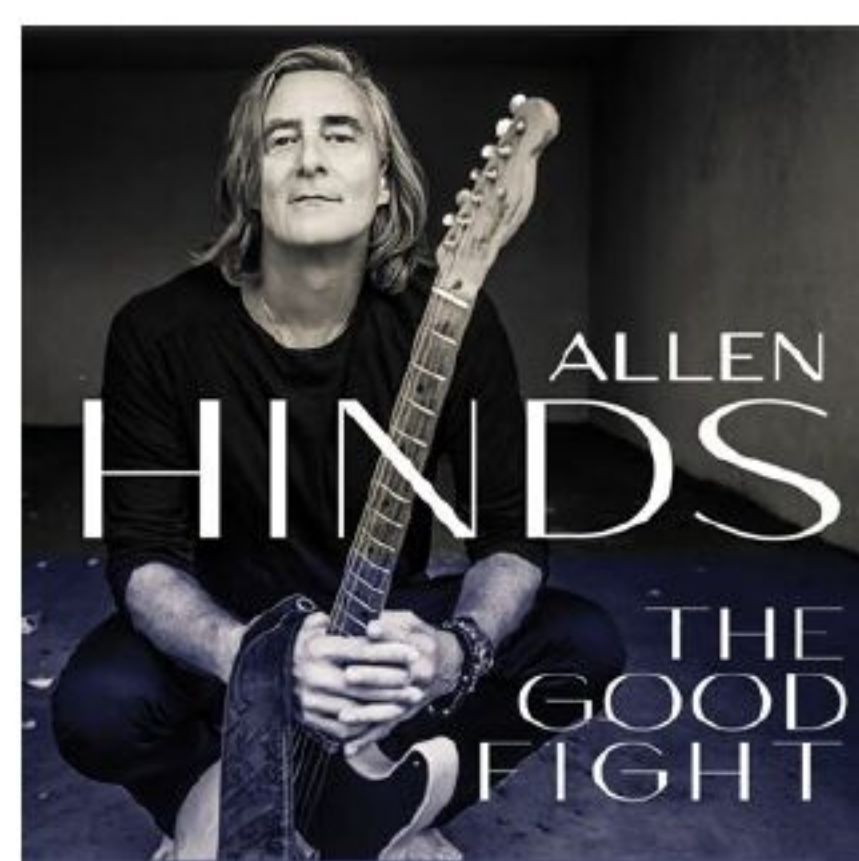
The haunting "Eire" and "Dublin" include Bell's relaxed strumming and fluid solos. His acoustic lays bare the tragic Irish folk song "Whiskey in the Jar," although the



Allen Hinds

electric version with Bell's Strat is superior. An excellent bonus track, "Slow Blues E.B." is a tribute to Gary Moore, who had several stints in Lizzy ('74, '78-'79). Cosmic electric fills, moody piano, and the gutsy solo charge the song.

These stripped-down songs, which sound a bit like songwriting/demo sessions, show the Dublin trio's steady growth. Interesting moments are scattered throughout, but *The Acoustic Sessions* will appeal mostly to Lizzy completists. Still, the wildly influential band remains eons ahead of its time. – **Bret Adams**



Allen Hinds The Good Fight

The latest from the Lord of Legato features compositions that blur the line between prog, fusion, and Americana. From the majestic to the bucolic, Hines leaves it all in the ring with epic tunes and sophisticated arrangements that grip the soul, the heart, and the mind. While songs like "Fearless" showcase his writing, use of wah, and superb legato phrasing, other compositions like "Tempest In A Teapot," "Slither," and the whimsical "Webster's Lake" display the most vocal-like slide guitar chops this side of Sonny Landreth.

The Good Fight has something for everybody. On the caffeinated "Blithe Spirit," Hines combines pop and fusion with a killer display of bop-rock phrases over syncopated grooves, provocative chord progressions, and stimulating musical motifs. He whips out the



B.B. King

acoustic on "Go Quietly," displaying artful lines and excellent use of chord melody. Lush harmonics dovetail into rich bass pads and tasteful slide-guitar ornamentation.

On the hallucinogenically ethereal "Safe Passage," acoustic passages merge with synth and ambient guitar lines played with slide guitar and creative use of delay. Brain cells are altered forever on this cut with Hines manipulating his guitar's effects like a shaman. *The Good Fight* has inspired playing from top to bottom. – **OJ**



B.B. King In France

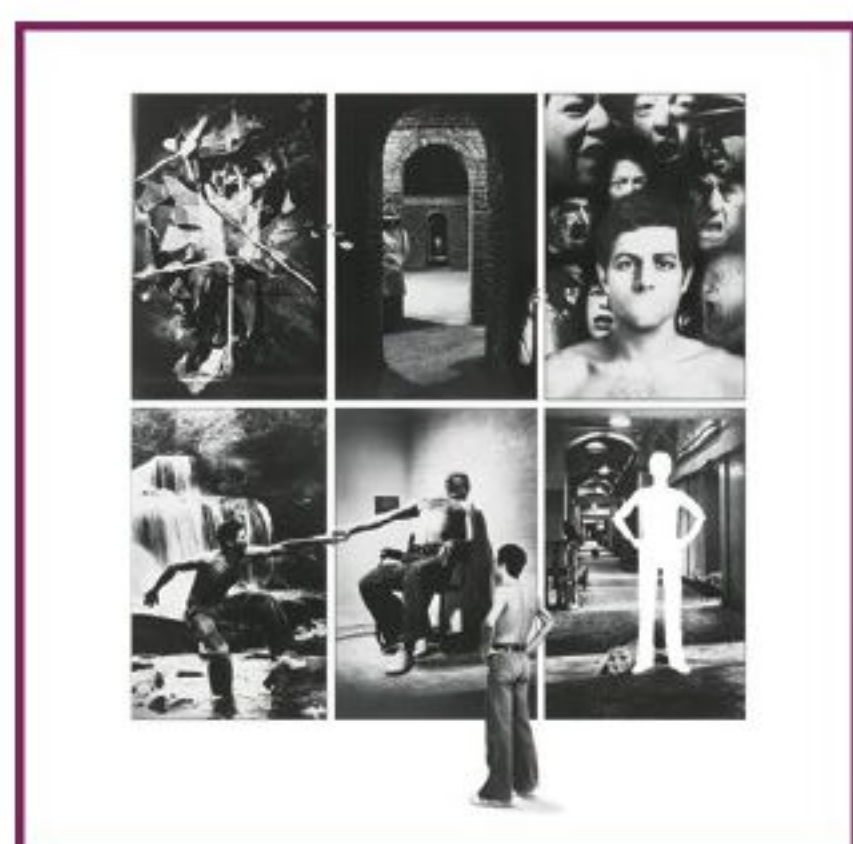
By 1977, when this French live album was recorded at the Nancy Jazz Pulsations Festival, the "King of the Blues" had truly crossed over. He'd played Fillmores West and East and won a Grammy in 1970 for "The Thrill Is Gone." In typical major-label fashion, subsequent albums saw him surrounded by rock stars and studio musicians, from L.A. to Philly to London, the mix often overpowering his guitar, its famous fat tone rendered flaccid.

They were a far cry from his killer concert LPs in the '60s, like *Live At The Regal* and *Blues Is King*, backed by his road band. Here, he fronts an eight-piece band that includes longtime side men James Toney on organ and Milton Hopkins on rhythm guitar. Like his vocals, King's guitar tone ranges from sweet to growling, with instantly recognizable vibrato and sweeping bends.



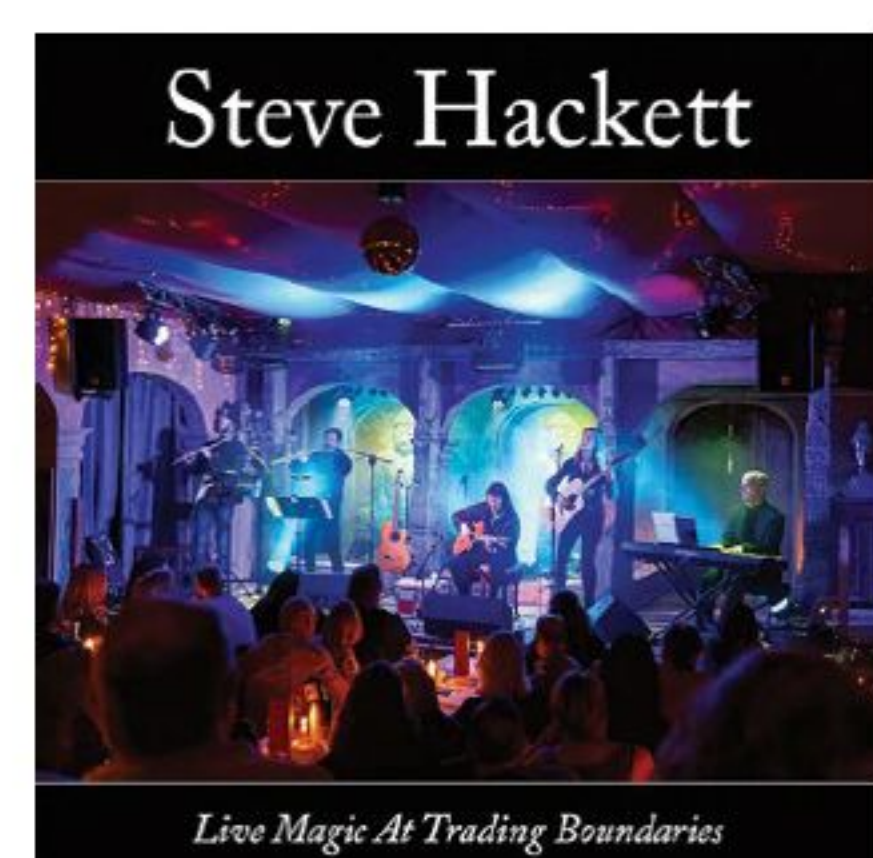
Genesis on "The Lamb" tour, 1974; Mike Rutherford (left), Peter Gabriel, and Phil Collins.

B.B. was adept at ballads, and he delivers an admirable version of Brook Benton's "It's Just A Matter Of Time." The repertoire also features standard fare that never grows old, such as "Sweet Little Angel," "Caldonia," "Sweet Sixteen," "I Got Some Outside Help (I Don't Really Need)," and, of course, "The Thrill is Gone," each extended to the delight of guitar fans. – **DF**



Genesis/Steve Hackett Lamb Lies Down on Broadway 50th/ Live Magic at Trading Boundaries

One of those double-LP masterpieces of the '70s, *The Lamb* was Peter Gabriel's final achievement with Genesis, quitting immediately after the 1975 tour. The music (remastered here and also available in ATMOS and HD formats) remains brilliant – a rock opera featuring Tony Banks' keyboards, Steve Hackett's haunting guitar, and both bass and electric 12-string from Mike Rutherford. A live tape from Los Angeles appears again, now with the encore of "The Musical Box" and "Watcher of the Skies" – both Hackett sizzlers. Listen for backing vocals from a largely unknown drummer named Phil Collins.



Steve Hackett

Live Magic At Trading Boundaries

Hackett is also celebrating the 50th anniversary of his solo career, starting with this acoustic live album. Trading Boundaries is a small venue in Sussex where he regularly plays with smaller, more-intimate ensembles. This album showcases his classical-guitar side, along with keys, flute, sax, and another acoustic guitarist. Cue up "Jacuzzi" to hear his deep finger-style and compositional gifts – the man could certainly write film-soundtrack music. He further tackles his classical-guitar repertoire with Genesis, including the bittersweet "Blood on the Rooftops," "Horizons," and "Supper's Ready." It's hard not to be impressed by Steve Hackett's almost-infinite range of guitar wizardry. – **PP VG**

extra. EXTRA



TAB BENOIT *I Hear Thunder*

Unholy Telecaster tones are just the tip of the iceberg on Benoit's first album in 13 years. *I Hear Thunder* is the sound of a Louisiana blues man unleashed from the shackles of corporate music committees and paint-by-numbers technology. Masculine blues-rock ditties like "Inner Child," "Why, Why," and the title track feature gut-wrenching passion and Tab's serious blues guitar chops. – **OJ**



MOBY GRAIL *Moby Grail*

Bassist Jonathan Feuerstein, guitarist Thor Fields, and drummer Jonathan Abrams comprise one of the most-original instrumental bands since the Raybeats. On the single-chord "Scattergun," the New Yorkers sound like *Revolver*-era Beatles mixed with James Brown. Fields' crunchy rhythm on "Page II" would do Malcolm Young proud, but "Revival" shows he's also capable of Santana-esque melodicism. – **DF**



WHIP Vol. 1

Queensrÿche guitarist Michael Wilton steps away from his trademark progressive-metal sound to play modern rock without the barrage of guitar monotony. Walls of power chords, subtle melodies, and crafted riffs and solos thrive; Mark Winterman's solid vocals help. "Get Away" and "Glitch in Time" have hooky riffs, while "Toxic Girl" is slower yet catchy. Surprisingly, "Wasted Time" is thundering metal. – **BA**



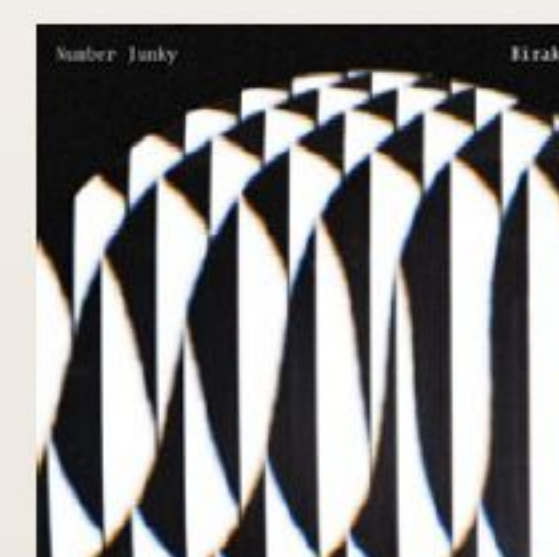
JAMEY JOHNSON *Midnight Gasoline*

Johnson's first album since 2011 is a spare, intimate reflection on his struggles with sobriety. Graceful acoustic, flawless amplified guitar, and steel frame his powerful, twangy vocals. The blend is particularly impressive on the pensive "Someday When I'm Old," "Sober," and "No Time like the Past." A powerful arrangement blending amplified guitars, trumpet and sax enhances the surging "Trudy." – **RK**



DAVID VEST & TERRY ROBB *CrissCross*

From the Pacific Northwest comes a bluesy set of original guitar-and-piano duets. The versatile Robb, known for his productions of John Fahey and Curtis Salgado, displays powerful slide work on "Drive 'em on Down." The instrumental "Good News" spotlights his ragtime picking à la Reverend Gary Davis, while the moody instrumentals "Mooresville" and "Natural Facts" feature passionate single-note soloing. – **DF**



NUMBER JUNKY *Birak*

Led by guitarist Kristian Borring, this jazz trio creates original material showcasing his low-keyed, lyrical harmonic stylings beyond the usual bebop or fusion roots. Kristian's deft interplay with guest saxophonist Will Vinson is particularly impressive on "Straight South" and "Into the Night." Borring explores "Basel Return" and "Pop Queen" with only his rhythm section. It's complex, yet always highly accessible. – **RK**

✓ VG APPROVED GEAR



DUAL-MODE DELIVERY

The Mesa/Boogie Mark IIC+ Reissue

The evolution of Randall Smith's legendary high-gain Mesa/Boogie design into the revered Mark IIC+ of the mid '80s established a rock amp that many guitarists still consider the epitome of the form. Building on what was already a high-gain amp by the standards of the day, the M/B team piled on even more gain, more high-end sizzle, and a tighter low end, and lit a fire under the tone-obsessed backsides of many heavy rockers in the process. Well-known from the playing of John Petrucci, Joe Satriani, Steve Lukather, both Kirk Hammett and James Hetfield from Metallica (who had theirs further modified to "C++" status) and others, original examples have become the priciest and most-collectible of vintage Boogies – setting the stage for a much-welcomed reissue like this.

Billed as an authentic re-creation, the hand-wired Mark IIC+ is a compact head that puts out 75 watts in Simul-Class or 25 watts in Class-A mode from its four 6L6GC output tubes, with five 12AX7s in the front end. Controls including Volume 1, Treble, Bass, Middle, Master 1, Lead Drive, and Lead Master – with bonus push/pull functions tied to many of them. Also familiar to any fan of the earlier Mark models are features like footswitchable five-band graphic EQ, rear-panel Reverb and Presence controls, and Slave Out with level knob.

Tested with an ES-355 and Telecaster into 1x12" and 2x12" cabs, the Mark IIC+ proved a fast track to the hallowed Cali high-gain tones of the '80s and '90s, and a lot of fun no matter how it was dialed in. There will be naysayers, and of course many of the components used to build the originals 40 years ago are no longer available, but this reissue offers an impressively authentic dose of the IIC+ magic, delivering everything you could hope for in juicy, saturated, singing, and endlessly sustaining lead tones.

No matter the builder or model, the latest version of 40-year-old amp design will sound a little different, but ultimately the new Mark IIC+ is a fitting tribute to the classic. And, lest we forget, its rich, clean rhythm tones are extremely good, as well – largely in the "big Fender" camp – and round out a package that offers most anything a rock-leaning player could need from a dual-mode amp. – **Dave Hunter**

Price: \$3,599
www.mesaboogie.com



Price: \$219.99
www.boss.info

DOUBLE ECHO

The Boss SDE-3 Dual Digital Delay

Based on the famed Roland SDE-3000 rack unit, Boss' SDE-3 combines some classic delay sounds of the 1980s, updated with a bevy of modern tricks and features. Like a lot of delays, it can be run in mono, but you'll get the biggest bang going in stereo to different amps or outputs.

The core of the unit is the Offset knob, which sends separate echo times and layers them into a sonic sandwich for supremely lush effects. If you've always wondered about the secret of The Edge's massive chords and arpeggios, the SDE-3's Offset can give you those sounds in a blink. Another bonus is a chorus/modulation circuit that gives Depth, Rate, and Hi Cut controls via the unit's concentric outer knobs. Naturally, there's tap tempo (controllable by foot, an external expression pedal, or MIDI), as well as eighth and dotted-eighth settings for that David Gilmour vibe. On the back of the unit, look for a Carryover On/Off switch, which can yield a natural tail decay when you turn the SDE-3 off, or more of a sudden chop.

These are just the tip of the iceberg, but the SDE-3 is a vast, powerful delay in that familiar Boss format, weaving in '80s sounds, two simultaneous delays (the offset), chorus, tremolo, dual-amp panning and far more. – **Pete Prown**

SLIDE PIECE

The Eastwood MRG Lap Steel

Now more than 90 years old, the lap steel was the earliest example of an electric guitar and remains a stringed instrument every guitarist should try, largely because it's so accessible. In fact, a lap steel is about as straightforward as you can get – it's a plank that sits on your lap and is fitted with a bridge, nut, tuners, and pickup. All you need is your slide of choice.

Eastwood's MRG has a solid mahogany body/neck slab, rosewood fretboard with block markers, and a scale length of 22.5". The bridge is an adjustable hardtail, while the tuners are chrome and side-mounted. It's finished with a black-to-amber sunburst and a translucent-gold pickguard. The sole pickup is a Höfner-style staple humbucker, accompanied by Volume and T knobs. Like most laps, it's the quintessence of simplicity.

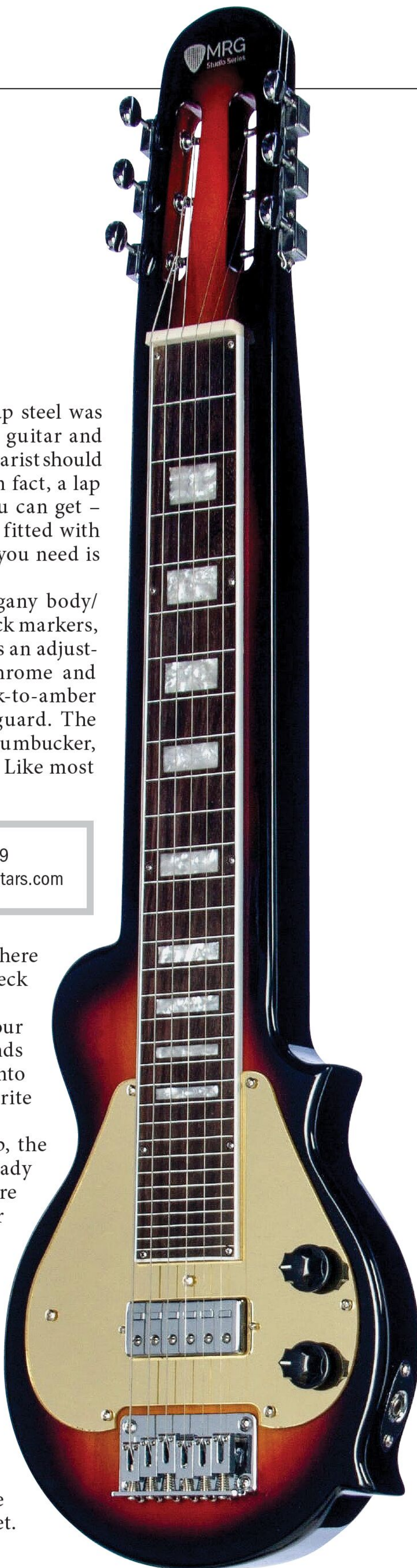
Out of the gig bag, the MRG is ready to play, though oddly set up with light-gauge strings; most sliders will put a medium or heavy set on there ASAP, as preferred for most bottleneck playing.

Next, twist those machine heads to your tuning of choice; Eastwood recommends C6 (such as C-E-G-A-C-E), but also dig into open E, D, or G, standard, or your favorite chord combination.

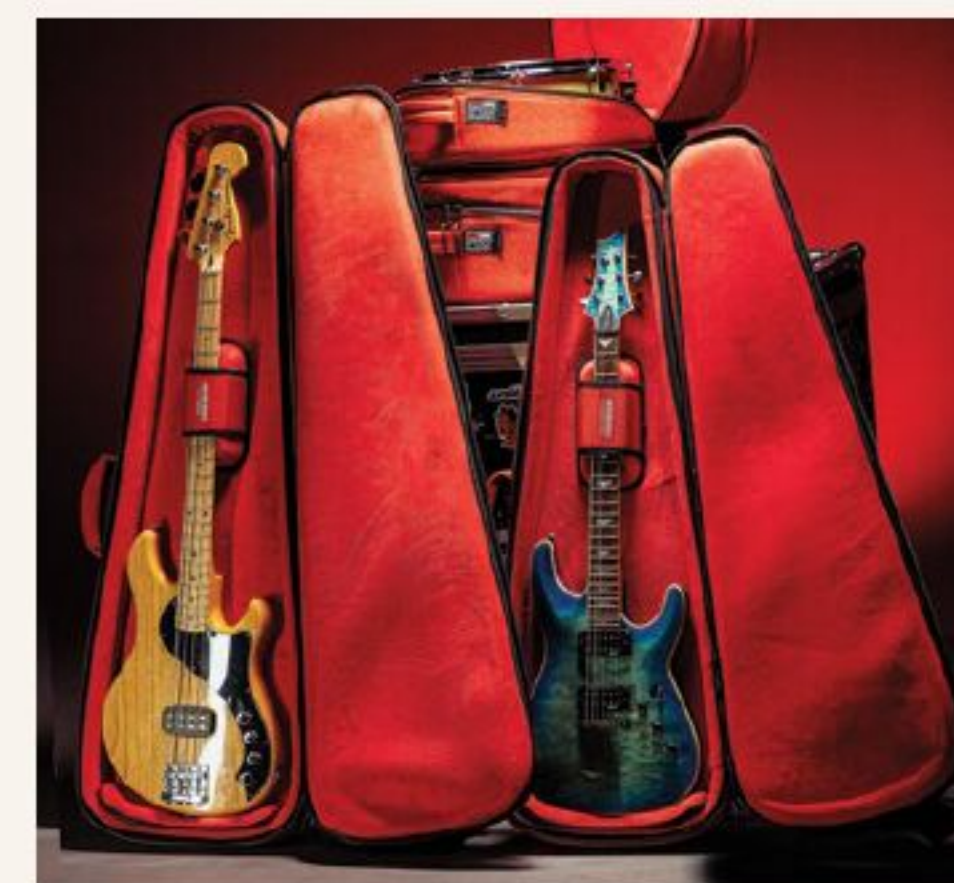
Going into a solidstate practice amp, the MRG sang like a bird. Lap-steelers already know to palm-mute strings, but if you're new to the game, hold the slide under your thumb, index, and middle fingers and mute with your ring finger and pinky. The humbucker keeps things nicely quiet, and rolling back the Tone knob a hair lets the Eastwood's natural tone shine forth. The MRG effortlessly delivers sonic textures from David Lindley to David Gilmour, ready to complement a vocalist with fills or add a searing solo.

With a solid build, mandolin-influenced looks, and killer tone, the MRG Lap Steel is also easy on the wallet. Definitely worth a run. – **Pete Prown**

Price: \$499
www.eastwoodguitars.com



GEARIN' UP



GATOR ICON 25TH ANNIVERSARY GIG BAGS

Gator's Icon Series 25th Anniversary gig bags for electric guitar and bass have semi-rigid construction, accessory pockets, reinforced handles, and adjustable backpack straps. The padded red lining protects the instrument, while removable foam blocks and an adjustable neck cradle secure it during movement.



REVEREND BOB BALCH FLOYD

Reverend Guitars' Bob Balch Floyd has a korina body with beveled edges, three-piece korina neck, rosewood fretboard with 12" radius, and Railhammer Bob Balch signature pickups. Its tailpiece is a Floyd Rose 1000 Series Pro vibrato, which the company says enhances the sparkle and harmonic richness.



VOLA GODET, DANIEL SIGNATURE MODELS

Vola Guitars' seven-string Quentin Godet and Pierre Daniel signature models have alder bodies, bolt-on maple necks with contoured heel, maple fretboards with medium jumbo stainless frets, 27" scale, and Bare Knuckle pickups. Controls include push/pull Volume, Tone, five-way selector, mini switch to tap pickups for series/parallel, Gotoh vibrato, and Gotoh locking tuners.

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

PLAYPEN POWER

Orange's Dual Baby, Gain Baby, and Tour Baby 100

For 2025, Orange has expanded on its compact Pedal Baby introduced a few years back with a new trio – the Dual Baby, Gain Baby, and Tour Baby. All 100-watt amps with solid-state Class A/B output stages, Jfet preamp stages (another form of solid-state), and two footswitchable channels, they're housed in 12" x 3.25" x 7.5" metal boxes and weigh a little under eight pounds. While offering individual *modus operandi*, they share several features – buffered effects loop, dual speaker outs, and XLR DI out.

The Dual Baby 100's two channels each carry controls for Gain, Volume, Presence, Bass, Middle, and Treble. Channel A – voiced to emulate the Orange Rockerverb

– adds a Tubby switch to boost lows, while Channel B – voiced for gritty clean-to-crunch tones – has a Tight switch to liven its sound at lower gain levels. Split into a more classic rhythm/lead dichotomy, the Gain Baby 100 has a simpler Clean channel with just Volume, Bass, and Treble, and Comp, tapping a built-in VCA compressor. Its Dirty channel piles on Gain, Volume, Presence, Bass, Middle, and Treble, plus FS Volume (footswitchable for a second output level/solo), and Tight switch. The Tour Baby 100 carries the exact same controls in its Clean and Dirty channels, minus the Tight switch, though it's voiced to more-classic overdrive tones versus the contemporary high-gain of the Gain Baby. Tested with an ES-355 and Telecaster into 1x12" and 2x12" cabs, each revealed some overlap in sonics, but with several distinct personality traits. We ultimately preferred the Gain Baby overall, with the Tour Baby a close second. The pair's similar Clean channels benefit immensely from the built-in Comp,

which adds swell, depth, and dynamics to the Dual's otherwise rather linear and solid-state-sounding Channel A. And while the Gain's Dirty Channel dishes out sizzle and saturation aplenty with Tight engaged, its up position delivered an expressive, full-bodied overdrive with typically mid-rich Orange leanings that yielded our favorite playing tones of the entire trio, with Tour Baby's Dirty (Tight up) a close second.

Ultimately, there's a lot to like in each. And while they might not knock more-exalted all-tube models off their perch, the Baby range represents a big bundle of power and tone at a reasonable price. – **Dave Hunter**

Price: \$599 (each)
www.orangeamps.com



ICON IN REACH

Soldano's SLO Plus Super Lead Overdrive

If the iconic Soldano SLO-100 is perpetually on your wishlist but its price tag keeps you from pulling the trigger, its creator now has a realistic alternative.

Expanding on the original single-channel SLO Overdrive pedal, the SLO Plus introduces a Normal channel alongside Overdrive, each with dedicated controls that allow for detailed tweaking of Preamp gain and Master output. Tone-shaping is courtesy of shared three-band EQ, Presence, and a side-mounted Deep switch for shaping low-end.

The pedal has a durable metal housing, tactile control knobs, heavy-duty foot switches, LED indicators, and a 9-volt jack. It's dressed with clean graphics and labeling, neatly organized internal components, and professional build quality.

Running a Les Paul through a boutique

amp with 6V6s and the Plus set to edge-of-breakup tone produced the thick, sustaining overdrive for which the SLO-100 is known. With the Overdrive channel's Preamp (gain) cranked, you're rewarded with creamy, saturated overdrive that oozes sustain and harmonics; the Normal channel provides a rich, aggressive crunch perfect for rhythm tones or bluesy leads when its Preamp knob is backed down a touch. Switching to a Telecaster yielded sharp, cutting distortion on the Normal channel and a saturated-but-articulate distortion through Overdrive. Adjusting the EQ and Deep switch tailored the pedal's tone for the Telecaster's brightness or the Les Paul's darker sounds.

The Plus responds well to picking dynamics and cleaned up nicely when rolling off the guitar's Volume knob. Channel and bypass switching make it ideal for live gigs and the studio.



Powerful and compact, the SLO Plus delivers usable, smooth, classic crunch or high-gain monster tone, bringing some of the experience of a legendary amp right to your pedalboard. – **Charlie Wilkins**

Price: \$269.99
www.soldano.com

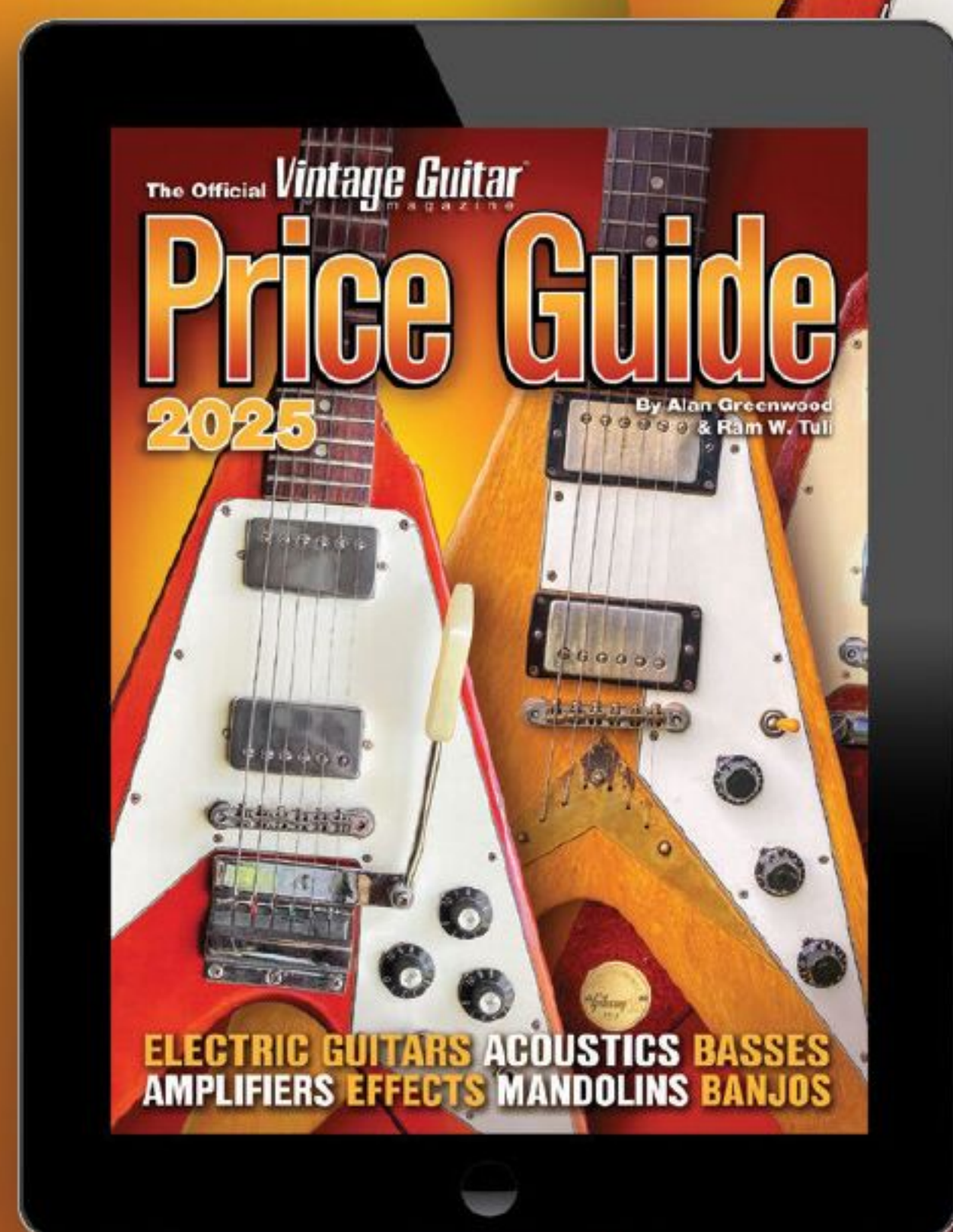
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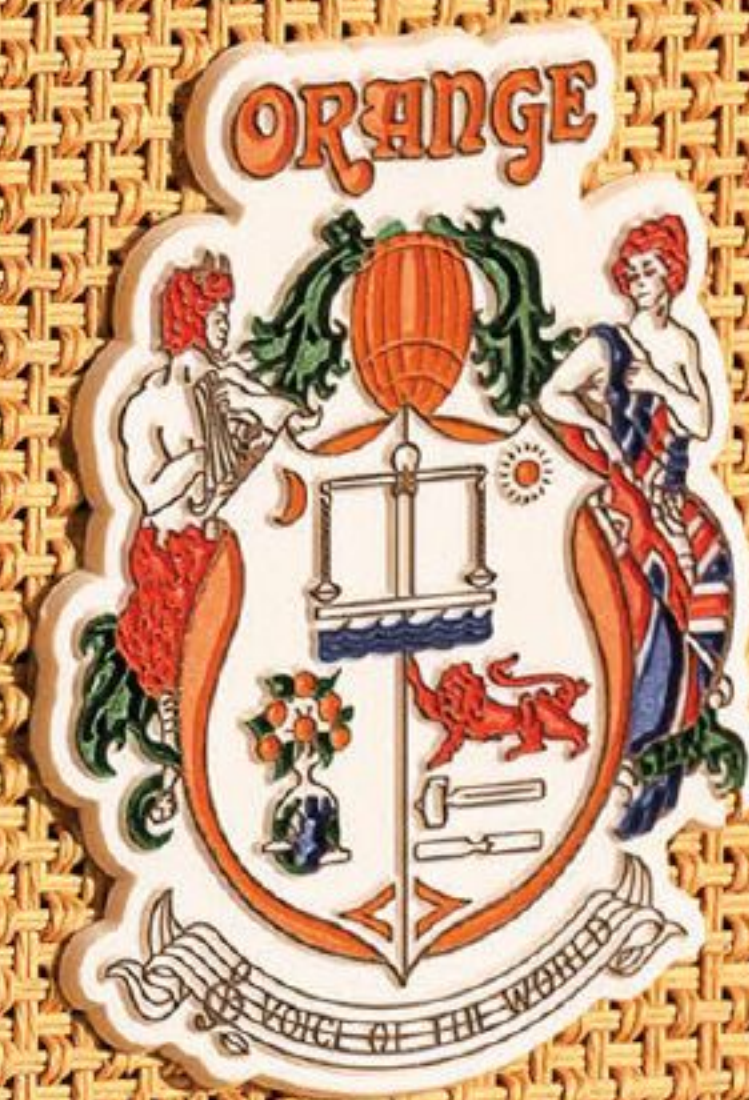
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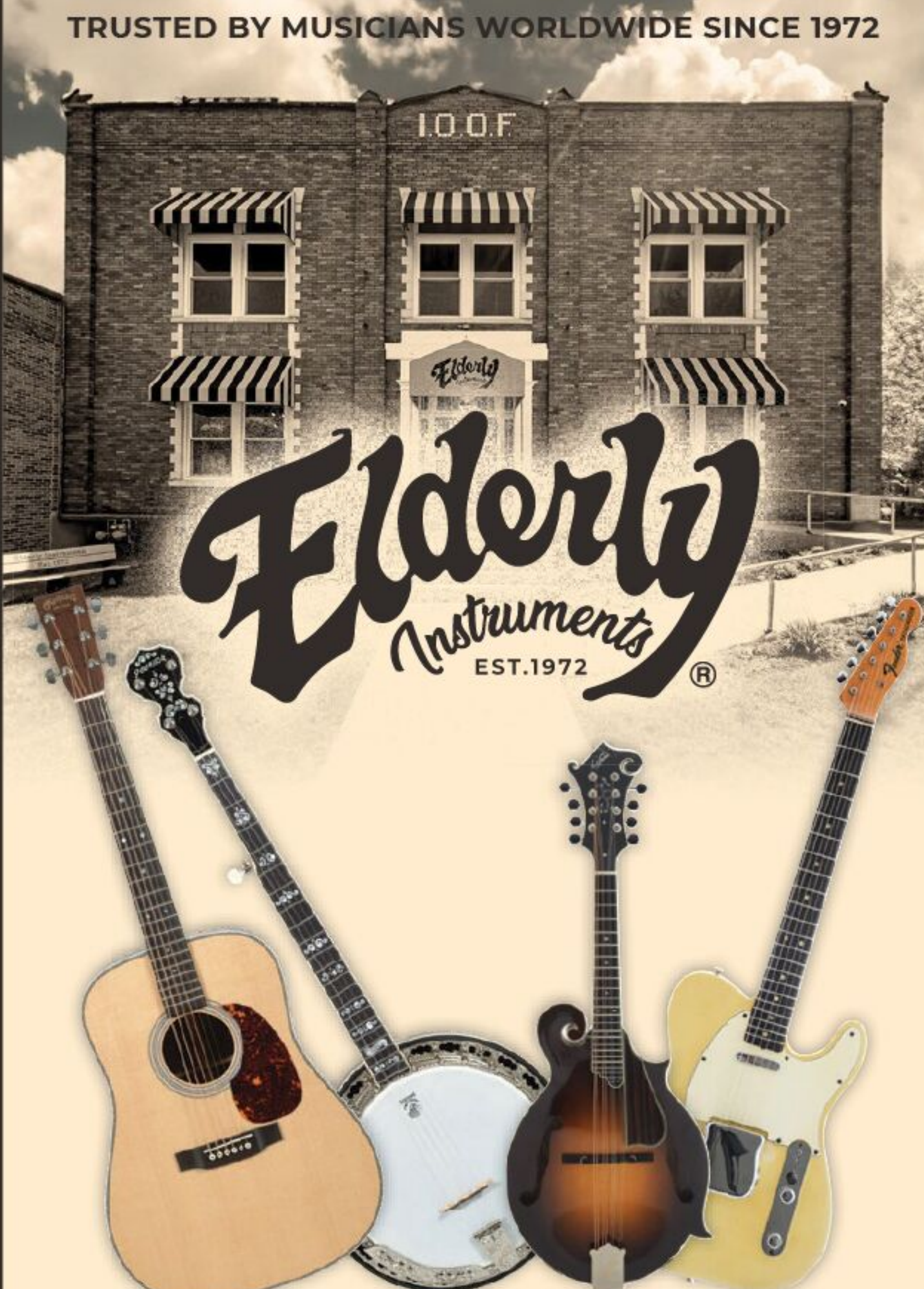


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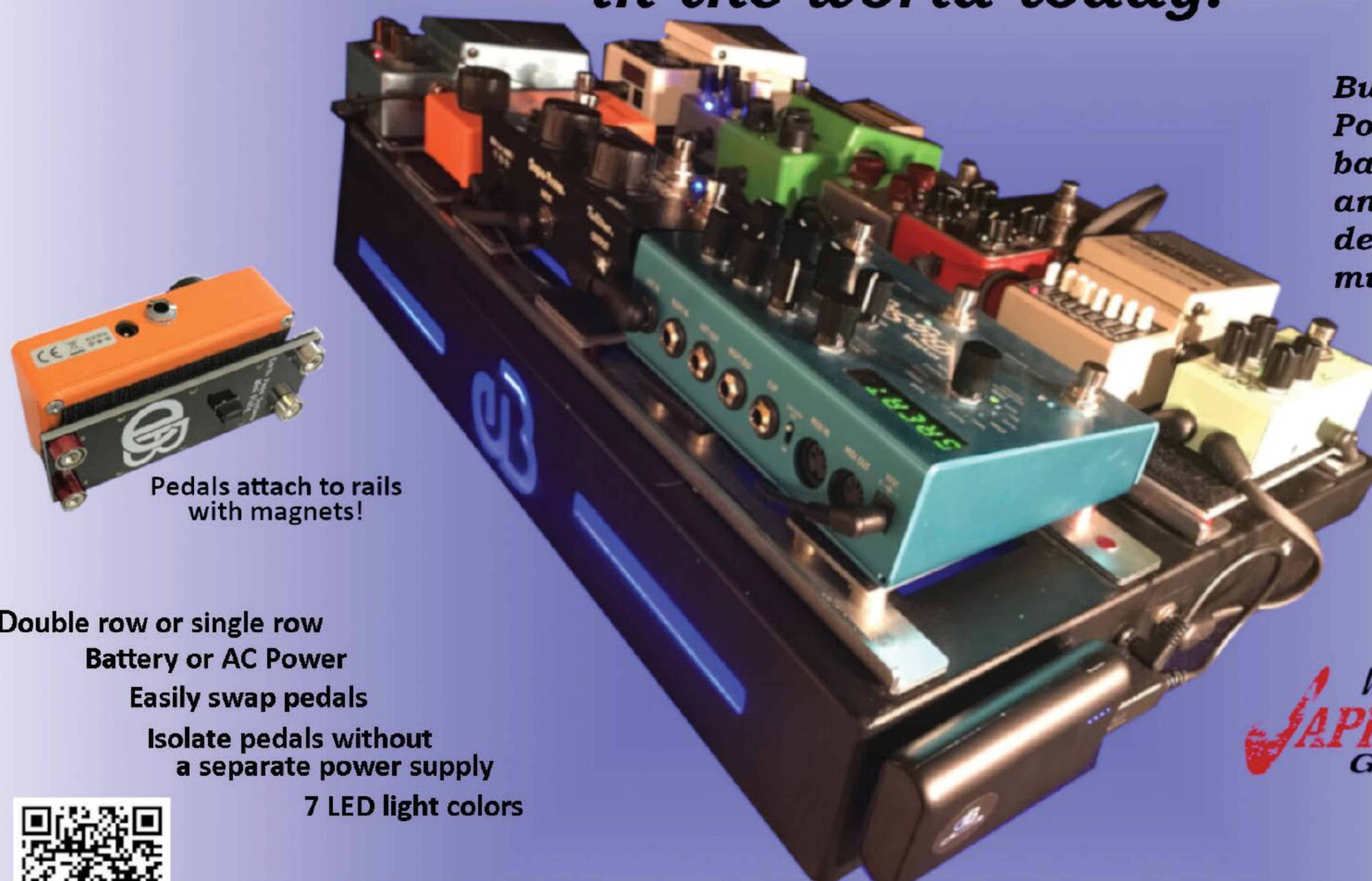


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01 The Rickenbacker region of Fred Stevens' collection includes this '77 4001, '92 620, '75 360/12 (24-fret), and a '98 360/12 V-64 reissue.

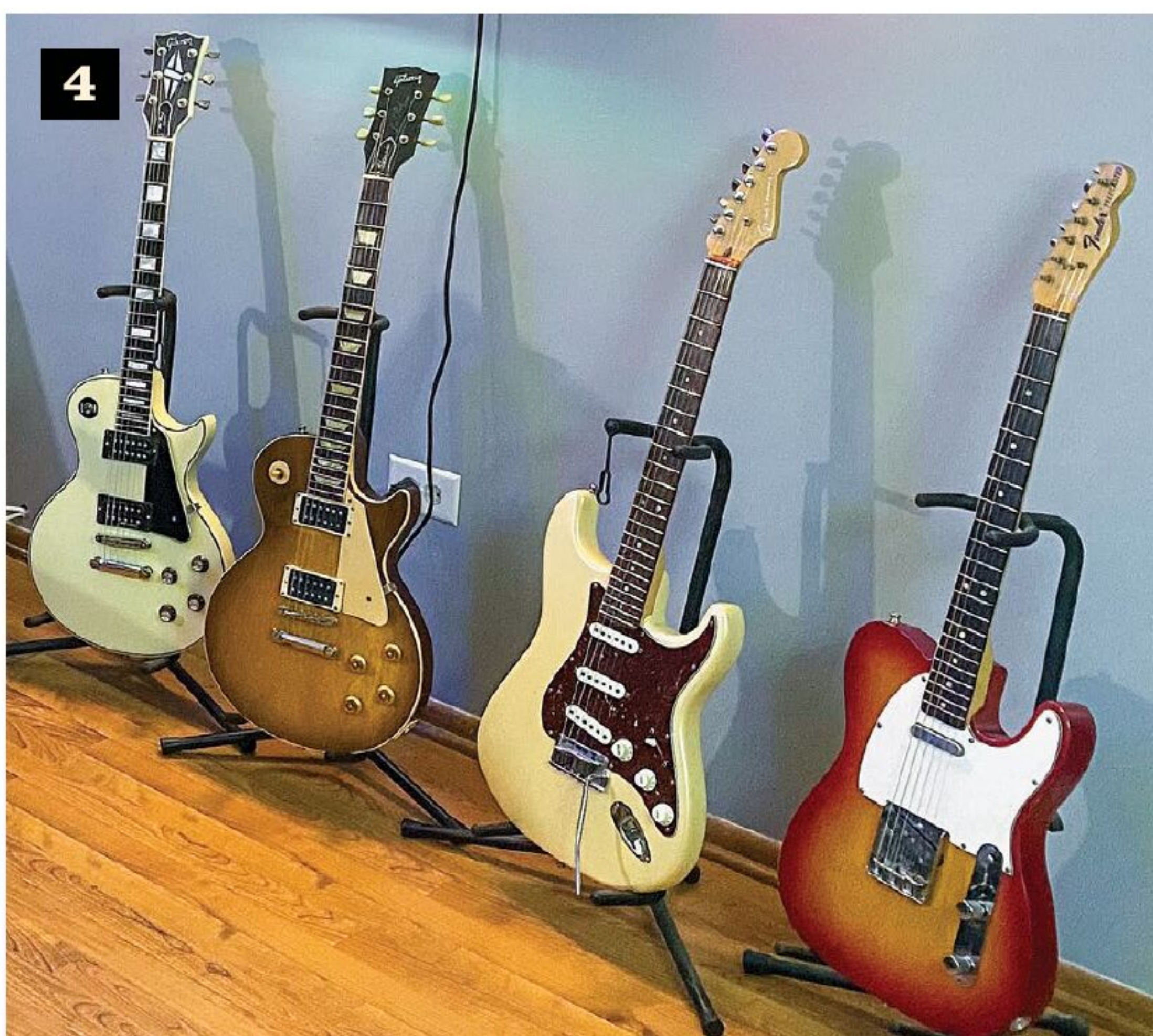
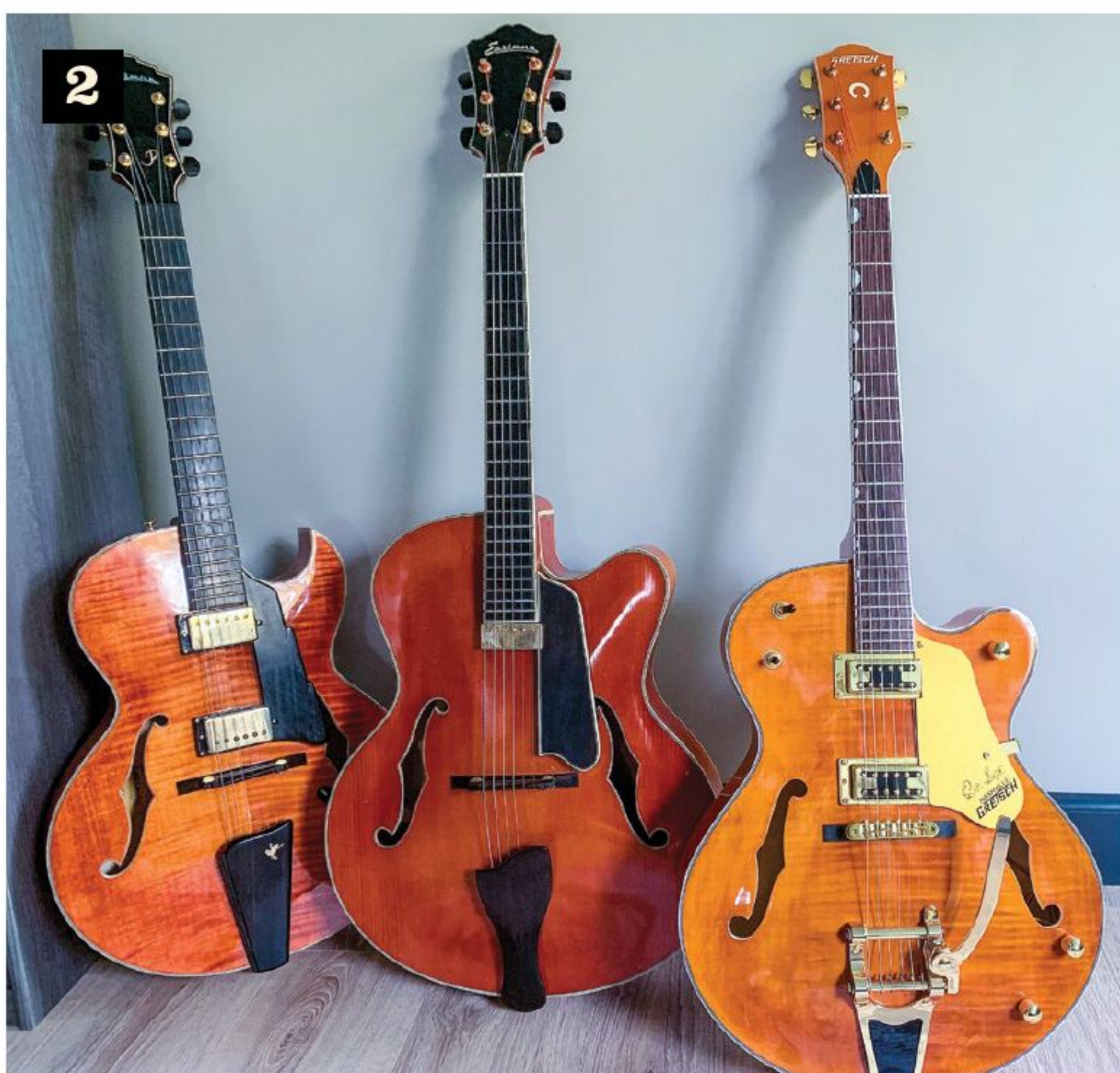
02 From Holland, Jan Meesters returns to the Gallery with this shot of his Eastman AR380 CE and 810CE, and a Gretsch clone.

03 Stare in awe at David Hinds' trio of "Modernistic" Gibsons – a '19 Flying V, '12 Moderne, and a '76 Limited Edition Explorer he bought new in '77 and has played onstage and in the studio ever since. "It sounds amazing," he says. All three, he adds, are played and gigged regularly.

04 Bill Simon's '76 Les Paul Custom, '99 Les Paul Classic, '06 Stratocaster Deluxe, and '71 Telecaster mean he's ready to play any style.

05 While working at a music store in the early '80s, Bobby Hamilton became obsessed with this Flying V Medallion that was scooped up by the shop's owner before it hit the floor. "We kept in touch through the years and he finally sold it to me," Bobby says. While the pickguard and tailpiece are swapped, the original parts are in its case. "She plays like a dream!" he added. "Low frets, no buzz."

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1963 Gretsch 6131
Jet Firebird "Malcom"
2011 Gretsch G6199CS
Billy-Bo "Stephen Stern"

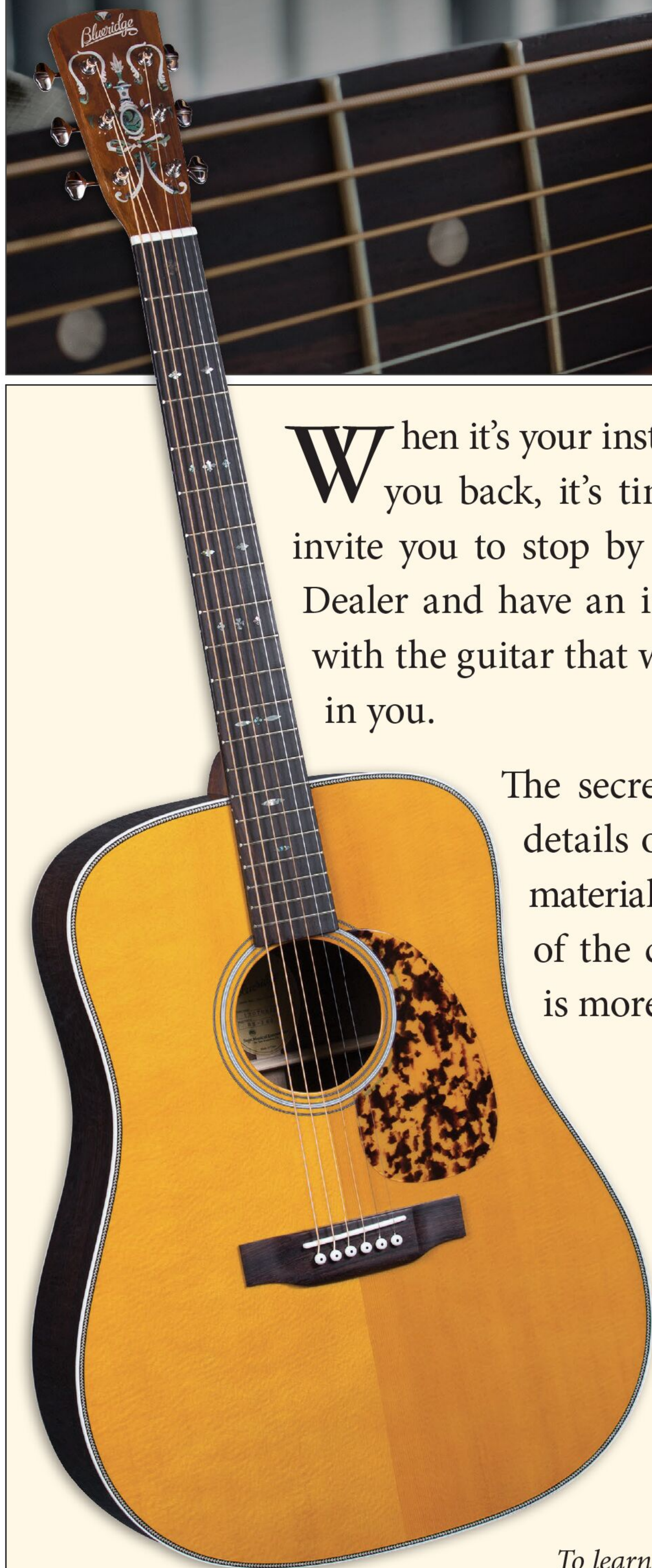


1952 Fender Telecaster
very early example
1960 Fender Stratocaster
Fiesta Red Slab Neck
1965 Fender Mustang
Dakota Red original
1968 Fender Custom
aka Maverick Minty
1974 Fender Telecaster
See-thru Blonde
1989 Fender Telecaster
Custom very rare
1993 Fender Jaguar
1-off "Fred Stuart"
1997 Fender Strat '57
4 of 4 Custom Shop



1852 Martin 2 1/2-21
173 year old original
1940 Martin D-18
rare Tortoise h'stock
1946 Gibson J-45
rare Mahogany Top
1947 Martin 000-21
rare Tapered Braces
1957 Martin 0-18
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