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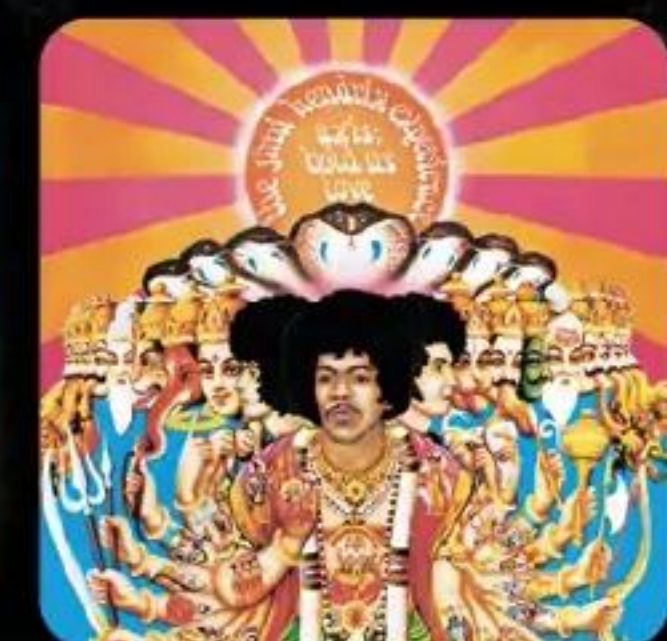
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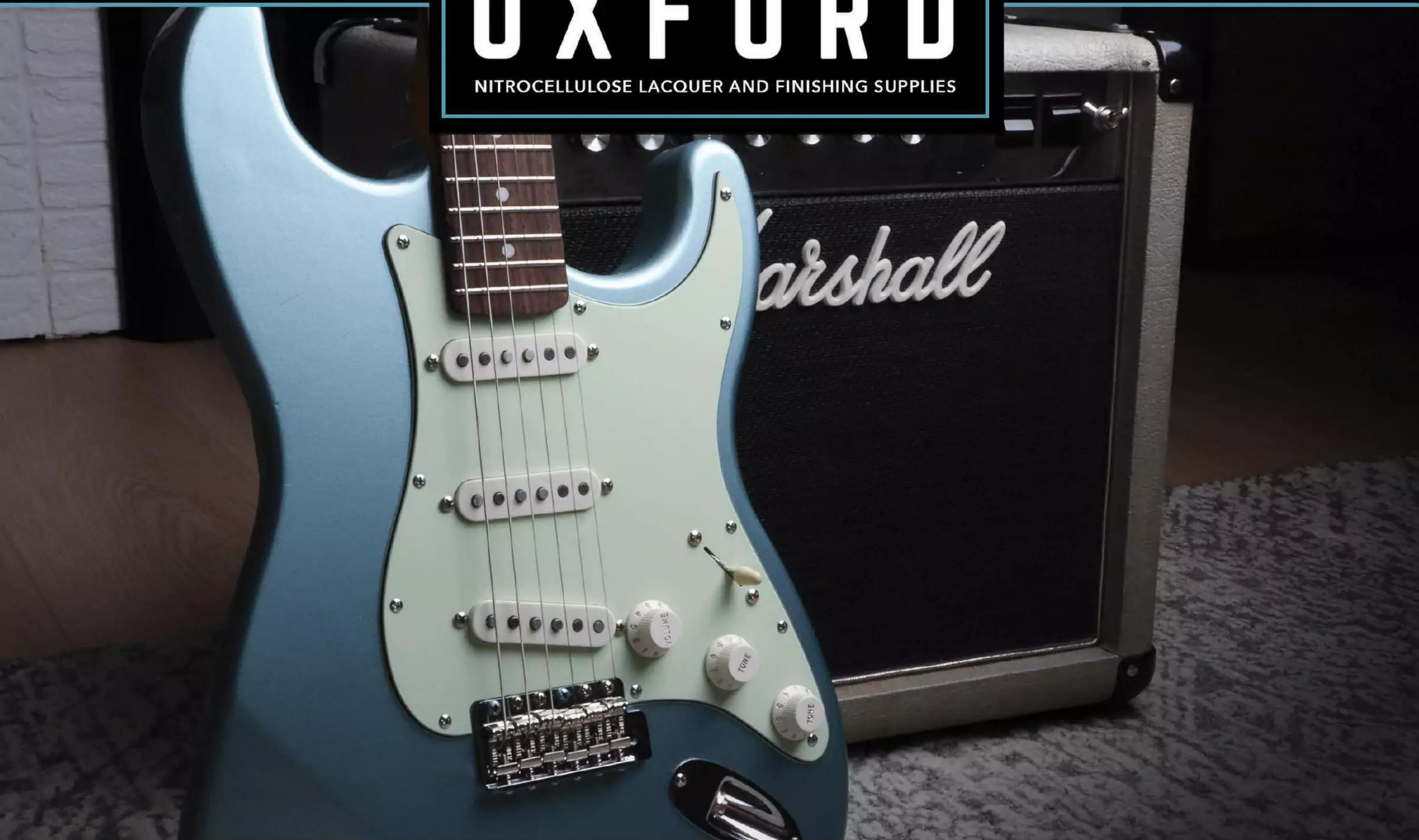
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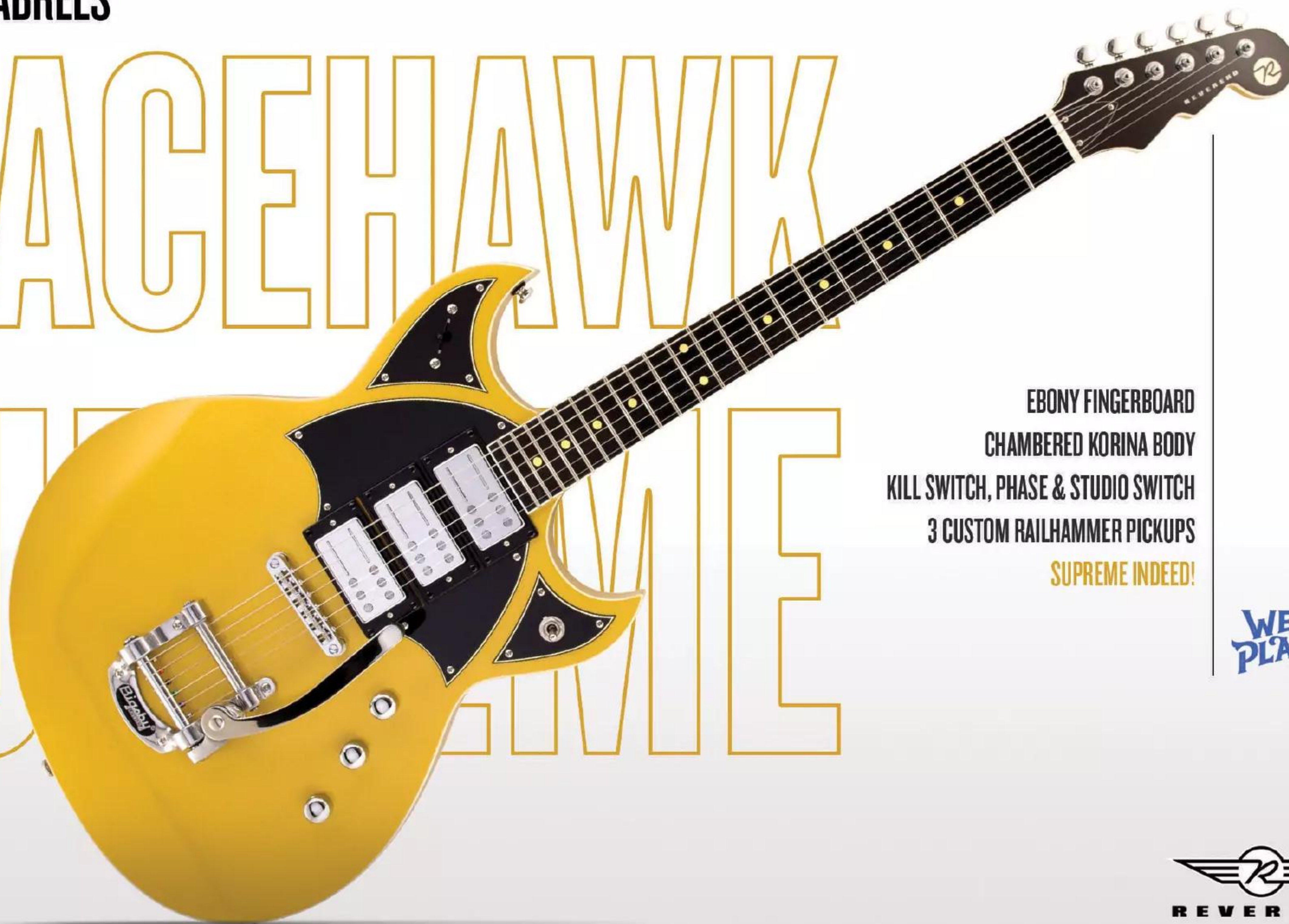
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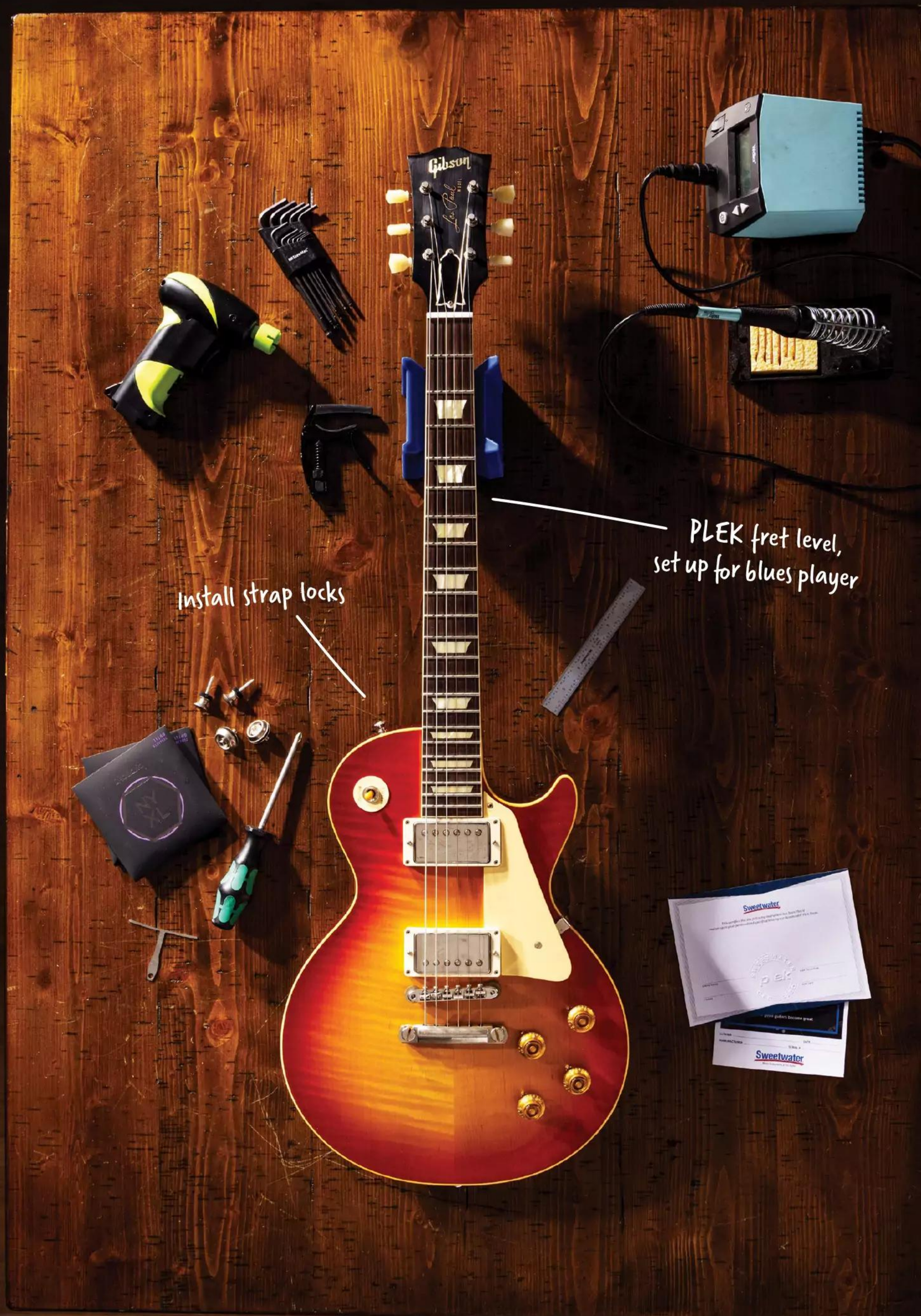
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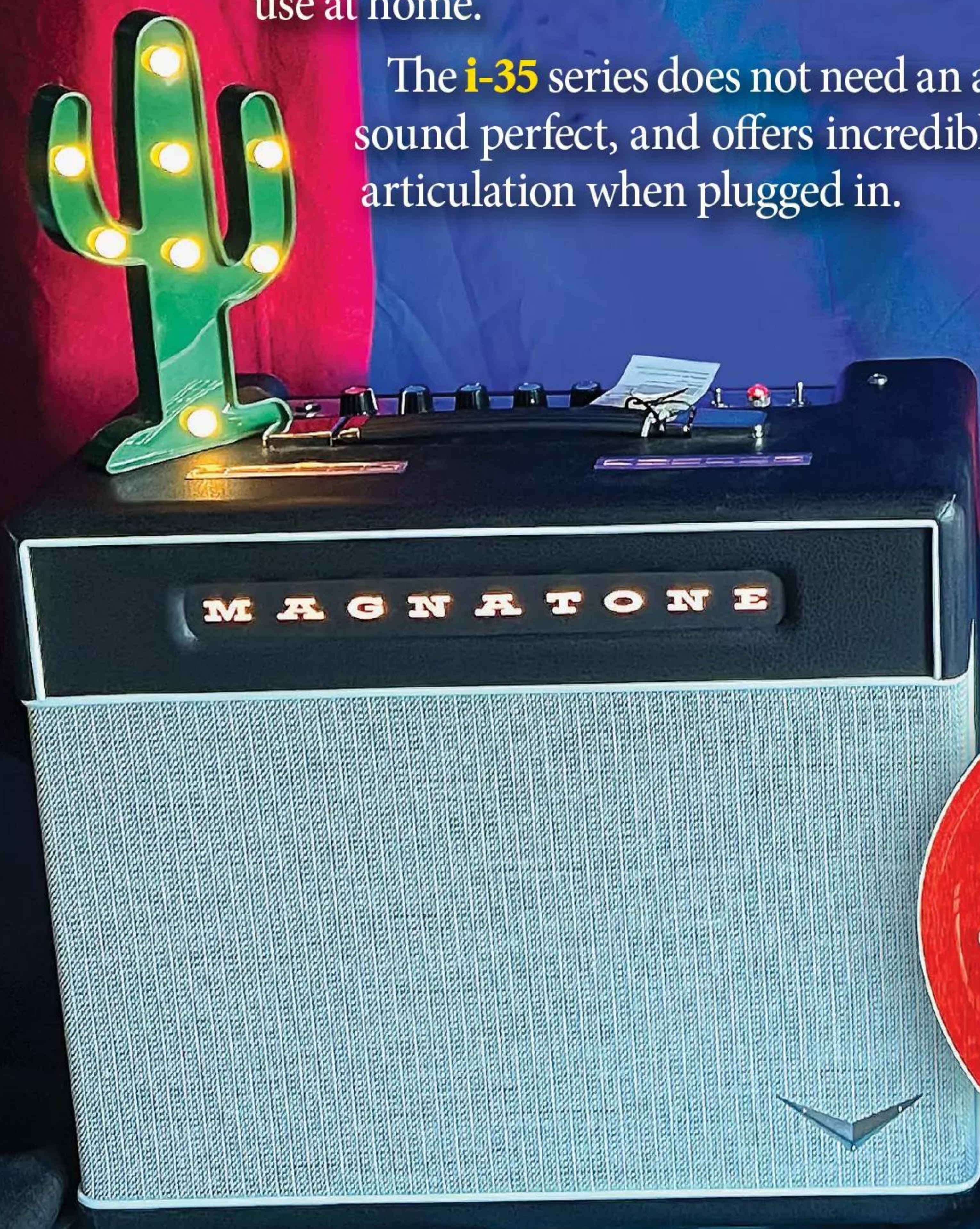
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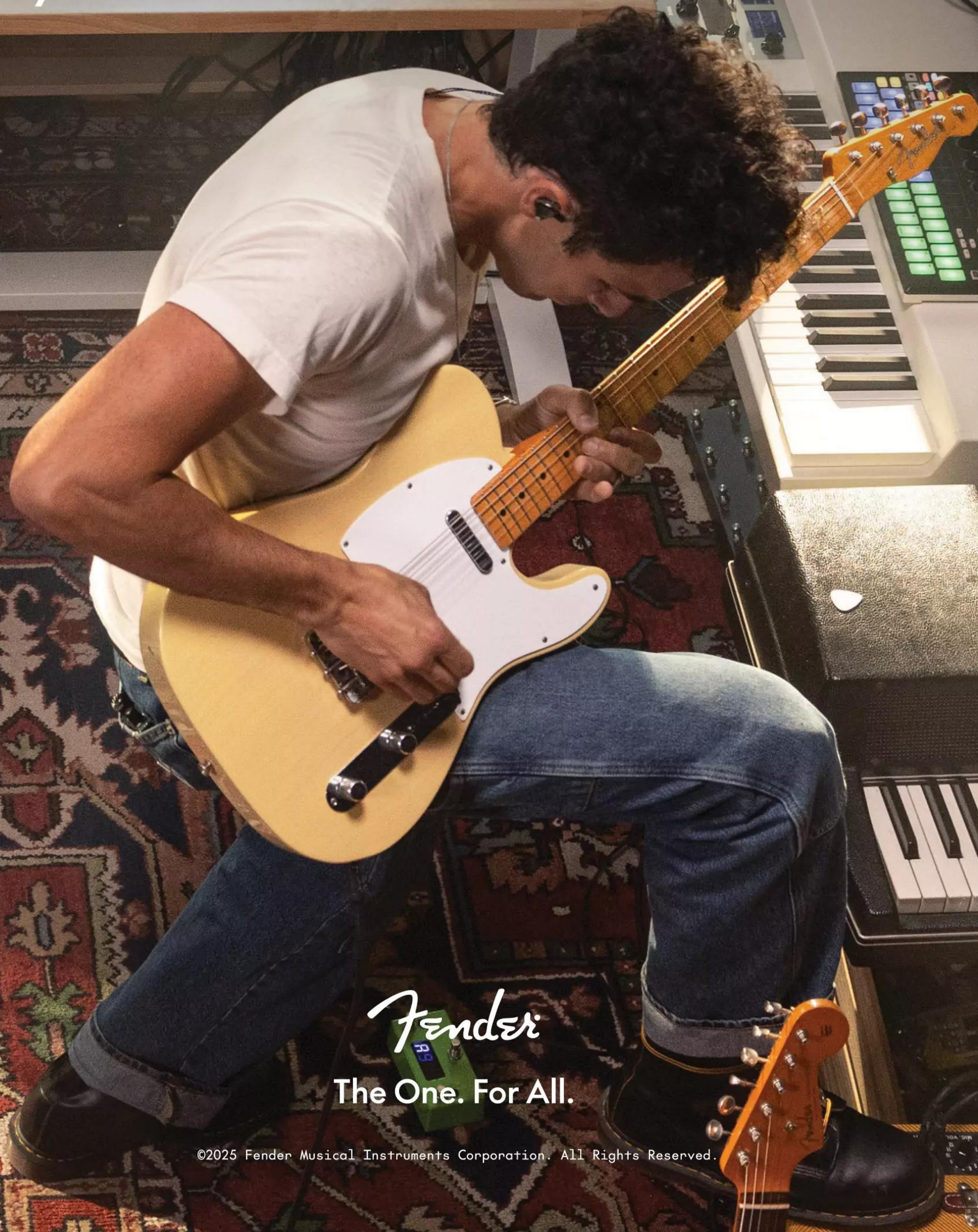
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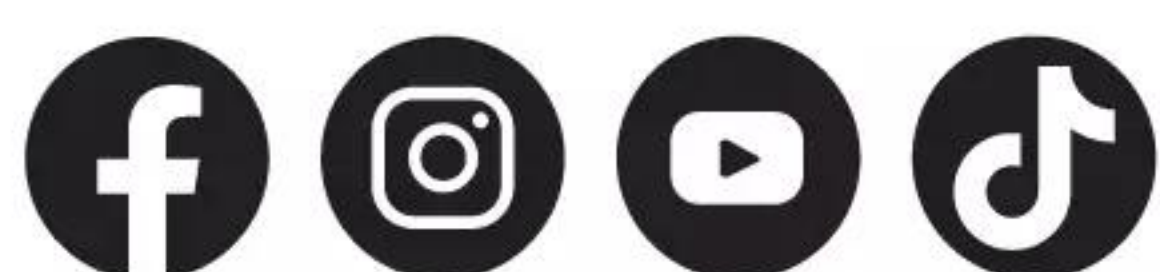
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# READER MAIL

## VG: TRUTH TELLER

I read every issue of VG from cover to cover and share pertinent articles with my friends. In September, I especially enjoyed the pieces on Alvino Rey and Bruce Forman. The magazine has a great mix of contemporary music and gear with vintage gear and historically important musicians and business figures. In short, you tell the truth.

Bob Kramer  
Nashville, Tennessee

## HEROES REMEMBERED

The August cover memorializing Rick Derringer really hit me. Not so long ago, it was John Sykes and Jeff Beck. Thank you guys for the wonderful job you do remembering such players. At almost 70 years old myself, I've been a subscriber for 20-some years and love the magazine, especially the "Dad's Day" issue. I'm not a father, but my stepfather played the uke and got me started – I blame him for all the instruments I've bought, sold, and kept. I know a few guys who've nurtured their kids on instruments and seen them achieve happiness and success.

I start reading VG from the back and work to the front. Love it! Keep up the good work.



Alvino Rey with a custom-built Rickenbacker in a 1935 photo for the Horace Heidt band.

Tommy Prall  
Wayne County,  
Pennsylvania

## PLAUDITS APLENTY

*Vintage Guitar* is the absolute best musical publication on the market. The content every month is interesting and covers a wide range of topics. I especially appreciate how the magazine features articles and photos that relate back to the history of guitars, amps, and other musical instruments. Keep up the great work.

Greg Gilkey  
Clarksville,  
Indiana

I've been a reader since VG was in newsprint. At 73, I'm an avid collector and still work part-time as a tech at Guitar Center to keep up on all the latest gear – and maybe influence young players. I'm also still in a rock band that has been together since the '70s. Keep rolling!

Jimmy Roberts  
Everett, Washington

The writing in VG is excellent and I look forward to every issue. If I had a wish, it would be for more long interviews – quality over quantity. Still, thank you for a great magazine that moves forward with one foot in the past. Well done!

William Rose  
Albion, Idaho



Bruce Forman in Italy with Ricardo "Stuly" Manzoli and his Adamo L-5 copy made to smaller dimensions.

VG is an outstanding magazine and I look forward to every issue. I learn something every month, be it a technique, historical fact, existence of some pedal or other device, upcoming artist, new genre... you name it. Well done and thank you!

Michael Prochot  
Brookfield, Illinois

I look forward to reading VG every month. It has the perfect balance between artists and the (vintage!) gear they use.

Steven Robinson  
Syracuse, New York

I'm a longtime subscriber who used to get a half-dozen guitar mags. The others are long gone and I have only VG now because it has great articles and a nice mix of vintage gear and info and new gear. Keep up the good work.

Tony Carter  
Newnan, Georgia

I like your classic guitar and amp profiles. I'm not familiar with some of the artists but enjoy reading about them and listening to their music. I really like the hardcopy and would not subscribe if it was online only.

Roland Soule  
El Cajon, California

## SEND LETTERS TO

Send letters to [vguitar@VintageGuitar.com](mailto:vguitar@VintageGuitar.com), or Vintage Guitar, Attn: Reader Mail, PO Box 7301, Bismarck, ND 58507.



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Dave Mason

### MASON RETIRES FROM TOURING

Citing ongoing health challenges, Dave Mason (VG, October '24) recently announced his retirement from touring after 60 years of presenting his music to fans worldwide.

Devoted to the work and the life he loved, Mason prided himself in being “the real deal” during shows that were entirely live with no backing loops or overdubbed vocals.

Mason rose to fame as co-founder of the band Traffic, then launched a solo career that saw him score several hits including “Feelin’ Alright,” “Only You Know and I Know,” “We Just Disagree,” and “Every Woman.”

### MARYLAND DECLARES PAUL REED SMITH DAY

Maryland Governor Wes Moore declared August 22, 2025, as Paul Reed Smith Day across the state. Smith founded PRS Guitars in Annapolis in 1985 and it is the largest private/full-time employer in Queen Anne’s County.

In a ceremony that day, Moore presented a proclamation to Smith at the Maryland State House.

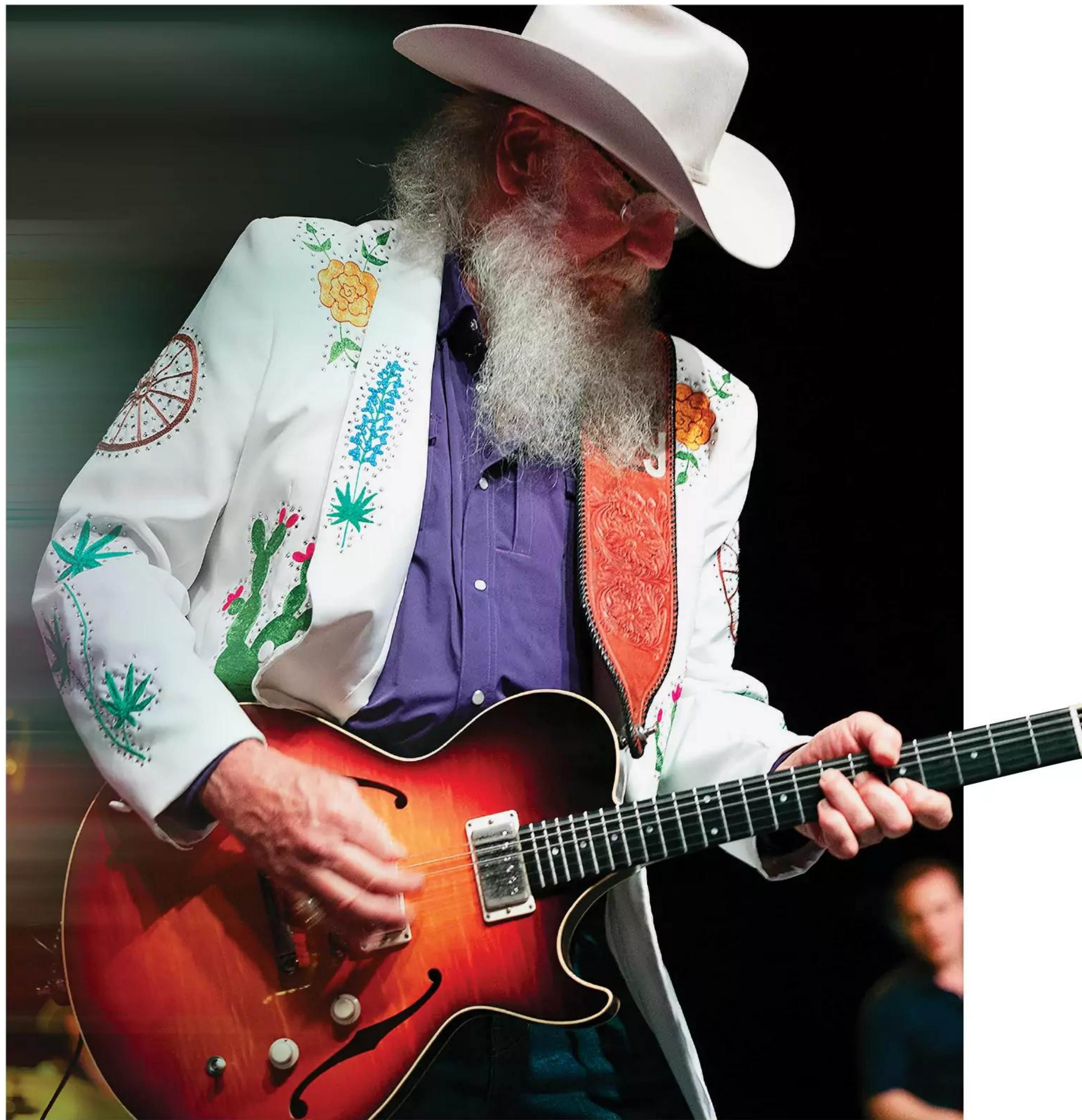
“Declaring Paul Reed Smith Day is about more than honoring a business, it’s also about honoring a Maryland legacy that continues to inspire,” said Moore. “Paul and his team have shown us what it means to build with vision and creativity – leading PRS to become a pillar of manufacturing excellence and heart-led service in our state.”

### OOPS! DEPT.

The October issue “Fretprints” contained a misstatement implying that Toto appeared on hit songs by many other artists recorded in L.A. from 1978 through ’83. The sentence should have made it clear that certain members, not the entire band, played on those records.

Also, the feature on Daniel Donato misspelled the name (and business) of guitar builder Dan Neafsey of DGN Custom Guitars. VG apologizes for any confusion created by the errors.

# FIRST FRET



## RAY BENSON

### Riding High Again

**A**sleep at the Wheel, the Western-swing band launched in West Virginia by Ray Benson and Lucky Oceans in 1970, was calling San Francisco home in ’74, when two Texas musicians suggested they relocate. One was Willie Nelson, the other was Doug Sahm of the Sir Douglas Quintet.

“Doug was my good pal and Willie was my hero. Willie said, ‘Hey, I’ll put you on shows,’ Benson remembers. “Of course it didn’t pay but \$100, but we didn’t care!”

Fifty years and many band members

later, Austin remains Asleep’s home. Four years after Benson celebrated the band’s half-century with a commemorative album and tour, he observed that pivotal move with *Riding High in Texas*, a 10-song celebration of their adopted state, recorded at Benson’s studio in Austin.

In choosing these 10 Lone Star-oriented tunes, he avoided the band’s longtime Texas anthem “Miles and Miles of Texas” and frequent covers of Bob Wills Texas tunes for a more varied repertoire.



Lyle Lovett handles vocals on their take of the 1959 rocker “Long Tall Texan,” written by the late Nashville A-Team bassist Henry Strzelecki (covered by the Kingsmen and Beach Boys), the Texas fiddle favorite “Beaumont Rag,” a funk-driven take on Guy Clark’s “Texas Cookin’,” and singer Darrell McCall’s obscure ’70s ballad “There’s Still A Lot of Love in San Antone.”

The title track, written by Americana singer/songwriter Peter Rowan and originally recorded by Tejano accordion great Flaco Jiménez, was suggested by the band’s newest member, singer/fiddler (and Austin native) Ian Stewart.

“Ian came with that song, and with the Carter Family/Hazel Dickens tune ‘Lonesome Pine Special.’ He was well-versed in country music and pulled out two really great ones.”

Pianist/fiddler Danny Levin, an original member of Asleep at the Wheel, was involved in both playing and arranging. Billy Strings’ guest appearance on the title song resulted from their long friendship.

“I produced part of a Jake Shimabukuro record, and while we were mixing, I said, ‘Billy Strings is in town,’” said Benson, who approached Strings. “This was before the pandemic. We met then, but the (Strings) boom hadn’t happened.

“We became friends,” he adds, noting his on-camera role in Strings’ video for his prison-themed song “Seven Weeks in County.” “He’s the most accommodating guy and the epitome of what you want a guitar picker to be – somebody who loves to play in any kind of situation.”

Earlier recordings of two songs by Hollywood Western-swing band leaders inspired their hard-edged treatment of Jimmie Rodgers’ “T for Texas.” Benson explains it was “partly stolen” from a 1940s version by Hollywood band leader Spade Cooley. While Benson knew Willie Nelson’s 1967 rendition of “Texas in My Soul,” he and the band adapted the album’s version from a ’47 recording by Tex Williams’ Western Caravan.

Curtis Clogston, who replaced longtime Wheel steel-guitarist Eddie Rivers after he retired, breathes new energy into the songs and the band with impressive pedal-steel, lap-steel, and resonator work. Clogston was already part of the organization.

“He was my roadie, a young kid. He was runnin’ sound and (at) one gig, the steel player didn’t show up, and he said, ‘I play a little.’ He was obviously learnin’, but I said, ‘Keep practicing, man.’ He got really good, so I said, ‘Come on!’”

Clogston’s steels are an early-’50s Fender Dual Pro lap and a ’78 Emmons push/pull with Fender Twins. His reso is a Beard R.

Benson and his son, Sam Siefert, handled the guitar work.

“Sam did the stuff I couldn’t play, and Billy Strings did the stuff I couldn’t play. Sam is a really good player. He just doesn’t like playin’ on the road.”

Benson used his primary onstage guitar, the customized Collings SoCo 16 LC Deluxe, and dipped into his sizable collection of older gear. “For rhythm, I used my Epiphone Triumph and my early-’60s Fender Deluxe.”

Sam used Ray’s SoCo, a Collings CJ Mahogany, a G&L Custom, and an ASAT Tele with two Fender reissue amps – a ’59 Bassman and ’63 Vibroverb.

While additional Asleep at the Wheel albums are down the road, Benson’s immediate recording plans focus on additional solo projects. He intends to record one album with a swing orchestra (“a mix of Sinatra-like stuff and Louis Jordan”), and later, a jazz album with piano. He waxes optimistic about the band’s next album. “We have really good young guys in the band, and we’re cementing that to see what we can come up with. That’ll take a bit of creative time.” – **Rich Kienzie**



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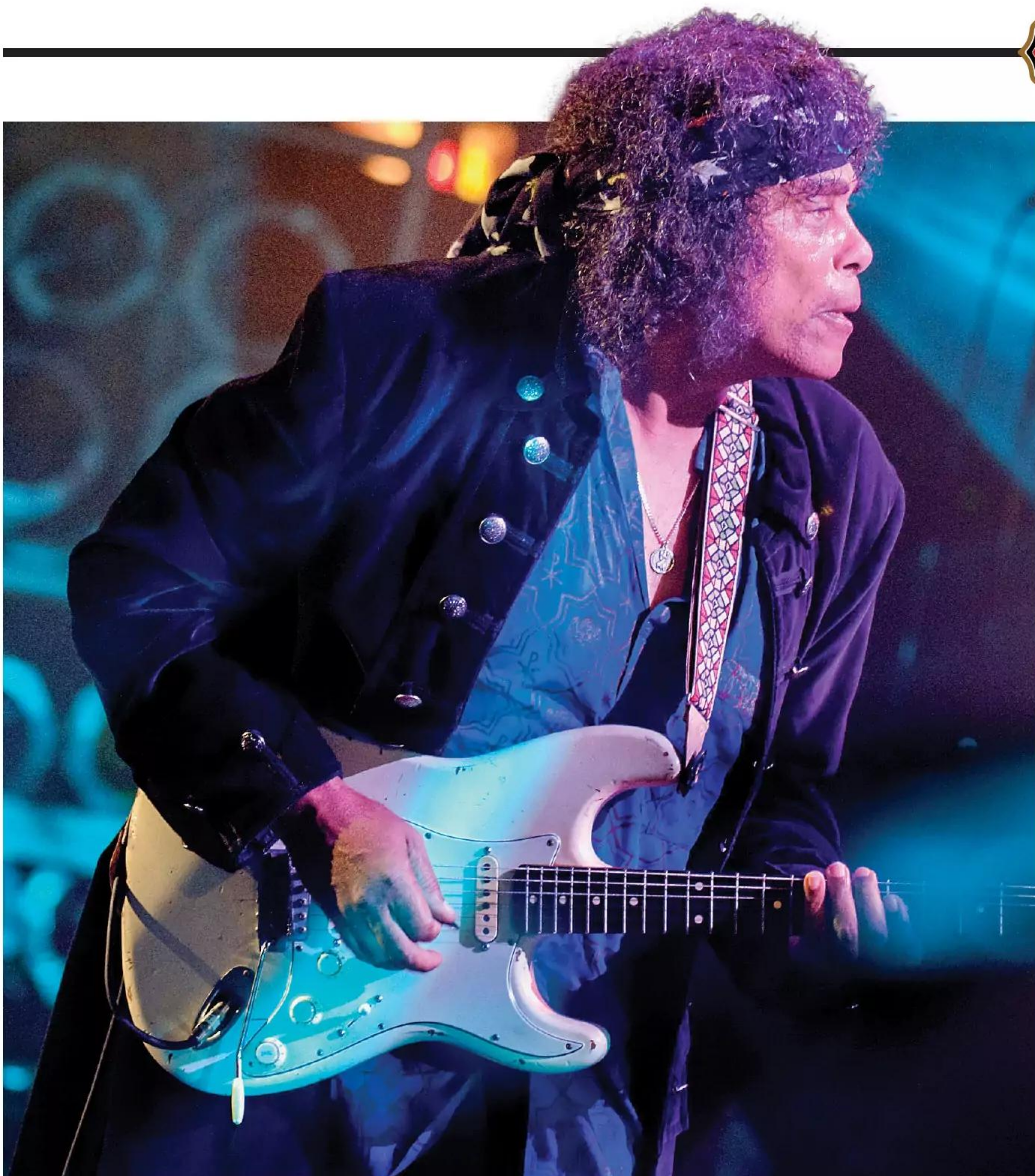
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# JON BUTCHER

## Mystery Fuzz

**N**ew England Music Hall of Fame inductee Jon Butcher's new album, *Nuthin' but Soul*, is packed with vintage soul, R&B-influenced rock and roll, and Hendrix-style psychedelia. There's also some cultural relevance. But it's Butcher's mystery fuzz that truly boggles the mind.

***Nuthin' but Soul* is like a stroll down memory lane.**

I'm so gratified that it's been received as well as it has. It's a tribute to the revolutionary music that opened my mind as a kid – James Brown, Curtis Mayfield, War, Sly and the Family Stone, and Graham Central Station – sounds that had a profound impact on me. It was a powerful feeling back then, and it was important for me to find a way to express those things in a way that wasn't so

boxy. Talking about things that have social relevance is tricky. That's why I love Sly Stone so much. He was a revolutionary in presenting very complex ideas.

**Your guitar playing is a showcase of '60s and '70s rock and soul.**

If you're a guitar player, there's something on this record that will speak to you. It's what spoke to me when I was growing up.

**You scrapped an album and started over. What happened?**

I finished 10 tracks and went through all the things you do to finish a record. I walked into the studio with my engineer. We sat down and listened, and I said, "This has got to go." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "This is not what I want to say. This is not where my heart is." When you start a record, it takes you places you don't expect. You realize that

where you started is not where you end up. That's exactly what happened.

I finished the record, thought it was great, but then I thought, "No. I have things to say. The world is changing right before our eyes, and there is no way, as a writer, I can ignore that." If there's truth in your art, there's no way you can avoid it. The best music always comes in a time of great upheaval, fear, and chaos. Unfortunately, those things seem to make great art.

I don't want to knock anybody who's doing traditional blues or jazz. No one digs that more than me. But I had more to express. We're living in tricky times, and now is the time for truthful voices no matter how they manifest. Truth in music comes across and touches people.

**What were some of the guitars you used?**

I used the guitars I tour with, which are a '63 Olympic White Stratocaster and my backup, a '63 sunburst Strat. Those have been in my hands for decades. Another I used a lot was a '53 Telecaster that I restored and is now one of the best Teles I've ever had.

Those three formed the foundation for *Nuthin' but Soul*.

**How about amps?**

I normally tour with a Marshall 100-watt plexi, but I've been scaling down. I'm using a 50-watt plexi head and a 2x12 Marshall cab. For the record, I used a '63 Princeton, a Vibrolux, and a '90s tweed Blues Junior. I wouldn't sell that Blues Junior for 10 grand! It's one of the best amps I've ever heard, period. I used it to play the "Star Spangled Banner" at Fenway Park in Boston. The sound is perfect. There are a couple of songs where I'm plugging straight into it. The purity of that comes across.

**What's on your pedalboard?**

The Univibe copy that I use is called the Midnight Vibe by R Weaver FX. I've owned every Univibe and this is the one that has followed me through the years. R Weaver makes great stuff, and the Midnight Vibe is excellent. I also have a Vox Clyde McCoy wah and a Landgraff Dynamic Overdrive for when I want to get saturated stuff. Then I have a silicon fuzzface. I don't know who made it or where I got it – there's no label inside or outside and I've had it for 10 years. I don't remember if someone made it and gave it to me, but I'm petrified to lose it because it's the best fuzz I've ever had. I wish I knew what it was so I could get another one (laughs).

**What's next?**

I'm focused on *Nuthin' but Soul* and lining up U.S. and European dates for 2026. – Oscar Jordan



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# MARCUS KING

## Songs Of The South

**M**arcus King reunites with his old band for an album packed with Southern tales of pain and suffering. *Darling Blue* blends elements of R&B, '60s rock and roll, and deep-fried guitar sounds with an array of guests including Billy Strings. King's heart lies in the great state of South Carolina, but it offers a lot more than peaches.

### What made you decide to rejoin your old band?

It has always kinda been me and my drummer, Jack Ryan. That's how I started, and that's how I continue to go. It took us a while to figure things out. For what it's worth, the first record had a different lineup than the second – and the third, for that matter – except for me and Jack. I met Jack when I was 17, and it was kismet. We love working together and we have a love for the same kind of music, so we started making music.

This time, it just felt right. I reconnected

with an old friend, Eddie Speer. The last time he and I worked together, he was the engineer for Dave Cobb at RCA on the last Marcus King Band record in 2018. He became a hot-shot producer in that time, so we reconnected in Macon. The timing was right and he was all-in on a collaborative record.

### *Darling Blue* has a wonderful sense of place. You can hear where you come from.

South Carolina is definitely a main character on this record. It's got a voice.

### How was it working with Billy Strings?

I've known Billy a long time. He's as busy as I am. When I was on the road, he was back home, so he was able to get into the studio and do some work for us. I love what he did, and it speaks for itself.

### Talk about some of the guitars you used on the record.

A lot of the acoustic tones you're hearing are from a '39 Martin D-18. That's my go-to for pure acoustic sounds. Apart from that, I

have a '61 O-18. A lot of times, when you hear a brighter-sounding acoustic, that's a '61 Harmony Sovereign. A good example of that is on "The Shadows."

### How about electric guitars?

For electrics, I always have Big Red with me, which is a '62 Gibson 345. I used it in a lot of places on the record. I also have a '66 Esquire named Smokey. On some of the more-aggressive material, I used my Banker Explorer, which is a speed demon. It's a really fun guitar. I also used my '69 Black Beauty. I picked up a Gibson Barney Kessel when I was in Munich, and it quickly became one of my favorite guitars. I was influenced by Steve Howe and Yes. I love the sound of a big jazz-style Gibson being used for a fusion-like sound, and controlling that feedback. It soars. It's like riding on the back of a Pegasus.

### Was Big Red the original from your grandfather or the signature model Gibson made for you?

I used the original in the studio.

### Which pedals did you use?

The Behringer Super Fuzz was used extensively on this record, as well as my Tru-Fi Fuzz. Also, my Tube Screamer. I always have that with me, but a lot of the tones were attributed to the amplifier. I used my Marshall plexi, a Gibson, and my Super Reverb.

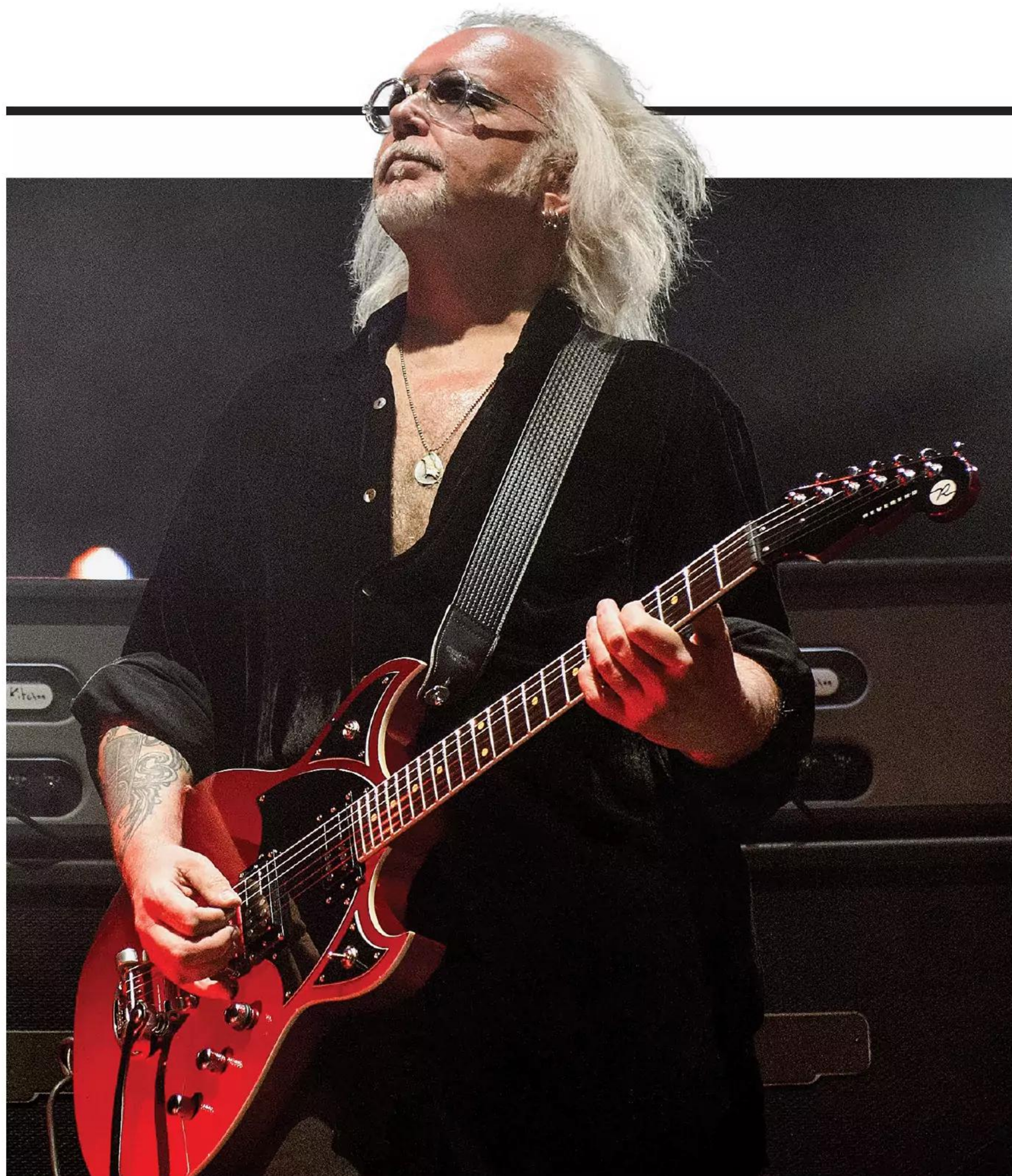
### What's next?

For a couple of years, I've been working alongside Paul Riddle, who was the original drummer for the Marshall Tucker Band, Oteil Burbridge from the Allman Brothers Band and Dead & Company, and Charlie Starr from Blackberry Smoke to honor the music of The Marshall Tucker Band. I've been on a crusade to get them inducted to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, and I'm trying to produce a documentary around that. I think it's an injustice that The Marshall Tucker Band hasn't been inducted yet. That's been taking up a large part of my social calendar as of late, and I think it's something that needs to be corrected.

### How did The Marshall Tucker Band influence your music?

They're from Spartanburg, about 30 minutes from where I grew up, and featured one of the best songwriters of all time – Toy Caldwell. Their songs were ahead of their time – good old country music played on rock radio, with influences of soul, Oakland funk, big band jazz, rock and roll, and, of course, country. They had all the influences I grew up with. They're my favorite band, and show that a band could grow up and get out of South Carolina. South Carolina's greatest export, second only to peaches, is The Marshall Tucker Band, and they influenced me greatly. – **Oscar Jordan**





# REEVES GABRELS

## Retrofuturistic Journeyman

**R**eeves Gabrels first found himself in the spotlight while collaborating with David Bowie in *Tin Machine* in the late '80s. An eclectic guitarist who has participated in numerous projects including solo records, when he landed the gig with The Cure in 2012, he needed a guitar that could cover a wide range of territory. Reverend came to the rescue, and they recently launched a new version of his signature model (see this month's "Approved Gear").

### Why did you need a new guitar?

It was like method acting. If I was going to join a band with this tradition and rabid enthusiastic following, I couldn't go up there and come off as a session player. A lot of the older stuff features a Jazzmaster and a lo-fi sound, long before it became fashionable. There were a lot of semi-hollow sounds on the

records, as well. To try something different, I talked to Ken Haas and Joe Naylor at Reverend. I wanted a guitar I could use for the entire night, so we came up with the Spacehawk and, later, the Spacehawk Supreme. The original had higher-output pickups. Because of the bass roll-off and treble bleed on the Volume control, you can get a Gretsch sound and all kinds of things.

### What are the differences between the Spacehawk and the Spacehawk Supreme?

I kept everything from the original, including the phase switch and kill switch, but added a whole array of sounds and a Bigsby. The Supreme allows you to have all three pickups on with one of them out of phase. If you use the bass roll-off, you can thin it out. With all the pickups, you have the world's biggest Stratocaster (laughs). I use the bass roll-off more than I use the pickup selector. It's handy

if you need a Telecaster sound but don't have enough time to switch guitars. It's a bit of a Swiss Army Knife with a real elegance to it.

### Talk about the pickups.

We have a Railhammer Alnico Grande in the bridge, a Hyper Vintage Bridge in the middle, and a Hyper Vintage in the neck. You get more horsepower from the bridge pickup if you want that alone. The earlier model had a three-position switch, but the Supreme has a five-position blade. If you leave it alone and don't want to play around with phasing, you can pull the Volume control and introduce the bridge pickup into any combination. If you have the blade in position 2 – neck and middle – you can pull up on the Volume control to introduce the bridge pickup.

I didn't want to stray far from the designs they already had, so we used a korina body with a maple top, but I wanted a bigger body that was semi-hollow. It's a Sensei shape that's very lightweight. We added a few inches in diameter, but it's still smaller than a 335 or a 6120, and easier to play. If you don't pull any knobs, you have a five-position guitar like a Strat, with all these classic sounds. But you can also get weird if you want.

It was built specifically for playing The Cure material. I didn't have anything that would get there, but also I wanted something I could do a blues gig with. It lives in both worlds. You can even play jazz on it. It has a nice PAF-style neck pickup. The fact that it's a semi-hollow but doesn't have sound holes allows you to play loud.

### Which amps are you running?

My Cure sound is the Spacehawk through a Hiwatt. I'm playing through three 100-watt amps, but for the longest time I've been running Audio Kitchen amps, from England. I worked closely with them using my Spacehawk and my pedalboard. We EQ'd the amps to those using a 50-watt Class A, and they have three KT88s and a big transformer. It's a cool machine.

### Any feedback issues?

No. I thought, "Why do we need sound holes?" (laughs) The Spacehawk Supreme is futuristic, but has its feet firmly planted in tradition. When I first took it out of the case and the sunlight hit the three pickups, it was like, "I bought an old Cadillac!" (laughs)

### What's next?

I'm doing what used to be called Doom Dogs, but we changed the name to Gabrels-Kane-Parker Wells. It's an all-improv band, and we never know where we're going. There's no material. We'll play up and down the Hudson, and we have an EP coming out soon.

– Oscar Jordan





# ANA POPOVIC

## Slave To The Rhythm

**A**na Popovic continues to fuse ferocious blues-rock guitar with R&B, soul, and funk. *Dance To The Rhythm* covers all the bases from the sounds of the disco era to Gary Moore-inspired blues ballads. Popovic is living the artist's dream. Her band is on point and the songs are killer, but her secret weapon was recently built by Fender.

**You've been mixing genres on the last few albums.**

I want to bring it all to life. I have a few different formations, but my baby is a big band. It's 11 pieces and we bring soul, funk, blues, and rock. It's a powerhouse. Ever since I started writing, I wrote for a big band. I just didn't have the means to bring it on tour. Even when I don't have horns, I *think* horns. If I don't have background vocals, I hear them. I love big gospel choirs.

**Was there a concept when you were com-**

**pling the tracks for *Dance To The Rhythm*?**

We wrote everything just for this record except, of course, "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover." The themes came to us. The main thing was not to repeat what I'd already done. There's a feeling that overcomes you that tells you that you should go in a certain direction. A song like "Worked Up" is something that I have never done before, and I always try to top myself. Same goes for when I write a slow blues like "Dwell on the Feeling," which was inspired by Gary Moore's "Parisienne Walkways." The guitar opens, but I added gospel vocals and I think it's gorgeous. Then we closed with "Sisters and Brothers," which has a positive message about living together. I think this kind of message is necessary for the world.

I always want to move things forward. I have two dance tracks that I'm super excited about, with background singers and horns

and everything. I love clubbing, but those songs never have guitars in them. So, how do you place blues guitar in a dance song? It was a quest for this record. Both dance tracks contain a lot of guitar, and I can't wait to perform them live. I really wanted people to feel the pocket when I was working on the solos. I wanted to come up with the good licks, but not interfere with the groove.

**You have new guitar tones on this record.**

I have a new Custom Shop Strat named Foggy. I made it with John Cruz and Greg Fessler, and it has a Foggy Mirror Chrome finish, '60s-style single-coils in the middle and neck positions, and a Seymour Duncan 78 in the bridge. It was important to have something different. My favorite is, of course, the '64 Strat that I've been using for quite some time. It's my road warrior guitar, and my favorite. I wanted something more modern. I haven't used a lot of humbucker Strat sounds, and Foggy is great for playing slide. The neck has a more-modern feel than my '64; it has a round, big tone, and it's inspiring.

**Which other guitars did you use on the record?**

I used some Gibsons, including my Les Paul and ES-175.

**The solo on "Solution" is intense.**

That's Foggy, and I did it in one take. I was free and did it in the moment.

**You don't get enough credit for your slide playing. The solo on "Sisters and Brothers" is great.**

Thank you. I enjoyed it. For some reason, my slide work always ends up on the end of the record (laughs).

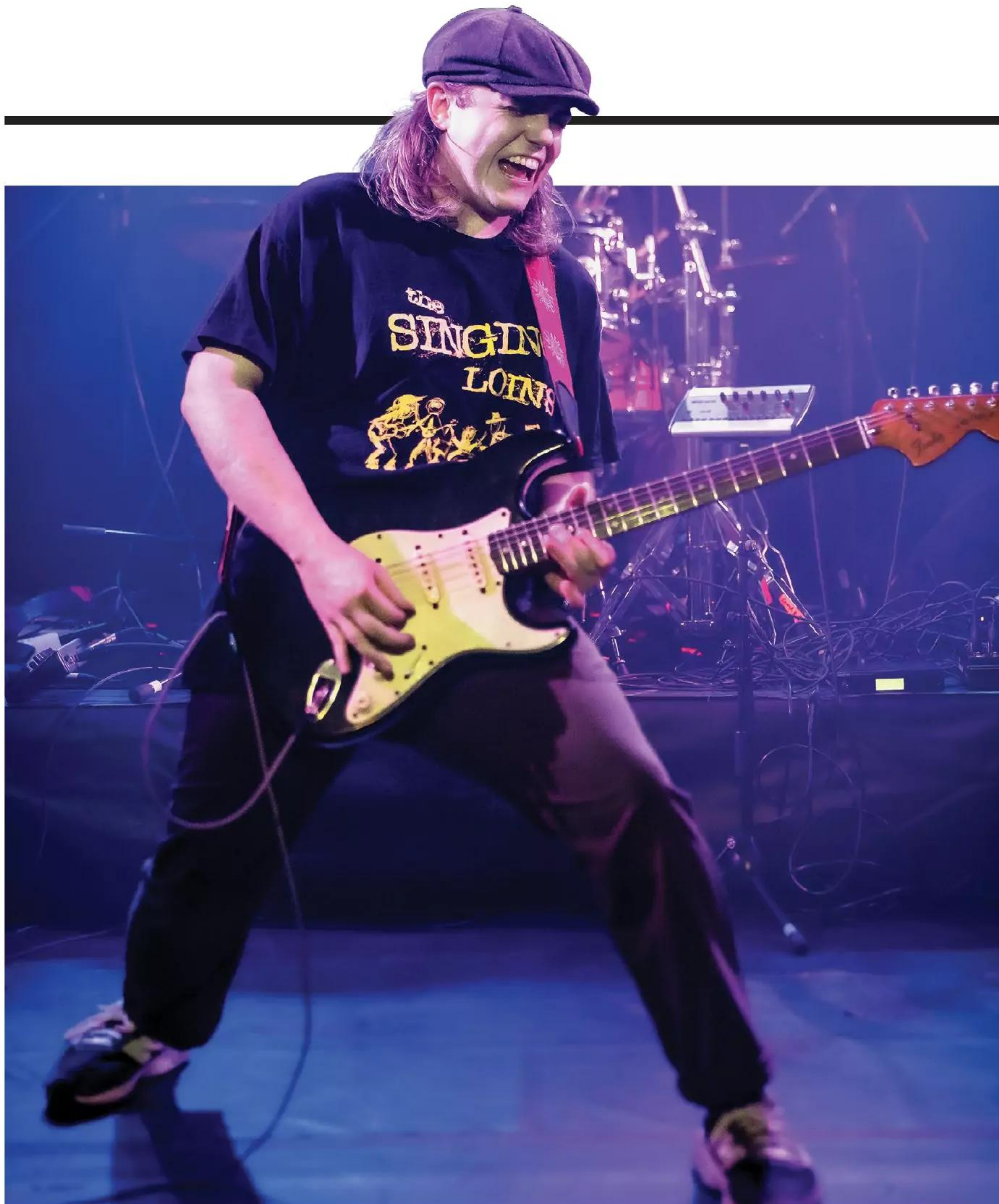
**What kind of amps are you using?**

I like to have a Mesa Boogie in the studio and a few Fenders. I love the Bandmaster. I really enjoy that amp, and I always have a Bassman as a second. But I will always have a Mesa Boogie Mark V; a Bassman and a Mark V is my favorite combination. I've used some Marshalls, and sometimes I add that to a Super Reverb and a Bassman, depending on the day. There's really no one amp that I use. It's always a mix of amps depending on the track.

**What's next?**

I have a big band cruise coming up, and I'll get to play all my songs. I get to play a lot of music, which my band is excited to dig into. I have festivals in the U.S. and Europe, and I'm going to keep on releasing music videos. I have quite a few coming out. — **Oscar Jordan**





# ZAC SCHULZE

## British Boogie Deluxe

**F**ormed five years ago in Gillingham, Kent, the Zac Schulze Gang is a power trio whose roar harkens to Cream, early Led Zeppelin, and Rory Gallagher. The three have won the U.K. Blues Emerging Band of the Year award and Young Artist of the Year. They were also invited to play at Eric Clapton's Crossroads Festival and headlined the Rory Gallagher Tribute Festival in Ballyshannon, Ireland.

Onstage, guitarist Zac Schulze, bassist Ant Greenwell, and drummer Ben Schulze are a fireball of energy, with Schulze ripping blues solos with abandon. The band has captured that fury on its debut album, *Straight To It*, and it's a barnburner from end to end.

**The Zac Schulze Gang evokes everything from The Who to AC/DC to Dr. Feelgood – and lots of British pub rock.**

Dr. Feelgood, for sure, and we love the pub-rock bands of the late '70s. We are massively influenced by Nine Below Zero and Ian Dury & the Blockheads. More recently, we've been listening to Wunderhorse and Turnstile – bands that deliver energetic performances.

**Who are your specific guitar influences? Rory Gallagher must be in the mix.**

Rory is definitely one of my main influences; his intensity and energy was incredible, and he was a fantastic songwriter. The first person that inspired me to play blues was Joe Bonamassa, in particular his *Live at Royal Albert Hall* album from 2009. Also, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Gary Moore, Greg Koch, and Steve Lukather, to name a few.

**The album is guitar intensive, but not at the expense of vocals, lyrics, and a hook.**

We wanted to make sure it had songs and

wasn't just built around my guitar solos. Ben and Ant have such varied music tastes, which really helps when writing together. As you said, the song comes first.

**On the other hand, "Damaged Man" and "Betterland" have the kind of rippin' rock-and-roll solos we rarely hear any more.**

"Damaged Man" is definitely going for the more straight-up blues-rock solo – fast and in your face. For "Betterland," I was inspired on the buildup from Paul Kossoff's solo in "All Right Now." I liked having a solid bass groove in the back and building the solo in a more melodic sense. I hope our fans will enjoy both.

**You play plenty of meticulous rhythm riffs, like on "I Won't Do This Anymore" and "High Roller." Given that you're so tight, does the Zac Schulze Gang practice?**

We don't practice much at all, but we play 250 gigs a year. We like to try new things out onstage, which keeps it fresh for us and the audience.

**Which guitars did you use on *Straight To It*?**

My main guitar, which is a '78 Strat neck on a '93 Squier Silver Series body with custom pickups. It's a great workhorse. I also used an old Guild Aristocrat and a 2003 Gibson SG Classic, which has P-90 pickups and is a modern spin on a '60s "batwing" SG Special.

**The Strat and an SG Special offer such different types of single-coil sounds. Do they make you approach your riffs and solos differently?**

*Absolutely.* I'm mainly a Strat player these days, but playing with P-90s has been a lot of fun, and definitely something I'll be coming back to in the future. You play a certain way on a Gibson, and it brings me back to when I was starting on guitar, playing an Epiphone Les Paul and trying to learn Joe Bonamassa riffs.

**You use a pick and play with your fingers. Did that evolve naturally?**

Another thing I stole off Bonamassa. I really enjoy playing fingerstyle, and find having the pick underneath my finger allows me to grab it back when I need it.

**What about amps and pedals?**

In my rig, I try to keep things as simple as possible. I use a Roland Blues Cube Artist, an Ibanez Tube Screamer TS9, and Boss TU3 tuner pedal. That's it.

**Do you own any vintage guitars?**

Just that '54 Aristocrat. I got that in a crazy deal with the Gibson SG Classic and an Eric Clapton signature Strat. I love buying and selling guitars, but that Guild is really cool and I'll keep it forever. I guess you could also count my '78 Strat as vintage ... well, *maybe* (laughs)! – **Pete Prown VG**





'67 Dane Hawk 2N12.

# DANES, CORALS, HAWKS, AND SITARS

## The Last Days Of Danelectro, Part 2

— BY PETER STUART KOHMAN —

**I**nstruments from the final years of the original Danelectro company may be less familiar than the Shorthorns, Longhorns, and Amp-in-Case Silvertones, but they're equally interesting. Nathan Daniel's products always manifested a utilitarian philosophy, untethered to traditional guitar making. After selling a controlling interest to MCA in 1966, he remained president as MCA/Danelectro began aiming more at the professional market.

In late 1966, a new line replaced most previous models; in the summer of '67, it was split in two. Perceiving the Danelectro name as associated with budget product, MCA aggressively promoted a new "prestige" Coral brand. Until the company's 1969 demise, a variety of mostly new instruments appeared.

Even before the sale, Danelectro's business with Sears was declining. The '66 Dano/Silvertone catalog retired the masonite Amp-in-Case Models 1448 and 1447 in favor of offset "selected hardwood" solid bodies – the Model 1450 (which debuted at the end of '65), followed by the single pickup 1451 and two-pickup 1452 with vibrato. The '67 Model 1452 sported a red/black sunburst

body, poplar neck with rosewood fretboard, single-sided headstock and "skate key" tuners. The white-topped masonite pickguard held two lipstick pickups, a three-way switch, and individual Volume and Tone controls.

The flat-plate/rosewood saddle bridge includes Daniels' ingeniously cheap vibrato, a three-point unit re-engineered into a system by incorporating a large coil spring under the rear screw. The design is dead simple but works well enough. The 1452 complete with amp-case sold for \$109.95, while the single-pickup 1451 set was \$77.95.

The Silvertone 1442 bass used the same body mated to a poplar neck with the traditional Dano short scale of 29½," a rosewood

fretboard, and single-sided headstock. This \$79.95 bass replaced the Model 1444 "Dolphin nose" semi-hollow bass in '66. The upscale Model 1443 offered two pickups and (a first for Danelectro) a full 33½" scale. It and the similar Dane Model E/Coral Deluxe were Danelectro's first long-scale basses. With two "lipstick" pickups and large Kluson tuners, the 1443 was the most serious bass Sears ever offered, and an excellent bargain at \$114.95. All of these were phased out in mid '68, as Sears switched to a mostly imported Silvertone line.

The Danelectro and Coral-branded lines from 1966 to '69 comprised a variety of solid, semi-solid, and hollow instruments, the last with bodies sourced from Japan. The low-budget series were originally called Dane A models, renamed the Hawk series in '67. These were available in six-, 12-string and bass formats built on a boxy asymmetrical body descended from the Pro 1, with a short-scale 18-fret neck and stamped metal one-piece bridge. Vibrato-equipped Hawks used a version called the "Flexbridge" with a handle that simply bent the piece of metal upwards. Dane A/Hawk models were offered in a wide range of colors. The Hawk 1N12 in Panther Black (\$74.98) and two-pickup 2N12 in black/blue crinkle lacquer (\$89.98) were the top of that line. The 2N12's two pickups are controlled by a three-way switch and concentric pots, offering a lot of tone for the price. "No greater value in popular priced electric guitars" claimed Danelectro. While fairly rare, it's remembered (in NYC at least) as used by Skronk maven Arto Lindsay.

The cheapest Danelectro was still the Convertible Model 5015, a holdover from



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Silvertone  
archetype – the  
'67 Model 1452.

The '67 Model 1442 (left)  
was bass brother to the  
1452. Its bigger-brother  
1443 (right) has one more  
pickup and four more  
inches of scale length.

Top of the line in '66/'67  
were the Dano Hawk  
1N12 and two-pickup  
Hawk 2N12 (p. 32).

the pre-MCA line offered until the end. This round-hole/fully hollow Formica-covered Masonite guitar was sold with or without the pickup, available separately so you could “convert” it after purchase. In '67-'68 it had a single-sided headstock with a snazzy chrome plastic logo in place of the “Coke bottle” shape, but the rest of the instrument is unchanged. The 1967 list price with pickup was \$65 (\$45 without).

Although omitted from the '67 catalog, the \$150 Longhorn four- and six-string basses and Guitarlin returned to the line through '69. The ink stamp on the neck heel of the

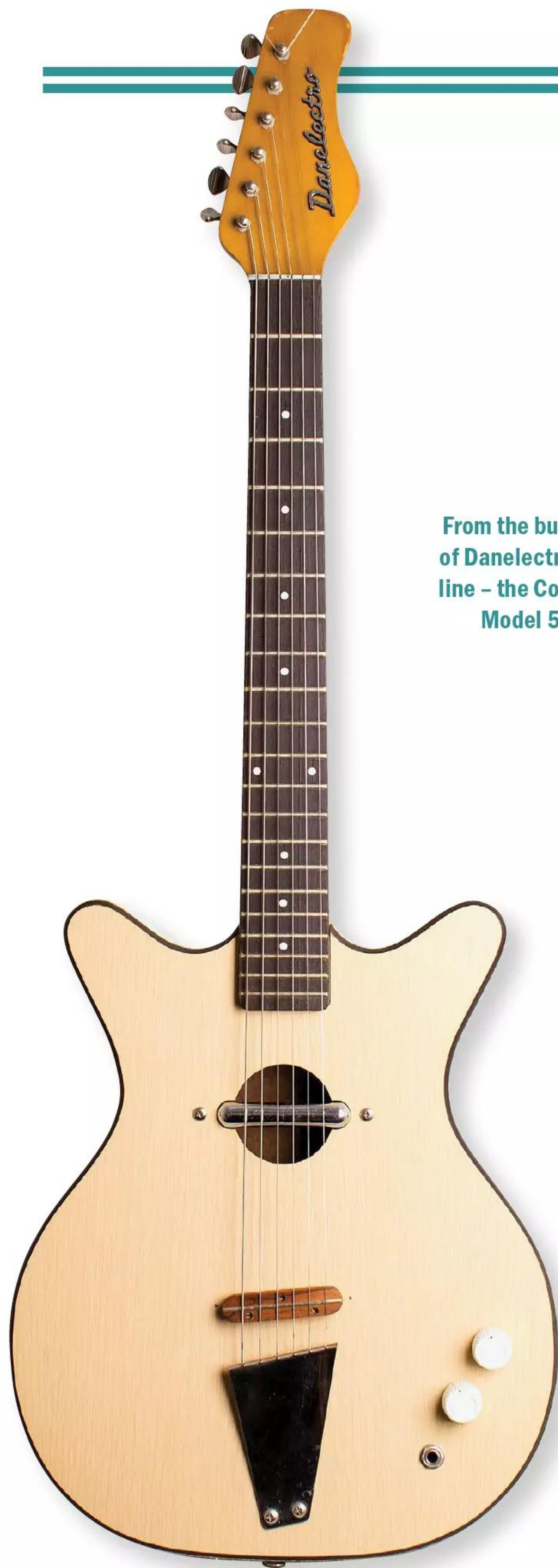
Model 4623 Longhorn six-string bass shown here indicates that part was fabricated in '64, but the metal neck plate, skate-key tuners, brass nut, and round, white knobs in place of wooden flippers on the split-shaft pots suggest assembly in 1967-'68, likely one of the last built. The four-screw control plate is installed over holes previously drilled for the two-screw setup.

The '66 Dane D series was the new deluxe line of solidbody six- and 12-string guitars and four- and six-string basses. Described as “Vincent Bell Signature Designs” they bore a strong Fender influence. The Dane

D3V was the top six-string model listing at \$140 plus \$30 for the Masonite case. The body had a Fender offset feel but tapered very thin at the rim. The pickguard was a pearlescent swirl 3-D plastic, perfect for reflecting psychedelic lights, with a smaller raised clear plastic finger rest below the strings. The matching neck is a standard Danelectro blank with spliced-on pieces forming a single-sided headstock carrying skate-key tuners, chrome plastic Danelectro logo, and the ubiquitous aluminum nut.

This guitar mounts “lipstick” pickups with an unusual control array on the sweeping

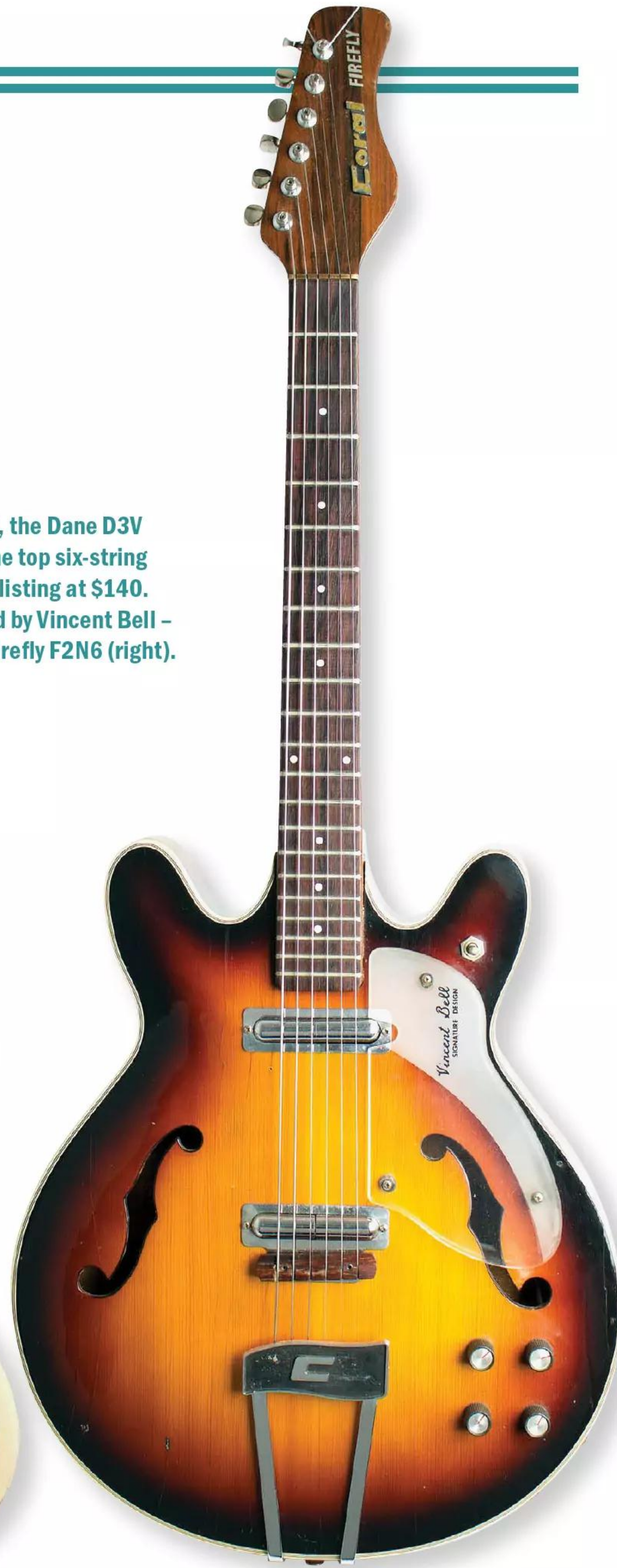




From the budget end of Danelectro's 1968 line – the Convertible Model 5015.



In '67, the Dane D3V was the top six-string Dano, listing at \$140. Designed by Vincent Bell – the '67 Firefly F2N6 (right).



chrome panel. Each has a Volume knob, with a master Volume and three on/off slide switches. There are no Tone controls; pickups were pre-wired bass-heavy on the neck, flat on the middle, with the bridge in super twang mode. They can be mixed with the three Volumes or quickly selected via the switches. While this sounds quizzical, it offers a range of sounds, especially when the pickups are blended.

These were available in a variety of finishes; the cool matching D2B4 you see here is a 29½"-scale bass offering a full two-octave neck on the same light body;

a D2B6 six-string bass was also offered, though very few were apparently sold. The neck is a 24-fret Longhorn blank with the single-sided headstock, four skate-key tuners, plastic Danelectro logo and aluminum nut. The two lipstick pickups also have a quirky control scheme – two individual Volumes, a master Volume and four slide switches. Three activate the neck pickup in progressively darker preset modes, the fourth adds the bridge pickup preset. The range is considerable from a fairly deep thump to a very bright twang, all for a \$120 list price!

The Dane D series were short-lived, as after summer '67 they were re-branded as Coral models – Hornet six-string, Scorpion 12-string guitars and Wasp four- and six-string basses. Slightly more expensive, they brought several upgrades including brass nut, Kluson Deluxe tuners, and solid natural-finished Brazilian rosewood headstocks spliced to Dano's poplar neck blanks. Otherwise, they were unchanged including the lipstick pickups and flat-plate bridge. Most Corals have a silver foil sticker on the back of the headstock with a serial number, something Danelectro never bothered with.



The six-digit numbers start with 7, 8, or 9, likely a year indicator for '67-'69. Some have peeled off and been lost, and occasional early models have a brown DymoTape label reading "Pat. Pend."

The Dane D2B4 became the Coral Wasp W2B4, with controls subtly altered. The Volumes and switches look the same but were wired differently – two switches for pickup on/off and two as tone modifiers. The finish shown on page 34 is a standout – a luminous Candy Apple Red similar to a '60s Fender spec. Coral solidbodies were available in "22 Custom Colors" at a five percent upcharge. All are rare today, but especially in custom finishes.

Coral eventually fielded an extensive line of hollowbodies with arched/laminated spruce tops and flamey "English maple" backs. The bodies were sourced from Kawai, in Japan, mated to U.S.-made necks and hardware in Neptune. The first and most common is the Firefly, a sort of ES-330/Dano hybrid. This double-cutaway thinline was practically ubiquitous in the mid/late '60s, used by nearly everyone (even Fender's Coronado). The Firefly was first offered in six-string format in several finishes with or without vibrato before 12-string and bass versions appeared by '68.

This sunburst Vincent Bell Firefly F2N6 dates to '67, when it listed for \$139 (Bell was credited as designer). The poplar neck and single-sided Brazilian rosewood Coral-logo headstock were shared with the solidbodies. Two lipstick-tube pickups were mounted in metal surrounds controlled with Gibson-style wiring, though the Tone knob on the treble pickup acts as a bass roll-off instead of the conventional high cut. The elevated pickguard is an oddly half-frosted piece of clear Acrylic with "Vincent Bell Signature Design" script logo.

The early Firefly had the floating rosewood bridge, and there were several variations of its bridge and tailpiece. The model must have been deemed a success, as it was followed in '68 with a series of out-there ideas including a hollow-body teardrop guitar, violin-shaped "fiddle bass" and a fully hollow version of Danelectro's own Longhorn, all using bodies made in Japan (Kawai was already building similar pattern bodies for the Japanese market).

The new Longhorns were described as "Great new sound, original body design by Coral... a professional instrument in every way." This hollowbody L2N6 was intended as a fancier (and

pricier) guitar than the original Masonite Danelectro, a mutant re-casting of Nathan Daniel's 1958 Longhorn design with more-conventional construction.

The hollow "English maple" body is 15" wide and slightly less than 2" deep, with a four-ply laminated spruce top and single binding on the top and sound holes. The neck is the standard poplar Dano blank with a bound rosewood fretboard – an almost invisible combination. The spliced-on rosewood headstock is a new (for '68) double-sided center-peak design with the raised chrome Coral logo and individual Kluson tuners.

The two Danelectro pickups in thin metal rings are mated to a five-knob/one switch wiring rig (the fifth knob is a master Volume). The elevated pickguard is grey pearloid with black binding. The floating rosewood bridge is adjusted by three screws – a holdover from the Convertible model mated to a short C-logo metal tailpiece.

The L2N6 is yet another rare Coral, first appearing in 1968. Its list price was \$199 – \$49 more than the original. Matching bass models with long- or short-scale necks were listed at \$215. Large quantities of the Kawai-made bodies remained unused after the Danelectro factory's sudden shuttering in '69; instruments have

Perhaps the best-known Dano/Coral, the Vincent Bell Electric Sitar 3S19 was introduced in '68, then later simplified as the Danelectro Sitar.





After starting life as the Danelectro Dane D2B4 in '67 (left), this bass became the Coral Wasp W2B4 (right).

been assembled from leftover parts over the decades since, in almost endless variations.

Of all the Coral instruments of the '60s, the Vincent Bell Electric Sitar is the best remembered, having moved beyond novelty status as a practical, sonically unique and surprisingly timeless creation. Needing the newly hip sitar sound for sessions but not wanting to grapple with the complex Indian instrument, Bell developed a graduated Sitarmatic bridge that combines the genuine instrument's traditional buzzing, twangy tonality with the playability of an electric guitar.

Bell also added an array of drone strings across the upper bout. Designed to vibrate sympathetically with the notes being played, they can also be used for special effects. Three lipstick pickups with individual Tone and Volume controls allow the sounds to be easily blended. The eccentrically shaped semi-hollow Masonite/pine body is quite comfortable to play, evolved from Bell's earlier Bellzouki pattern. The crackle lacquer finish was a Dano specialty dubbed Bombay Red.

The Electric Sitar was launched in a blaze of publicity in mid '67, but was in production for only two years before Danelectro's demise. Numerous studios and session players acquired one, and its distinctive sound appeared on many prominent recordings through the late '60s, '70s, and beyond in every genre from country to R&B. They were a must in every session guitarist's arsenal, and modern reissues still offer the sound.

The last new Dano of the '60s was a low-budget Electric Sitar offered under the Danelectro brand in '68. The Baby Sitar reduced the design to its basic essentials, eliminating the semi-hollow body, extra pickups, and drone strings. Its Sitarmatic bridge was mounted to a vaguely gourd-shaped thin solid body with a single bridge pickup (all that's needed for the sitar sound) with Tone and Volume controls. The pickguard is silver-sparkle Lucite with a scroll design around the perimeter, painted black on back. The small oval body is not particularly ergonomic, so a chromed leg rest bar was fitted along the bottom edge.

The standard Danelectro neck ends in an enlarged "blob" headstock vaguely suggesting the gourd head of an Indian sitar, with a silver Danelectro logo across the face. It



mounts Kluson Deluxe tuners, upscale for a budget Danelectro. This instrument was in production less than a year (only a hundred or so may ever have been made), so they're rare today, even compared to the Coral. Shown in the Coral/Danelectro catalog dated 1969-'70, it was priced less than half of the \$295 Coral model. "At \$139, shouldn't you be a sitarnick?" the write-up queried.

Long after the Danelectro's demise, these instruments and many more survive

In '67/'68, \$150 could get a Longhorn Model 4623 six-string bass. A re-casting of Nathan Daniel's 1958 Longhorn, in '68 it was called the Coral Longhorn L2N6 (right).

as the legacy of the incredibly creative (if sometimes eccentric) genius of Vincent Bell and Nathan Daniel. Players who love them still marvel at the unique sounds, ingenuity, and variety offered by these "Guitars from Neptune!" **VG**





# L-5 TO SUPER 400

## The Story of Gibson's Big Archtops

— BY GEORGE GRUHN —

**T**he archtop guitar is a uniquely American instrument which can be traced directly to the creative genius of one person – Orville Gibson.

In the mid 1890s, the man who later formed the company started building guitars and mandolins with carved tops and backs, and though his creations were quite different from a modern jazz guitar, there's no question his instruments were the inspiration for the archtops that followed.

Upon first inspection, this 1935 Gibson appears to be an L-5 neck on a Super 400 body. Labeled an L-5 Special, it most likely is the earliest 18"-wide archtop f-hole model made by *any* builder. It is also very likely a prototype of the Super 400, as it precedes the introduction of that model by several months.

Though it appears to be the earliest f-hole guitar with this body size and shape, Gibson would have had forms for it dating back to oval-soundhole instruments built by Orville. Gibson's first f-hole archtop was the 16" L-5, and one known example (made in 1923) was signed by Lloyd Loar, an acoustic engineer at Gibson (more Loar-signed models were made through December of '24).

The L-5 remained the only archtop f-hole model in Gibson's line until the introduction of the L-10 in 1929 (though it was not shown their catalog until '31) and the L-12 in 1930, both with 16" bodies.

Gibson did not produce any archtop f-hole guitars larger than 16" until 1935, when it introduced the 17" "Advanced" L-5, L-7, L-10, and L-12 models, then followed with the introduction of the 18" Super 400 (the original version used the body form designed by Orville with a 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ " upper bout, and, early in the history of the company, a few were made with 18" lower bout and 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ " scale). In early '37, the Super 400's body was given an enlarged upper bout (13 $\frac{5}{8}$ ") and the scale was lengthened to 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The Advanced models not only had a larger body, but fancier Art Deco ornamentation with flashy inlays and bold bindings. Prior to 1930, the L-5 had narrow script "The Gibson" and "flowerpot" peghead inlays with simple dot fingerboard inlays. By 1930, the L-5 had block inlays starting at the third fret, but overall ornamentation of 16" guitars was understated compared to the Advanced 17" guitars of '35 onward.

In 1931, Epiphone entered the market aggressively by introducing a line of archtop f-hole acoustics ranging from small-body student models on up to the 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ " Deluxe. Gibson was caught by surprise but responded in '32 with the competing L-50, L-75, and L-7 models; Epiphone made many

Photos: William Ritter. Instrument courtesy of George Gruhn.





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of its earliest f-hole archtops with slightly wider bodies than their Gibson counterparts, and continued the trend even after Gibson introduced the Advanced models. In an effort to surpass Gibson's 18" Super 400, the Epiphone Emperor had an 18½" body when introduced in '35, while the Epiphone Triumph, Broadway, and Deluxe were enlarged to 17¾" to trump Gibson's 17" Advanced models. Not to be outdone, circa '36, D'Angelico started producing the 18" New Yorker and 17" Excel models, followed shortly by Stromberg's 19" Master 400 and Master 300.

The L-5 Special featured here has a Super 400-style 18" body, spruce top with fholes, figured maple back and sides with sunburst finish, multiple body bindings, maple L-5-style neck with walnut backstripe, ebony fretboard with pearl block inlays, and pearl peghead inlays. Gibson records indicate it was shipped to Coy Davison on September 6, 1935. Accord-

ing to research by Joe Spann (*Spann's Guide to Gibson 1902-1941*), Davison was employed at Gibson as a string tester from 1937 to '39. According to his family, he played music professionally in the '30s and onward, and presumably was a player of some merit.

At Gibson, the guitar was listed as "Spl L-5" both times it was returned for repair – in August of '36 and December of '42. Though it's clear the guitar has been modified, Gibson records don't provide insight about the work that was completed. However, photos provided by the Davison family not only show the original appearance of this guitar, but help create a timeline for the modification in the late '30s and early '40s. In photos from the mid/late '30s, the guitar has a Super 400 tailpiece (without the model name engraving) and pickguard, engraved/pen-back Grover tuners, a bell-shaped truss cover, and sunburst top finish with bound fholes. In later photos, it has an L-5-style pickguard, Grover

Imperial tuners, and a natural-finish top with unbound fholes (natural finish was not standard until '38, though it was available as a custom option). With the exception of the truss cover, which had clearly been changed in the 1938 photo, all modifications appear to have taken place at the Gibson factory from 1940 to '42.

Though this instrument has been modified significantly from its original specs, the changes were made at Gibson not long after it was built. Prototypes were viewed as experimental, and as a result were frequently modified in the course of testing. It's interesting to see that remarkably detailed records have been preserved for this and numerous other Gibsons. Quite a few salesman samples – and a surprising number of instruments – were shipped and returned several times, some even reconditioned prior to being re-sold. This instrument represents the final stage of a model's evolution, and as such is an important piece of Gibson history.

Lynn Wheelwright and André Duchossoir (1949-2020) contributed research to this feature, which was originally published in the January '15 issue of VG.

**1935 Gibson L-5 Special/ Super 400 prototype, with serial number 91700.**





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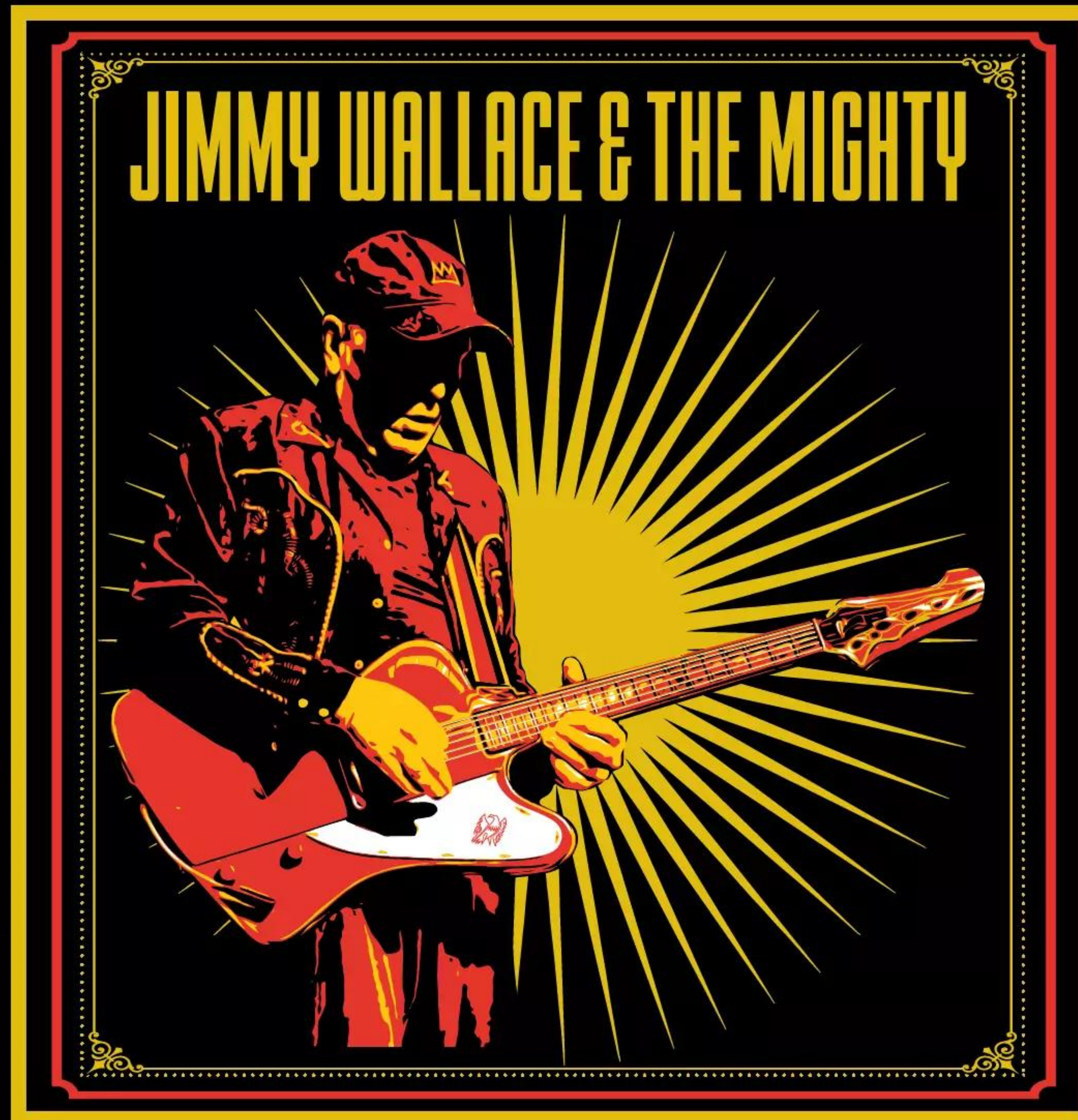
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# SEAT OF POWER

## The WEM Westminster 15

BY DAVE HUNTER

**E**arly Watkins combos are glorified for helping establish Britain's guitar-amp industry, but the company's successor, WEM, made good, useable tube amps well into the 1970s. This Westminster 15 is a prime example.

### 1978 WEM WESTMINSTER 15 AP

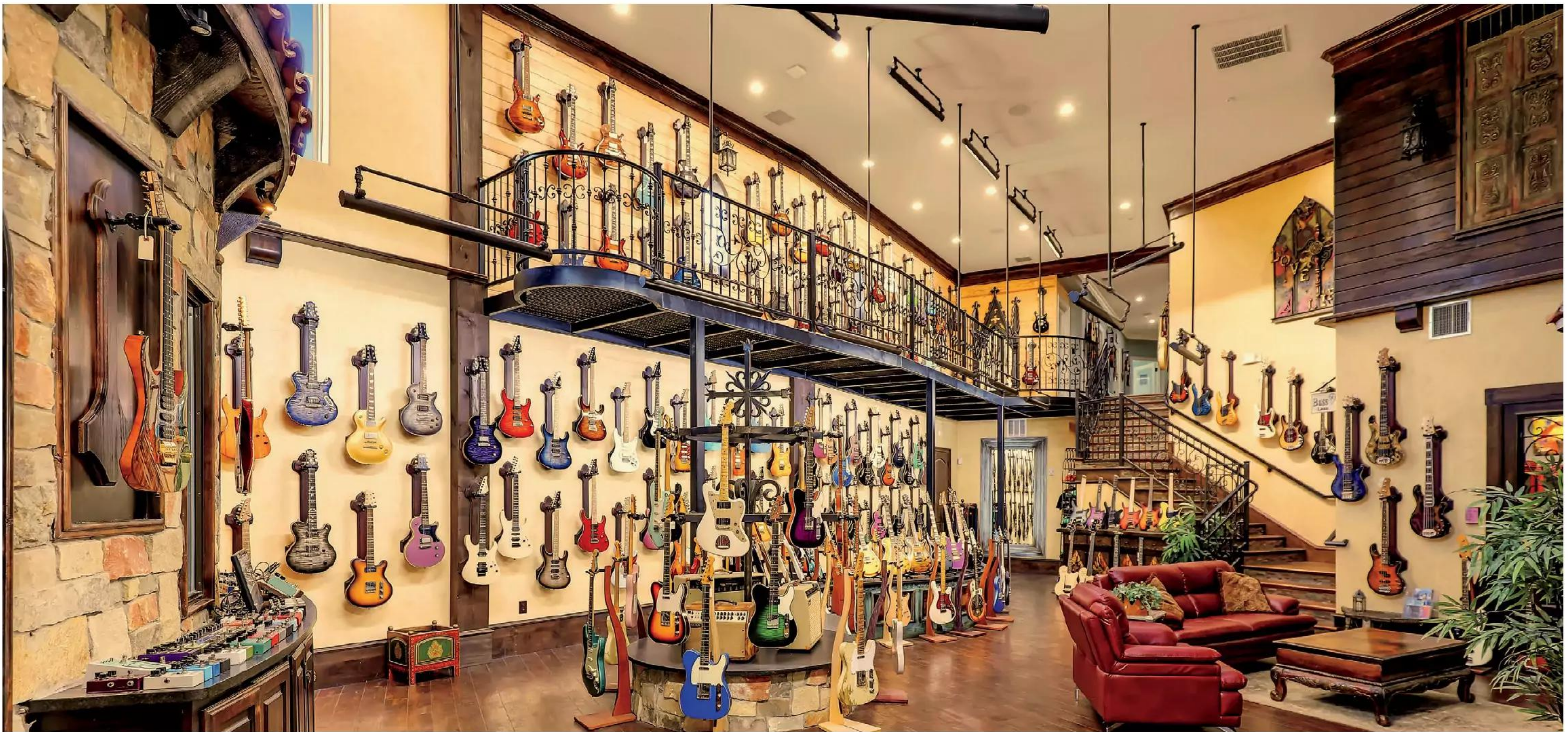
- Preamp tubes: one ECC83 and internal triodes from two ECL82
- Output tubes: pentodes from two ECL82
- Rectifier: solid-state
- Controls: Bass, Treble, Volume
- Speaker: 12" Elac
- Output: approximately 10 watts RMS

The V-front Dominator combo of the late '50s and early '60s is the enduring image of Charlie Watkins' legacy, along with the Copicat tape-echo that was often plugged into it. But those who have played through one of the tube-fired WEM combos that

Amp courtesy of Tone Wolf, photos by Tim Reynolds.



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Photo by Anja Schlein

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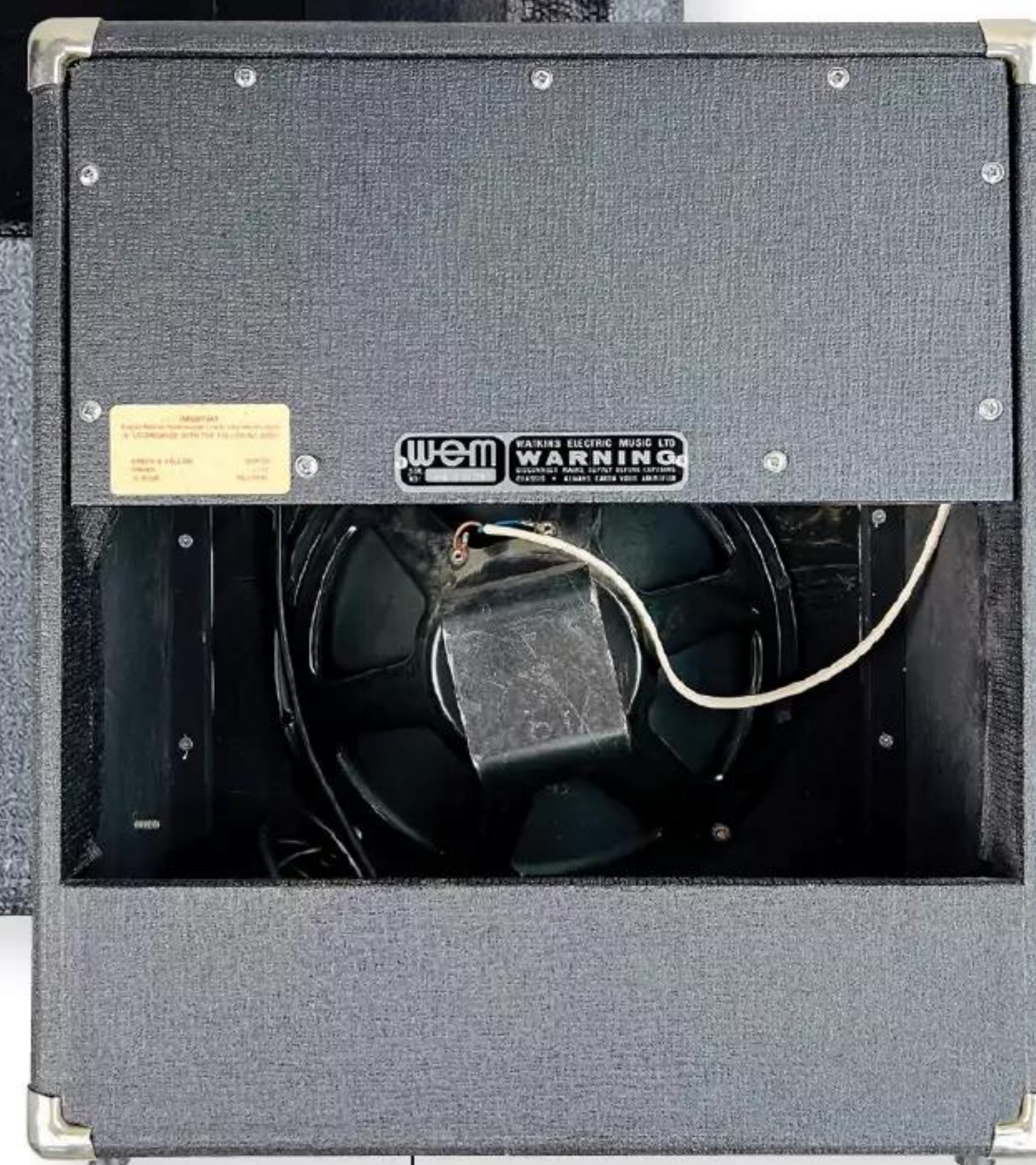


The rear view sans back panel reveals a compact 1x12" combo with a simple yet well-built PCB circuit.

as larger Watkins amps moved to printed circuit boards in the mid '60s.

While many of Watkins/WEM's ads for the Westminster boasted of a "five-valve circuit," that claim might confuse readers perusing the images of this amp and noting the three slender glass tubes within. The seeming anomaly arises from the fact that in addition to the single ECC83 (12AX7) dual-triode in the preamp, the Westminster uses two ECL82 (6BM8) tubes in the output stage. Each contains a high-gain preamp triode and a power pentode within the same glass envelope, enabling the pair to cover both

phase-inverter and push/pull output duties. The ECL82 and dual-purpose tubes of its type were often used in radios, phonographs, and other compact/portable applications, but have occasionally migrated into small guitar amps. The Marshall Popular combo of the '70s used a similarly configured



followed the Watkins era – after sidestepping the brief detour into solid-state amplification – know the Westminster 15 can also be a fiery little tone monster.

The Dominator remained WEM's cornerstone, appended with a larger 30-watt version for a time in the '70s, while the Westminster evolved as the company's student amp. But, while the better-known Dominator in all its forms can sound like a mini Marshall, some later-era Westminster come off as anemic... a tonal assessment that can be changed with a few basic modifications.

Watkins was an accordion player who got into musical-instrument retailing shortly after returning from serving in the Merchant Navy after World War II. In 1949, he and his brother, Reg, opened a record store in south London and, noting the increasing popularity of guitar-driven

"skiffle" music, in '52 began offering affordable jobber guitars and amplifiers. It's worth mentioning that Watkins got into the business even before Tom Jennings (also an accordion player, as it happens) and JMI's popular Vox line – in all-caps on the amps – inspired Watkins to change his brand name to WEM in late 1963 or early '64.

After a run of AC/DC amps that proved to be potentially dangerous (see VG's October '24 feature on the 1955 Selmer Truvoice TV10), the Westminster settled in as Watkins' first real production amp in 1957 and remained a staple in the lineup until the end of production in 1980. Early models were simple point-to-point circuits boasting around 10 watts and selling for around £19. The Westminster remained a point-to-point circuit for several years, even

ECL86, and more recently, Steve Carr has employed the ECL82 in his Super Bee, which seeks to replicate the tone of a Super Reverb in a smaller, lower-volume package.

The Westminster was still using the one-ECC83/two-ECL82 complement upon the arrival of its most-common version, the Mark IX of 1972-'76, by which time its circuit had also gone fully PCB. The schematic had changed in other ways, though, and those alterations largely remained in place in this 1978 Westminster 15 All Purpose (or "AP") combo, which was also the last of its line.

What the 15 gained with the "All Purpose" label, however, it lost in raw, juicy tone when compared to earlier hand-wired





models, at least, since it was much the same as the Mk IX but with the addition of a pushbutton bright switch labelled “Treble Boost.” As it sits, the Westminster 15 AP isn’t a bad-sounding amp, but it’s a little thin and sterile thanks to a few things that were taken away. For example, it lacks cathode-bypass caps, which help voice the preamp and output stages, often lending a fuller, gutsier tone and a little more gain. Adding two or three of these and maybe swapping a coupling cap or two for some of higher values could significantly increase its sonic muscle.

In broad terms, the Westminster’s

**The Westminster’s circuit is basic but well laid-out, with all three tube sockets mounted directly to the board. The lone ECC83 is the amp’s only independent preamp tube, though the taller ECL82s each hide another preamp triode within.**

preamp stage is closer to the ’60s Fender topology than any of the classic British designs. The independent Bass and Treble controls are sandwiched between the first gain stage of the ECC83 and the second (a gain make-up stage). Although, rather than following behind those tone pots and before the second triode, as it would in a Deluxe Reverb, for example, the Volume control sits after that gain stage – an unusual configuration. In any case, neither of these triode stages has a cathode-bypass cap attached; adding a standard low-voltage 25 $\mu$ F here in either or both positions (which a qualified tech could clip on temporarily to test) could really beef up the Westminster’s tone.

In addition, the coupling caps before and after the Volume pot and the two carrying the signal from the phase inverter to each pentode within the ECL82s are all .01 $\mu$ F, a rather low component value for these

**In addition to individual Bass and Treble controls, the Westminster boasts a “Treble Boost” switch, really just a bright switch. The amp is powered up via the switch on the Treble-control potentiometer.**

positions. Upping them to .022 $\mu$ F, .047 $\mu$ F, or .1 $\mu$ F (and experimenting with the results in different positions) would also increase the amp’s bass response and overall girth, bringing a lot more muscle through the 12” Elac Alnico speaker.

Even so, as is, this ’78 Westminster is a fun and funky combo that offers a lot of character from a simple circuit and basic components. It’s also a fascinating look into one of the last designs from the original Watkins/WEM, and a last shot across the bow from the archetypal British “student amp” of the golden age of transatlantic tone. **VG**







# Classics

**I**n 1991, Q104.3 and WNEW 102.7 nudged 10-year-old Jarret Crawford through his first steps to guitar infatuation. Songs by Pearl Jam, Nirvana, and Smashing Pumpkins led him to Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Soon, he wanted to do more than just listen.

“So, I borrowed a guitar from my uncle – a cheap Strat copy with the Hollywood sign painted on it (laughs). But my first proper guitar was a ’94 Richie Sambora Strat with a Floyd Rose, which I bought new at Rondo’s Music with my confirmation money.”

It proved perfect for strumming with high-school friends.

“Dan, Joe, and Alexa!” he recalls fondly. “We shared a lot of licks and riffs.”

After playing in a “very short-lived” band, Crawford set the guitar aside while attending college, graduate school, then starting a family. But by his mid 30s, he was itching to step back in, so he bought an Epiphone Les Paul Standard and an import Strat. Turns out, they were gateways.

“The dam broke,” he said of the years that followed. “I’ve owned more than 100 guitars since.”

He started buying vintage pieces in 2018 and currently has an all-gold ’55 Les Paul Standard that holds “favorite” status, a refinished ’55 TV Junior, ’63 ES-335, and a ’64 6120. Like most collectors, he regrets having sold or traded a few pieces, especially a ’61 dot-neck ES-335 and a ’53 Deluxe modded by the late Alexander Dumble.

In the last five years, his collection has become more Strat-centric.

“Since 2020, I scored a refinished ’57 Mary Kaye, an incredible maple-board ’59, a slab-board ’61, a ’63 refinished in Candy Apple Red, a ’64 Olympic White refin, and three other ’64s in sunburst.”

In May of 2025, Crawford was looking to replace one of his sunburst ’64s despite it being completely original with no issues – spaghetti logo, clay dots, greened pickguard, original case.



"What more could a guy ask for, right?" he said. "I liked it, but I didn't love it; what it had in collectibility it lacked in character, and I really wanted a player-grade Strat that felt more like 'me.' I had just missed on a pre-CBS Strat and was angry-scrolling one day when I saw an ad that had been up for only a few minutes."

Advertised as a refinished '59, it caught his attention mostly because it had an ash body.

"That meant it was originally blond or was an earlier body paired with a slab-board neck and green pickguard. The price was low enough that I knew I'd be safe regardless of the details."

Once in hand, Crawford disassembled the guitar, mostly to confirm the neck was from '59. He noticed a light overspray and, with the exception of the low-E tuner and a couple saddle screws, the hardware was all original. The neck plate serial number was from '59.

But there *was* something odd...

"The three-ply guard didn't match the body, and the control cavity had the earlier shape without the shoulder for the additional pickguard screws; that

meant it would not have been paired with an 11-hole guard."

Searching for a body date, he found "12/54" in the vibrato cavity, but he believed the neck and body had been paired for a very long time, given the paint transfer from the neck pocket to the neck. One theory was someone sent their '54 for a replacement neck and/or a refin after Fender had started using rosewood fretboards in mid '59. Such stories aren't uncommon.

"That said, I saw no indications it was a factory refin, though it is the proper two-tone sunburst," he reasons.

Things got even more interesting when he sent photos to a vintage dealer.

"He not only confirmed the body as a '54, but also that the pickups' slightly taller D-string polepieces meant they were from '54. Oddly, though, the polepieces had been 'unstaggered' – someone pushed the third and fourth nearly flush with the rest. I've asked around and haven't been able to determine if that's something you'd do if you were a lefty playing a right-handed

guitar, but it's something I hadn't seen before. I did ask a collector friend, who told me it's done to make the output more even; he called it 'flat-pole tone.'

"My dealer friend also mentioned the impressions in the body under the pickguard. I hadn't thought much of it – I presumed 'J.H. '69' probably indicated the body had been refinished in '69 by someone with the initials J.H. He noted that equipment used by Jimi Hendrix was sometimes given his initials or marked with 'JHEXP.' And then an amazing coincidence clicked – I'd purchased the guitar from a guy on Vashon Island, just across Puget Sound from Seattle."

Thus began a quest.

"I had two leads – the seller, who hadn't owned it long and didn't take it apart, and an envelope in the case that mentioned 'Jimmy Spakowsky' and a 'Doily party.'"

He called the seller and sleuthed online, discovering the guitar had been owned by Michael Spakowsky, who (with his brother, Jimmy) was in a rock/rockabilly/country band called The Doily Brothers, which

drew crowds in the Vashon area throughout the '70s until Michael's death in 2014.

"Their biggest gig was opening for Alice Cooper at the Paramount in Seattle in 1972," says Crawford.

Michael Spakowsky went on to become a renowned maritime portrait painter

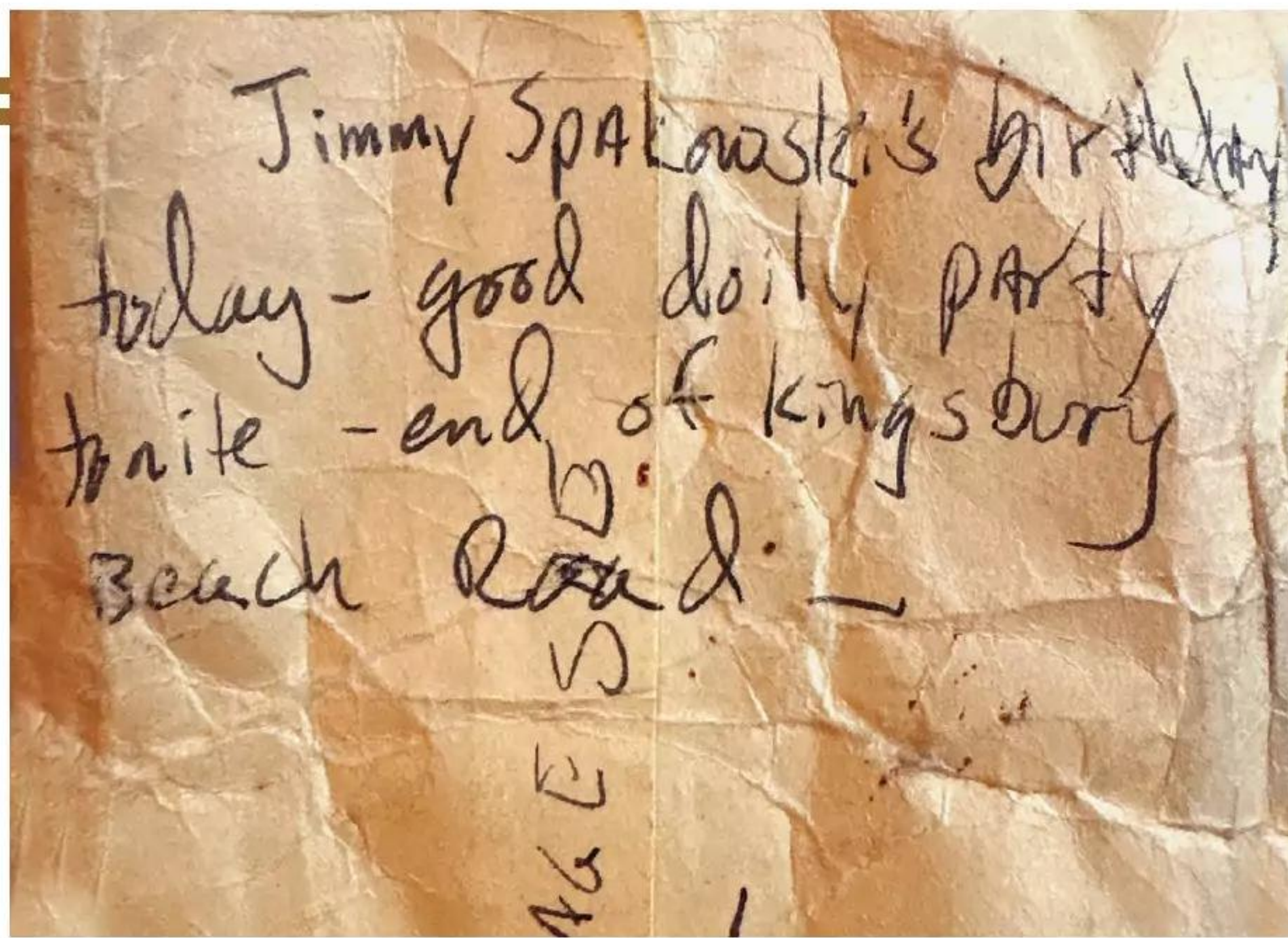
After removing the pickguard, new owner Jarret Crawford discovered "J.H. '69" embossed in the wood, seemingly using the tip of a ballpoint pen repeatedly pushed into the surface.







"J.H." in the neck pocket is more smoothly impressed than on the body.



One-of-a-kind case candy – a note about a band member's birthday-party gig.



Though obscured, "12/54" is scrawled in pencil in the vibrato cavity.

who, in a 2012 interview with *The Beachcomber*, said he completed two pieces each week for 40 years and sold them locally for \$600 or less.

"Unfortunately, this is where the trail went cold, and my attempts to contact Michael's next of kin have not been successful," says Crawford, who now fronts the indie-rock band Loose Panic, which plays original music at gigs in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. His main stage guitar is a Novo Serus J in Ice Blue Metallic Sparkle because "...it looks amazing under the lights." When he and the

band are recording, he digs into his vintage instruments and mostly plugs them into a '67 Deluxe Reverb and '65 Super Reverb.

What status does the Spakowsky Strat hold? "I play it regularly, though I haven't had a chance to gig with it yet. I might take it next time because it's punchy and cuts through a mix. It's easy to find the in-between positions on the three-way, too, and each delivers the tones you'd expect. The neck shape is fairly typical for a '59 – a bit narrower in the first few positions compared to a '63 or '64 –

though not as narrow as the maple-board '59 I previously owned. Also, it's rounder and narrower than your typical '62 to '64 Strat. I recently had Billy Penn do a refret, so it now plays perfectly." **VG**

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



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'58 Sunburst Mint Condition, Perfect collector's piece.  
'58 Sunburst EX+ Condition, Perfect collector's piece.  
'58 Sunburst "Lefty" 100% original in Near Mint, Perfect collector's piece.  
'59 Blond 100% original in Mint condition.  
'59 Red/Slab Rose neck Original custom color, 100% original.  
'61 Fiesta Red/Slab Rose neck 100% original. Near Mint condition.  
'62 Sunburst/Slab Rose neck 100% original. Near Mint condition.

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'62 Blond 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 "Tortoiseshell Pickguard" Gold Hardware 100% original  
'65 Olympic White "Tortoiseshell Pickguard" 100% original  
'66 Sunburst We have 2 Super clean gears in stock.  
'66 Sunburst 100% original in EX condition.  
'69 Blond/Rose neck 100% original, Amazing tone!!  
'70 Sunburst/Rose neck 100% original in Near Mint condition, We have 2 in stock.

'70 Olympic White/4 Bolt Rose neck only refret, changed nut, Super clean!!  
'71 Black/4 Bolt Rose neck only changed nut & SW, Amazing tone!!  
'72 Natural 1 String tree Maple neck 100% original in Mint condition, Super rare!!  
'72 Sunburst 1 String tree Maple & Rose neck We have each in stock.  
'73 Black Rose neck 100% original in Near Mint condition  
'74 Sunburst 1 Strings tree Maple & Rose neck We have each in stock.  
'74 Sunburst "Lefty" Maple neck 100% original in Mint condition, Super rare!!  
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# Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Ram W. Tuli



1971 Gibson  
Flying V  
Medallion

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1972	Acoustic Black Widow		\$1,125	\$1,500
1987	American Showster			
	AS-57-B Classic	USA	\$3,500	\$5,500
1967	Ampeg SSB	Short scale, fretted	\$3,000	\$4,500
1984	Arion Guitar and Bass Effects	Various models	\$25	\$100
1921	Bacon & Day			
	FF Professional No. 2	5-String	\$1,250	\$1,750
1989	BC Rich Gunslinger	Class Axe era	\$1,500	\$2,000
1978	Boss Distortion DS-1	Keeley modded	\$175	\$250
1920s	Bruno and Sons Bowl Back	Fancy	\$550	\$725
1991	Charvel CX Series		\$300	\$400
2004	Collings D2HA	Adirondack	\$4,500	\$5,750
1967	Coral Scorpion	S2N12, sunburst	\$1,125	\$1,500
1967	Danelectro Dane B Series	12-string	\$1,250	\$1,625
1950	D'Angelico			
	New Yorker Special	Natural	\$30,000	\$40,000
2000s	Death By Audio Apocalypse		\$165	\$325
1939	Dobro Dobro/Regal 65	Round or square	\$2,625	\$3,250
1981	DOD Performer Phasor 595		\$75	\$165
2015	EarthQuaker Devices Z-Drive		\$190	\$230
1978	Electro-Harmonix Big Muff Pi	v5, tone bypass	\$300	\$400
2000	Epiphone 1963			
	Firebird VII/Firebird VII		\$650	\$850
1970	Epiphone EA-250 Riviera		\$600	\$750
1996	Epiphone G1275			
	Custom Double Neck		\$700	\$950
1965	Epiphone Rivoli (1 Pickup)		\$3,000	\$4,000
1950	Epiphone Zephyr			
	Emperor Regent	Natural	\$8,500	\$10,500
2000	Fender Bassman 60			
	(later version)	Combo	\$95	\$125
1961	Fender Duo-Sonic/			
	Player Duo-Sonic	Desert Sand	\$3,500	\$4,500
2007	Fender FB-58		\$500	\$650
1999	Fender Jaguar '62	USA	\$1,500	\$2,000
2019	Fender American Ultra Jazz	IV or V	\$1,375	\$1,875
1980	Fender Mustang	Various colors	\$1,500	\$2,000
1981	Fender Precision	Black & Gold	\$2,250	\$3,000
2003	Fender Rumble Series	Rumble 150 Head	\$135	\$175
1998	Fender Squire Precision Special	IV and V	\$115	\$150
1973	Fender Stratocaster	Sunburst	\$5,000	\$6,500
1982	Fender '62 Stratocaster (USA)	SN: V series	\$3,500	\$4,500
1997	Fender Collector's Edition			
	Stratocaster ('62 Reissue)		\$1,500	\$2,000
1963	Fender Telecaster	Sunburst	\$22,000	\$28,000
1970	Fender Telecaster Thinline	Common color	\$16,000	\$20,000
1997	Fender '50s Relic/			
	'51 NoCaster Custom Shop	Cunetto era Closet Classic	\$3,500	\$4,500
2006	Fender 60th Anniversary			
	Telecaster Limited Edition		\$2,000	\$2,500
2004	Fender Jimmy Bryant			
	Tribute Telecaster	Custom Shop	\$3,000	\$4,000
1981	Fender Vibrolux Reverb	Blackface	\$1,500	\$2,000
1960s	Framus Model 5/97 & /197		\$600	\$775





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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1984	Genesis G10	10 watts	\$70	\$100
1933	Gibson A-1	Sunburst, f-holes	\$1,375	\$1,875
1965	Gibson C-0 Classical		\$650	\$850
1969	Gibson EB-0 L		\$1,750	\$2,500
1964	Gibson Firebird I	Sunburst, reverse, trem	\$10,500	\$14,000
1971	Gibson Flying V Medallion		\$25,000	\$30,000
2013	Gibson Flying V			
	Brendon Small Snow Falcon	Limited run	\$2,500	\$3,000
2005	Gibson Hummingbird Historic		\$2,500	\$3,250
1999	Gibson J-45 Rosewood	Indian rosewood	\$2,000	\$2,500
1970	Gibson L-4 C or L-4 CN	Natural or sunburst	\$3,000	\$4,000
2006	Gibson Les Paul			
	50th Anniversary			
	1956 Les Paul Standard		\$3,000	\$4,000
1976	Gibson Les Paul Deluxe	All other colors	\$4,000	\$5,500
1998	Gibson Les Paul			
	Old Hickory		\$4,500	\$6,000
1983	Gibson Les Paul Studio		\$1,500	\$2,000
1961	Gibson Melody Maker D	Sunburst, cherry, double-cut	\$2,625	\$3,250
1934	Gibson Roy Smeck Radio Grande Hawaiian	Brazilian, Spanish converted	\$20,000	\$25,000
1983	Gibson SG Special II		\$850	\$1,125
1974	Gibson SJN Deluxe (Country-Western Jumbo)	4-ply to binding	\$2,750	\$3,500
1925	Gibson TB-5	Ball-bearing	\$7,000	\$9,500
1994	Godin Acousticaster 6 Deluxe		\$625	\$850
1977	Gretsch Broadkaster (Hollowbody) 7609	Red	\$1,250	\$1,500
1960	Gretsch Eldorado (6040/6041)	Natural	\$2,500	\$3,250
1954	Gretsch Round-Up (6130)	Pine	\$15,000	\$18,000
1977	Guild B-302AF		\$1,000	\$1,500
1966	Guild Duane Eddy Standard DE-400	Natural	\$3,750	\$5,000
1980	Guild Mark III		\$500	\$650
1991	Guild Starfire IV	Reissue	\$1,500	\$2,000
1965	Hagstrom H-22 Folk	Acoustic flat top	\$375	\$475
1960s	Harmony H-306A	1x12	\$375	\$575
1986	Heritage Eagle		\$2,500	\$3,125
1968	Hofner Model 172/R	Red	\$1,000	\$1,375
1970s	Hondo M 16 Rambo-Machine Gun	with form fit case	\$500	\$650
1980	Ibanez Multi-Effect UE400 (Rackmount)		\$300	\$375
1990	Jackson Soloist/Soloist USA/SL Series/American Series	Various models	\$2,500	\$3,500

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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1936	Kalamazoo KTG-21 Tenor	Archtop	\$775	\$975
1961	Kent Electric	Common models	\$250	\$350
1985	Kramer Ferrington		\$500	\$650
1989	Kustom KLA-15 Combo		\$65	\$100
1924	Leedy Solotone	B Tenor	\$1,125	\$1,500
1966	Magnatone Model MP-3 (Magna Power 3)	2x12 tube	\$850	\$1,250
2007	Marshall JVM410C	100 watts, 2x12	\$1,000	\$1,375
1973	Marshall Model 1987 50-Watt Head	Black, printed C.B., large box	\$2,125	\$3,000
1857	Martin 2-18		\$4,250	\$5,500
1999	Martin 000-18WG Woody Guthrie		\$3,000	\$4,000
2000	Martin 000C-16RGTE		\$1,125	\$1,500
1961	Martin 00-21NY	Brazilian, 12-fret	\$8,000	\$10,000
1950	Martin 0-18T		\$2,000	\$2,500
1996	Martin D12-1	Mahogany, satin	\$775	\$1,000
1999	Martin D-21JC			
	Jim Croce Signature	Indian	\$4,500	\$6,000
2008	Martin D-41 Porter Wagoner	Indian rw	\$3,000	\$4,000
1996	Martin DM-12		\$600	\$800
1996	Martin HD-28SO Sing Out!	Indian rosewood	\$3,000	\$4,000
1998	Martin N-20WNB 'Trigger'	Brazilian, 30 made	\$12,000	\$15,000
2022	Martin SC-13E Special		\$1,375	\$1,750
1996	Matchless Lightning 15 210		\$2,250	\$3,000
1990	Mesa-Boogie Quad Preamp	With footswitch	\$775	\$1,250
1960s	Mosrite Joe Maphis			
	Mark XVIII		\$4,000	\$5,000
1962	National Dynamic 20	17 watts, 2x8	\$900	\$1,250
1956	National Tremo-Tone			
	Model 1224		\$1,125	\$1,500
1984	Orville by Gibson			
	SG LP Custom		\$1,250	\$1,625
1924	Paramount Banjo-Harp	Tenor, 4-String	\$900	\$1,250
1996	Peavey EVH Wolfgang	Pat. Pending early production	\$3,250	\$4,000
1998	Peavey Ultra 410	60 watts	\$325	\$450
1987	PRS Curly Bass-4		\$3,000	\$5,000
1995	PRS Standard 22	Stevensville	\$1,500	\$2,000
2014	Rick Model 4003SW	Walnut	\$1,750	\$2,375
1965	Rickenbacker Model 360	OS body	\$7,500	\$9,500
1957	Rickenbacker			
	Model 800/Combo 800	Blond/white, 2 pickups	\$7,500	\$9,500
1890s	S.S. Stewart 20th Century		\$900	\$1,250
1960s	Silvertone Espanada	black	\$1,500	\$2,000
1970s	Sound City 200 Plus Head		\$1,375	\$1,750
1978	Sunn Beta Bass	Combo 4x10	\$725	\$1,250
1970s	Supro Strum 'N			
	Drum Solidbody	Higher-end	\$500	\$650
1998	Taylor 414-K	Koa	\$1,625	\$2,125
2020	Taylor AD17		\$900	\$1,125
2004	Taylor XXX-KE (koa)		\$2,625	\$3,500
1967	Traynor YBA3			
	Custom Special Bass Set	130 watts, 8x10, tubes	\$1,125	\$1,500
1966	Vega Ranger	5-string	\$550	\$750
2015	Vox AC15HW1	15 watts, 1x12, China	\$925	\$1,250
1961	Vox Stroller		\$575	\$750
1924	Weymann Style A Tenor	Style A, low pro	\$750	\$1,125
1972	Yamaha YBA-65 Bass		\$125	\$175



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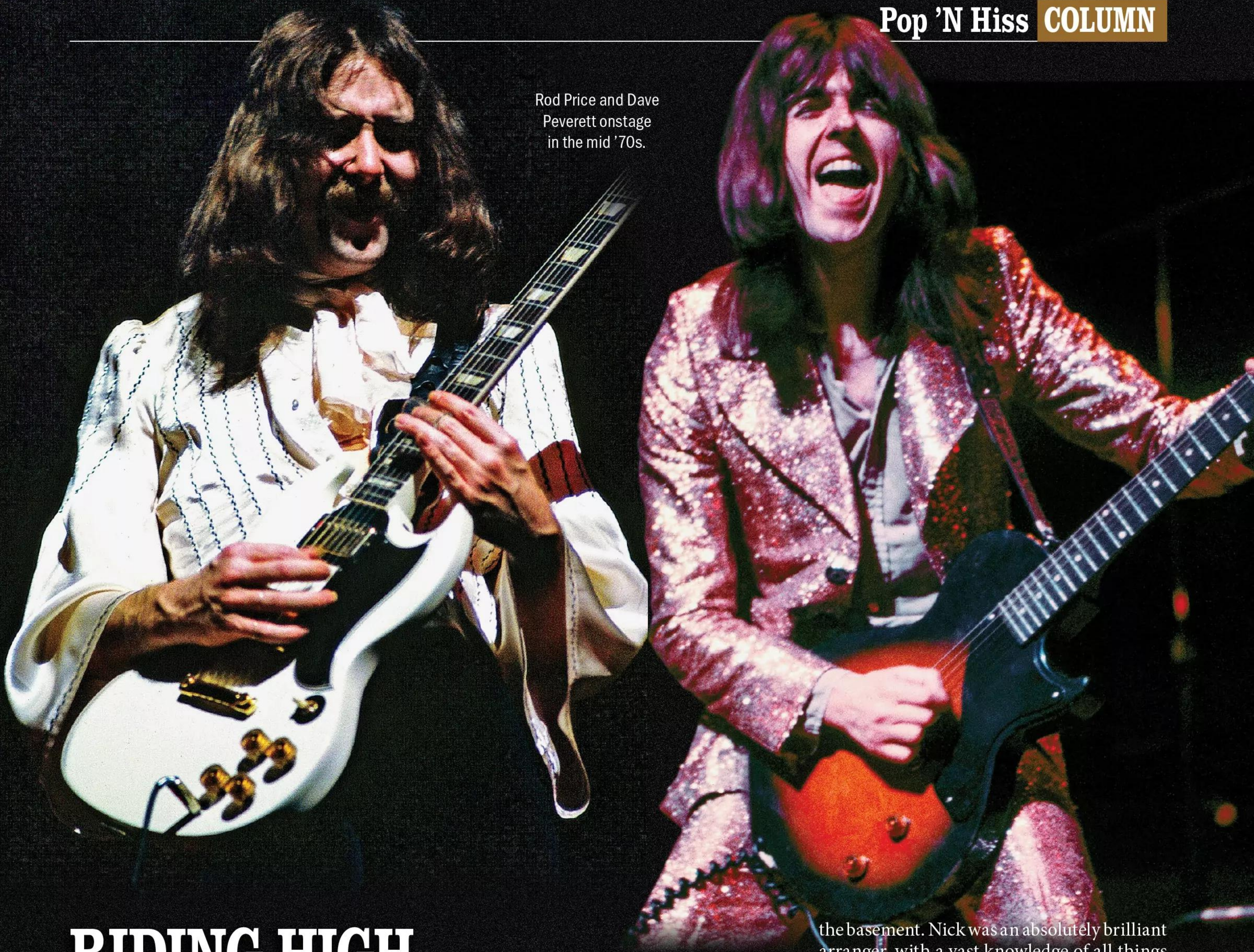
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Rod Price and Dave Peverett onstage in the mid '70s.



# RIDING HIGH

## Foghat's *Fool for the City*

By Bret Adams

**F**rom its opening drum beats, swaggering guitar riffing, bass thumps, and sing-along chorus, Foghat's "Slow Ride" is one of rock's enduring epics, anchoring an album that sizzles with blues-rock boogie gusto.

Formed in 1971, Foghat was an offshoot of the British band Savoy Brown; vocalist/rhythm guitarist "Lonesome" Dave Peverett, bassist Tony Stevens, and drummer Roger Earl left Savoy to join lead/slide guitarist Rod Price. Relentless touring promoted the band's first four albums, starting with 1972's *Foghat* and its

blistering cover of Willie Dixon's "I Just Want to Make Love to You." Success was building, but the grueling pace led Stevens to depart. Nick Jameson joined as bassist informing the band he would stay on for one year. With Jameson also serving as producer, sessions for *Fool for the City* took place in 1975 at Suntreader Studios in Sharon, Vermont.

"It was the first time the band took three months off," Earl told *Vintage Guitar*. "Nick had just joined and we rehearsed at a house Rod and I had in Long Island. We soundproofed

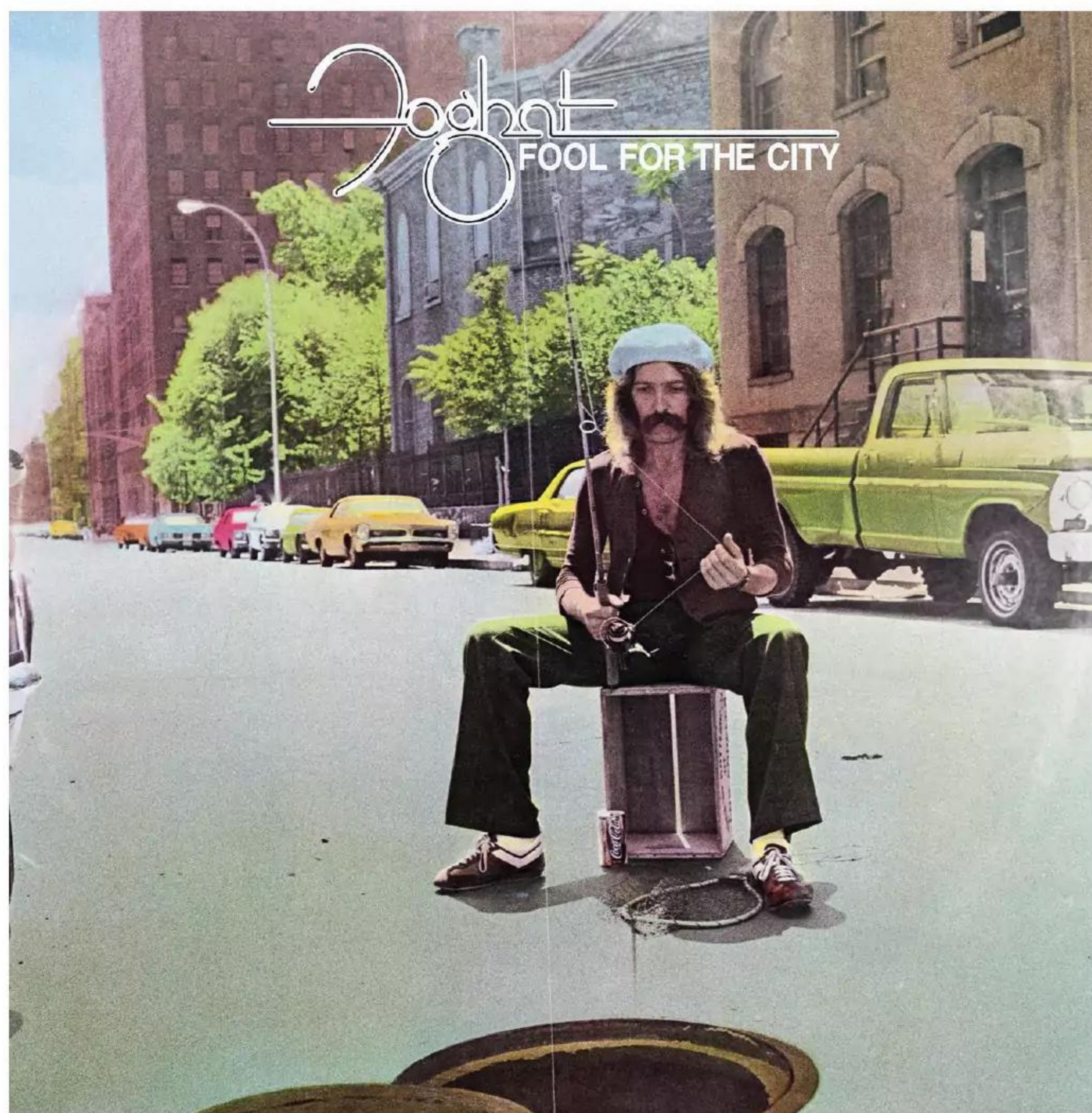
the basement. Nick was an absolutely brilliant arranger, with a vast knowledge of all things music and [the ability to] play dozens of different instruments.

"It was a lot of fun making the album. Everybody was also at the top of their game, musically. Dave was as good a writer as he was a guitar player, and Rod was just absolutely brilliant – he *knew* he was at the top of his game, which I think put a lot of pressure on him. The band didn't, but he wanted to be the best that he could, and he pressured himself."

The rollicking title track was a team effort.

"I remember Dave had the basic lyrics and sort of how it was going to go," said Earl. "Nick added the arrangement. Rod's guitar playing was fantastic and turned it all around; every time we'd play the song, we'd find something new to put in, or Nick would say, 'Let's try this next time.' But it was fun."





The song reached #45 on the *Billboard* singles chart. "My Babe" was a minor 1963 hit for The Righteous Brothers.

"We were on the road supporting Humble Pie. Dave and I would hang out with (vocalist/guitarist) Stevie Marriott," remembered Earl. "He recommended it to us, and Nick said he did that song in his first band. Stevie and Dave, musically, were like two peas in a pod."

The album's first single, "Slow Ride" came from a jam recorded in two sessions because power went out in the first.

"It's basically a John Lee Hooker riff played in a straight 4/4 instead of a shuffle," said Earl. "Dave had some lyrics, Nick did all the arranging. To be fair, Nick should've got credit for co-writing it, and probably Rod, as well, but that's another story. The song took on a life of its own."

Despite running more than eight minutes, the song was getting radio airplay even before its actual release as a single. Cut down to 3:56, it reached #20 on *Billboard*.

The band's take on Robert Johnson's "Terraplane Blues" includes extensive slide soloing from Price.

"Rod was a Robert Johnson fan, as was Dave," Earl said. "Rod's playing on that was beautiful. Nick recently told me he played bass with a slide."

"Take it or Leave It" is a soulful ballad featuring Jameson's warm keyboard sound.

"Before Nick was in the band, Dave never sang or wrote anything in such a high,

full voice. But Nick encouraged him. It's a beautiful song."

Earl praises Jameson's overall musicianship and production skills. In fact, his talent and Peverett's love of saxophone led to a now-lost track.

"Nick could pick up an instrument and in half an hour, he'd be playing it. When we were on the road, you always knew where Dave's room was because you could hear him practicing sax. In Vermont, Dave wrote a song called 'Going to the Mardi Gras.' We got to the studio and Nick came in with a soprano sax and decided that we were going to do a horn section on a song, so he wrote some charts. I don't think Dave could actually read them, but the two of them played horn parts. That's typical of Nick."

"Unfortunately, the song never made it onto the record, but it was an R&B kind of thing. Nick bought a soprano sax and was playing it within 15, 20 minutes. He is an absolute genius and tons of fun to make records with."

*Fool for the City* – with Earl pictured on the cover fishing down a manhole

on a Manhattan street – reached #23 on *Billboard* and went platinum. It has just been reissued for its 50th anniversary with previously unreleased live tracks from two 1975 Chicago shows.

Today, Earl leads Foghat as the lone original member. In 2000, Peverett died of kidney cancer and pneumonia, age 56. Price passed away in '05 at 57, after a heart attack and suffering head trauma when he fell down a flight of stairs at his home. Jameson, who worked on the *Fool for the City* reissue, has a varied creative career as an actor, comedian, and voice-over artist.

Earl has many fond memories of the *Fool for the City* era.

"We were having a blast. Everybody took their music seriously, but we were having fun with it. We were enjoying every moment onstage. It was a good time." **VG**



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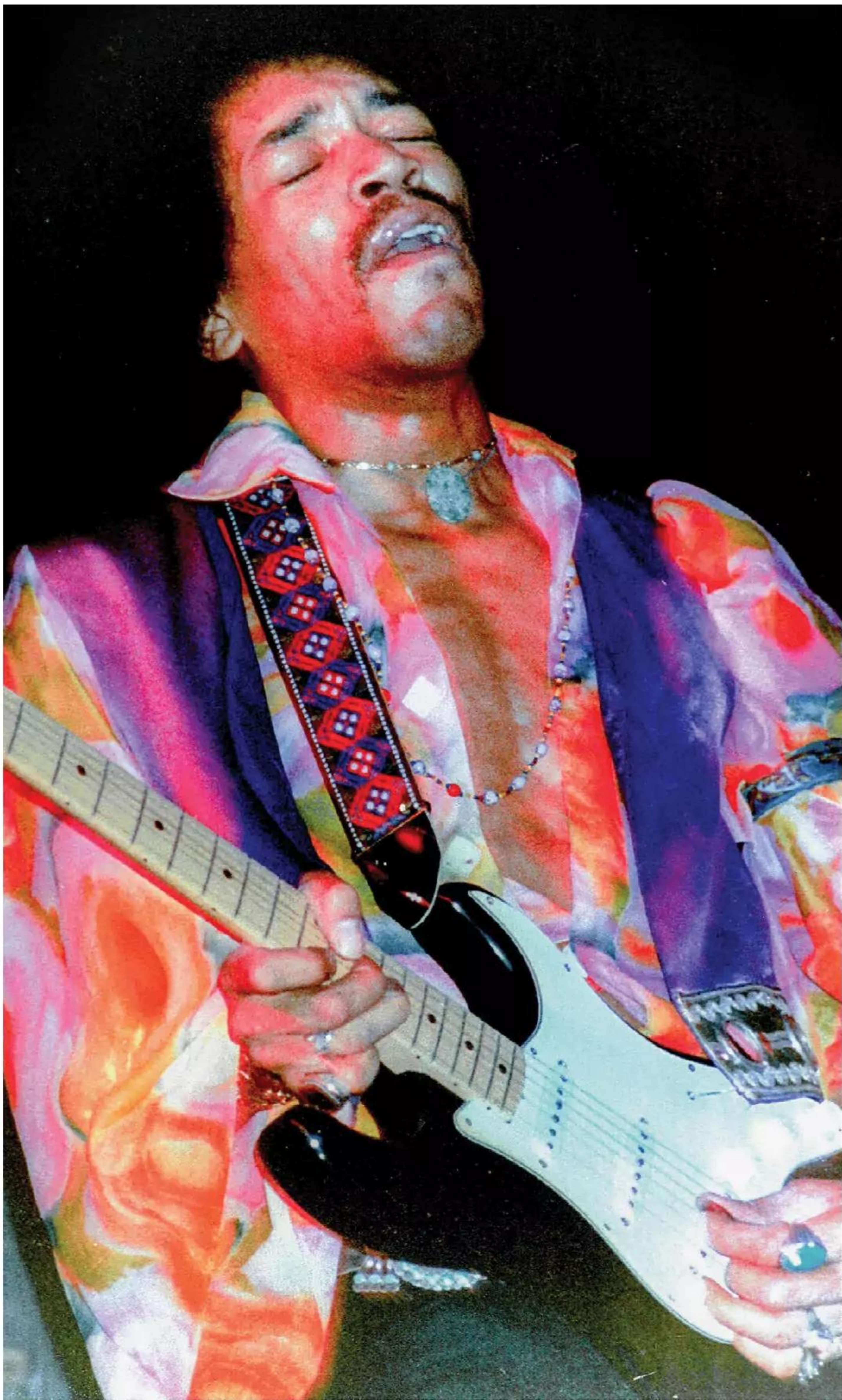
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# CURSE CIRCUMVENT

## Jimi Hendrix Experience *Axis: Bold As Love*

By Wolf Marshall

**L**ooser, jazzier, and more polished than the earthshaking debut album by the Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Axis: Bold As Love* exceeded expectations as the burgeoning guitar god elegantly sidestepped the sophomore curse with its innovation,

wah. Recording was hastily scheduled and randomly scattered as the band also performed in England, Europe, and America that summer. On June 5, they recorded 17 takes of “Cat Talking to Me,” which wasn’t released until *West Coast Seattle*

maturation, and focus.

Highlighted by the guitarist’s growing compositional prowess, arranging skills, and command of hard rock, psychedelic, funk, progressive, jazz, and pop, *Axis* reached rock’s outer limits.

Days after completing *Are You Experienced*, sessions commenced for *Axis* May 4 and 5, 1967, at London’s Olympic Studios with new eight-track machines under the supervision of producer Chas Chandler and engineer Eddie Kramer, aided by second engineer George Chkiantz. Redding’s “She’s So Fine” was first to be attempted and rough passes at “If 6 was 9” and “EXP.” The band, which also included bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell, recorded seven tracks but only kept three; returning May 9 to begin “Burning of the Midnight Lamp,” which included experiments with harpsichord, 12-string, and

*Boy* in 2010. In mid June, they played the Monterey Pop Festival followed by shows at the Fillmore, then were booked June 28-30 at L.A.’s Houston Studios for what proved to be unproductive sessions. July 6-7 found them in Mayfair Studios, adding R&B group The Sweet Inspirations’ vocals to “Midnight Lamp.”

On September 27, they convened without Jimi at Rye Muse to continue “She’s So Fine.” October was busy at Olympic; Jimi became adept in the studio, but his perfectionism delayed production with numerous retakes of backing tracks, causing conflicts with an impatient Chandler. Moreover, sessions were frequently disrupted by a party atmosphere with friends and hangers-on. Nonetheless, recording progressed steadily; October 29 was particularly productive, as five songs were completed. Mixing began October 31 with remixing into early November. Wrapped in Hindu-meets-hippie artwork depicting the Experience as transcendent sonic demigods, *Axis* was released in England on December 1 (seven months after *Experienced*), America on January 15. It reached the Top 10 in both. Only their second album, it was the last to feature a cohesive JHE (its successor, *Electric Ladyland*, included more than a dozen guests and a sprawling soundscape).

*Axis* captured Jimi in mid flight, hurtling toward greatness. The Strat-colored R&B chord style introduced on “Wind Cries Mary” crystallized in “Little Wing” and “Castles Made of Sand.” Redding claimed only “basic distortion” effects were used on the debut, but *Axis* signified a departure, showcasing new sounds from studio processing (ADT, phase, flange, echo, VSO) to Jimi’s unrestrained embrace of pedals (wah, fuzz, octave divider) and Leslie cabinets, tuning down a half step, and Hagstrom eight-string bass (played by Redding and Hendrix).

*Axis* opens with Jimi’s imaginative sound collage, “EXP,” which combines a spoken-word faux radio interview (Mitchell and Hendrix) documenting contact with extraterrestrial “Paul Corusoe” (Jimi), with electronic noise and harmonic/microphonic feedback plus open harmonics, processed guitar bits, and whammy-bar antics suggesting what David Crosby called “dinosaurs fighting nuclear war.” A vignette expounding on the sounds and imagery introduced in “Third Stone from the Sun,” it’s made more disconcerting through panning to scatter at least three guitar parts (some through a Marshall stack plus a separate six-foot horn)

Jimi Hendrix circa 1968: Jeffrey Mayer/Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy.



Tune down 1/2 step  
Moderate Rock

C#7#9

In the closing solo on Jimi's "Spanish Castle Magic" (2:37), he extracted the essence of iconic blues guitarists and stirred it into a hard-rock stew over a vamping C#7#9. The rolling repeated figures with idiomatic unison string bends and riff patterns of largely pentatonic content in measures 1-2 reach

back to blues traditions of T-Bone Walker and Buddy Guy, while his exaggerated major and minor-third wide string bends and emphatic phrasing in 3-6 acknowledge the influence of Albert King. Jimi spikes the mixture with heavy distortion and a driving hard-rock attitude.

over the stereo picture, and segues directly into "Up from the Skies," amplifying Jimi's fascination with extraterrestrial themes. Mitchell's triplet-feel stroll and brushwork convey soul-jazz sensibilities in the swinging vamp groove, a contrast to "EXP" and quite different from anything on *Experienced*. Jimi's wah-colored guitar decorates and permeates the arrangement, supplying atypical chromatically-shifting dominant chords and bluesy triplet-dominated single-note lines. His feel change at the bridge, understated inner solo, and grooving outro solo provide intriguing points of contrast. Released as an American single, it reached #82.

"Spanish Castle Magic" is unabashed proto-metal, inspired by the Spanish Castle roadhouse near Seattle. Blending heavy rock with R&B, it was one of two *Axis* tunes played regularly in concert. The arrangement features dynamic parallel guitar/

bass riffs, dramatic stop-time verse figures (a pre-Zep harbinger), and an omnipresent C#7#9 chord that places it squarely in the "Purple Haze"/"Foxy Lady" canon. Recorded October 27-28, it boasts Jimi's overdubbed eight-string bass (through an Octavia), jazz chords on piano, and two strong solos merging blues, his most pervasive influence as soloist, with a heavily distorted hard-rock bent.

Recorded October 26, "Wait Until Tomorrow" presents more evidence of Jimi's compositional advancement in one of his most enduring situation songs and greatest bits of storytelling. His R&B side surfaces immediately in the intro figures he labored over (recalled in interludes) via embellished triad riffs bristling with syncopation. Verses contain undisguised allusions to black dance rhythms and funky comping a la Steve Cropper and the "chitlin circuit" soul medium, with tightly placed yet loosely swinging

partial chords, fills, and arpeggiations. Jimi doesn't solo on the tune, but develops the motion and power of pure rhythm in his propulsive lead-rhythm approach.

A lesser-known (but no less compelling) piece in the "Purple Haze" canon is "Ain't No Telling," which similarly exploits the distinctive 7#9 sonority in verses. Jimi's core riffs (one-bar figures containing the altered chord) are repeated and developed within six-bar phrases characteristic of the unflagging funkiness he brought to hard rock. The powerful forward motion is maintained by Mitchell's propulsive drumming and complemented by the trio's accented wide-triplet patterns that momentarily suggest an unexpected waltz feel. Jimi overdubbed a second guitar to reinforce the vocal melody – a strategy that hints at blues traditions and underscores his arranger's mindset. Another tune dominated by rhythm and groove, it contains minimal guitar soloing.

"Little Wing," inspired by events at Monterey Pop, was completed in late October. Its origins harken to Jimi's Greenwich Village days

fronting Jimmy James & the Blue Flames. The initial JHE version was played faster with hard-rock trappings but was recast as a slow-rock/R&B ballad with lyric references to Native American mythology. Throughout, Jimi cultivates Curtis Mayfield lead/rhythm mannerisms, recalling guitar parts reminiscent of Lonnie Youngblood's 1966 arrangement for The Icemen's "She's a Fox" (on which Jimi played guitar). He processed his Strat (neck and middle pickups) with rotating-speaker effects, added glockenspiel, and Kramer applied ADT to his vocals. A shorter arrangement (2:30), it was the second *Axis* song played in concert, and has been covered by Clapton, SRV, Sting, and Gil Evans.

Jimi said "If 6 Was 9" demonstrates "a great feeling of blues" despite its acid-fueled rock delivery, rife with hippie counterculture aphorisms, nods to Hopi lore, and spacey free-form jam. His Strat



sound is colored with echo and fuzz, employs heavy reverb and extreme panning, and doubles his vocal with an overdubbed guitar in the blues tradition. Graham Nash and Gary Leeds provided the foot-stamping percussion effects. The song was developed over several months beginning with a May 4-5 studio jam recorded in two segments – “Section A” and “Section B” (retitled “Symphony of Experience”). Historic note: the *Axis* side-one master (ending with this piece) was lost when Jimi accidentally left the tape in a taxi. Seven songs had to be hurriedly remixed from Redding’s rough dub.

Back-tracked guitar, introduced on *Experienced*, opens “You Got Me Floatin’” and ushers in Jimi’s funky riff of simple double-stops and muted strings doubled by bass that might as well be called “R&B 101.” The chorus exploits a secondary tandem groove riff, also in the R&B tradition. The track’s unusual instrumentation includes eight-string bass parts acting as counterpoint to Jimi’s Octavia-tinged interlude solo and random backward-guitar snippets, blues licks, and lead/rhythm chord phrases laced into the ad-lib jam. Roy Wood and Trevor Burton (of Move) supplied background vocals.

In “Castles Made of Sand,” Jimi’s amalgam of soul, Dylanesque poetics, and psychedelia evokes a dream-like story line chronicling his childhood. Emerging from the October 29 session, the loose psychedelic ballad reveals more sophistication and develops a gentle mid-tempo groove punctuated with abrupt  $\frac{2}{4}$  bars and rubato sections. Ubiquitous backward guitar underscores subconscious imagery in the intro, verses, choruses, and most conspicuously in the solo, flown-in to accompany Jimi’s lead/rhythm chord-melody. The latter is made

more striking by chains of modernistic sus2 (5add2) sonorities in the intro and outro.

Inspired by Jimi’s compositions, Redding offered an original for the first time. The 23rd pass on May 5 yielded the master take of “She’s So Fine,” his hippie paean

ornamented approach that blends basic homophonic chord playing with contrapuntal elements emphasizing non-chord tones (9ths, 11ths, 13ths, suspensions) and ad-lib improvised melodies. Throughout, his patented thumb-fretting technique and legato phrasing of embellishments are on full display.

reconciling British Invasion pop with San Francisco psychedelic rock. It features Redding singing lead with Jimi and Mitchell providing background vocals. He introduces the catchy chorus riff on bass over Mitchell’s rock beat and is joined by Jimi’s doubling

Tune down 1/2 step  
**Slow Rock**

Em G

Harm. let ring throughout

Am Em

Bm Bb Am

G Asus2 Gsus2 Fsus2



Tune down 1/2 step  
Moderately Slow Rock

In “Bold as Love,” Jimi crafted a memorable, tuneful solo that epitomizes melodic blues improvisation (1:46). Use of melodic and rhythmic sequences, imitation, thematic development, and call-and-response phrase structure indicate his solos were not just loose instrumental breaks (though he excelled at those, too) but mini-compositions

in themselves. His sensitivity to the harmony is reflected in the deliberate lines played over F#m-G, an uncommon chord change in blues and rock. Jimi’s ability to infuse a ballad or pop song with soulful bluesy feel and melodic string bending made him a model for legions of guitarists to follow.

part and short lead break. The characteristic Mixolydian progression of hippie-rock coaxes a melodic blues-tinged approach from Jimi, explicit in his very structured solo and modal sitar-ish lines in the outro.

Hendrix aficionado Eric Johnson cited “One Rainy Wish” as a personal favorite, and Mike Stern upped the ante by claiming Jimi attained the lyric feeling and fatter tone of a hollowbody (à la Jim Hall and Wes Montgomery) on his Strat. The B-side of “Up From Skies,” Jimi’s moderato ballad pursued otherworldly themes and sound-as-colors notions (developed fully

in “Bold as Love”) based on his dream of a “sky filled with a thousand stars” and “eleven moons played across the rainbows.” He mixes meters for strong contrast in the arrangement, using  $\frac{3}{4}$  for gentle, ballad-like verses in E major and  $\frac{4}{4}$  for heavier rock-oriented choruses in C# major. Layering interwoven lead/rhythm guitars throughout, Jimi builds to a canonic imitative section with two dialoguing guitars over C-C#m changes in the outro. Recorded in mid October, it was completed late that month.

“Little Miss Lover” epitomizes the intuitive connection between Mitchell and

Hendrix. Its drum part fore-shadows, complements, and mirrors Jimi’s funky guitar riffing, which is clearly rhythmic in nature and performed percussively using abundant muted string scrapes, partial chords, and occasional single notes, colored with fuzz and wah. Eight-string bass completes the sonic picture. Jimi plays his space-conscious blues-based lead break with Octavia and reprises the sound with an insistent repeated lick in the outro.

Jimi explored sounds as colors in the closing title track “Bold As Love,” attributing moods and personalities to varied hues. He united incongruous shades/characters with an overarching theme, “Just ask the Axis.” Superficially, the song represents psychedelia, but on examination, it exemplifies Jimi’s deeper spiritual side and increasing lyrical and musical sophistication. He marries tone to tints in the narrative and fashions colorful guitar orchestration combining loose semi-clean R&B chording with simple clean-tone accompaniment – arpeggios, drones, and tremoloed dyads (choruses) – along with distorted fills and fuzzed lyrical blues-rock solo and outro improvisations. The coda contains the first official recording of stereo phasing (two tape decks running simultaneously, one flanged/manipulated and one normal) in the melodious

ride-out guitar solo. JHE began recording the rock ballad on October 4. It was composited from instrumental takes 21 and 27 the next day and completed late that month.

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](http://wolfmarshall.com).



# STILL GOT IT

## A Player and His Decca

I'm hoping you can shed some light on the old Decca electric my father picked up for me second-hand around 1970. I remember plugging it in for the first time and playing "Wipe Out" for hours, and it still sounds pretty good.

I've seen other Decca electrics with different pickguards, either black or mirror. Mine is a brushed metal or aluminum, and I'm wondering if it is original. Everything else but the tuners seem original. It's kind of quirky, has a very fat neck, push-button pickup selectors, and odd fret-marker spacing.

Finally, was it made by the same Decca company that made records? – **Bill Brown**

Your guitar is a DMI-202, which only shows up in Decca's 1968 catalog but is identical to the DMI-201 (one pickup) and DMI-203 (three pickups, vibrato) shown in the '66 catalog, so presumably the 202 was also available in '66. For some reason, none of them are in

the '67 catalog! Yours appears to be all stock, including the pickguard.

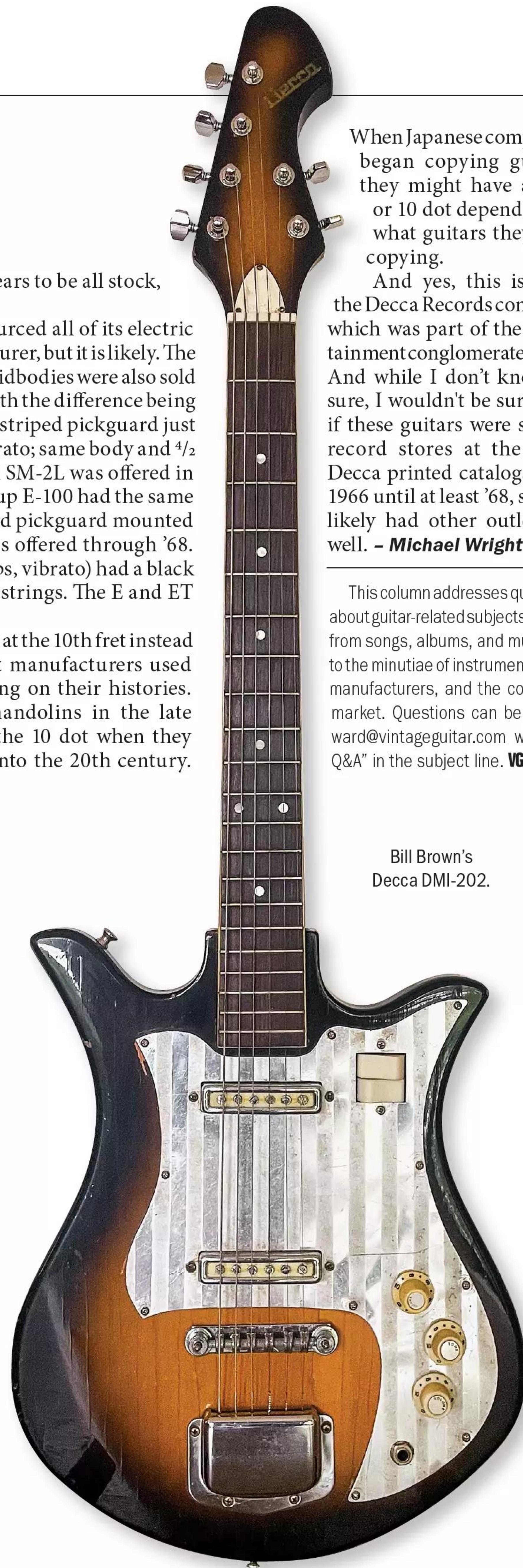
I'm not sure if Decca sourced all of its electric guitars from one manufacturer, but it is likely. The DMI-202 and other 200 solidbodies were also sold as the '66 Teisco ET-210, with the difference being that the ET-210 had a half-striped pickguard just below the strings, plus vibrato; same body and 4 1/2 head. The almost identical SM-2L was offered in Japan. In '67, the one-pickup E-100 had the same body with a small mirrored pickguard mounted below the strings. This was offered through '68. The '67 ET-200 (two pickups, vibrato) had a black pickguard, also below the strings. The E and ET had Strat-style heads.

Why this guitar has a dot at the 10th fret instead of ninth is a mystery, but manufacturers used one or the other depending on their histories. Companies that made mandolins in the late 19th century often used the 10 dot when they switched to guitars well into the 20th century.

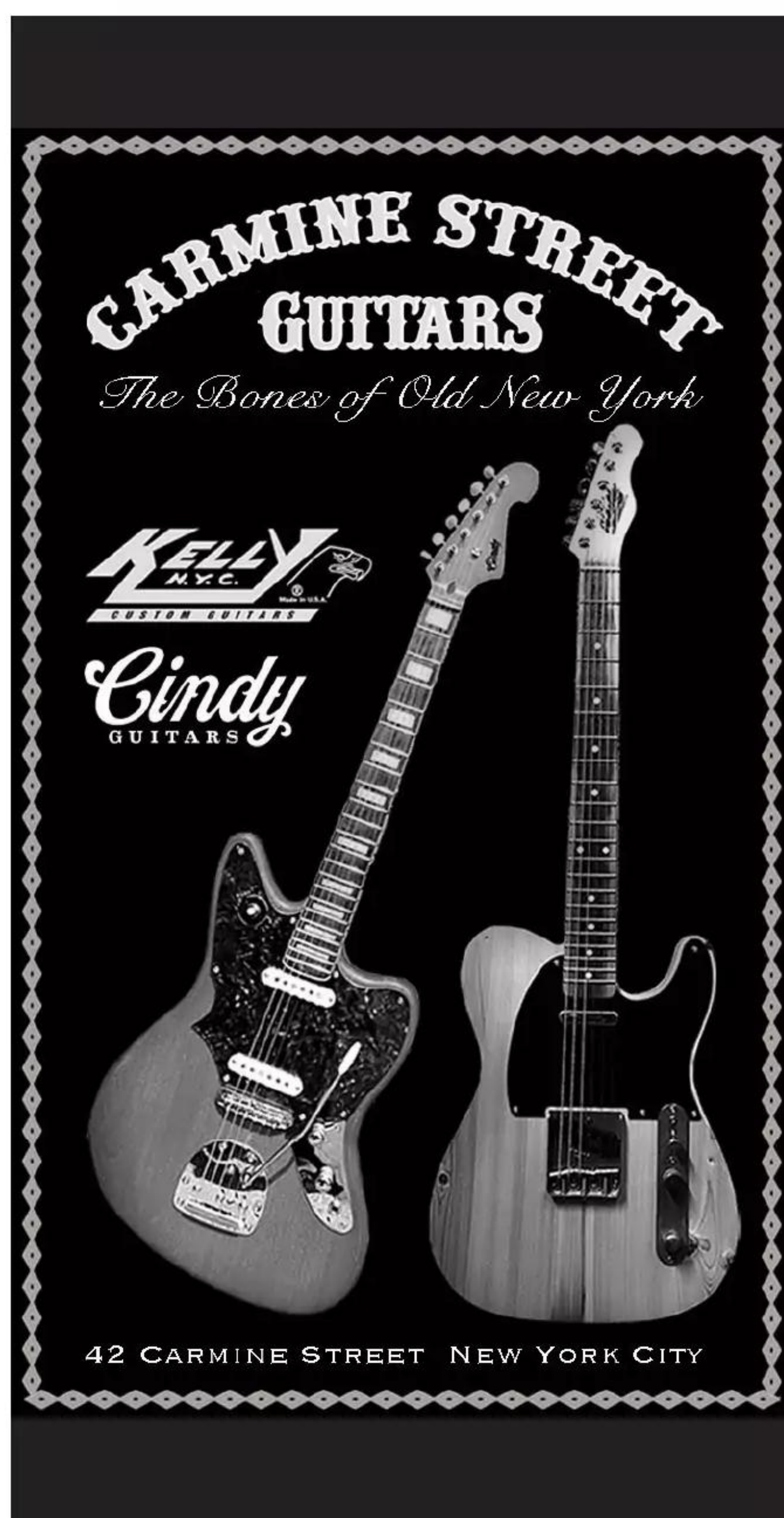
When Japanese companies began copying guitars, they might have a nine or 10 dot depending on what guitars they were copying.

And yes, this is from the Decca Records company, which was part of the entertainment conglomerate MCA. And while I don't know for sure, I wouldn't be surprised if these guitars were sold in record stores at the time. Decca printed catalogs from 1966 until at least '68, so they likely had other outlets, as well. – **Michael Wright**

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](mailto:ward@vintageguitar.com) with "VG Q&A" in the subject line. **VG**



Bill Brown's  
Decca DMI-202.





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1960 Gretsch 6122 early Country Gent



1963 Gibson Johnny Smith Double Mint



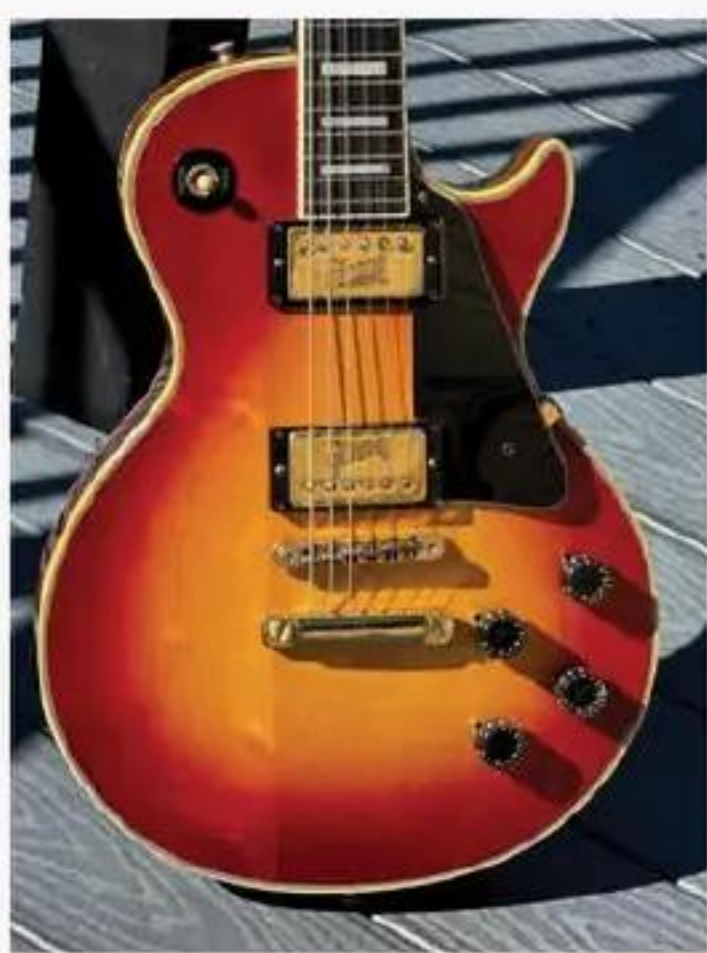
1978 Guild T-500 Duane Eddy model



1967 Gibson ES-355 Mono Sparklin Burg



1997 Gibson ES-335 Dot Neck Reissue



1972 Gibson Les Paul Custom early issue



1973 Gibson Les Paul Deluxe Tobacco'burst



1978 Gibson Les Paul Custom Maple'board



1980 Gibson Les Paul Heritage Std. 80 Elite



1981 Gibson Les Paul Custom Gold'burst



1984 Gibson Les Paul Jimmy Wallace '59 Re.



1985 Gibson Les Paul Std. early '59 Reissue



1989 Gibson Les Paul 3-pickup Custom



1958 Gibson Les Paul Jr. a rare '58



1969 Gibson Les Paul Std.original Gold Top



1962 Gibson SG Special Polaris White



1932 Gibson L-00 1st issue very Rare



1968 Gibson Hummingbird



1937 00-18H Sunburst Near Mint



1966 Martin 000-28 Brazilian Rosewood



1969 Martin D-35 Brazilian Rosewood



1953 Fender Precision Bass & Tweed Bassman



1954 Fender Precision Bass w/"Poodle Case"



1959 Fender Precision Gold'gard 3-tone'burst



1965 Fender Precision Olympic White MINT



1966 Fender Precision Bass Cleanest Extent !



1961 Fender Jazz Bass "Stack Knob"



1973 Fender Jazz Bass 4-bolt Minty



1972 Guild M-85 Sheryl Crows fave



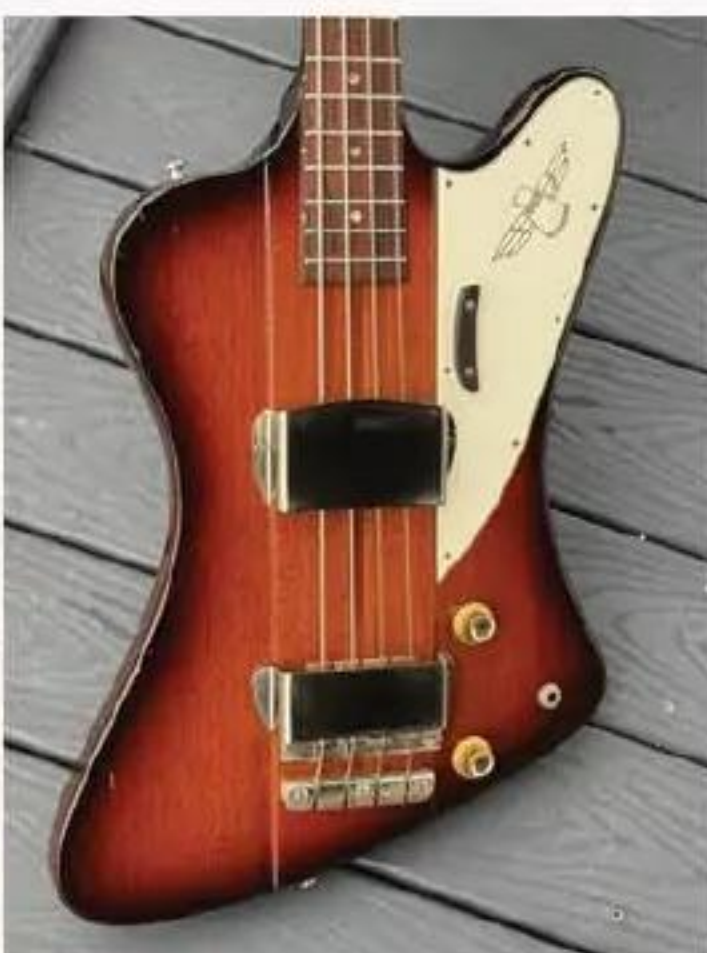
1964 Hofner 500/1 Beatle Bass "Macca"



1958 Gibson EB-2 rare 1st year Mint



1961 Gibson EB-3 near mint example



1964 Gibson T'bird II Bass ultra clean



1964 Gibson T'bird IV Bass exceptional !



1982 Wal Pro I Bass rare 'bursted Neck

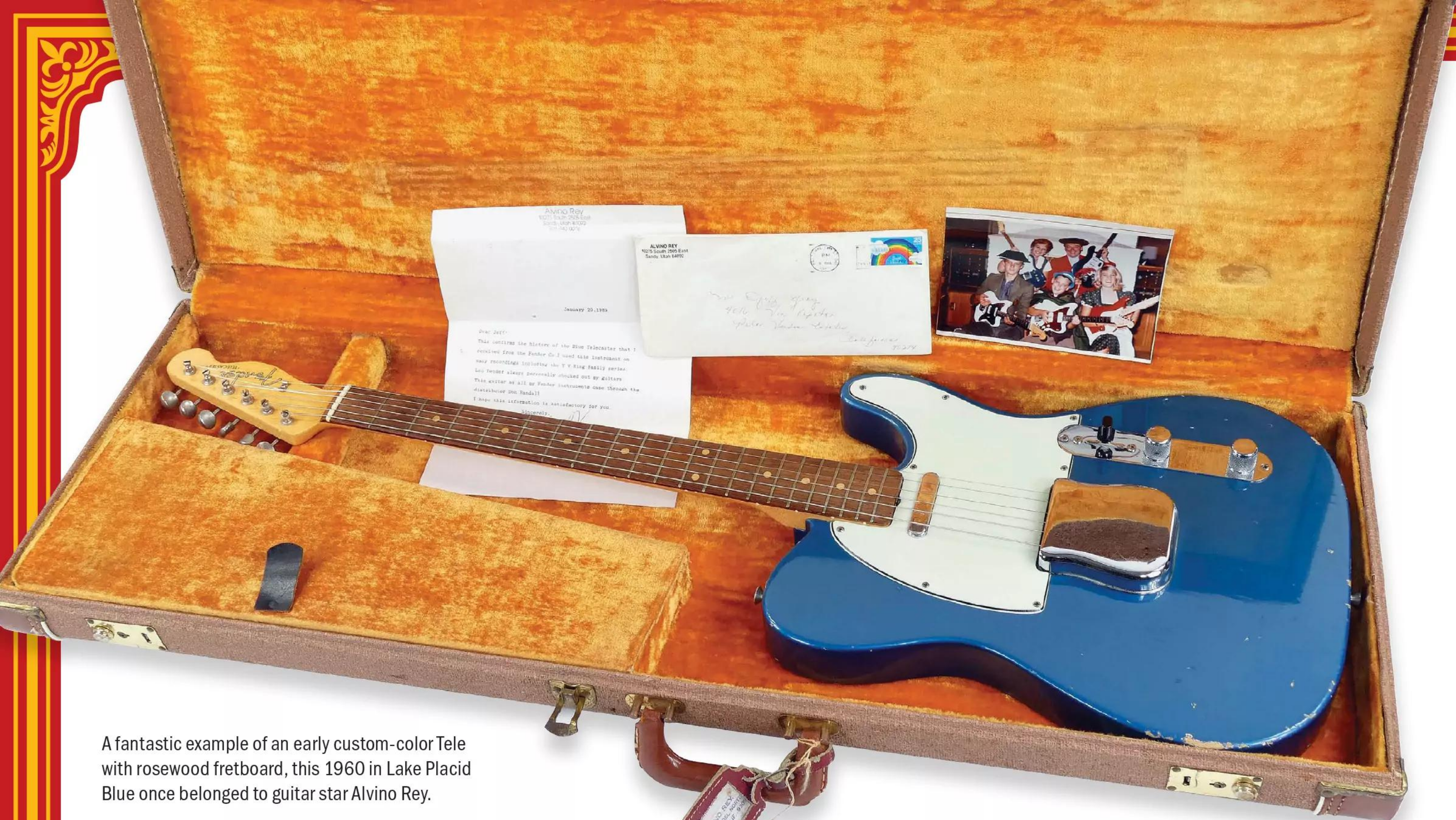


1988 Wal Mk. II Bass same as Paul Macca



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A fantastic example of an early custom-color Tele with rosewood fretboard, this 1960 in Lake Placid Blue once belonged to guitar star Alvin Rey.

# ONGOING EVOLUTION

## THE TELECASTER IN THE '60S

BY DAVE HUNTER

**T**he 1950 arrival of the first mass-manufactured solidbody electric guitars – Fender’s Broadcaster and Esquire – stands as a watershed moment in the history of popular music. And while its transition to “Telecaster” and the story of its early years have been well-documented and even romanticized, less understood – but equally compelling – are the changes in design and materials the Tele was subject to from the late '50s through the decade that followed.

Furthering our homage begun in the October issue and continuing with “Messin’ With Perfection: 7 Heretics Of The Telecaster” this month, we also present an excerpt from Dave Hunter’s new book, *Telecaster 75 Years*, now available from Motorbooks and VintageGuitar.com.

### NEW LOOKS, FRESH FEATURES

The course of the 1960s saw dramatic shifts in several arenas in the United States

and around the world. Music, culture, and the political climate were all very different heading into the dawn of the new decade than they were heading out of it, and the Telecaster experienced significant changes in that tumultuous ten-year period, as well. Many of the features of the guitars we think of as typifying “an early-’60s Telecaster” were actually enacted upon it in the late '50s – the rosewood fingerboard, the Custom model, changes in plastics – but many

are still seen as helping to define what we think of as “an early '60s Telecaster,” with the model’s 1950-’58 features thought of as typifying its first decade.

The addition of the rosewood fingerboard is often considered the most obvious feature of an early-to-mid-’60s Telecaster, even though it arrived with more than a year remaining in the previous decade. For about the first two and a half years, these separate fingerboards were sawn with a flat underside and glued to a flat neck face, a style that has since been dubbed the “slab board” for its thick, flat-bottomed appearance. Part way through 1962, Fender introduced the practice of rounding the face of the maple neck as well as both sides of the fingerboard, enabling the use of a thinner piece of rosewood. The result was what is now often referred to as a “laminated” or “round-lam” fingerboard.

Maple fingerboards would again be

Photos by John Shults.





This early-'59 Custom Tele in sunburst has front and back binding plus a three-ply pickguard. The bound back of a sunburst 1959 Telecaster Custom (right).

available by request from the mid '60s and as an official option from 1967. Until 1969, however, necks were made much like the rosewood fingerboards – with a separately milled piece of maple glued to the face of the neck – a construction now known as a “maple cap” neck.

Many fans of early-'60s Telecasters and Stratocasters alike have expressed a preference for the “slab-board” necks, usually in

figure out how to do it quickly. Then they had to tool up to make the rounded 'board and never turned back.” (*The Electric Guitar Sourcebook*, Backbeat Books, 2006)

The Jazzmaster, which introduced the rosewood fingerboard partly to appeal to jazz players, never made much of an impression on the

and Julian Lage, were also devotees, as of course were Danny Gatton and Roy Buchanan, whose virtuosic playing arguably defies classification in any one genre.

### CUSTOM BY NAME

Around the same time as the rosewood fingerboard was arriving on the Jazzmaster, Fender was planning a line of Telecasters and Esquires with more-deluxe appointments that would also ally them slightly more closely with the traditional crowd. The Esquire Custom and Telecaster Custom were introduced at the summer NAMM show of 1959, and were originally characterized by a rosewood fingerboard, an ash body with sunburst finish trimmed with a traditional white body binding around its top and back, and a three-ply white/black/white pickguard made from nitrate.

In his book *Fender: The Inside Story*, former factory manager Forrest White talks of some of the difficulty Fender had getting the binding process right, and the help he received from an unexpected quarter.

“Fred Martin,” he writes, “of the Martin Guitar Company, had been kind enough to show me through his factory. He showed me the special tool they made to cut binding strips, and what material and what adhesive to use.”



The headstock of this early example, made before “Custom” was added to the decal.

the belief that the thicker piece of rosewood is somehow superior. Discussions with former Fender Custom Shop Master Builder Chris Fleming, however, provide a different perspective on the issue.

“Somebody asked me why I thought Leo decided to do round lams, and although I can’t know for sure, I think it was for a couple of reasons. One is that he liked the idea of the maple being more of a majority of the wood, and he liked the idea that it was kind of a custom way to do it, it was proprietary. And I’d also like to think that he liked the sound of it. I feel like the slab 'board was the way that they did it because they had to

genre for which it was intended, other than perhaps being played by a few artists who were offered examples for promotional purposes. The Telecaster, on the other hand, has had a long-standing place in the jazz world, proving a surprisingly good fit for several prominent jazz artists. Ted Greene, Ed Bickert, and Jim Mullen were noted Tele enthusiasts. Joe Pass used one on several of his early recordings, and later players such as Mike Stern, Bill Frisell, Jim Campilongo,





Although sunburst was standard for the Custom models, several were finished in a variety of custom colors by customer request, resulting in proportionally more custom-color Customs than standard Telecasters and Esquires. While Teles were generally less often ordered in custom colors than were Strats, Jazzmasters, and the new Jaguar of 1962, it seems that players willing to break tradition and play a Telecaster with a bound body were also more likely to be enticed by the custom-color option. Meanwhile, beneath those custom-color and sunburst Telecaster and Esquire Customs, a new timber option was in evidence. In use on sunburst Stratocasters since 1956, alder was making its first regular appearance in Telecaster bodies, signaling, if not an entirely new direction – an alternative tributary, at least.

### LUMBER YARD

Ash has long been the wood most closely associated with the Telecaster body. When

found in relatively light stocks, its resonant characteristics can suit the tone of the model while its distinctive broad grain, seen through a semi-translucent blonde finish, is a big part of the classic look of

A 1967 Custom in rare Ice Blue Metallic – an example of an opaque finish used on alder-body guitars – and the instruction manual on a '61 Telecaster Custom, a model that represented the first major change in the format in nearly a decade.



Dave Hunter's latest guitarhead expository book is *Telecaster 75 Years*.

the instrument. With Fender production hitting unforeseeable heights in the late '50s, however, quality lightweight ash – found in the form of “swamp ash” taken from trees with their lower sections growing below the

waterline – was proving harder to come by on a consistent basis. Alder provided a good alternative, particularly in guitars where

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the finish concealed the grain, and is a good resonant tonewood for guitar construction. Alder-bodied Teles still sound very much like ash-bodied Teles, but that wood does change the character and the look of the guitar ever so slightly. With the look of an ash grain beneath a semi-translucent blonde finish having defined the Telecaster aesthetic since its introduction, Fender might have been sav-



ing the better stocks of this wood for the standard-issue model. Having introduced alder into its production in 1956, that wood suited the Stratocaster's "standard" finish – sunburst – perfectly well, and as a rule only custom-color blonde Strats were made using swamp ash. Other custom-color Fenders, including Telecasters, Stratocaster, Jazzmasters, and eventually Jaguars, were made with alder also, since its plainer grain sat happily beneath these opaque paints.

Considering the extent to which electric-guitar aficionados like to debate the merits of different tonewoods today, it's interesting to note that Fender promotional material of the day generally made no mention of the species of wood used in its guitar bodies. Multiple reports indicated that Leo Fender himself thought there was very little sonic difference between the two woods, so to him it made sense to use what was suitable, on hand, and affordable. Red alder grows along the West Coast from central California to southern Alaska, so it was plentiful and more readily available than swamp ash, which was more often found in the southern central and eastern parts of the country. Red alder, as a material, is also more consistent and will likely sound

more similar from piece to piece, whereas ash can be dramatically different from one board to the next.

In very general terms, the typical swamp-ash-bodied Fender is often characterized as somewhat airy, resonant, and scooped, with full lows and sparkling highs. Alder-bodied guitars are often described as being smoother and more balanced throughout the spectrum, but sometimes with a slight emphasis on the upper-midrange. Such descriptions are far from consistent, however, and most experts agree they shouldn't form a basis for choosing between guitars, since the more specific sonic characteristics of any instrument can vary more greatly than this from Telecaster to Telecaster or Stratocaster to Stratocaster, even when comparing guitars made from the same woods.

### PLASTIC FANTASTIC

Another end-of-decade alteration visited upon the Telecaster and Esquire as the '60s approached was the addition of three more screws to the original five used to affix the pickguard. The screws were also repositioned slightly in an effort to correct the minor warping that was occurring

with many of the original single-ply white 'guards which would noticeably lift along the upper edge between the bridge and the neck. It was a relatively minor shift, but another that is noted by some collectors as a demarcation point between the decades... and perhaps as a sign of greater attention to be paid these plastics in general very soon.

In late 1963, Fender altered this minor adornment further by adding the three-ply nitrate pickguard of the Custom and custom-colored models to all Telecaster and Esquire guitars. Early in 1965, however, these flammable nitrate 'guards, often called "green 'guards" for their faint green hue, would be superseded on all models by three-ply plastic pickguards. Less likely to burst into flames in the warehouse, these pickguards would also prove more resistant to the warping and shrinkage that would plague original nitrate 'guards.

At the midpoint of the decade, greater changes would come to Fender Electric Instruments as a whole with its sale to CBS. Although the Telecaster would hang on in much the same form for another few years, the first half of the '60s would forever mark the last of the golden age of Fender's iconic original solidbody. **VG**

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# MESSIN' WITH PERFECTION



**BY OSCAR JORDAN**

## 7 HERETICS OF THE TELECASTER

**A**nyone who doubts the Telecaster is the best guitar ever made needs only to hear Albert Lee's blackguard go to work on Emmylou Harris' 1976 album, *Luxury Liner*. Still unconvinced? Throw a Tele, Strat, and Les Paul down a flight of stairs. Guess which will stay in tune?

Introduced in January of 1951, the Telecaster altered the fabric of popular music. Perfection is in the ear of the beholder, but there are those who desire to push the envelope. And every superpicker knows there's always room for improvement.

Here are seven examples of players who dared to push the world's best solidbody beyond the limits of imagination.

### **CLARENCE WHITE**

Born June 7, 1944, Clarence White was an innovative guitarist who combined his passion for bluegrass, country, and rock and roll. He's best known for his work with The Byrds, The Kentucky Colonels, and sessions for The

Monkees, Ricky Nelson, Linda Ronstadt, The Everly Brothers, and Jackson Browne. That's just the short list.

A revered guitarist, White was a teenaged flatpicking monster in the Kentucky Colonels. A hybrid picker who broke from bluegrass tradition (using only open first-position chords) to explore the fretboard. With the Nashville West band in '67, he began looking for a way to play pedal-steel licks on his '54 Tele. Working with the mechanically inclined multi-instrumentalist Gene Parsons, he soon after devised what would become the Parsons/White Pull-String. Parsons built the first version in '68.

With The Byrds beginning in '68, he used

a Fender Vibrolux in the studio while preferring bigger amps onstage, including a Dual Showman, a hot-rodded Twin Reverb, a Super Reverb, and a Leslie cabinet miked in stereo.

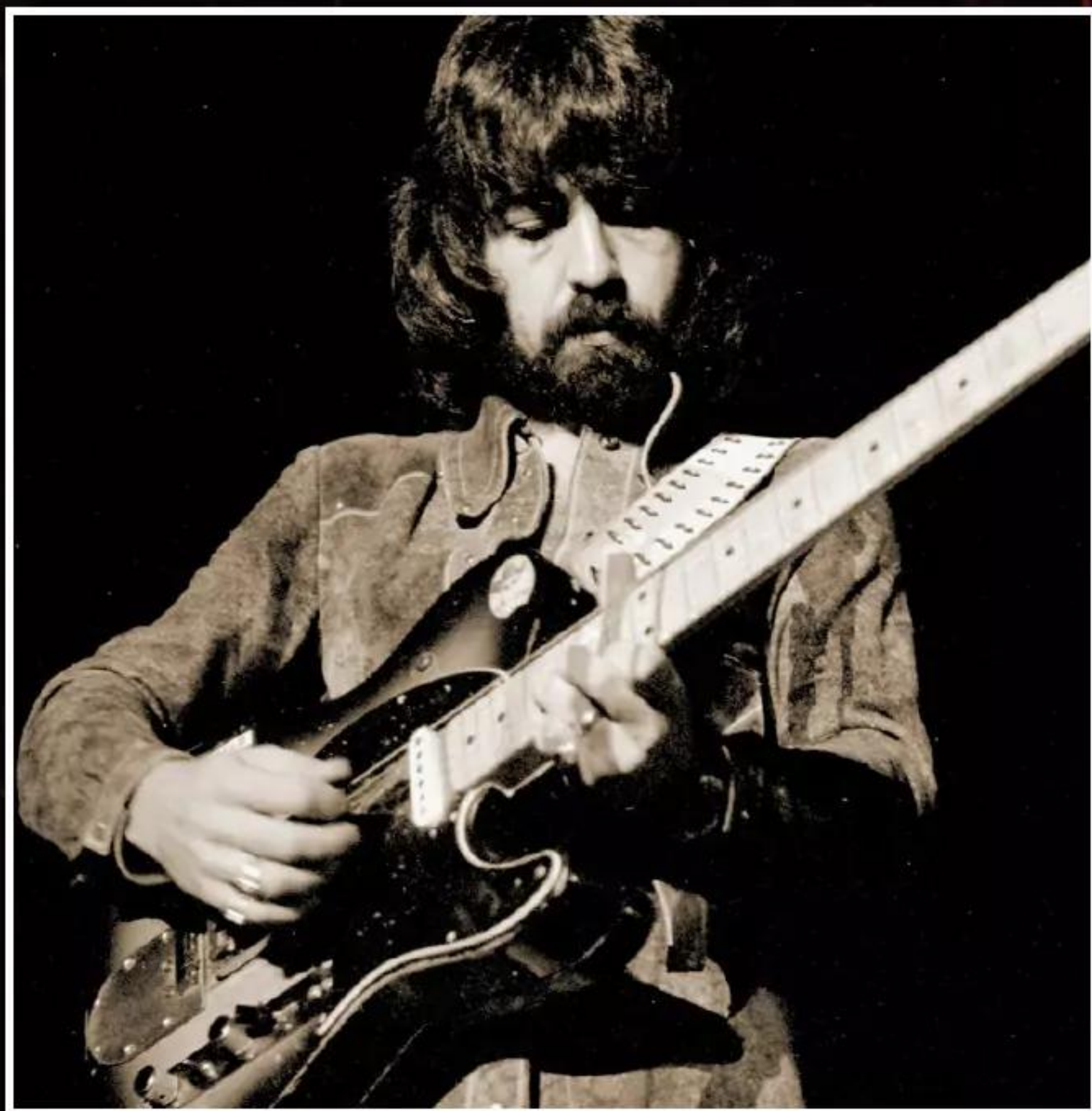
On July 15, 1973, as he was loading his gear into his car after a gig in California, White's car was struck head-on by another driven by a drunk driver. He died at the scene.

An innovator, a virtuoso, and a significant influence on guitarists to this day, White not only helped change the role of the acoustic guitar in bluegrass, he redefined the sound of the electric guitar in country music. Inducted to the International Bluegrass Music Association Hall of Fame in 2016, he was inducted a second time in '19 as a member of the Kentucky Colonels.

### **TERRY KATH**

Born January 31, 1946, Terry Kath was one of the most talented and intense players of his generation. A member of the original lineup of The Chicago Transit Authority (later, Chicago),





Clarence White onstage with The Byrds in 1971, Carmichael Auditorium

his use of amps and effects was innovative in the late '60s, and his hot-rodded Tele is one of the most recognizable instruments in the history of rock and roll.

Kath started on a Kay and later purchased a Stratocaster, then added a Gibson SG and a '69 Les Paul Professional to his arsenal. In 1974, he began using his famous '66 Tele, which was heavily modified and dressed in Pignose amp decals and a Chicago Blackhawks logo. Its neck pickup was replaced with a Gibson humbucker, while the Tele bridge pickup remained stock.

The bridge was replaced with a six-saddle hybrid from a Strat vibrato. Its body was routed, its control plate flipped, tuners were replaced, and two additional string trees were added. Kath's most prized instrument, after 1974 it was essentially the only guitar he played, usually through a Dual Showman.

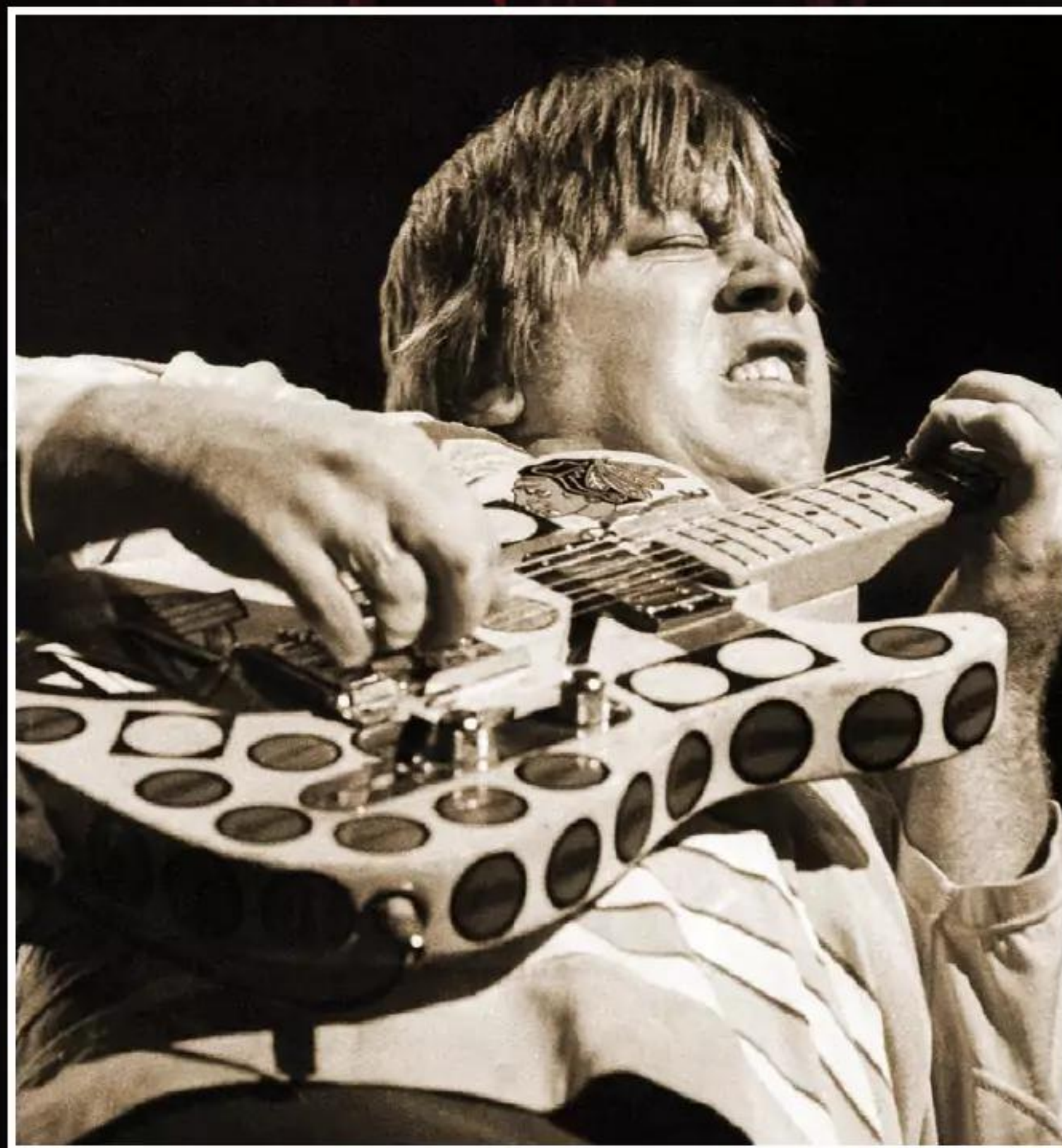
Kath was a force of nature onstage and hugely important to the band's success thanks to his knack for sophisticated composing and his visceral vocal delivery. As a player, he was a beast on the wah pedal and a mad scientist setting up amps. Check out his guitar work on "25 or 6 to 4," "Free Form Guitar," "Make Me Smile," "Introduction," and "Song of the Evergreens."

On January 23, 1978, Kath died of an accidental gunshot to the head eight days before his 32nd birthday. In 2015, his daughter, Michelle Kath Sinclair, wrote and produced the documentary *The Terry Kath Experience*, for which she tracked down the iconic Telecaster after it had been lost for decades.

Kath was a forward-thinking guitarist, inventor, composer, and a key figure in promoting and developing Pignose amps. In 2016, he was inducted to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

## CORNELL DUPREE

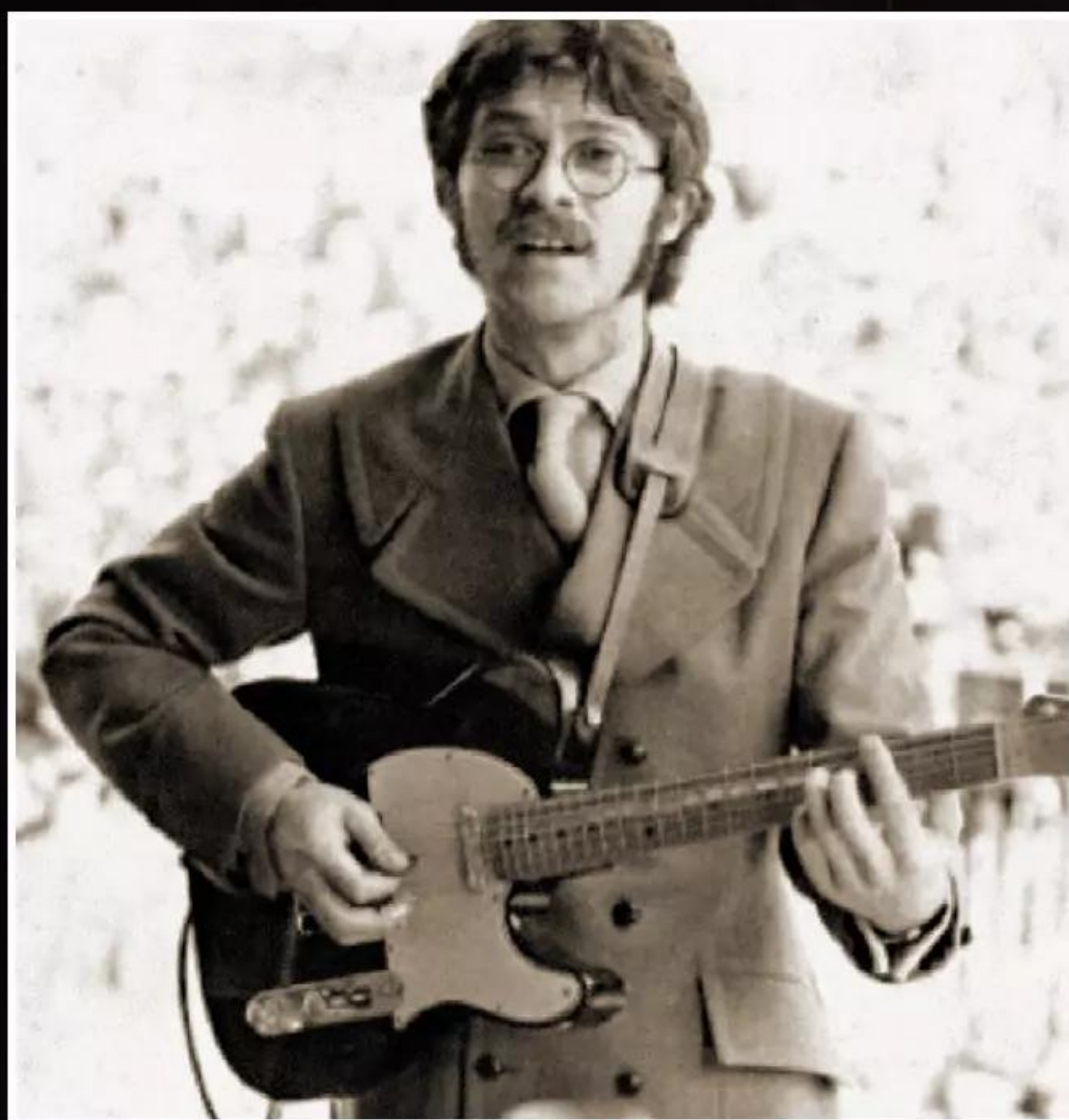
Born on December 19, 1942, Cornell Dupree began his professional career in Fort Worth. Falling under the spell of Johnny "Guitar"



Terry Kath

Watson, he became a fine blues player and came in close proximity to artists like T-Bone Walker, Lowell Fulson, Lightning Hopkins, and Albert Collins. Being from Texas, Dupree was exposed to country music, as well.

The ultimate soul-guitar package, he blended



Robbie Robertson in 1969 with The Band during its first show in Canada.

the sounds of southern R&B, blues, jazz, and country. His sultry lines can be heard in a variety of musical settings, including "Rock Steady" by Aretha Franklin, "Kodachrome" by Paul Simon, "Red China Blues" by Miles Davis, and Brook Benton's 1969 hit "Rainy Night in Georgia."

Jazz aficionados are familiar with his work, performing with Buddy Rich, Carmen McRae, and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. He played on so many sessions that he was given the nickname "Mr. 2,500," for having played on more than 2,500 albums. He shared the stage with Jimi Hendrix in King Curtis' *Kingpins* and opened for The Beatles. That's Dupree's guitar on the Wilson Pickett classic "In the Midnight Hour." Master of tasteful R&B chordal embellish-



Cornell Dupree

ments popularized by Curtis Mayfield and Jimi Hendrix, his guitar parts were famous for their space and feel, always in support of the vocalist. Dupree's 1989 instructional video, *Mastering R&B Guitar*, produced by Arlen Roth, is a must-own for R&B guitar aficionados.

Before collaborating with Yamaha on a signature guitar, Dupree played a blond '67 Tele with the pickguard removed and its screw holes covered with rhinestones. He added a DeArmond pickup, flipped its control plate, and added a toggle to control the DeArmond.

The Yamaha Cornell Dupree Pacifica 1512 had an ash body, maple neck, Alnico V humbucker in the neck, GS6 single-coil in the middle position, and a blade pickup at the bridge.

Dupree never became a household name, but the sounds he made on the guitar were ubiquitous in the heyday of radio and vinyl. His influence was also heavily felt in soul, funk, and country music. In the African-American guitar tradition, he stands shoulder to shoulder with Hendrix, Bobby Womack, Eric Gales, and Mayfield. Check out the band Stuff, where he played alongside Gales and Steve Gadd. Dupree passed away May 8, 2011, of emphysema.

## ROBBIE ROBERTSON

Born July 5, 1943, Robbie Robertson grew up near Toronto and studied under the tutelage of rock and roller Ronnie Hawkins.

Most famous for being a member of The Band, Robertson's '65 Telecaster played a pivotal role in the careers of Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Carly Simon, Joni Mitchell, and Ringo Starr. Heard on 1965's "Like A Rolling Stone," the guitar (serial number L97811) was stock with a maple neck and maple-cap fretboard. The body was alder and the guitar weighed just over seven pounds; Robertson felt it was perfect for touring. Dylan played it on studio sessions for *Blonde on Blonde* and





Brent Mason

on the 1965-'66 world tour, including the oft-cited performance at Manchester Free Trade Hall, where he was accused of being a "Judas" for going electric. You hear it in the intro to "Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat."

From Dylan to Robertson, the guitar appeared on *Music From Big Pink* and was Robertson's weapon of choice for seven years afterward; he used it for The Band's debut concerts in April of '69, with Dylan at the Isle of Wight, and while recording The Band's *Stage Fright* album. Robertson stripped the original black finish in 1970 and added a Bigsby in 2000. He also added a white pickguard and a chrome-covered Gibson PAF in the neck position.

Other songs it was featured on include "Up On Cripple Creek," "Tears of Rage," and "Chest Fever." During The Band's Woodstock performance, it cut through a dense mix on "Slippin' and Slidin'" and "Loving You Is Sweeter than Ever."

"I was always looking for a better guitar, but I couldn't beat the Tele," Robertson said on "Talk From the Rock Room" in 2019. "Each incarnation... seemed to give it a new life, along with a different creative surge."

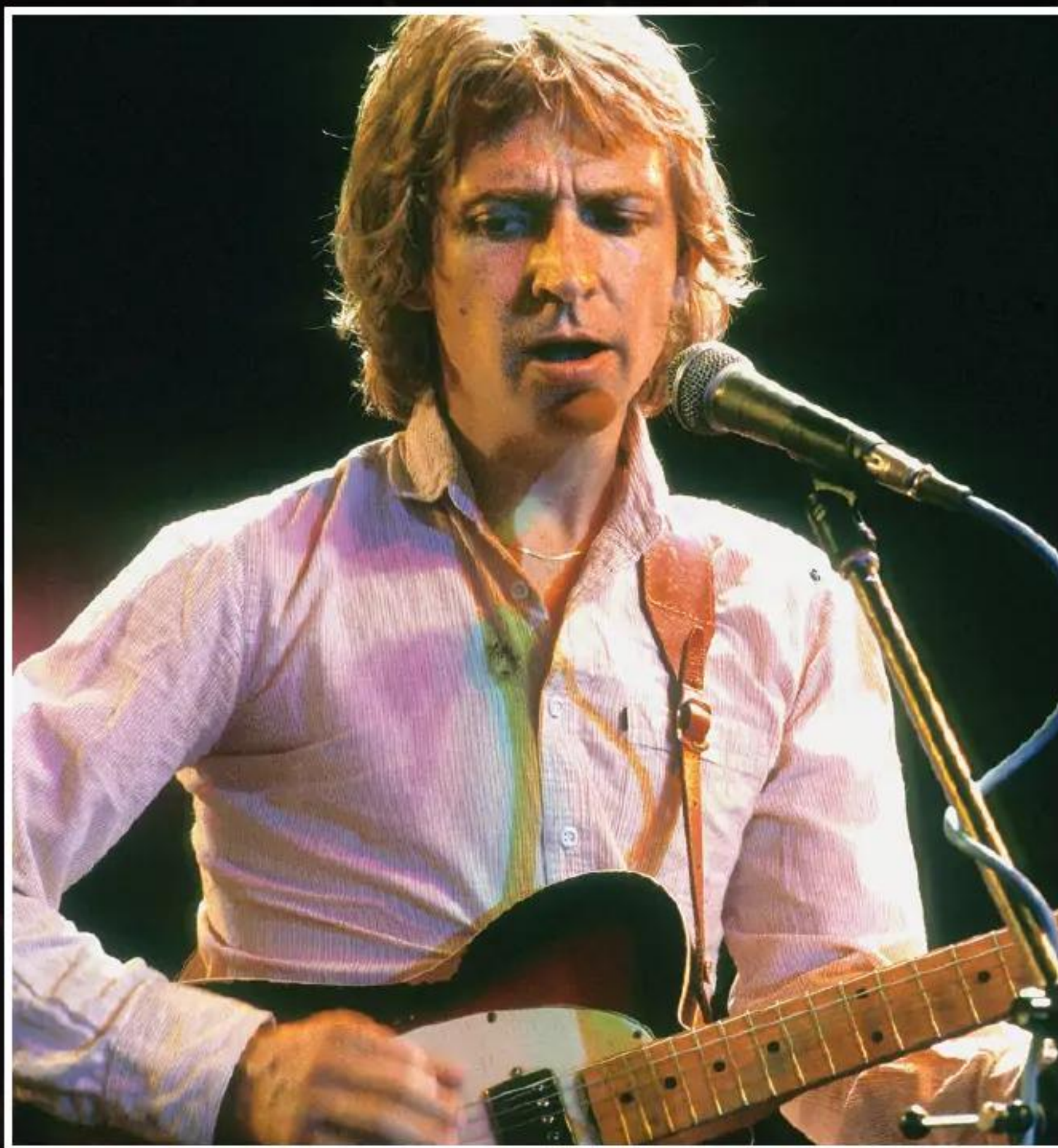
In 2018, the guitar was sold by Julien's Auctions for \$640,000 with one request; "Whoever ends up with this guitar, you have to treat her with love."

Robertson passed away August 9, 2023. In May of '24, the guitar sold again at auction, this time for \$650,000.

## BRENT MASON

One of the 10 best session guitarists of all time, Grammy winner Brent Mason was discovered by Chet Atkins and has been voted "Guitarist of the Year" 12 times by the Academy of Country Music. An inductee to the Musicians Hall of Fame, he is also a solo artist and songwriter.

Mason's signature Telecaster was born out



Andy Summers

of old-fashioned American ingenuity. While breaking into the business, he couldn't afford a fleet of Strats, Teles, 335s, and Gretsches to accompany him on sessions; he needed one guitar that could do it all. Inspiration struck in 1982, when he came upon a '67 Tele with a perforated swamp ash body that had been partially painted with car primer. It sounded better than anything else he played at the time.

Influenced by the ingenuity of Steve Morse and Peter Green, Mason experimented with various pickups to create an all-purpose guitar. Renowned Nashville tech/builder Joe Glaser added a string bender, middle pickup, three-way pickup selector, and a Volume pot to control the middle pickup's output independent of the three-way. These mods enabled Mason to get out-of-phase Strat sounds and discover sonic sweet spots when engaging the neck and bridge pickups.

His Fender signature model is a replica of that guitar, fitted with three Seymour Duncan pickups including a mini-humbucker in the neck position. It uses a Hot Stack in the middle position and a Vintage Stack Tele at the bridge. The independent Volume control for the Hot Stack offers a variety of tonal colors. Fender offers two versions, one a heavy relic. Both are equipped with Joe Glaser B-benders.

Mason has left an indelible stamp on country music and the guitar. And while his reputation looms large as the most-recorded guitarist in history, he's a down-to-earth guy you'd want to trade licks with while drinking beers. Check out the title track from his solo album *Hot Wired*, and be humbled.

## ANDY SUMMERS

Before he joined The Police, Andy Summers spent years toiling in Zoot Money's Big Roll Band, Soft Machine, Eric Burdon & The Animals, and Neil Sedaka's band.

In the early '70s, he moved to Southern California, where he studied classical guitar



Steve Morse with his Frankenstein Tele in a 1983 ad for Ampeg.

and composition at Cal State Northridge. He graduated in '72, and as he was getting ready to move back to the U.K., one of his guitar students offered to sell him a beat-up sunburst Telecaster Custom with an alder '63 body, '61 neck, and a Gibson PAF in the neck position, and highly modified switching (including active boost controlled by a third knob).

Summers paid \$200 for the guitar and immediately replaced the stock tuners with Schallers. Other mods include a brass nut, brass bridge plate with individual brass saddles, and (later) a Tele pickup in the bridge position. In Summers' 2006 memoir, *One Train Later*, he wrote, "It's a fire-breather. When I start to play it, something stirs within me... I can't stop playing it."

A jazz guitarist at heart, he became famous for his imaginative use of inverted chord voicings and Lenny Breau harp harmonics that added sophistication and an atmospheric quality to Sting's lyrics and melodies. Extrapolating rhythms from reggae, world, jazz, and pop, Summers mixed effects to create sheets of time-based sounds. His effects consisted of the Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress, a Mu-Tron III Envelope Filter, a Maestro Echoplex EP-2 Tape Delay, an MXR Phase 90, and the Roland GR-300 Synthesizer. Later, he used a pedalboard made by Pete Cornish. For amps, he switched between a Roland Bolt, a JC-120, Twin Reverbs, and Marshalls depending on his needs.

Summers' Telecaster has been heard on some of the Police's biggest songs, including "Roxanne," "Walking On the Moon," "Message in a Bottle" and "Every Breath You Take." In 2007, the Fender Custom Shop created a replica called the Andy Summers Tribute Telecaster.

## STEVE MORSE

Steve Morse's body of work is astounding on many levels. His playing with The Dixie Dregs, solo albums, and contributions to Deep Purple continue to captivate and inspire. A Grammy winner with a championship left-hand vibrato,



he's the missing link between Yes, Mahavishnu Orchestra, The Allman Brothers, and Flatt and Scruggs.

At the drop of a hat, Morse can shift from chicken pickin' to Baroque classical and jazz-rock to hard rock, Celtic tunes, or Led Zeppelin. Mere mortals find his music demanding to perform, but always edifying, and his now-retired parts Telecaster is the stuff of legend.

The origins of Morse's date to 1969/'70, when he was given a black Tele with a maple neck as payment for a recording session. It came with a humbucker in the neck from a Gibson 335. According to Morse, the guitar was a disaster – it fed back, wouldn't stay in tune, the neck was slippery, and the three-way toggle made no sense.

Morse turned a negative into a positive by thinking of the guitar as a blank canvas, and he went to work replacing the neck with one from a Strat. He then stripped its paint, clipped the capacitor, and purchased one of Fender's early Wide Range humbuckers, which he installed with a hammer and chisel in the bridge position. After all the cutting, Morse replaced the bridge with a Tune-O-Matic, and later added a 12-string trapeze tailpiece.

A lipstick pickup was installed between the two humbuckers, and while it sounded thin, it added something. He later installed an on/off switch to control pickup combinations. The Fender bridge humbucker was removed because it was prone to feeding back, so Morse replaced it with a custom humbucker from Larry DiMarzio. It would later be sold as the Steve Morse pickup.

Morse continued to experiment and had a custom pickguard made that allowed him to add a Strat pickup. He added a toggle to control it and installed a miniature three-way between the Volume and Tone controls. To reduce noise, he added a grounding wire on the tailpiece, which ran under the pickguard to the metal plate that stabilized the Volume and Tone controls.

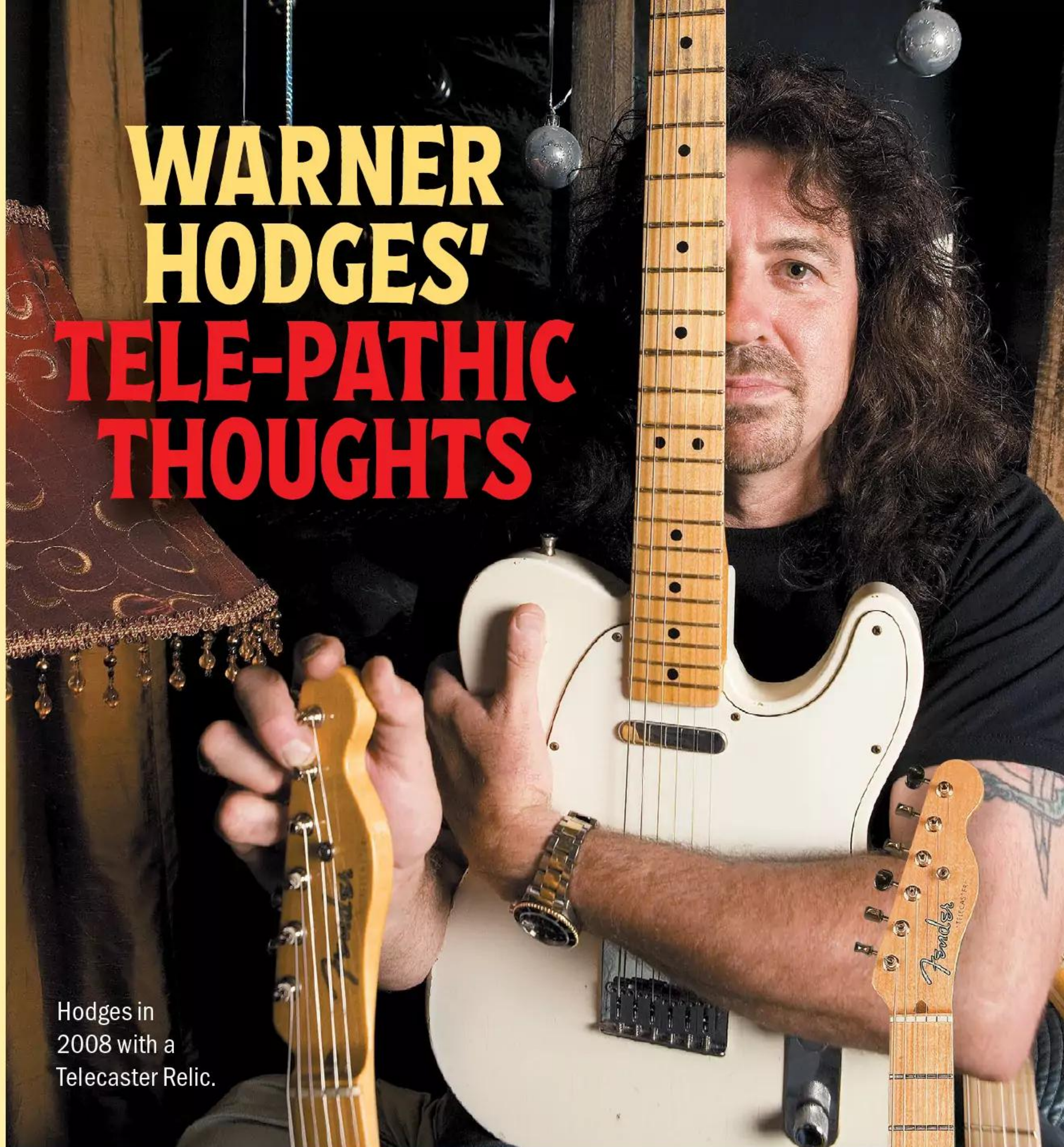
He later added jumbo frets and routed the high E string through a string tree. In time, other minor mods were done due to wear and tear, but Morse used the guitar up until his 1989 album, *High Tension Wires*, when Music Man duplicated the guitar with the intent of creating a Steve Morse signature model.

Music Man eventually got it right, and Morse's Frankenstein Tele was put to pasture. Later, the Ernie Ball Music Man Steve Morse signature model proved more reliable and offered an extra fret.

Though Morse has been seen performing with his signature model for decades, he still has a soft spot for the guitar he put his heart and soul into.

Those late to the party should check out The Dixie Dregs' *Live At The Montreux Jazz Festival*. Wear a seatbelt. **VG**

# WARNER HODGES' TELE-PATHIC THOUGHTS



Hodges in 2008 with a Telecaster Relic.

**I**n the November '08 issue, we profiled Warner Hodges, guitarist in the pioneering '80s cowpunk band Jason & The Scorchers, who today is still recording and touring in groups and as a solo act. A noted Tele slinger, we asked why Leo's first-born was his first choice.

**1) You can play things behind the nut.** You gotta love that!  
**2) It doesn't matter what gauge of strings you use,** you cannot mess up the neck.

**3) You can drop it, kick it, pick it up, and it'll stay in tune.** One night in Norway, I threw one 19 rows deep into the audience, and a girl gave it back. The B string was sharp – that was it! That same guitar, in a case – *not* a flight case – was run over by a luggage tractor and six carts full of luggage. I went to the Scandinavian Air Service baggage claim to open the case; I told the lady, "I want you to see the damage at the same time I do." I was so pissed off! But I opened the case and there wasn't a damn thing wrong with the guitar. The case was destroyed, but the guitar was fine. That's a Telecaster.

**4) James Burton.** I've got a buddy who met Elvis. He asked, "Hey, Elvis... Where's James?"

**5) You can play any musical style with a Telecaster.** It's the Bayer aspirin of guitars. Crazy, how Leo got it right the very first time! – **Ward Meeker**

**"Toughest Tele I own," Hodges said of this '93 model, which one day in '96 was run over by an airline luggage tractor then sailed into the audience during a gig. Retrieved by his tour manager, Hodges tuned its B string and went back to work.**





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# Upcoming Events

\* Denotes a new or updated listing.

## OCTOBER

The 20th Anniversary Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, Sunday, October 5, 11 am - 4 pm, at CFS Bank Event Center 111 Gallitin Rd Belle Vernon, PA 15012. For more info contact Scott Talarico at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net [www.guitarshowusa.com](http://www.guitarshowusa.com)

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday October 5th, 9 am to 3pm, at NEW LOCATION - Hyatt Regency 1800 Golf Road, Schaumburg Illinois. For more info contact Beverly Bakes R&B Productions at 847-931-0707 [bakesguitar@aol.com](mailto:bakesguitar@aol.com) [Chicagovintageguitarexpo.com](http://Chicagovintageguitarexpo.com)

**KC Guitar Show**, October 11 - 12, 10 am - 6 pm, at the Ward Parkway Shopping Center, Kansas City, MO 64114. For more info contact Mark at [Valentine@BoxOfCalk.com](mailto:Valentine@BoxOfCalk.com) or visit [www.kcguitarshow.com](http://www.kcguitarshow.com)

**Southern Ohio Guitar Show**, Sunday Oct. 12th, 11 am - 4 pm, Chillicothe Highschool Commons Area, 425 Yoctangee ParkWay, Chillicothe, OH 45601, For more info contact Elliot John Conery at 740-541-0916 [southernohioguitarshow@gmail.com](mailto:southernohioguitarshow@gmail.com) [www.sohioguitarshow.com](http://www.sohioguitarshow.com)

Mesquite 2025 - formerly Guitarlinton, October 18-19, at the Mesquite Convention Center, 1700 Rodeo Dr, Mesquite, TX. For more info contact Ruth Brinkmann (817) 312-7659 [ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com](mailto:ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com) Larry Briggs (918) 288-2222 [larryb@stringswest.com](mailto:larryb@stringswest.com) Dave Crocker (417) 850-4751 [davelcrocker@gmail.com](mailto:davelcrocker@gmail.com), Fax 817-592-3381 [www.amigoguitarshows.com](http://www.amigoguitarshows.com)

Best Guitar Show, Sunday, October 19, 10 am - 4 pm, at the Quality Inn, 300 Tarentum Bridge Rd, New Kensington PA 15068. For more info contact Allen Jones 814-215-4087 [adjinv@outlook.com](mailto:adjinv@outlook.com)

The Tampa Guitar Show, October 25, 10 am - 5 pm, and October 26, 10 am - 4 pm, at the Florida State Fairgrounds, 4800 US 301, Tampa, FL 33610. Dealer day October 24, 9 am - 5 pm. Vendors can register at [Mvgguitarshows.com](http://Mvgguitarshows.com). For more info contact Marty Beeson at 813-400-0803 [info@mvg-guitarshows.com](mailto:info@mvg-guitarshows.com)

## NOVEMBER

Great American Guitar Show (Fall Philly), November 8-9, at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center - Hall A, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA. For more

info contact Bee 3 Vintage at (828)298-2197 [www.bee3vintage.com](http://www.bee3vintage.com) (See Advertisement on page 66.)

The Chicagoland Guitar Show, Sunday November 9, 9 am - 4 pm, at Atlantis Banquets, Prospect Crossing Plaza, 1273 N Rand Road, Arlington Hts IL 60004. For more info contact Midwest Buy & Sell at 773-545-2020 [mwbuynsell@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mwbuynsell@sbcglobal.net)

Ann Arbor Music Instrument Swap, Sunday November 9, 10 am - 4 pm at the Eastern Michigan University Student Center, 900 Oakland St., Ypsilanti, MI 48197. For more info call Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 [www.musicinstrumentswap.com](http://www.musicinstrumentswap.com)

Big Als' Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, Sunday, November 9, 8 am - 3 pm, at Renninger's Florida Twin Markets, 20651 Hwy 441 Mt. Dora FL. Hours For more info contact Allen at 352-735-0025 [www.info@lcmsm.com](http://www.info@lcmsm.com) [www.lcmsm.com](http://www.lcmsm.com)

Midwest Music Gear Swap, Sunday, November 16, 10 am - 4 pm, at Emidio's Event Center, 48 E Bath Rd, Cuyahoga Falls, OH. For more info contact Corey at 330-753-5050 [midwestmusicgearswap@yahoo.com](mailto:midwestmusicgearswap@yahoo.com)

**Rose Quarter Guitar Show**, Saturday November 22, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm, at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Portland, OR. For more info contact [bruceadolph@mac.com](mailto:bruceadolph@mac.com) [www.WestCoastGuitarShows.com](http://www.WestCoastGuitarShows.com) (See Advertisement on page 63.)

## 2026 JANUARY

**Amigo Bay Area World Guitar Show**, January 10 - 11, at the Marin Civic Exhibit All, 10 Avenue of the Flags, San Rafael, CA 94901. For more info contact Larry at 918-288-222 [amigoshow@stringswest.com](mailto:amigoshow@stringswest.com) [www.Calshows.tv](http://www.Calshows.tv)

Big Als' Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, Sunday, January 11, 8 am - 3 pm, at Renninger's Florida Twin Markets, 20651 Hwy 441 Mt. Dora FL. For more info contact Allen at [info@lcmsm.com](mailto:info@lcmsm.com), (352)735-0025 [lcmsm.com](http://lcmsm.com)

**Amigo SoCal World Guitar Show**, January 24 - 25, at the OC Fair and Event Center, Arlington and Fairview St, Costa Mesa, CA 92626. For more info contact Larry at 918-288-222 [amigoshow@stringswest.com](mailto:amigoshow@stringswest.com) [www.Calshows.tv](http://www.Calshows.tv)

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, January 30-31 through February 1, Public hours Sat. 10 am - 5 pm, Sun. 10 am - 4 pm, at the Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL. For more info contact Britt Keen at 850-294-5537 [orlandoguitarexpo@outlook.com](mailto:orlandoguitarexpo@outlook.com) Morty Beckman [www.guitarexpo.net](http://www.guitarexpo.net)

## FEBRUARY

Best Guitar Show, February 22, 10 am to 4 pm, at the Blair County Convention Center, 1 Convention Center Dr., Altoona, PA 16602. For more info contact Allen Jones at [adjinv@outlook.com](mailto:adjinv@outlook.com)

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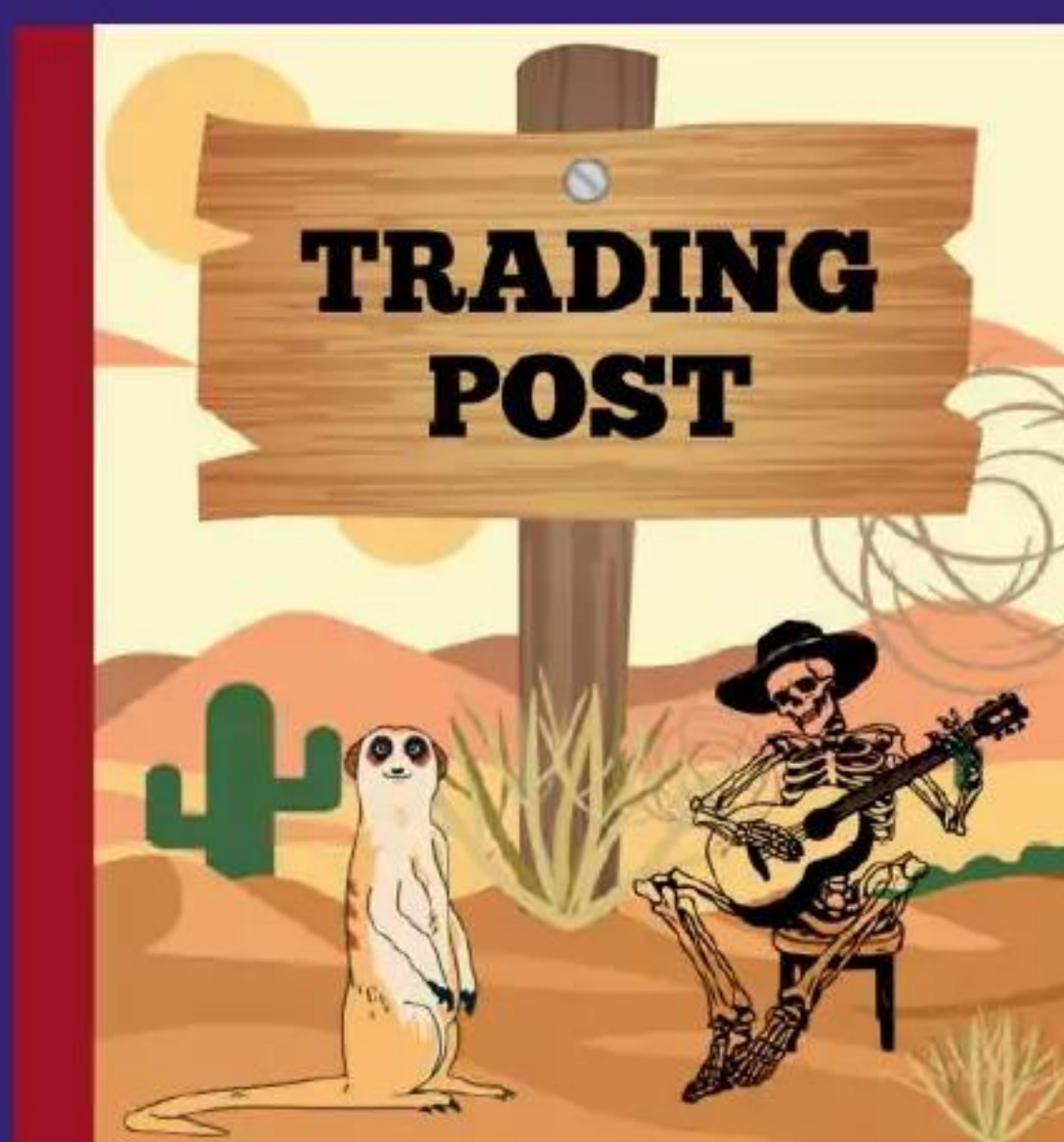
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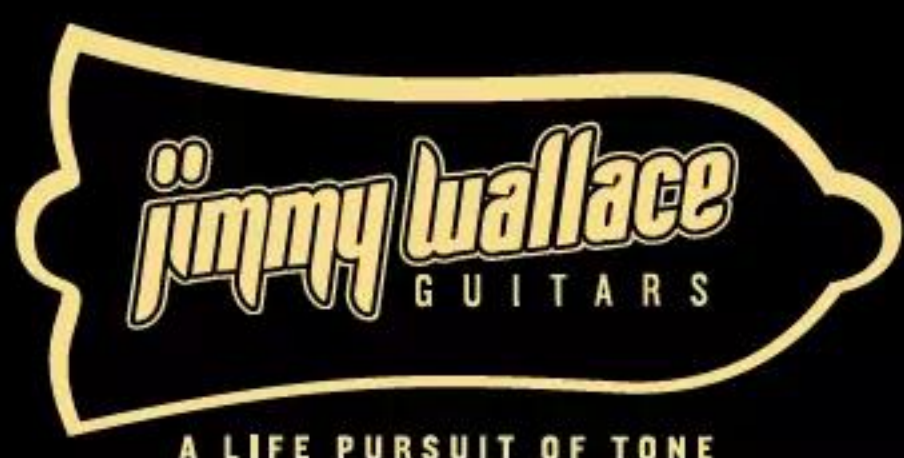
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# Upcoming Events

## MARCH

Cincinnati Guitar Show, Sunday, March 15, 10 am - 4 pm, at the Sharonville Conv. Cntr, 11355 Chester Rd, Sharonville Oh 45246. For more info call Denny 513-503-1072 [www.cincyguitarshow.com](http://www.cincyguitarshow.com) and FB.

Frantic Mid Atlantic Guitar Show & Swap Meet, March 27-29, at New location - Delaware State Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall, 18500 S. Dupont Hwy Harrington, DE 19952. For more info [www.MidAtlanticGuitarShow.com](http://www.MidAtlanticGuitarShow.com) (See Advertisement on page 64.)

## MAY

Dallas International Guitar Festival, May 1-3, at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX 75207. For more info contact 972-240-2206 [info@JimmyWallaceGuitars.com](mailto:info@JimmyWallaceGuitars.com) [www.GuitarShow.com](http://www.GuitarShow.com) (See Advertisement on page 65.)

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

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## HEARTY BLUES

**M**arcus King springboards from the mental health topics of *Mood Swings* to reunite with his band for a singer/songwriter record with rich harmonies and an appealing mix of acoustic and electric instrumentation.

Their first album together since 2018's *Carolina Confessions*, *Darling Blue* is a rustic, deep-fried meditation on the struggles of existence. King mixes elements of country, R&B, folk, and '60s rock and roll with stories of bad choices and addiction. King's take on the acoustic sounds of South Carolina is beautifully illustrated on "On & On" and "Here Today," featuring Jamey Johnson and Kaitlin Butts.

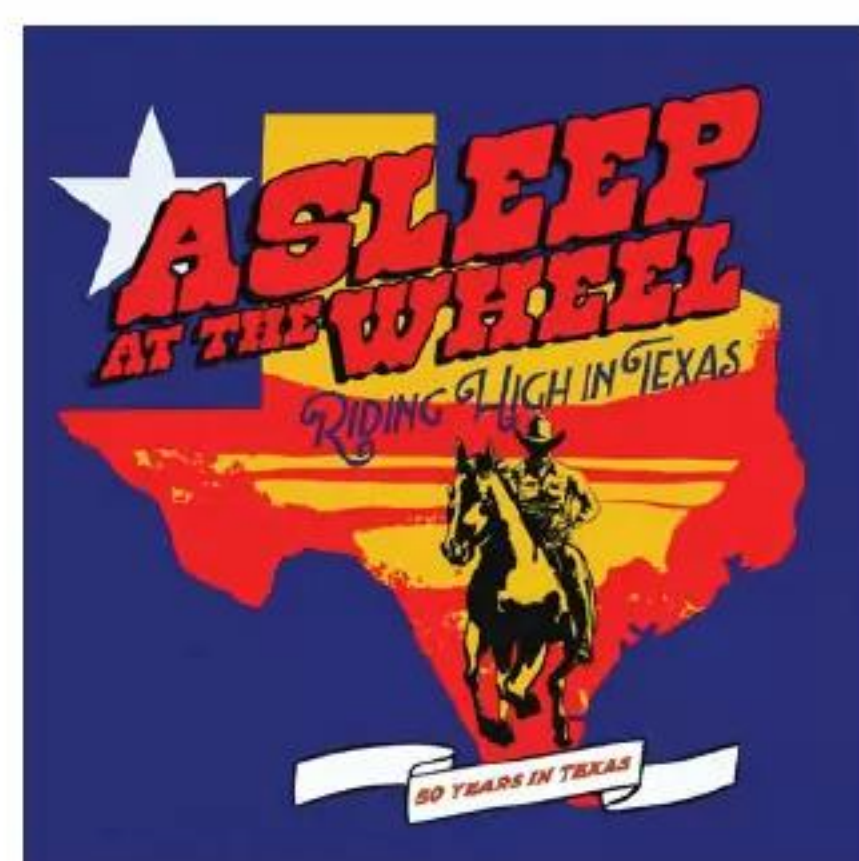
"Heartlands" is a blend of Nashville and New Orleans featuring fiddle, banjo, pedal steel, and expert acoustic guitar playing. King sings his ass off throughout, with a rich drawl. On "Die Alone," his vocal treatment



**Marcus King**  
*Darling Blue*

lends poignancy to introspective lyrics, complemented by excellent fingerpicking and bottleneck slide. The band excavates tear-soaked Southern R&B on "No Room For Blue," and finds haunting acoustic chemistry with Billy Strings on "Dirt," with excellent acoustic playing.

Loaded with great songs, superb musicianship, and meaningful lyrics, *Darling Blue* sticks to the ribs. – **Oscar Jordan**



**Asleep at the Wheel**  
*Riding High in Texas*

After heralding their 50th Anniversary in 2021, Ray

Benson's Western-swing unit continues to celebrate its half-century mark, this time at its home base in Austin.

Benson, who handles the guitar work with his son Sam, is joined by both longtime veterans, fiddler-pianist Danny Levin and drummer David Sanger. Among the new and impressive voices are fiddler Ian Stewart and steel-resonator guitarist Curtis Clogston.

All 10 songs, from various composers and eras, celebrate the Lone Star state. Benson revives his longtime pal George Strait's 1987 hit "All My Exes (Live in Texas)" and reaches back to '59 for the swaggering bar-band favorite "Long Tall Texan," joined by guest vocalist Lyle Lovett. Billy Strings adds an

acoustic solo to the band's take on the title track, written by Peter Rowan. For "Texas in My Soul," Benson revives the hard-swinging, full-bodied 1946 version by Tex Williams and his Western Caravan, adding a brief, concise guitar break, followed by Clogston.

While Guy Clark's "Texas Cookin'" gets a smoldering '60s funk treatment, their take on Jimmie Rodgers' "T for Texas" is conventionally bluesy, with juicy lap-steel from Clogston, whose fluent resonator work enhances "Lonesome Pine Special." Benson, Clogston and Levin (on piano) all shine on the timeless instrumental "Beaumont Rag." – **Rich Kienzle**



**Lafayette Gilchrist & New Volcanoes**  
*Move With Love*

Jazz keyboardist Gilchrist has been busy for more than

three decades, leading ensembles, backing saxophonist David Murray, and recently joining the Sun Ra Arkestra. His broad palette stretches from stride to avant-garde, with nods to hip-hop and D.C. go-go. Teaming with the funky New Volcanoes (featuring guitarist Carl Filipiak), here he creates an impressive live set.

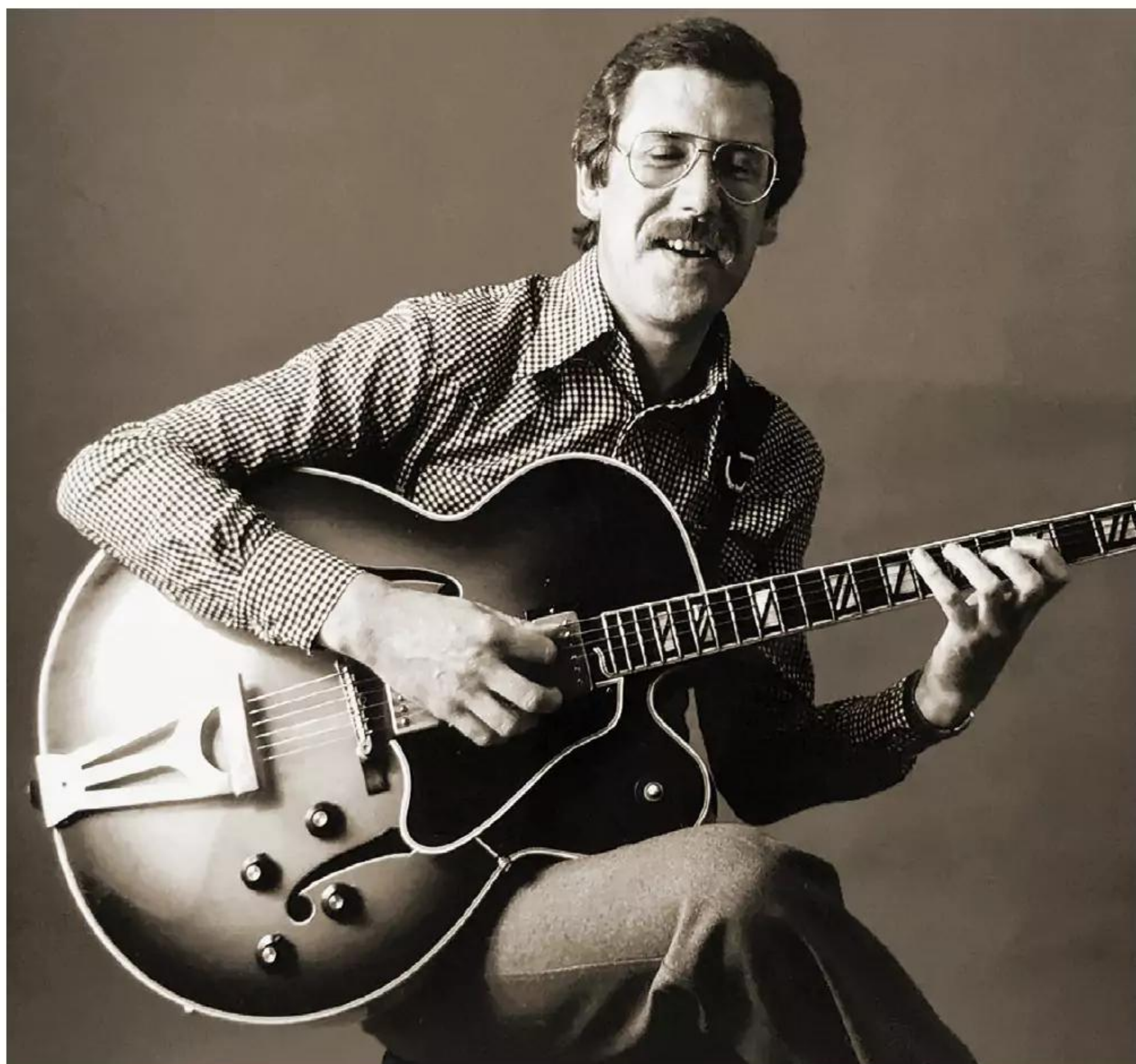
Between seven albums on his own Geometric Records and his work with Jimi Jazz Band, Filipiak deftly straddles jazz and rock as few can. That duality might bring to mind fusion or jazz-rock – fair enough – but it's been years, if not decades, since those sub-genres were as exciting as his demeanor (in a "Third Stone" jam on one of his albums, he declared, "I never want to hear smooth jazz again"). He and bassist Anthony "Blue" Jenkins lock into the percussionists, and his segue from clean to dirty gives the title track a dynamic lift.

When an album makes you want to dig into a band member's back catalog, that's a good sign. – **Dan Forte**



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## THE MYSTERIOUS LOUIS STEWART

By Dan Forte

From the day I was born, I was hearing jazz guitar greats. Years before, my father had begun buying singles, EPs, and LPs by Barney Kessel (with Jimmy Wyble on rhythm), Oscar Moore with the Nat King Cole Trio, Chuck Wayne with the George Shearing Quintet, Irving Ashby with the Oscar Peterson Trio, and the Red Norvo Trio featuring the vibist with Tal Farlow and Charles Mingus on bass.

Eventually, his collection and mine included Jim Hall, Wes Montgomery, Charlie Christian, Herb Ellis, George Barnes, Al Viola, Kenny Burrell, Johnny Pisano and Billy Bean, George Benson, Pat Metheny, Joe Pass' *Virtuoso* series, Charlie Byrd's bossa nova, all of the Howard Roberts albums on Capitol, and Django Reinhardt. Lots of Django. It didn't occur to me at the time, but my schoolmates' households might have had soundtracks to *South Pacific* and *The Music Man*, *The Andy Williams Christmas Album*, and little else – certainly not a “collection” like my dad's eventual 900 LPs.

One name that would come up was English jazzier Louis Stewart (actually Irish). Inside

ers spoke of him in hushed tones, ranking him with the very best. In the July '23 issue of VG, Wolf Marshall devoted his “Fretprints” column to analyzing his style. But his albums were hard to find, except for a handful with George Shearing. So I was excited when I got a press release for *I Thought About You*, an album he recorded in 1977 and was released in '80. It turns out, Stewart cut seven albums for the boutique Livia label; in fact, the late Gerald Davis founded it specifically to spotlight the guitarist.

In '77, Stewart was working with the house band at

London's famed jazz club, Ronnie Scott's. Booked for a series of shows was pianist Cedar Walton, known for his work with such legends as John Coltrane, Art Blakey, Milt Jackson, and Lee Morgan, among many others. Rounding out his formidable trio were bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins – which gave Stewart the idea to bring them into Davis' Dublin studio with Scott's pianist, John Taylor.

The eight tunes reveal a bebop maestro to be reckoned with. The Jimmy Van Heusen/Johnny Mercer title ballad is taken at a smooth, swinging pace. Taylor and Jones take masterful solos while Stewart mixes quicklines with spontaneous punches. Jones contributes “Unit 7,” with Taylor dropping out for some energetic bass-and-guitar sparring. The set also includes two numbers by Francy Boland and Jimmy Woods (of Kenny Clarke's trio) and the modern standards “All Blues” (by Miles Davis) and “Straight, No Chaser” (Thelonious Monk). “Litha,” from mid-'60s Chick Corea, provides the best springboard for Stewart's altering moods and velocities.

Years ago, Martin Taylor mentioned working with Stewart, 12 years his senior, but until now I never found out what context. Taylor was my dad's favorite living jazz guitarist, and he's mine. He was Stephane Grappelli's right-hand man for 11 years, and Pat Metheny declared, “He is one of the most awesome solo guitar players in the history of the instrument. He's unbelievable.”

I saw Taylor on his own and with Grappelli many times, interviewed him for *Guitar Player* in '84, then again for VG's January '06 issue. For a period, he and Stewart formed Grappelli's backing unit, but as far as I know they never played America. Thankfully, the two of them cut *Acoustic Guitar Duets* for Livia, and it was recently remastered and reissued.

As expected, the results are magnificent. The repertoire includes standards by Count Basie, Luiz Bonfá, and Charlie Parker. But in the four hands and 20 fingers of these virtuosos, they attain new life. “Pick Yourself Up” is surely something Stewart played with George Shearing; here, it's a fascinating exercise in interplay. Each has a distinct approach – Stewart's harder attack, Taylor's simultaneous bass lines and moving chords – but things really brighten up when the rhythm drops out, as it were, and they mix it up with simultaneous, dizzying leads. That's topped only when the pair lend their jazz skills to arrangements of traditional Scottish and Irish folk tunes.

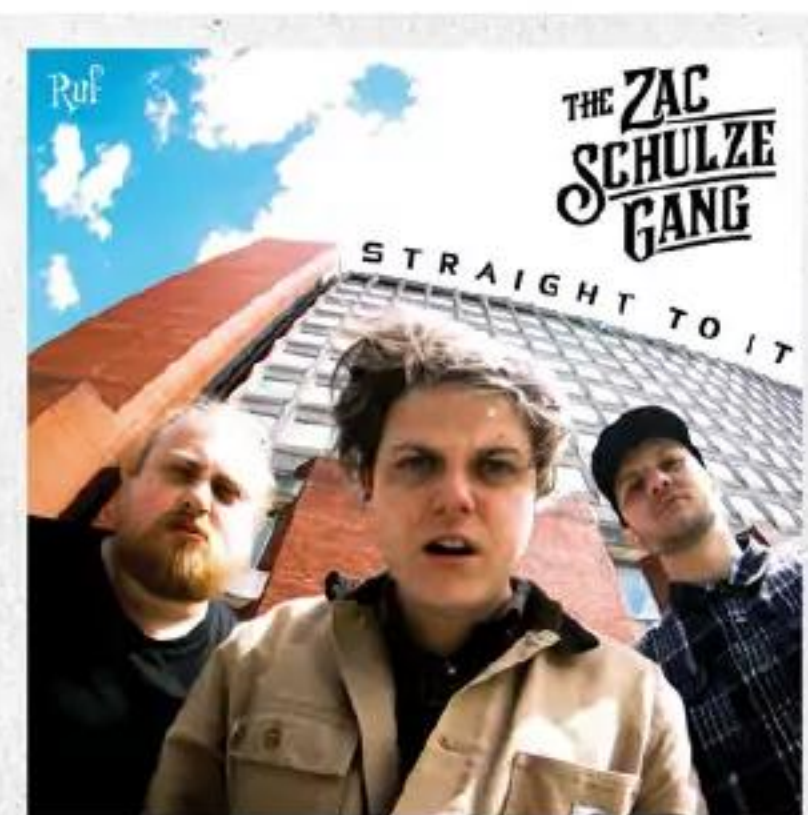
As if all this wasn't already jazz-guitar heaven, there's also *The Dublin Concert*, a previously unreleased 1982 live recording of Stewart with Jim Hall, the only recording of them together. It is, of course, amazing – a study in contrasts and commonality of two jazz giants. Along with Sonny Rollins' hot calypso “St. Thomas” and Duke Ellington's lovely “In A Sentimental Mood,” Van Heusen's “But Beautiful” best describes the proceedings.

A big tip of the hat to Livia's founders, who documented this music, and the folks at the revived label who are preserving it.

Of the 900 or so interviews I've done over the decades, I'm embarrassed to say Louis Stewart wasn't one of them. Even with all the technology available, I didn't do the legwork to hook up with him before he died in 2016. As a friend told me when I was kicking myself over another bucket-list artist slipping through my fingers, “You can't interview them all.” But I want to.

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## Zac Schulze Gang Straight to It

It does the heart good to see fierce, no-frills rock-and-roll bands being formed by the younger set. The U.K. is fertile ground for such upstarts, including the Zac Schulze Gang, featuring lead guitarist/vocalist Zac, brother/drummer/vocalist Ben Schulze, and bassist/vocalist Ant Greenwell.

The roar of these British lads is described as blues-rock, but their vibe is too uproarious to be pigeonholed. The trio is inspired by AC/DC, Thin Lizzy, Rory Gallagher, and modern bands like Queens of the Stone Age and Royal Blood. It's kick-ass rock with good lyrics.

"The Rocker" is a cocksure strutter that gives way to a wild Schulze solo. The feverish (yet catchy) "I Won't Do This Anymore" and "High Roller" barrel on relentlessly with snappy guitar and harmonica bles. "Runnin' Dry" is a two-minute blast with a jumpypunk beat and tough vocals. The ballad "Angeline" isn't mournful, but the earnest singing is enhanced by ethereal slide and Zac's wailing guitar solo. "Damaged Man" evokes a '50s/'60s rock feel. A turn toward R&B with organ shakes up "Turning to Stone." The closing ballad, "Things Change," includes multiple distinct guitar parts, including a resonant, bluesy solo. – **Bret Adams**



## The Who Live at the Oval 1971

Recorded at an outdoor cricket ground in Kennington, South London, this 1971 tape captures The Who during their *Who's Next* peak. At this point, Pete Townshend's tone was still draped with molten overdrive (before evolving to a much cleaner tone), and displays those frenetic Hendrixian colors on "My Wife." Even the lighter "Love Ain't For Keeping" is a crunchy rocker here, propelled by John Entwistle's first-gen Thunderbird IV and Keith Moon's drum fury. It's rum stuff.

Going back a half decade, the quartet delivers crisp versions of early singles "I Can't Explain" and "Substitute," both master classes on Pete's chord work, here using an SG Special (which he smashed later that night). He strums acoustic for the intro to "Bargain" and treads the line between light



arpeggios and nasty power chords on "Behind Blue Eyes." "Pinball Wizard" also nails that patented clean-meets-dirty dynamic.

"Won't Get Fooled Again," perhaps the Who's greatest guitar anthem, is given a suitably brutish performance, rife with the Ox's muscular bass lines and Pete's fiery riffs and solo.

*Live at the Oval 1971* isn't essential, but with excellent audio and seismic energy, it's a snapshot of The Who at their critical highpoint. – **Pete Prown**



## John McTigue, III Never Too Late

"Eclectic" doesn't begin to describe this trip, which is all over the map – from barrelhouse piano (Al Hill, who also sings "Down The Road a Piece") to gospel, spaghetti Western, and even chamber music – but well worth the ride.

Nashville drummer McTigue founded Brazilbilly and has played on three Raul Malo albums, as well as recordings by Dale Watson, Jim Lauderdale, Rosie Flores, and others. As with 2021's *It's About Time*, he co-produced this set with Kenny Vaughan, himself broad-minded and versatile. Besides his stellar work with Marty Stuart's Fabulous Superlatives, videos of Vaughan's Imperial Blues Hour are responsible for many an online rabbit hole.

McTigue co-wrote the instrumental rumba "The Last Goodbye" with Malo, who's featured on guitar, with mariachi trumpet adding atmosphere. "Route 66" has seen interpretations from Nat King Cole to the Rolling Stones. Presented as a guitar/drums duet, Vaughan handles vocals and struts some tasty jump-blues licks.

Although "(Ghost) Riders In The Sky" has seen countless iterations from Bing Crosby to Johnny Cash, Lawrence Welk, and the Ramrods' instro-rock hit, Cousin Kenny's rendition stands apart. With intertwining overdubbed guitars over a giddy-up rhythm, it's a dramatic tour de force. – **DF**



## Foghat Fool for the City 50th Anniversary Edition

The quintessential '70s boogie band, Foghat played rock designed for hockey and basketball arenas – pumpin' 4/4 jams that got booties out of seats. Their breakthrough was this 1975 LP produced by bassist Nick Jameson and unleashing the twin-guitar fury of slider Rod Price and frontman Dave Peverett. The remastered set also features an unreleased '75 live tape from Chicago.

You already know the studio tracks (like the FM anthem "Slow Ride"), but the draw here is the live cuts. In addition to being monster musicians, Foghat garnished their revved-up *blooze* with massive vocal harmonies, as in "Home In My Hand" and "My Babe." A cover of the blues standard "Honey Hush" lets us hear the late Price playing conventional guitar leads, at which he was just as adept as bottleneck. The guy remains criminally underrated. Willie Dixon's "I Just Want to Make Love to You" keeps the party going, with Dave and Rod trading solos next to Jameson's wicked bass licks.

This live version of "Slow Ride" isn't a departure, but it's hard not to be dazzled by Foghat's unstoppable guitar boogie,



propelled by more fat Fender bass. Get out of your seats – and flick that Bic! – **PP**



### Ana Popovic Dance to the Rhythm

Bues-rocker Ana Popovic continues to be inspired by her artistic muse, fusing excellent guitar work into African-American music styles. The title track is a cold slap of reality, as listeners are introduced to a funky track with horns that evoke the disco era. Popovic's triple-tracked vocal lines and bluesy guitar lean into catchy, but familiar grooves. She continues in this vein on "Worked Up" and emotes on the slick soul ballad, "California Chase," highlighted by an intense Strat solo.

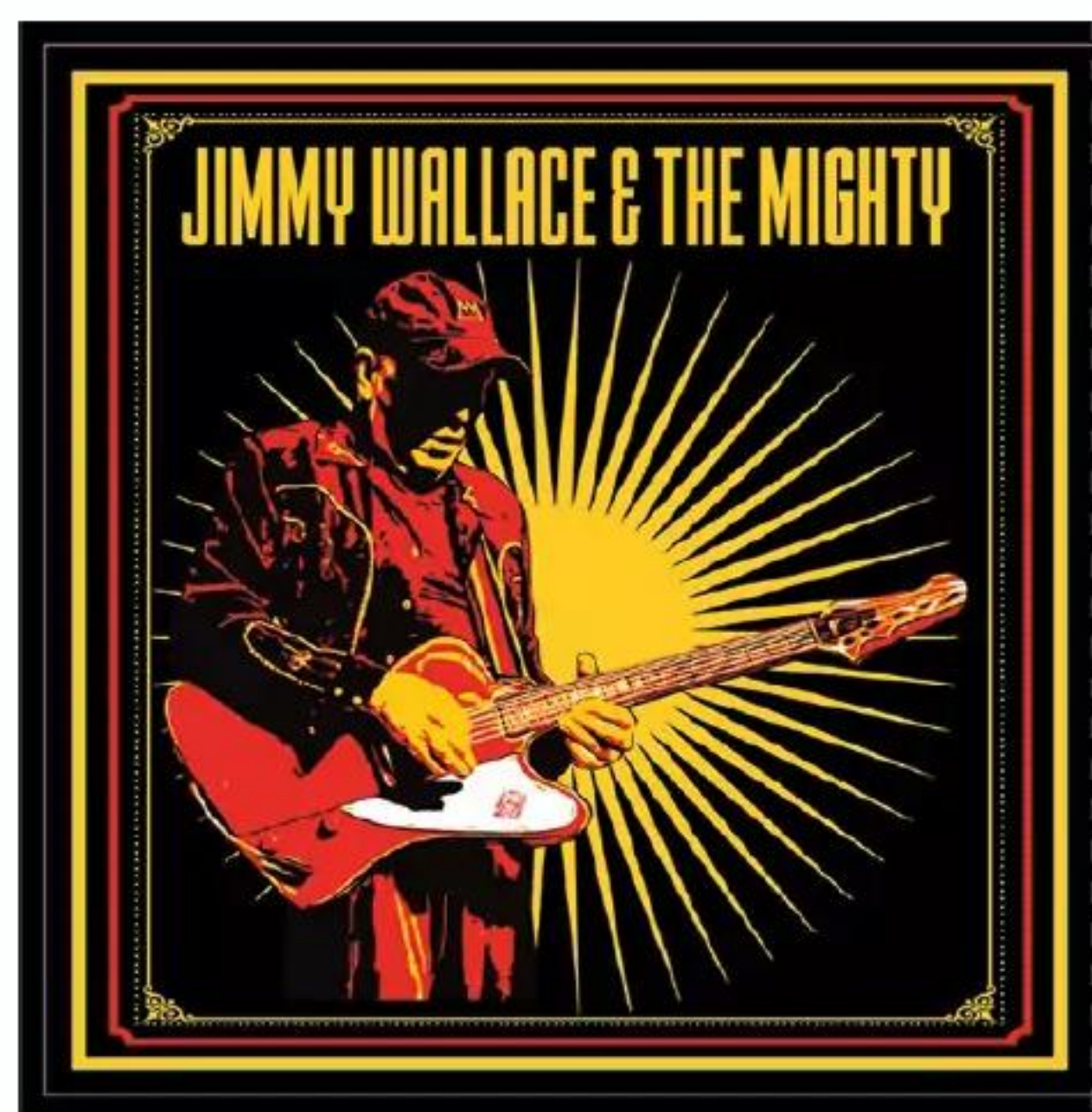
Popovic whips out the acoustic on "Hurt So Good" with some earth-bound guitar licks and continues with more dance grooves on "Sho' Nuf." On "Dwell on the Feeling," she conjures the musical spirit of Ernie Isley, then unleashes her inner Santana for "Solution."

Popovic's love of black dance and soul music is admirable, but the album lacks what makes this Serbian blueswoman's personal journey unique. Yes, she gets points



Ana Popovic

for distinguishing herself from the Joanna Connors of the world but risks losing Joe Six-Pack at festivals. – **OJ VG**



### JIMMY WALLACE & THE MIGHTY Jimmy Wallace & the Mighty Dallas-area guitar retailer and

builder Wallace is also a rip-pin' player, no baloney. On this covers album, his massive tones can be heard on the hard-rock "And Your Bird Can Sing," and Hendrixian "Taxman." Jimmy's cover of Clapton's "Pretending" sports overdrive as huge as Texas, while "All Along the Watchtower" is a sonic stunner. A guitar feast for the ears. – **PP**



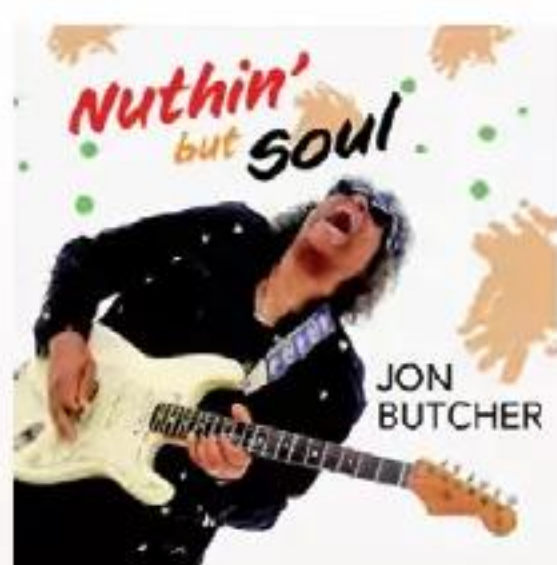
### WARREN HAYNES The Whisper Sessions

This nine-song digital release features stripped-down versions of songs from the Gov't Mule/Allman Brothers Band guitarist's 2024 album Million Voices Whisper. Five songs feature just Haynes singing and playing electric guitar; three include former ABB band-mate Derek Trucks on slide guitar. "You Ain't Above Me" is a superb soul ballad, while "These Changes," with Trucks, sports a catchy, repeating melody. Primal stuff! – **BA**

slap bass, and Sylvester "Sly Stone" Stewart's originals, Sly & the Family Stone became one of the most innovative forces of the '60s and '70s. But prior to hits like "Everyday People," they were a dynamite soul cover band; Freddie Stone also shows what a sorely underrated guitarist he was. With extensive liner notes by producer Alec Palao. – **DF**



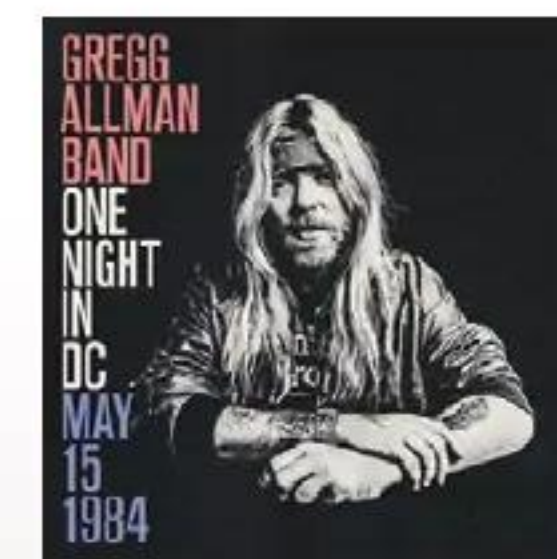
### ANTHONY WILSON NONET House of the Singing Blossoms Diana Krall sideman Anthony Wilson has for years worked solo with larger hard-bop units. This latest effort returns him to that setting in a live L.A. performance. While leaving ample room for his bandmates to shine, Wilson's brief solos blaze with inventiveness, especially on the furious "Triple Chase," the Joe Zawinul jazz standard "In A Silent Way," and "Bordertown." – **RK**



### JON BUTCHER Nuthin' But Soul Grammy-nominated guitarist Jon Butcher uses his superpowers to explore the music of his youth. The genre is funk and soul, and Butcher puts his guitar chops and songwriting craft to use, capturing a glorious, turbulent time in music history via the sounds of Motown, Stax, James Brown, and Sly Stone. Highlights include "Arrested No Charge," "Shout It," and "Unbreakable." – **OJ**



### SLY & THE FAMILY STONE The First Family: Live At Winchester Cathedral 1967 Featuring multiple singers, Larry Graham's game-changing



### GREGG ALLMAN BAND One Night in DC, May 15, 1984 This sharp concert with lead guitarist Dan Toler and bassist Gregg Voorhees includes Allman Brothers Band favorites ("One Way Out" sports Toler's blistering solo) and newer songs like "Yours for the Asking" and "Faces Without Names" that would end up on 1987's *I'm No Angel*. The acoustic Allman/Toler duet "Melissa" shines, and the epic jam "Matthew's Arrival" features stunning solos from Toler and Voorhees. – **BA**



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## VINTAGE TECH

### Fender's American Ultra Luxe '60s Stratocaster HSS

**T**he concept behind Fender's new Ultra Luxe Vintage series is simple but effective – planks for guitarists who want modern features and playability in a Strat (or Tele) that looks pre-CBS.

The '60s Stratocaster HSS is something of an electric wolf in sheep's clothing. Looking and feeling like a 1960s Strat hot-rodded with 21st-century firepower, our tester was dressed in the fabled Fiesta Red topped with Fender's Heirloom nitro-cellulose lacquer sporting a semi-matte appearance – a welcome relief from hyper-glossy poly finishes. The Strat has an alder body, maple neck, and 22-fret rosewood board (10"-14" radius) with stainless-steel frets. Its aged-white pickup covers and knobs give a nod to vintage specs.

While the visuals say 1965, the Ultra Luxe is definitely a 2025 machine. Its pickups are Vintage '61 single-coils in the neck and middle for classic Strat midrange quack, but with a zebra-stripe Haymaker humbucker in the bridge. A button for the popular S1 circuit sits atop the Volume knob, allowing you to split the Haymaker into separate coils for instant quack. Another contemporary nod is the D-shaped neck, which is perfectly shred-able for your best legato, tapping, and blues licks; a tapered heel, locking tuners, and reliable vibrato bridge continue the tech parade. Luminlay side dots glow-in-the-dark after being exposed to light. Fender says 20 minutes should keep them glowing the whole gig, and it totally works.

On the job, the Ultra Luxe HSS brings plenty of cool tones. In band rehearsal, it sparkled; the pickups and alder body combined with the blazing neck covered everything from Stevie Ray quack to Iron Maiden HSS scream. Conversely, the guitar logs in at 8.2 pounds – something to keep in mind if you prefer the Strat's customary light weight.

All told, the Ultra Luxe Vintage '60s Stratocaster HSS is an impressive solidbody, offering players that "modern inside vintage" sound and functionality many desire. It's a seriously impressive instrument. – **Pete Prown**

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**S**o it's 3 a.m. and you're sitting in your apartment with a killer new riff in your head. But the neighbors already hate you and your guitar – especially between bedtime and breakfast. To the rescue comes the EarthQuaker Easy Listening, a one-knob amp simulator that covers many jobs.

Just string together your favorite pedals (or pedalboard) before the input and plug your headphones into the output jack. You'll be rewarded with pro-grade tone, and the neighbors won't hear a thing.

Well-named, the Easy Listening just plugs in; there are no digital menus or IR/software sims of amps and mics. All you do is power the small-footprint box with a standard 9-volt adapter and you're off to Jamsville.

Designed to re-create the tone of a '65 Deluxe Reverb EQ'd flat, there are two main uses for the all-analog Easy Listening – with headphones and your favorite pedals for silent jamming, or as a DI, thanks to its mono and stereo TRS outs for plugging into a PA, recording interface, or mixer. What makes the pedal so intriguing is its low price *and* that ability to work beautifully with your favorite stompboxes. That in itself is gold. – **Pete Prown**



# EXCEPTIONAL SEMI-HOLLOW

## The Reverend Spacehawk Supreme

Since 1997, Reverend Guitars has been designing some of the most innovative guitars to appear on concert stages. From Vernon Reid and Pete Anderson to Rick Vito and Billy Corgan, a diverse range of players have created beautiful music with a Reverend (or two).

Reverend's Spacehawk was designed for Reeves Gabrels when he joined The Cure in 2012, and the new Spacehawk Supreme is the company's sixth signature model created for him (*Ed. Note: he discusses the guitar in this month's "First Fret"*).

The Supreme's aesthetics bring a retro vibe incorporating modern tech and nifty styling aimed at non-traditional players. Our review model was finished in Venetian Gold on a semi-hollow korina body (Metallic Silver Freeze is another option) with a solid maple top and a three-piece korina neck. The neck's profile is medium oval, with an ebony fretboard that has a 12" radius. It has 22 frets, a 24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" scale, 43mm Boneite nut, and Reverend's Pin-Lock Tuners. Controls consist of Volume, Tone, Bass Contour, five-way pickup selector, Phase push/pull, and Studio push/pull. Its Bigsby B-50 has a roller bridge.

The guitar has a Railhammer Alnico Grande pickup in the bridge position, a Hyper Vintage Bridge in the middle, and a Hyper Vintage in the neck position. This configuration allows for seven pickup combinations – neck/bridge and neck/middle/bridge. The Killswitch toggle turns the guitar off or can be used to create Les Paul-like stutter effects.

A striking piece, the Spacehawk Supreme's neck and weight are comfortable. Plugged into a Deluxe Reverb and a JHS Sweet Tea, it elicited an array of sounds that fell sonically between a Gretsch Falcon and a Gibson ES-345. While it rocks with the dirt dialed up, the real goodies lie in the out-of-phase and in-between pickup positions, where its tones are unique, trippy, musical, and inspiring. It handles jazz, blues, rockabilly, and rock and roll, and just begs to be used for ambient time-based effects.

When its time to expand your tonal palette, it's worth considering the Spacehawk Supreme. – **Oscar Jordan**

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



## GEARIN' UP



### GIBSON TONY IOMMI HUMBUCKER

Gibson's Tony Iommi Signature Humbucker is potted and uses ceramic and Alnico II magnets. Its proprietary winding was developed in collaboration with Iommi, and has a four-conductor lead for use in series, parallel, and split-coil operation. Output measures approximately 16K-ohm.



### BAD CAT OCELOT

Bad Cat Amplifiers' Ocelot is a compact 20-watt (switchable to one watt) with three 12AX7 tubes in its preamp and two EL84s in the power section. It has two channels with Hi/Lo mode, controls for Treble, Mid, Bass, Presence, and Master Volume, Torpedo DynIR Integration (with six presets), XLR-out cab sim, MIDI input, buffered effect loop, and 8-/16-ohm speaker outs.



### MESA/BOOGIE BASS-800D

Mesa/Boogie's Bass-800D is a Class D head with tube preamp and channel topography/interface borrowed from the company's Bass 400+. Controls include a Low/High preamp gain switch, Deep/Bright switches, and a variable High Pass Filter. Its overall tone is slightly more gain-forward than other Subway bass heads.

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# LIL' BEAST

## The Blackstar ID:X 50

In recent years, a chasm has formed between amplifier families, with tubes on one side and modelers on the other. Blackstar builds both, providing vacuum flavors for vintage hounds alongside digital-fueled combos like the new ID:X 50. Don't be fooled, though – this

diminutive 50-watter packs a lot of power and contains surprisingly tubular tones.

Price: \$349.99  
www.blackstaramps.com

The ID:X 50 is a small-cabinet combo with one 12" speaker and 50 watts of solid-state juice. Unlike the transistor amps of yesteryear, though, there's powerful software loaded with

amp models, EQ, and effects. The best part of its design is the supreme ease in which you can access these goodies. On the right is the Master volume knob, while on the far left is Voice, which offers six amp models, from Clean Warm and Clean Bright to Super Crunch, OD1, and OD2. Like a regular amp, there are Gain and channel Volume controls for overdrive character, EQ, and an interesting knob called ISF, which re-voices the preamp from an American tone (fewer mids, more scooped) to British (beefy, low-mid muscle).

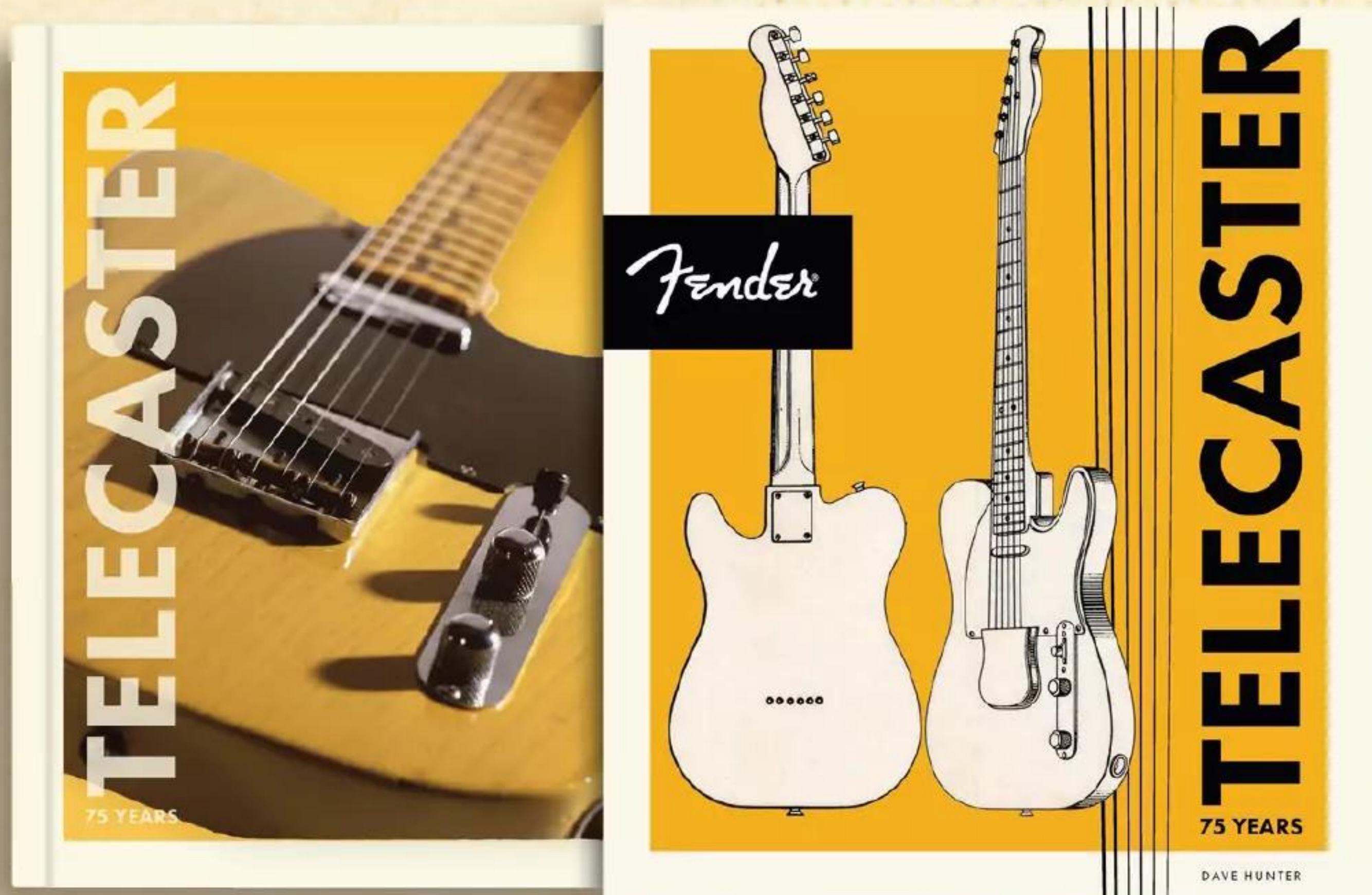
Tweaking effects is easy, as Blackstar offers four choices (Pre-FX, Modulation, Delay, Reverb) and knobs for simple editing. With tap tempo, they turn this amp into a full guitar rig. Other knobs are Power, which selects one of three output levels (1 watt, 10 watts, 50 watts), and Response, which re-voices the power-amp section with simulations of EL84, EL34, and 6L6 tubes.

Using a PRS P-22, the ID:X 50 proved solid across the spectrum, but excelled in heavy overdrive situations. There are some hairy, *fat* distortion tones that must be heard to be believed – they're scary-good. The cleans are nice, especially with effects, but it's a small-cab combo, so expect the normal degree of combo boxiness (Blackstar also makes a 100-watt ID:X for a wider-cab experience and bigger tones).

All told, this modeler is a little beast that's impressive sounding, portable, and sure to challenge Boss' popular Katana line. The real joy is that anyone can master the ID:X 50 in a few minutes and benefit from its dazzling audio. If you haven't jumped in the modeling-amp pool yet, this might be the perfect diving board. – **Pete Prown VG**







## Fender Telecaster 75 Years

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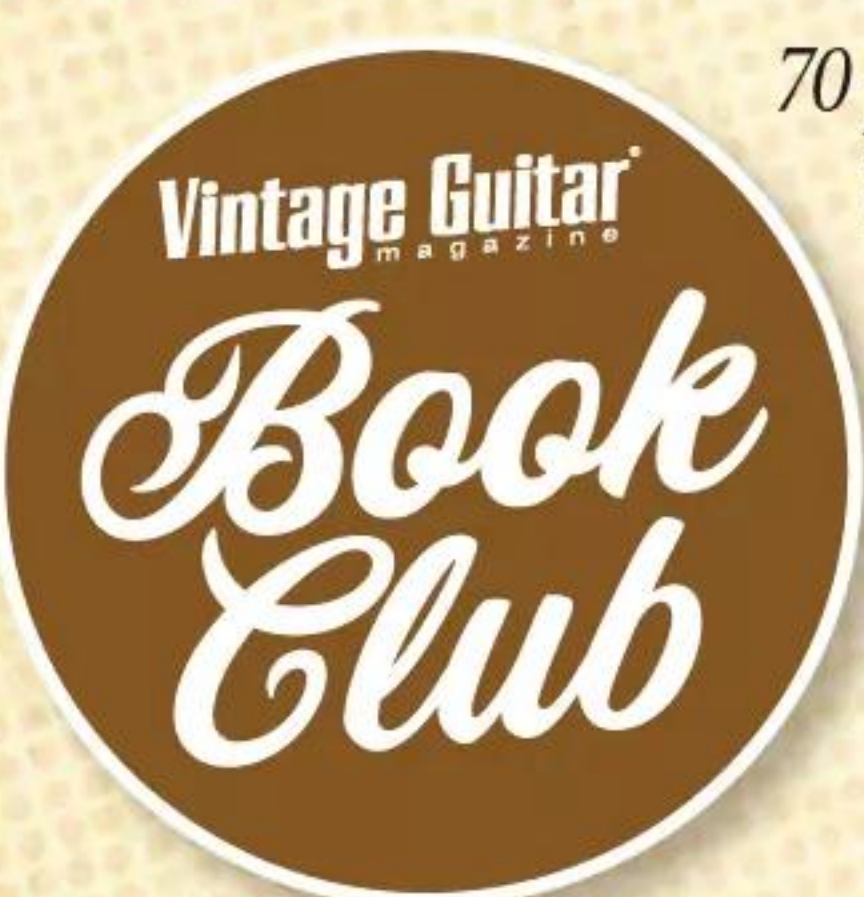
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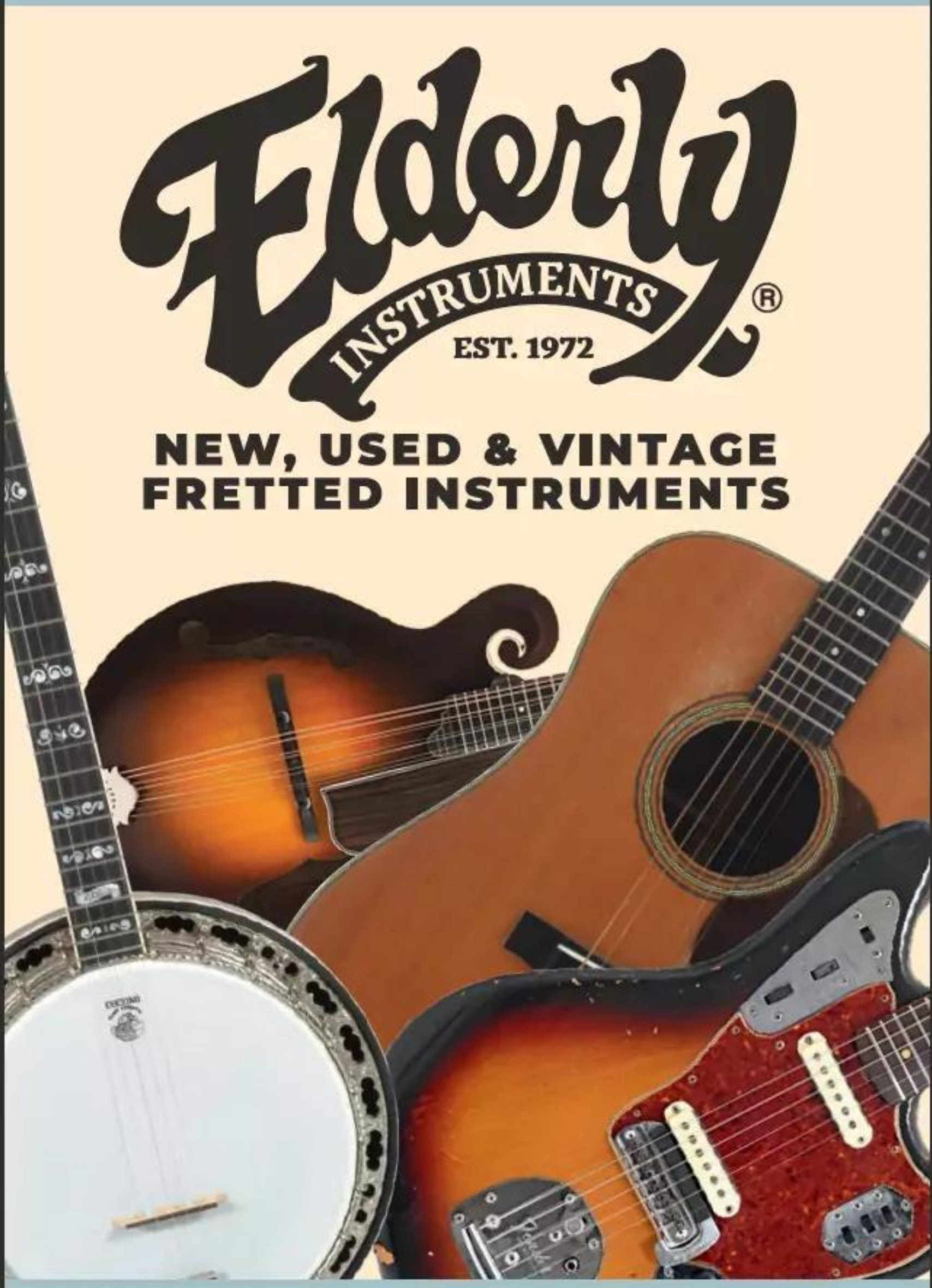
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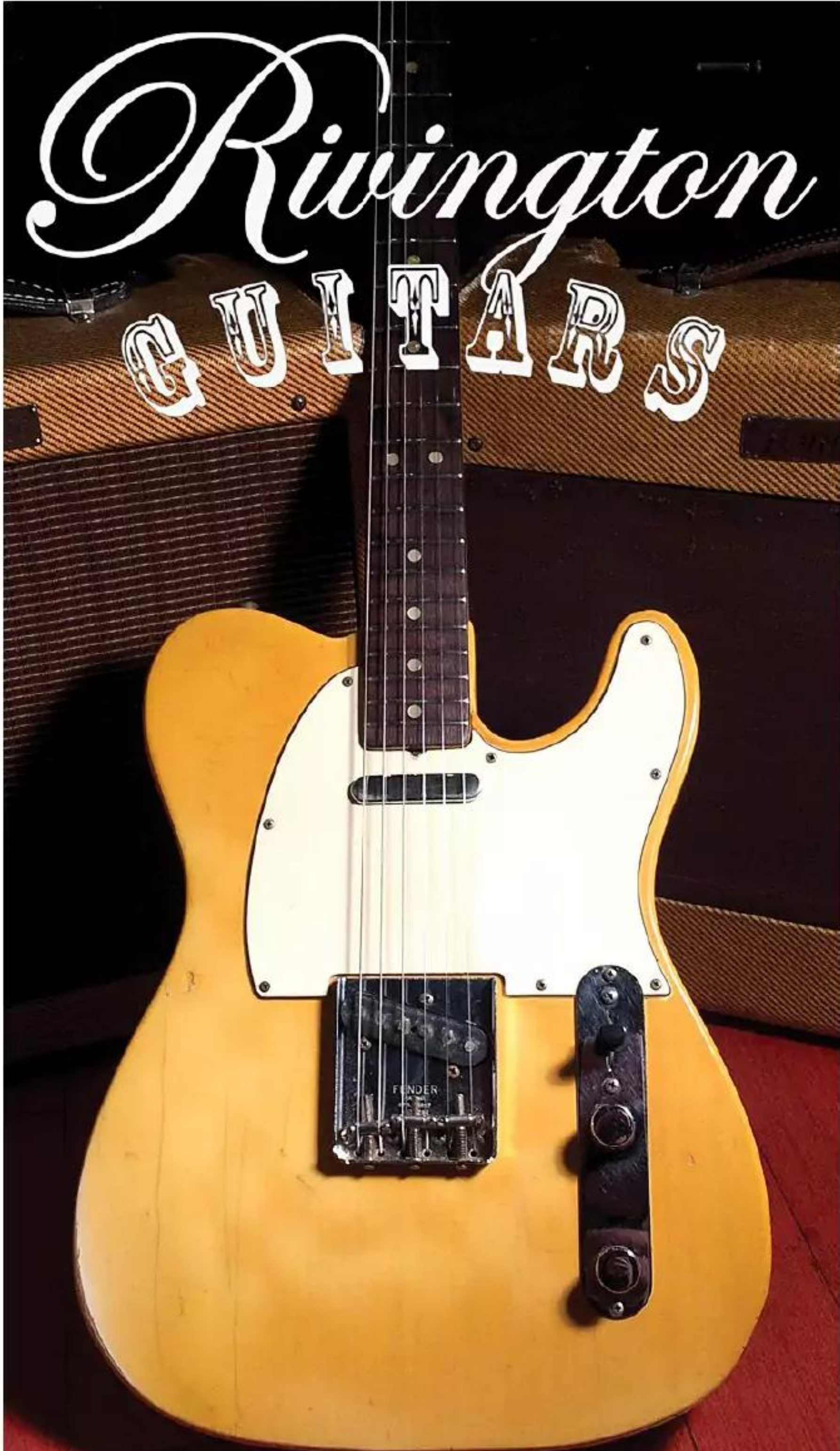
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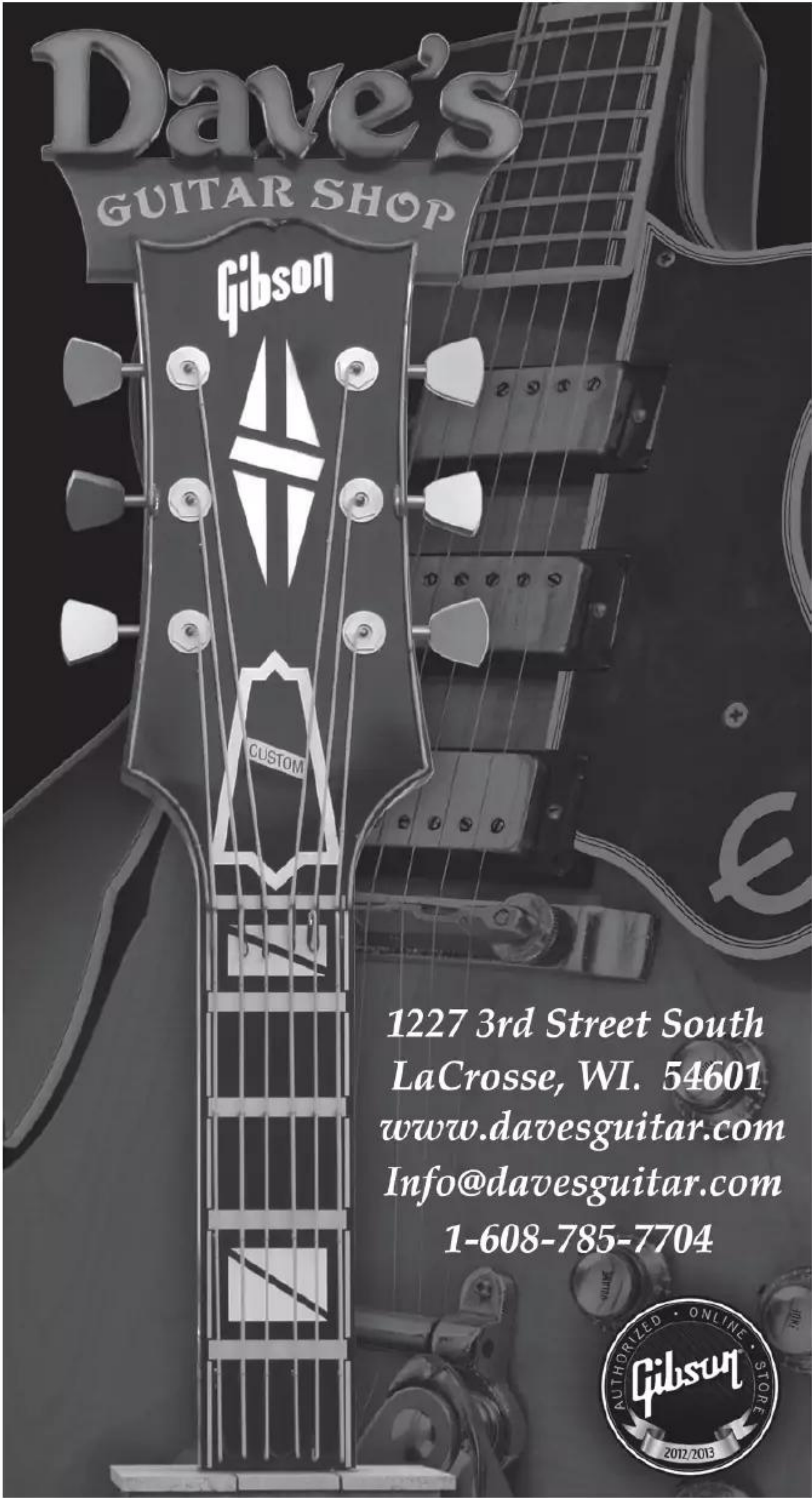
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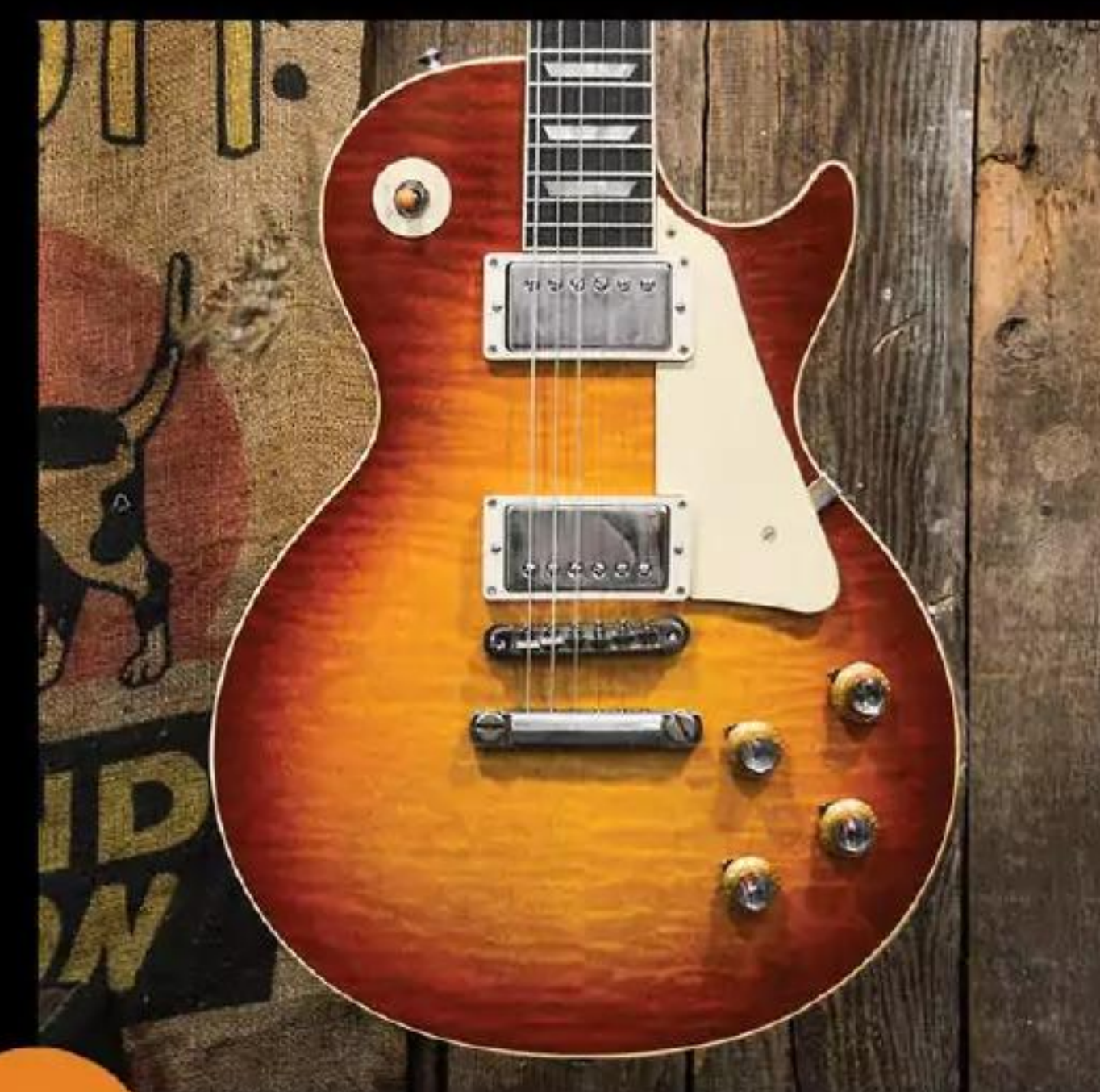
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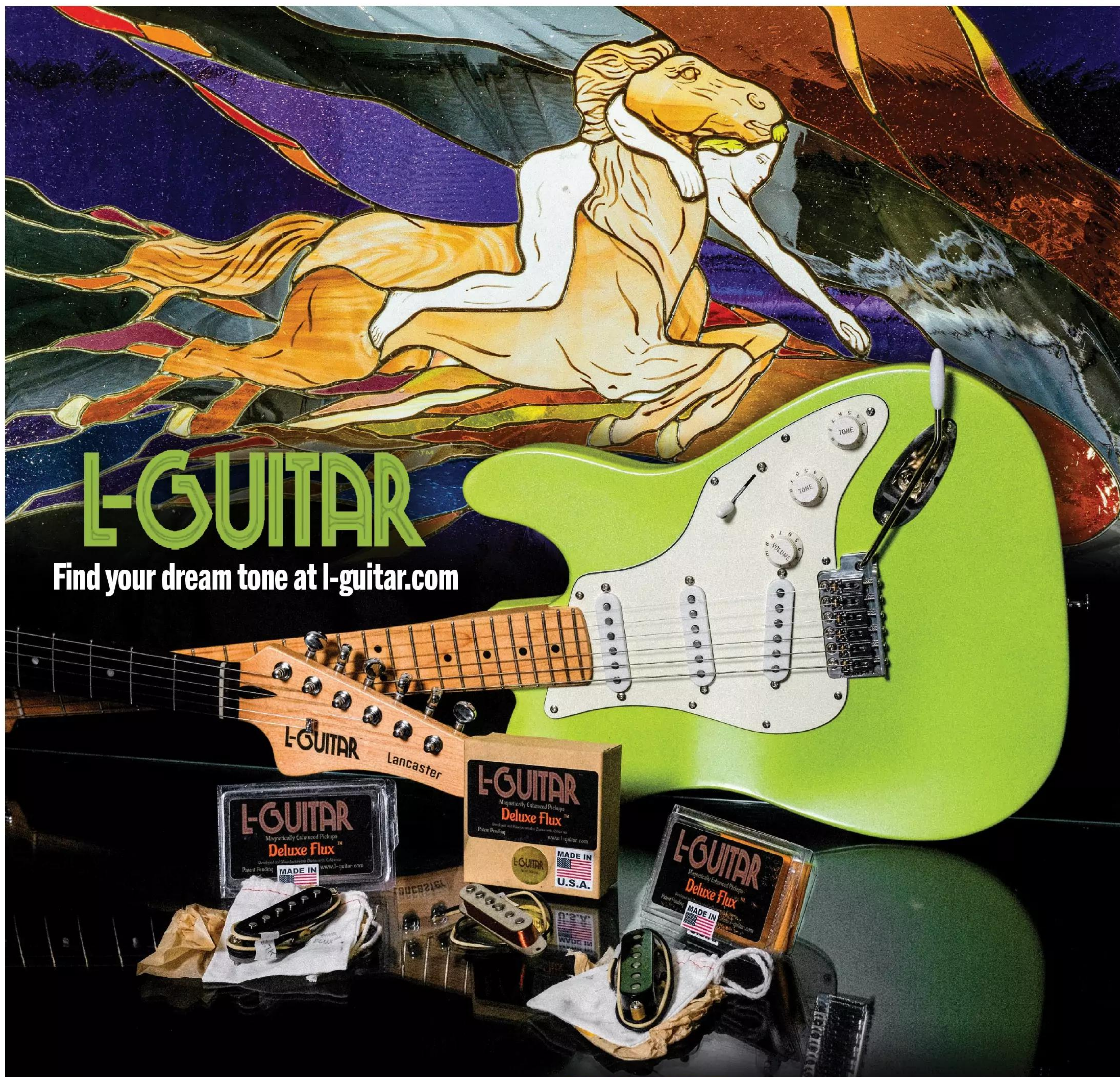


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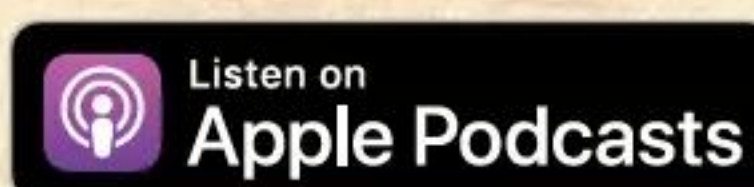
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**01** Fred Stevens' collection has been featured here a few times, but, he writes, "My basses were complaining that they get no respect, so I lined a few up in front of my Peavey rig. Front and center is a Squier Bass VI painted by Marijke Koger (a.k.a. "the Fool"), and on the left are an Epiphone Thunderbird Pro, Rick 4001, and an Epi Flying V. To the right is a Dano Longhorn and Epi Explorer."

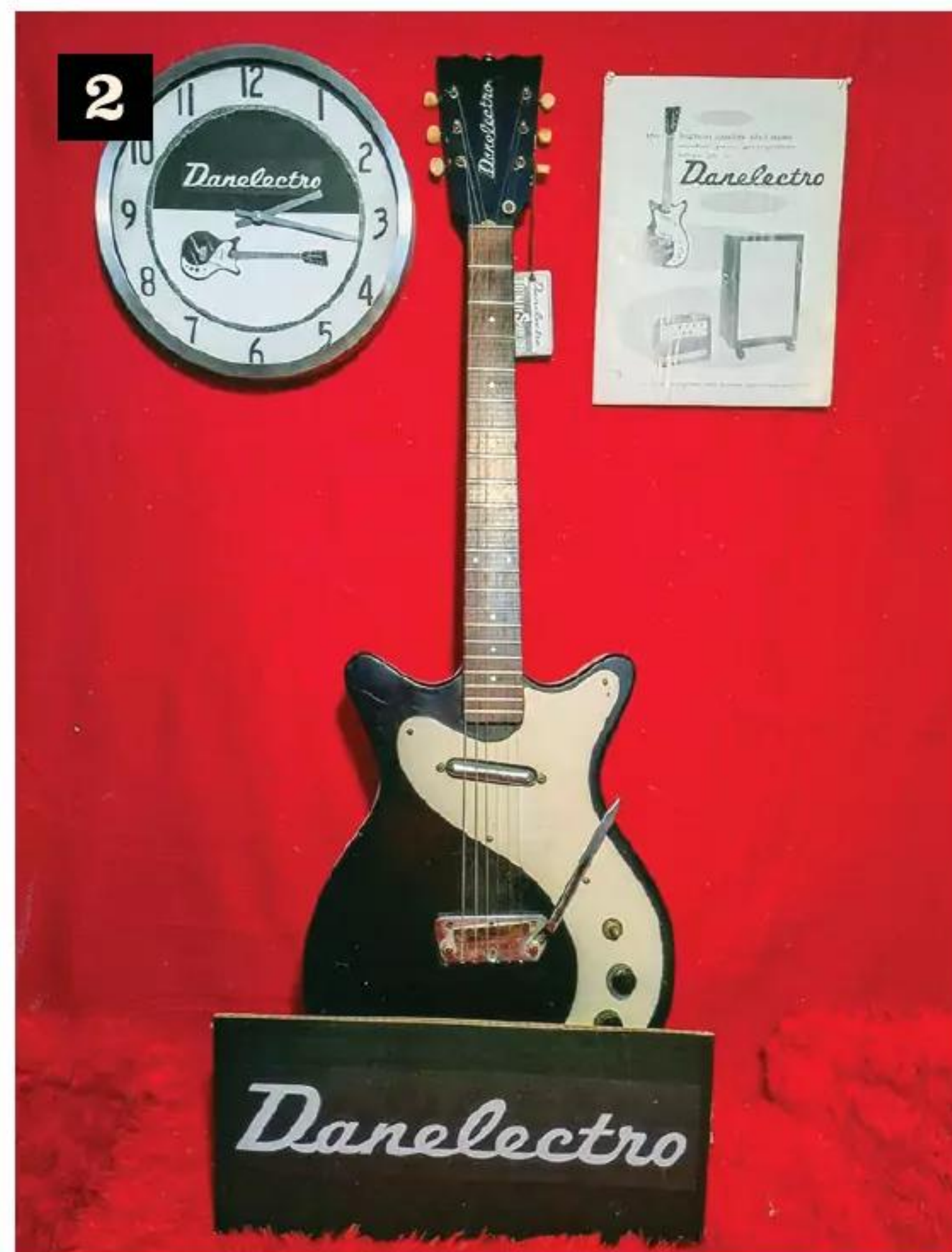
**02** Instrument dealer Cohn Rude sent this shot of his '65 Danelectro Shorthorn and offered a history lesson along with it. "After The Beatles sang 'I Want to Hold Your Hand' on Ed Sullivan in 1964, everyone wanted a guitar," he said. "Danelectro sold 1,000 guitars every day, Harmony sold 750."

**03** Two of Tony Hoffman's favorites are his lefty Epiphone Firebird VIIs. He tells us the Antique Ivory one is all-original while the Cardinal Red has banjo tuners.

**04** Mike "Evil Jake" Jacobs' collection is a mix of vintage, reissue, and modern. It includes instruments and amps by Ibanez, Gretsch, Gibson, Reverend, Fender, Budda, East Amplification, G&L, ESP, and Fretlight.

**05** Lee Adams' drummer buddy, Skip Johnson, lets him take care of Skip's '70s Ibanez Rocket-Roll.

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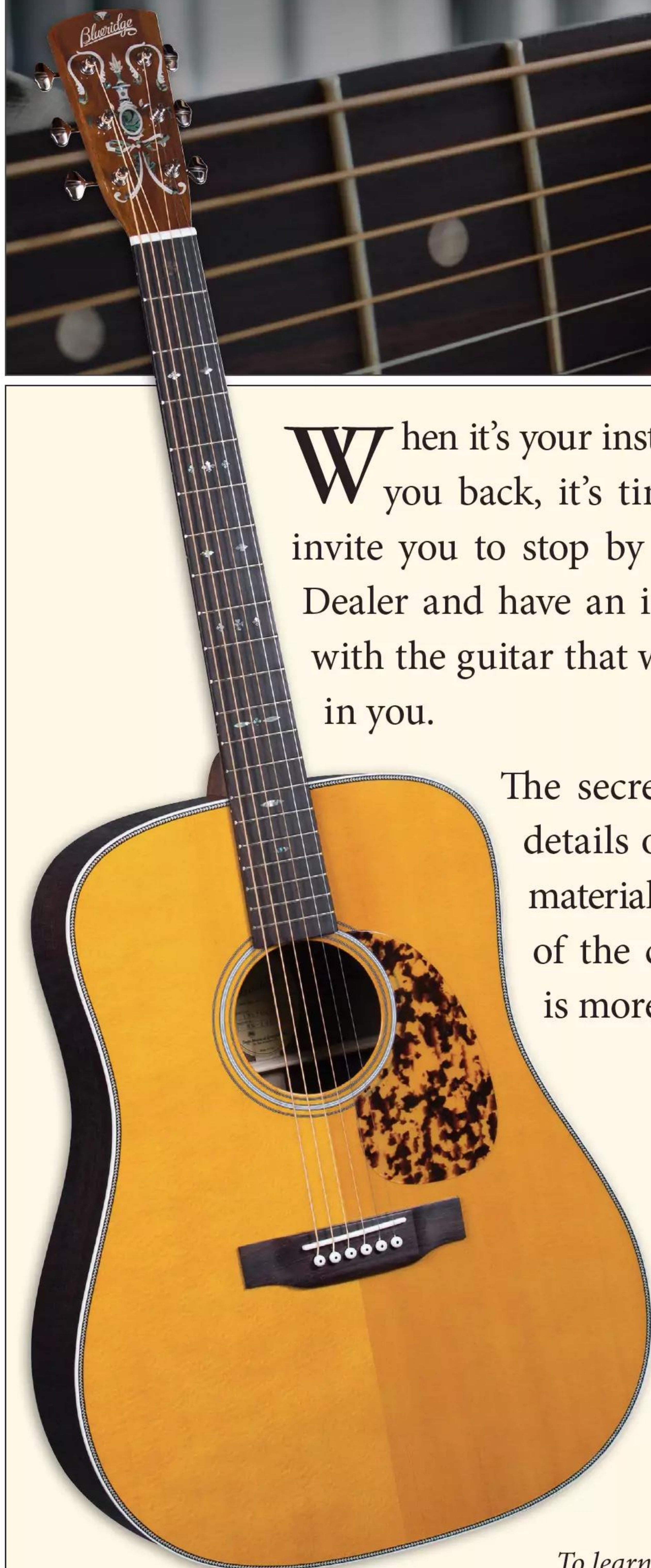


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