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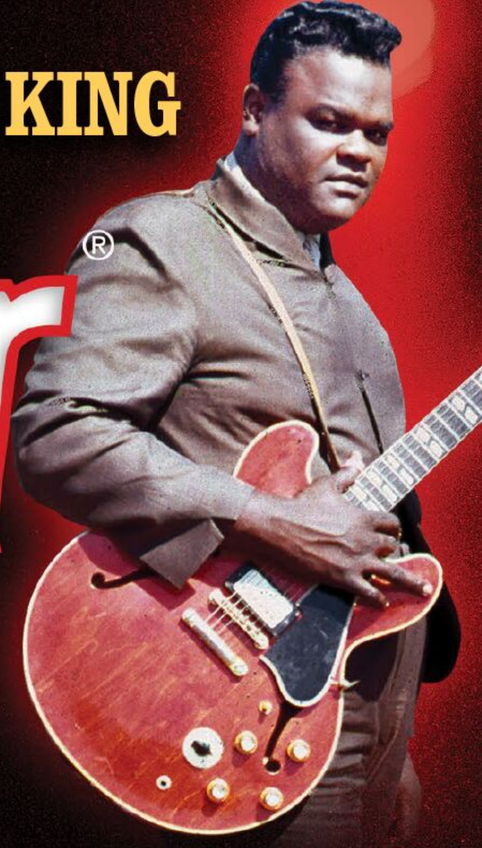

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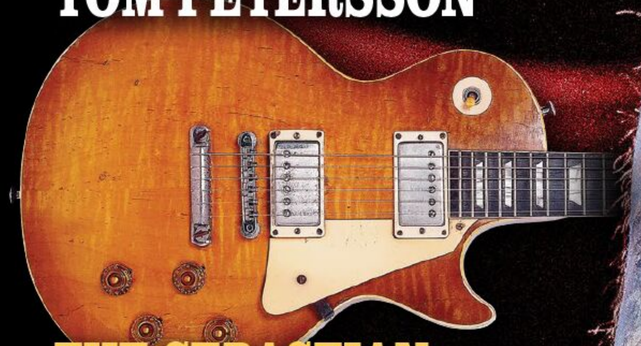

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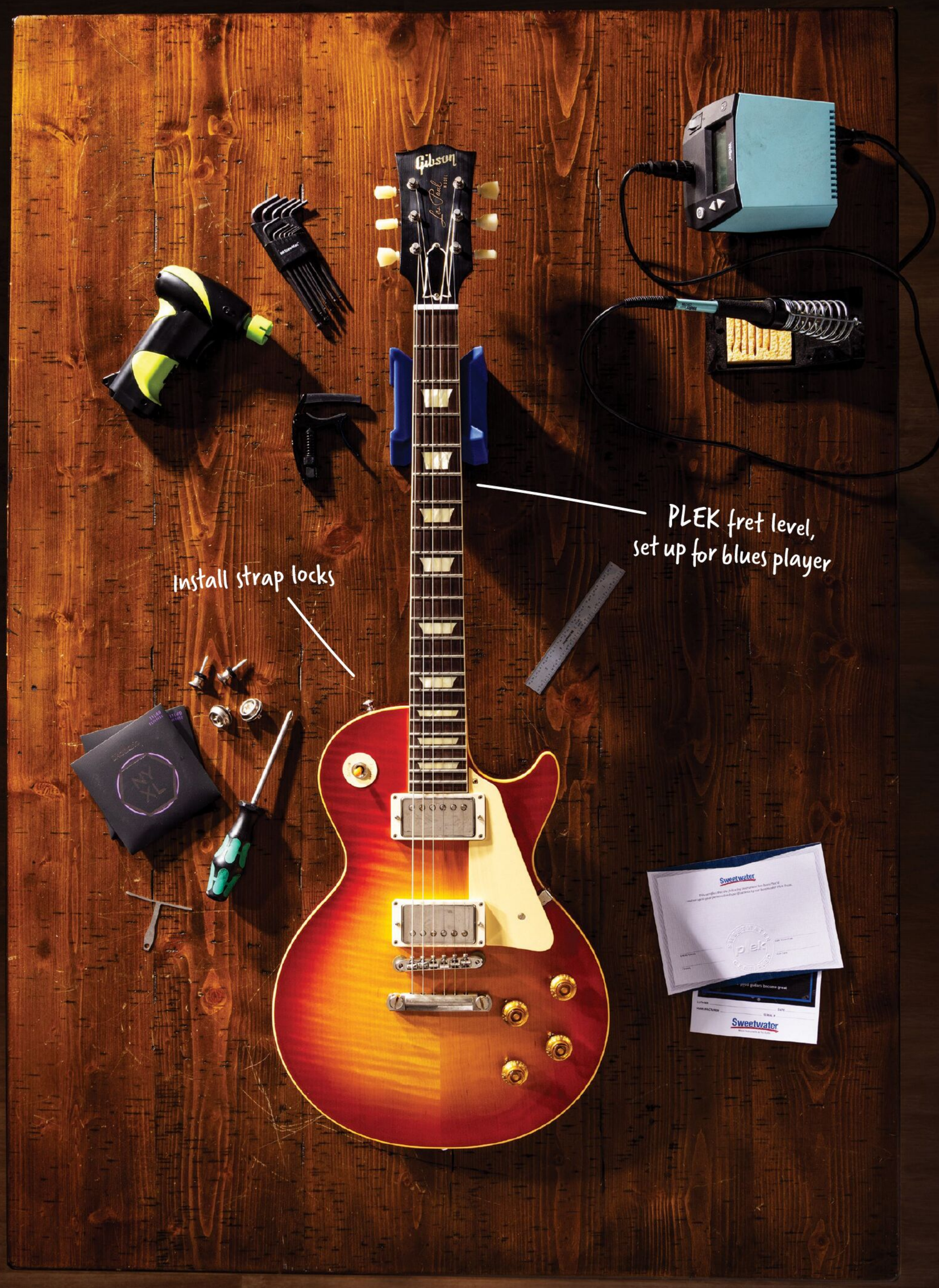

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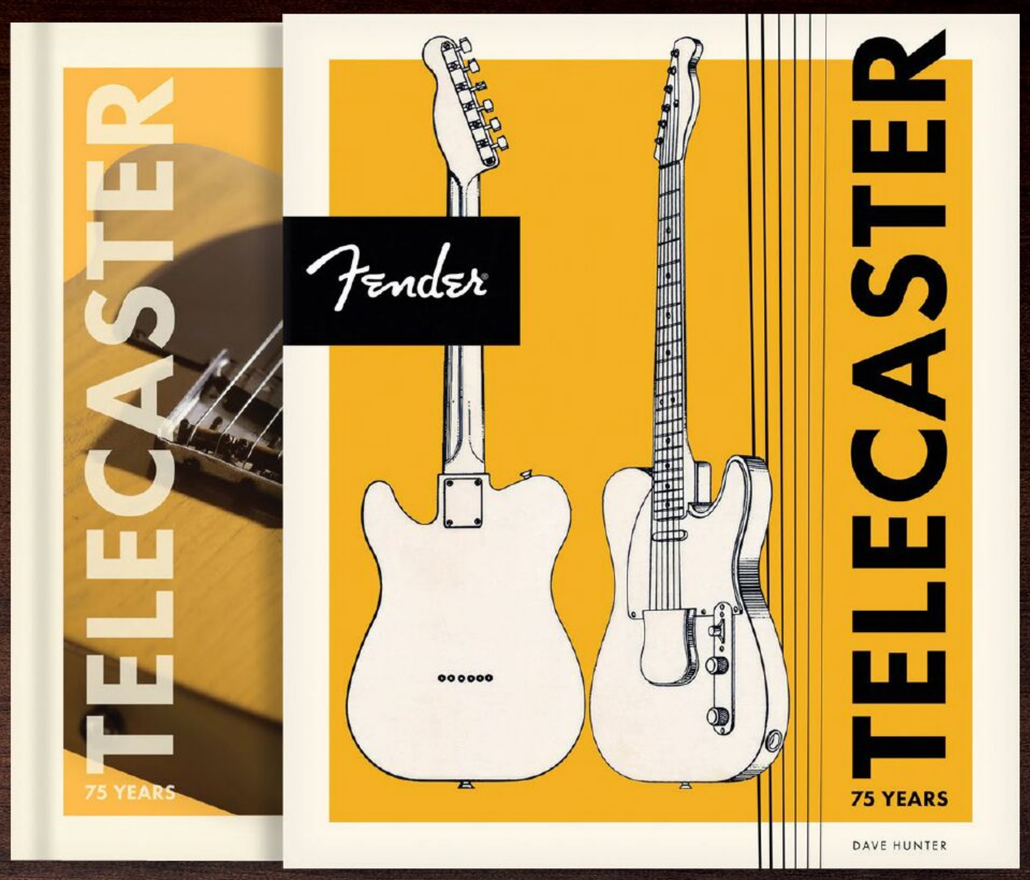

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CONTENTS

DECEMBER 2025 VOL. 40 NO. 03

FIRST FRET

12 **Reader Mail**

14 **News and Notes**
Martin Hosts Sustainability Summit; Fodera Guitars, DR Strings Support Pink Aid

14 **Vernon Reid**
Tone & Telemetry

16 **In Memoriam**

18 **Charlie Starr & Ben Wells**
Company Men

20 **Chris Dreja**
1946-2025

21 **Los Straitjackets**
Behind The Mask

22 **Tom Petersson**
Good Clean Fun

24 **Eric Gales**
Brother to Brother

DEPARTMENTS

42 **Holiday Buyers Guide**

54 **Vintage Guitar Holiday Buyers Guide**

68 **Upcoming Events**

76 **Showcase**

80 **Readers Gallery**

COLUMNS

46 **Fretprints**
Freddie King: King of Instrumental Blues | By Wolf Marshall

50 **Dan's Guitar Rx**
The Ugly, the Bad, and the Good: Tackling a '59 P-Bass Disaster | By Dan Erlewine

REVIEWS

70 **The VG Hit List**
Buddy Guy, Cheap Trick, Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, Spinal Tap, Richard Bennett, West, Bruce & Laing, more!

71 **Check This Action**
Who Says Crime Doesn't Pay? | By Dan Forte

74 **VG Approved Gear**
DOD OD/Pre 250-X, Fender American Pro Classic Mustang Bass, Silktone Expander

75 **Gearin' Up!**
The latest cool new stuff!

Vernon Reid

26 **JOHN SEBASTIAN'S 'BURST**
Inspirational Icon
The mere mention of a Gibson Les Paul Standard made between 1958 and 1960 commands attention. This one became famous in the hands of John Sebastian, who used it with the Lovin' Spoonful until he went solo in '68. | *By Willie G. Moseley*

30 **BRIDGE-PLATE BLUES**
The Secret That Haunts '70s Martins
Facing increasing demand amidst material shortages, C.F. Martin & Company faced significant challenges in the early '70s. We examine one that still inspires debate. | *By Cliff Hall*

36 **KILLER BEE**
The Mesa/Boogie Mark IIB
It may not get the acclaim of the Mark I or Mark IIC+, but many guitarists have found this to be the most versatile of Mesa's early guitar amplifiers. | *By Dave Hunter*

60 **A HERO'S HARMONY**
Along with 37 other "Bedford Boys" from Virginia, Jack Powers was a member of the 29th Infantry Division. Though he died on Omaha Beach, his beloved Harmony archtop returned home. To commemorate Veteran's Day, we tell his story. | *By Mitch Yockelson*

64 **FIRES, FLOODS, ART, GUITARS**
John 5's Haunting Rock
We sit once again with the versatile überpicker to discuss his new instrumental album, *Ghost*. A workaholic perfectionist, he digs into the new music, his disdain for down time, and his philosophy on collecting guitars. | *By Ward Meeker*

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COVER: John 5: Matt Christine. Freddie King courtesy of Bear Family Records. Sebastian 'Burst: Rick Malkin.
THIS PAGE: Vernon Reid: Justin Borucki.

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READER MAIL

From the October issue – a gold-sparkle/crushed-glass Telecaster.

CURTIS CLASS

I loved Oscar Jordan's article on Curtis Mayfield in the October issue. I have *Super Fly* and know his hits, but hadn't really ever dug in. After reading the story, I listened to *Curtis/Live!* straight through – what a great album!

In-depth articles about artists (including "Pop 'N Hiss," "Fretprints," and "Check This Action") are always a highlight of the magazine. Knowing a bit more about an artist's history, the times they're reflecting, and their various albums makes it easier to get into them and explore. Keep up the great writing!

Vince Dickinson
Orlando, Florida

I've long enjoyed Brownie Magee and Sonny Terry's 1973 album *Sonny & Brownie* with "People Get Ready," but if somebody had told me the person who wrote it also wrote "Super Fly," I would've told them they were full of it! I've always thought the song sounded so real, gospely, and old-timey, so there ain't enough Es in "Geeeeee wiz!" to express my surprise.

In the dictionary, next to the word "diversity," should be a picture of Curtis Mayfield. Thank you for the history lesson, and as always, the rest of the magazine.

George Lopez, Jr.
LaPlace, Louisiana

VG VENERATION

I read every word in *VG*, including the ads. I love all kinds of musical styles – blues, country, Western swing, bluegrass, surf, Hawaiian slack-key, flatpicking, thumbpicking, etc., and all are represented with high-quality information, pictures, interviews, and scores. As an absolute Telecaster fan, you once again outdid yourself with the October issue.

Dirk Heimberg
Niedersachsen, Germany

VG is the only magazine I read cover to cover – at least twice! I love the feature stories on amps and guitars, and the articles about players are interesting. Please never stop publishing!

Tim Shropshire
Boulder, Colorado

I first encountered *VG* in 2007 and absolutely love it. I typically enjoy everything in each issue, including the album and book reviews. I take more interest in guitar content, but I do read bass articles and enjoy the interviews, especially with people whose music is new to me, and love most of Wolf Marshall's technical analyses.

I play acoustic and electric, but I take greater pleasure in the electric-guitar reviews. Interestingly, I'm drawn to gear in the high-middle price range more than the high-end stuff. For example, while I appreciated the review of the Pre War Mahogany Dreadnought (October '25), the fact that it was nearly $6,500 caused me to read with a different eye than if it were priced at $3,000 to $3,500. And yes, I use the reviews as guidance in my own gear choices.

Anyway, *VG* is the most interesting magazine I've read in my 76 years (66 years of playing almost daily) and I always share my copies with bandmates and friends. Keep up the great work!

Rick Kolan
Sherwood Forest, California

I may not read everything in *VG* each month, but I like being exposed to little-known musicians and their stories. And I particularly like the old-gear stories and Dan Erlewine's repair articles.

Darren Price
Richardson, Texas

I have been a subscriber for over 25 years and still get excited to see each new issue. I have to ration myself so I don't binge read it cover to cover! I particularly enjoy interviews with older guitar slingers and stories from gigs they've done. I also like the stories of cool vintage guitars with their backgrounds. Please continue your printed version; I'm 80 years old and just retired from my band of 27 years, but I still love seeing and reading your highly addictive guitar porn.

John Dougherty
Collinsville, Oklahoma

VG is the most informative musician's magazine – I read it cover to cover! The album reviews are great, and the vintage guitar and amp features are very insightful. The reviews of new gear are great, too.

Thomas Durso
Macomb, Illinois

I enjoy *VG*'s reviews and interviews with blues artists, and Dave Hunter's examinations of vintage amps. Please be sure to review any books published on guitars and amps. Thank you for the great job!

Thomas Shand
Gore, Virginia

(*Ed. Note: Thanks, Thomas. Rest assured that any time we're told of a guitar-related book, we're going to give it close consideration and share our impressions if we think it's worth your time and money.*)

I cherish every new issue of *VG*. There's nothing else like it and I often seek artists featured that I'm not familiar with on Youtube. Every single thing, cover to cover, interests me.

Peter Thomas
Lambertville, New Jersey

SEND LETTERS TO

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Crushed Glass Telecaster Custom: Ryan Piorkowski, courtesy of Fender.

ISSN 10672605 • USPS 009383

Vintage Guitar® magazine

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Kate Micucci with a uke at Martin's first Sustainability Summit.

MARTIN HOSTS FIRST SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT

On October 9, C. F. Martin & Co. hosted its first-ever Sustainability Summit. Themed "Setting the Tone: Sustainability in Music & Manufacturing," it brought together more than 100 artists, industry leaders, educators, and advocates to discuss sustainable solutions within their industries.

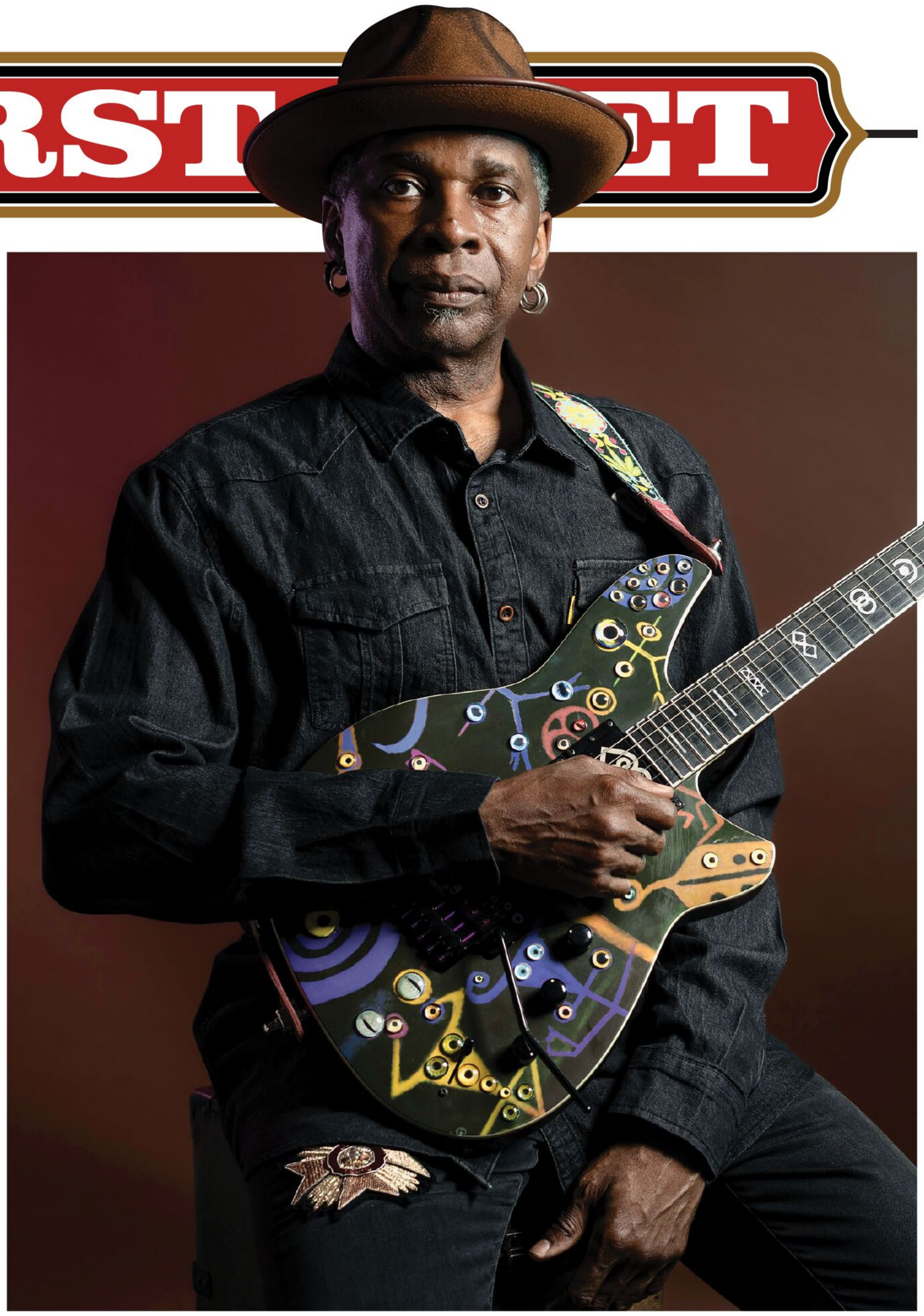
Presentations, panel discussions, artist-led demonstrations, and live performances highlighted the importance of sustainable practices. In a video message, Wilco frontman Jeff Tweedy, whose new signature guitars are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), said, "[Sustainability is] great for everybody, and it's great for business, because what's better than sustainable? I'm proud to see more of these guitars being made and proud to be part of it."

Martin said it is hopeful the summit marks the beginning of a broader long-term initiative to connect leaders across music, manufacturing, and environmental sectors.

FODERA GUITARS, DR STRINGS SUPPORT PINK AID

During Breast Cancer Awareness month in October, Fodera Guitars and DR Strings teamed with Pink Aid's Play It Pink program to support breast-cancer patients. Pink Aid is a national nonprofit that delivers emergency financial aid within 48 hours to help meet patients' daily needs and ensure they have transportation to treatment. Fodera donated a custom-made pink bass valued at more than $6,000, while DR Strings donated the proceeds from every set of Neon Pink guitar strings sold during the month.

"Music is about connection, and we are proud to connect our craft with such a meaningful cause," said Laura Fodera, CEO of Fodera Guitars. "By joining forces with Pink Aid, we hope to strike a chord of compassion and help ensure patients don't have to choose between lifesaving treatment and providing for their families."



VERNON REID

Tone & Telemetry

Vernon Reid's new solo album, *Hoodoo Telemetry*, is a vortex of fearless distortion, urban psychedelia, and wondrous eclecticism. Wielding disparate recording platforms and rhythms, Reid makes guitar fun again. Here, he talks about reclamation, guitar hoodoo, and playing a Black Sabbath benefit.

***Hoodoo Telemetry* is dense but spacious. What were you thinking?**

The record is a combination of live, reclamation of old tracks, and real-time tracks. It's all over the place but has a unifying mentality. In 2021, I lost a major person in my life – critic, guitarist, bandleader, and intellectual Greg Tate. We'd been friends for many years and he changed my life in so many ways. We were co-founders of the Black Rock Coalition. I thought to myself, "I would like to make the kind of record that Greg would like."

I had a lot of great singers on this album, like Rachid and Kevin Webb; I sang "Ef-

Vernon Reid: Justin Borucki.

figy" after Greg and my wife encouraged me to. Originally, Living Colour was a trio. I'm a "hold the tune" type singer – I can barely make the note (laughs). I got some encouragement, so I finally did it on this record. It was a process of all the different things.

There's so much going on; creating it must have been overwhelming at times.

Part of it was having an amazing engineer like Ivan Julian. He's a legend in his own right and was one of the few black punk innovators who played guitar with Richard Hell and the Voidoids back in the CBGB days. Living Colour came in through the punk side door, and played the same venues. He was incredibly encouraging, patient, and always found a way to make things work. It's very much an underground record because we recorded the main tracks at Super Giraffe Sound, and I did my overdubs at my studio. I would make basic tracks then take it home. Our mix engineer, Scotty Hard, did a phenomenal job. I had stuff all over the place – samples, drums, and a hodgepodge of approaches. Ivan and Scott made a unified whole out of it.

Did you use your Reverend Vernon Reid guitar?

Reverend makes some of the best passive pickups. I'd been an EMG guy for years, and then Reverend came out with these Railhammers. They're great; pinch harmonics, sustain, or anything with overdrive, distortion, or fuzz. They clean up incredibly well. They have all the necessary rhythm sounds and they did an incredible job.

On the album, I used my old Hamers, Parkers, Paul Reed Smiths, and my Reverends. I also used an odd Gibson somewhere in there. I'm a big fan of the Line 6 Helix, but I also used some Eventide and Digitech stuff. I used Electro-Harmonix and some Boss guitar synth stuff. On some of the earliest tracks I used a Roland VG-99 V multi-effects processor.

What's the deal with you and distortion?

(laughs) I've always loved that sound between fuzz, overdrive, distortion, and preamp distortion. With virtual effects chains, you can do all kinds of gain staging. I love the idea of getting pinch harmonics, overtones, and things like that. Some people say there's too much gain or too little gain. It's a sound I've loved since I got my first Pro Co Rat. Before that, it was the Big Muff Pi, the MXR Distortion+, and the Ibanez Distortion. On the albums, I've combined that with modulation and wah, which is a classic thing.

Your lines have a singing quality.

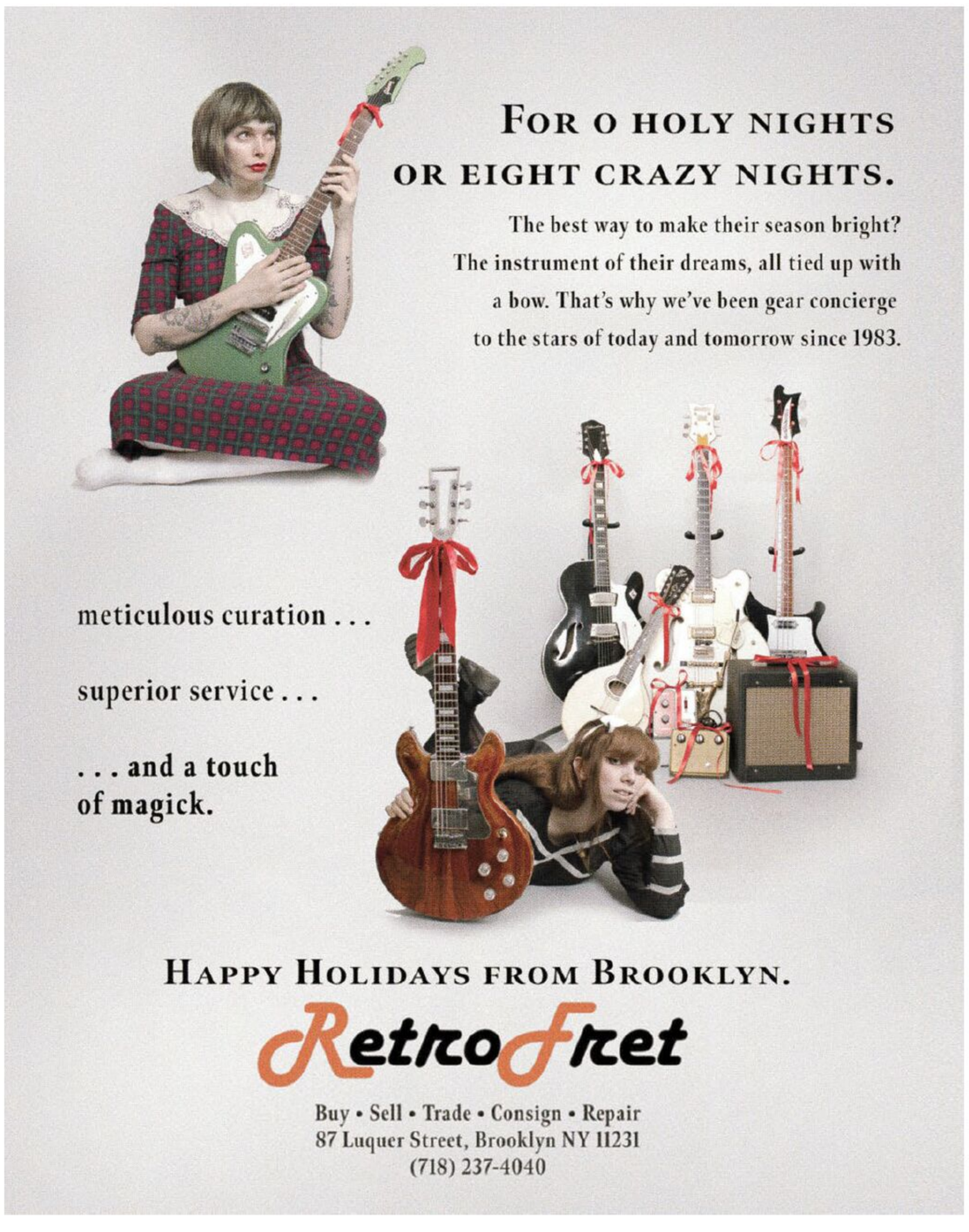
That's related to being interested in free-jazz saxophone players, Sonny Sharrock, Carlos Santana, and all these firebrand guitarists. When Hendrix got the Fuzz Face, the guitar became a different animal at that volume. With three Marshall heads and a Fuzz Face, he turned the world inside out.

Is gear a bottomless pit?

(laughs) Guitar is the province of people who are married to an OCD in so many different ways, and that's one aspect of it. It's something to get caught up in. But there's a way when the guitar is going right, the overtones are right there – but there are a lot of different sounds. I love the Helix Floor, the HX Stomp, and I love the fact that Line 6 made a platform that applies to all their pedals. That's fascinating to me.

What are your memories playing at the Back to the Beginning benefit concert with Black Sabbath?

To see "War Pigs" for the final time with the entire audience knowing all the lyrics, was insane. Tom Morello should be commended for what he did as music director. That was an insane thing to pull off. But most of all, there was a lot of love. ***– Oscar Jordan***



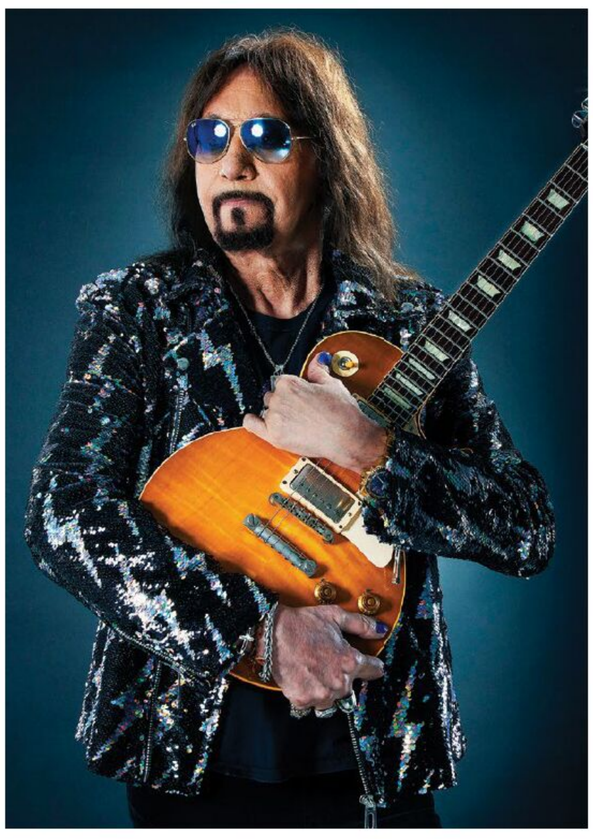
IN MEMORIAM

ACE FREHLEY

Ace Frehley, co-founder and lead guitarist in Kiss, died October 16. He was 74 and suffered a brain bleed after taking a fall at his home studio.

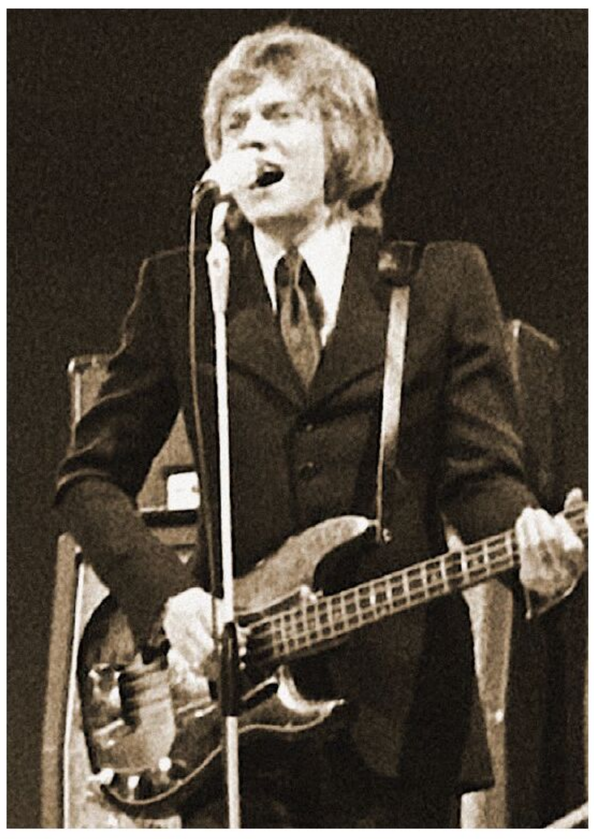
Born Paul Daniel Frehley on April 27, 1951, he was the youngest of three children to parents who played piano and encouraged the kids to also play instruments. He received an electric guitar as a Christmas present in 1964. Self-taught, his formative years were spent listening to Jimi Hendrix, Albert Lee, Buddy Guy, Jeff Beck, B.B. King, Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, and The Who.

Frehley spent the early '70s in local bands before a friend spotted an ad for a lead guitarist in *The Village Voice*, which in late 1972 led to auditioning for the other three members of what would become Kiss. A devotee of the Les Paul, his playing on the group's albums through the '70s has had a profound influence on every generation of rock guitarists since.



Ace Frehley

Frehley's most-recent interview with *VG* appeared in the April '24 issue, discussing his latest solo album, *10,000 Volts*. A full memorial will appear in the January '26 issue. **– *Ward Meeker***



John Lodge

JOHN LODGE

Moody Blues bassist, singer, and songwriter John Lodge died October 10 at age 82.

Lodge joined the Moody Blues in 1966 along with frontman/guitarist Justin Hayward, who is now the sole surviving member. Lodge and Hayward charted the band into British psychedelia and gold records galore, including hook-filled Lodge songs "Ride My See-Saw," "Isn't Life Strange," and "I'm Just a Singer (in a Rock and Roll Band)." Hayward wrote a lion's share of the band's hits, but Lodge further served as the Moody's critical harmony singer and bassist for 52 years. Lodge was also the father-in-law of current Yes vocalist Jon Davison.

In a 2019 interview with *VG*, Lodge noted, "Back in the '50s, it was those left-hand boogie piano parts that started me off on bass.

To me, this was the heart and driving force of rock and roll. The first band I saw with an actual bass guitar was the Treniers in the 1956 movie, *The Girl Can't Help It*. In Birmingham, there were no bass guitars – in fact, I didn't know they existed before seeing that film."

With his faithful 1960 Fender Precision Bass, Lodge said of his low-end role contribution to the Moody Blues, "The bass in a song has to stand on its own and be the foundation for the melody. When you play the bass part alone, you should be able to recognize the song. If you listen to just the bass in 'Tuesday Afternoon,' 'I'm Just a Singer,' 'Legend of a Mind,' and 'Nights in White Satin,' you'll know the song." **– *Pete Prown***

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Charlie Starr and Ben Wells (below).

CHARLIE STARR & BEN WELLS

Company Men

Bad Company's influence has crossed generations since its self-titled debut in 1974. The first tribute album to the newly inducted Rock and Roll Hall of Famers, *Can't Get Enough: A Tribute to Bad Company*, includes nine BadCo classics and one iconic Free song from artists including Slash featuring Myles Kennedy and The Conspirators, The Struts, Dirty Honey, Def Leppard's Joe Elliott and Phil Collen, Halestorm, The Pretty Reckless, and others. Plus, there are guest appearances from Paul Rodgers and Simon Kirke. *Vintage Guitar* spoke with two guitarists about their contributions; vocalist/lead guitarist Charlie Starr of Blackberry Smoke, which covers "Run with the Pack" (with Rodgers and Mastodon's Brann Dailor) and guitarist Ben Wells of Black Stone Cherry, which plays "Burnin' Sky."

How were you invited to participate?

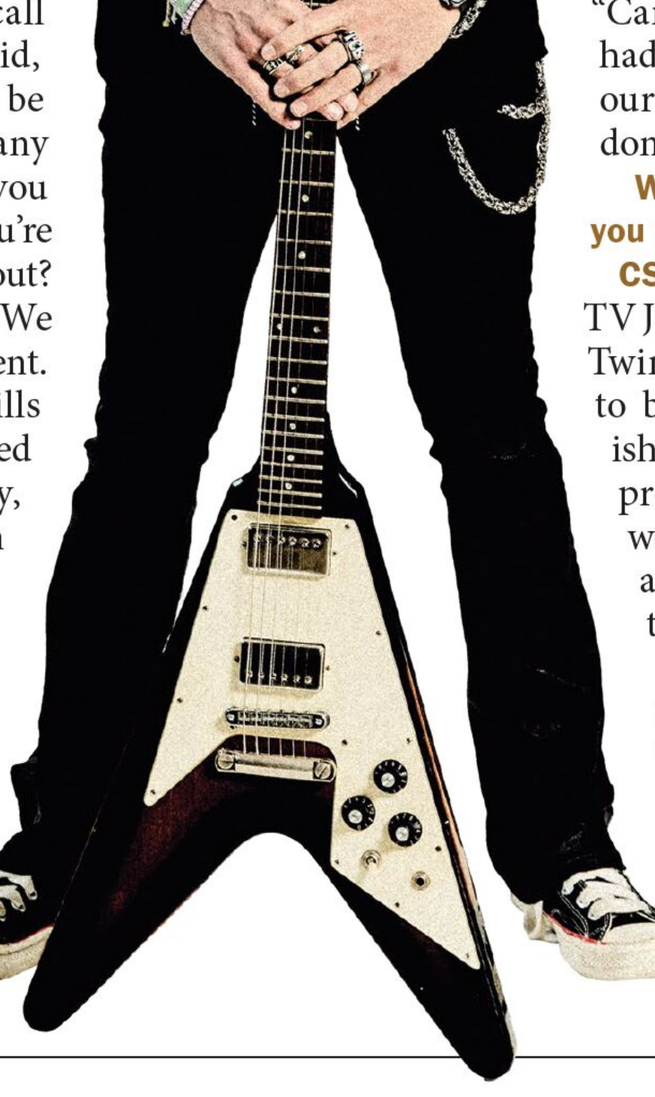
Charlie Starr: (Radio and television host) Eddie Trunk, who's a friend and such a great guy, called and said, "Can I give your phone number to Bad Company's management? They're putting together a tribute record." I said, "Absolutely." They called later that day. I said, "We're all in with both feet. Where do we start?"

Ben Wells: We were recording our new EP back in April, and the funny thing is we had just finished tracking drums and our drummer, John Fred Young, was taking his drums to our storage facility. As soon as he drove away, we get a phone call from our manager. He said, "You've just been asked to be a part of this Bad Company thing. Do you guys think you can record this song while you're in the studio and knock it out? They need it pretty soon." We were like, "A hundred percent. We're honored." We had chills when we got asked, so we called John Fred and said, "Hey, you're going to have to turn around." He said, "You're kidding me..." He thought we were joking about being asked. When he found out it was real, he said, "I'll be there in a heartbeat."

How did you decide which song to do?

CS: I asked right off the bat. I said (to co-executive producer Gary Spivack), "Can I choose the song?" I went down the list and some had already been chosen. I said, "It might be easier if you tell me what's available." He said, "The songs available are 'Run with the Pack,'" and I said, "Continue, but you got me right there." He said "Seagull," but Def Leppard wound up doing that. As soon as he said "Run with the Pack," my mind's eye could see it and my mind's ear could hear us doing it.

BW: We were asked specifically to do that song, so we were like, "Absolutely, we'll go in, turn it up, and make it our own but keep it true."



Had you ever played the song in your present or previous bands?

CS: I don't think any of us had ever played it. We'd played countless other Bad Company songs. That was another interesting aspect – putting it together. Everybody learned it in their spare time – you don't want to get the stink eye if you come in and don't know the song. But we arranged it in the studio and had a couple of tweaks for the ending; the original has orchestration at the end. We turned that all into guitar because we have three guitar players.

BW: I don't think we've ever done "Burnin' Sky." We did Free's "Fire and Water" and Bad Company's "Can't Get Enough." All we had to do is, number one, do our thing. And, number two, don't mess it up.

Which guitars and gear did you use?

CS: I played a '56 Les Paul TV Junior and a '65 Vox AC15 Twin. I figured I wasn't going to be wrong playing a British amplifier because that's probably what Mick Ralphs would've used. I also used an old MXR Phase 45 with the script logo.

BW: I played a Les Paul Classic and we're all using the Line 6 Helix to record and play live. My preset is like a Peavey 5150 setup, which was my first tube head. ***– Bret Adams***

Charlie Starr: Andy Sapp. Ben Wells: Jimmy Fontaine.

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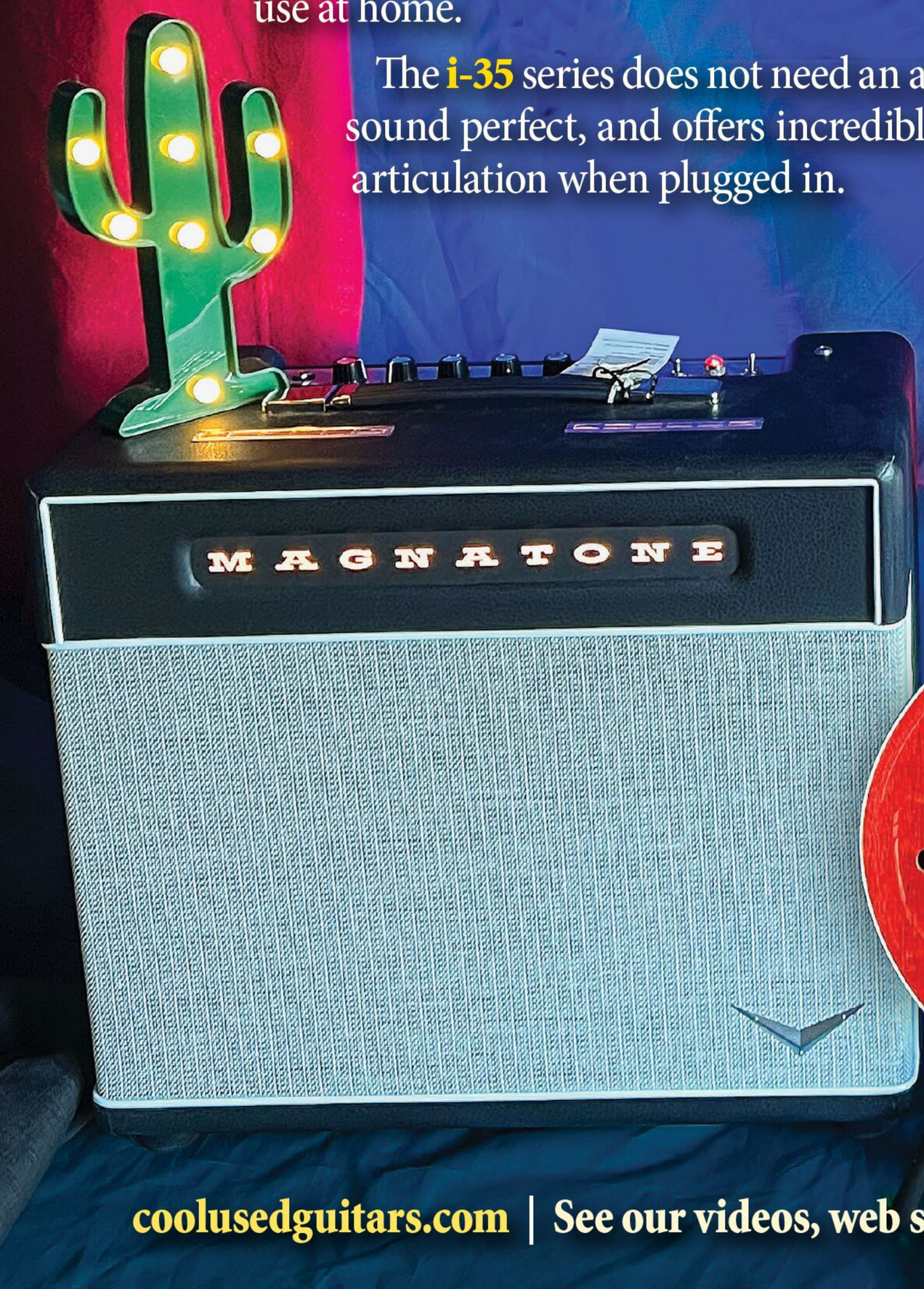

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CHRIS DREJA

1946-2025

England's Yardbirds, the '60s band on the cutting edge of blues-rock and psychedelia, lost a founding member when Chris Dreja died September 25 from complications of a stroke. He was 78.

The band scored such hits as "For Your Love," "Heart Full Of Soul," and "Shapes Of Things." While they were best known for their succession of guitar heroes – Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page – the band's rhythm section was top-notch, with Dreja playing both rhythm guitar and bass.

In the 2024 documentary, *The Yardbirds – In Their Own Words*, Page said, "People might have underestimated him because of the predominance of the lead guitarists, but he's a fine, fine musician. And when he played the bass, he played the bass really well."

The group coalesced in 1963, when Epsom Art School students Dreja and Anthony "Top" Topham, playing guitars, got together with drummer Jim McCarty, and soon melded to the Metropolis Blues Quartet, which featured bassist Paul Samwell-Smith and Keith Relf on harmonica and vocals.

The original five shared a love of American blues, but harbored an adventurous side. In a 2003 interview for *VG*, Dreja said, "Well, I'd have to say, initially, Jimmy Reed – that whole typical Jimmy Reed rhythm section. But then, of course, Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Louisiana Red. You have to remember, it was very hard for us to get stuff in England in those days. I think there was one import shop that Eric and I and Top used to go to, and that was about it. But we were white guys, and one of the reasons we didn't completely stay in the blues idiom was that we wanted to try to play something original for ourselves."

Before they made any records, Topham left to concentrate on art, which provided an opening for Clapton to enter the picture. That and a residency at London's Marquee Club upped the ante.

"I loved playing with Eric," Dreja recalled. "He always had charisma, and, as you know, he reinvents himself on a very regular basis. There's some archival recordings from that period, when the band was very together and at ease, having a good time. I've heard the stuff, and it made my knees tremble. It's got that magic moment when everybody is gelling."

Though he wasn't credited on either American album, Clapton's early tone and aggressive stance are evidenced on most of *For Your Love* and the live side of *Having A Rave-Up*. From the outset, gigs found them taking off on intense, extended jams that they called rave-ups

The blues purist left on principle when the band flirted with pop, and was replaced by Beck. In Dreja's eyes, "I don't think he quite got that we wanted to develop and experiment and create something original."

Of E.C.'s replacement, he nodded, "I just love Jeff; nobody touches him."

When Samwell-Smith left in '66, session ace Page joined, initially as bassist. Obviously, his forté was guitar, so Dreja transitioned to bass, presenting the potential for epic two-lead heroics. But constant touring incited Beck's exit, trimming the lineup to a quartet, presaging Led Zeppelin's format and attitude.

Dreja, whose artistic bent was spotlighted on the cover of the group's self-titled '66 LP (known by fans as "Roger the Engineer") became a professional photographer. But he picked up his guitar again in the '80s, forming Box Of Frogs with McCarty and Samwell-Smith; the Yardbirds reunited in the '90s with their first American member, singer/guitarist John Idan. Chris retired from touring in 2013 for medical reasons.

In the early days, Dreja sported a black Jazzmaster or red ES-335 and favored an Epiphone Rivoli bass. "Ever since the Box Of Frogs, I've used Les Pauls for rhythm work," he recounted. "I can play up by the bridge to get a certain sound, and then move right down to playing over the frets with the right hand. It has that warmth, but an edge to it if you hit it hard."

Summing up his too-often overlooked role in a band of dazzling lead men, he explained, "It's all emotion. And I realized that my natural personality is not out-front. It's like when I played bass – another perfect instrument for me. I realized I was never going to be a virtuoso guitar player. What I really enjoyed was sitting behind these guys, listening to them, and enhancing what they were doing at every possible moment I could. As a rhythm player, you're just on all the time. In the Yardbirds, you don't stop. I think one of my strong points is my right wrist. An odd thing to say, but I brought a lot of energy to the band, and I guess that welded its way into the sound. That's where I come from – sitting behind these guys, working with the rhythm section, listening to where they're going, and just building behind them."

As for what was, in hindsight, one of the most foreword-leaning bands of its time, he stated, "We had a no-rules thing, really. We didn't know what rules were." ***– Dan Forte***

Chris Dreja: Tony Gale/Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy.

Eddie Angel

Greg Townson

LOS STRAITJACKETS

Behind The Mask

Somos Los Straitjackets demonstrates why Los Straitjackets have been a mainstay of instrumental rock for more than 30 years, creating tunes rife with tremolo and reverb, relentless riffs, and guitar hooks galore. Produced with a vintage touch, Both love letter to instro's past and a declaration of its purpose, the album's title translates to "We Are Los Straitjackets." *VG* sat with guitarists Eddie Angel and Greg Townson to learn what happens behind the mask.

"Two Steps Ahead" is instro that doesn't bash you over the head with volume and speed. Every note is in the right place and the recording has a vintage character.

Greg Townson: Thanks. The melody came first and dictated the chord changes. It has a '60s songwriting vibe, but isn't totally retro, so it gave us a chance to bring our own character to the song. It's probably my favorite cut on the record.

Same with the beautiful "Polaris," sonically transporting us back to 1963. Are those artificial harmonics we hear?

GT: Those aren't harmonics, actually – I'm just playing way high on the neck. I was trying to make it sound a bit like a lap steel. Actually, that song would sound great on lap – someone should cover it.

After original guitarist Danny Amis was sidelined with a medical issue, how did you integrate Greg to Los Straitjackets.

Eddie Angel: You could say Greg was both an exceptional guitarist and fit in, personally. We have a shared musical background, aesthetic, and sensibility. I remember our first gig with Greg. It was outdoors at Collingswood, New Jersey, and I was amazed because he played it without any rehearsal!

Does one of you play lead, the other rhythm, or do you trade it up?

EA: We switch. On "Bumper Car," "Bad Apple," "Genesee River Rock," "and "Spin-out," Greg plays the melody and I take the solo. But "Cry for a Beatle" was written by our drummer, Chris Sprague, and he plays lead guitar on it.

"High Wire Act" displays the quick tremolo picking that surf guitar is famous for. Is that a workout for your picking hand?

GT: It *is* a bit of a workout, but for some reason I don't find it that hard to play as long as the tempo isn't too fast. The best way to practice that style is with a metronome at a slower speed, then gradually increase tempo once you've got a handle on it. Strangely enough, if you come from an acoustic background, maybe playing mandolin or bluegrass music, you might transition more easily to this kind of right-hand technique.

What effect is the volume swell and garage-y fuzz on "Numbskull"?

EA: That was done by our engineer, Alex Hall, using a tape delay. The other thing he did on "Numbskull" was play the tape backward for the guitar solo, like The Beatles did in "I'm Only Sleeping." We thought it was funny and ridiculous in such a song as "Numbskull," but also loved it. Also, any overdrive or distortion you hear was also done by Alex through the board, as we don't use any pedals, *ever*!

"April Showers" touches on a Motown vibe with a pop melody and breezy groove. What's that jangly guitar that appears briefly?

EA: That was a six-string electric through a Leslie or the Magnatone Panoramic... I believe it was the Leslie that Alex has in his studio, Reliable Recorders.

Do you use actual reverb tanks?

EA: Yes, we used a Fender Reverb tank and tube Echoplex on some songs, but like I said, we don't use pedals of any kind. We prefer the sound of a good guitar played through a good amp, and we had some great gear to choose from.

What other pieces did you use on the album?

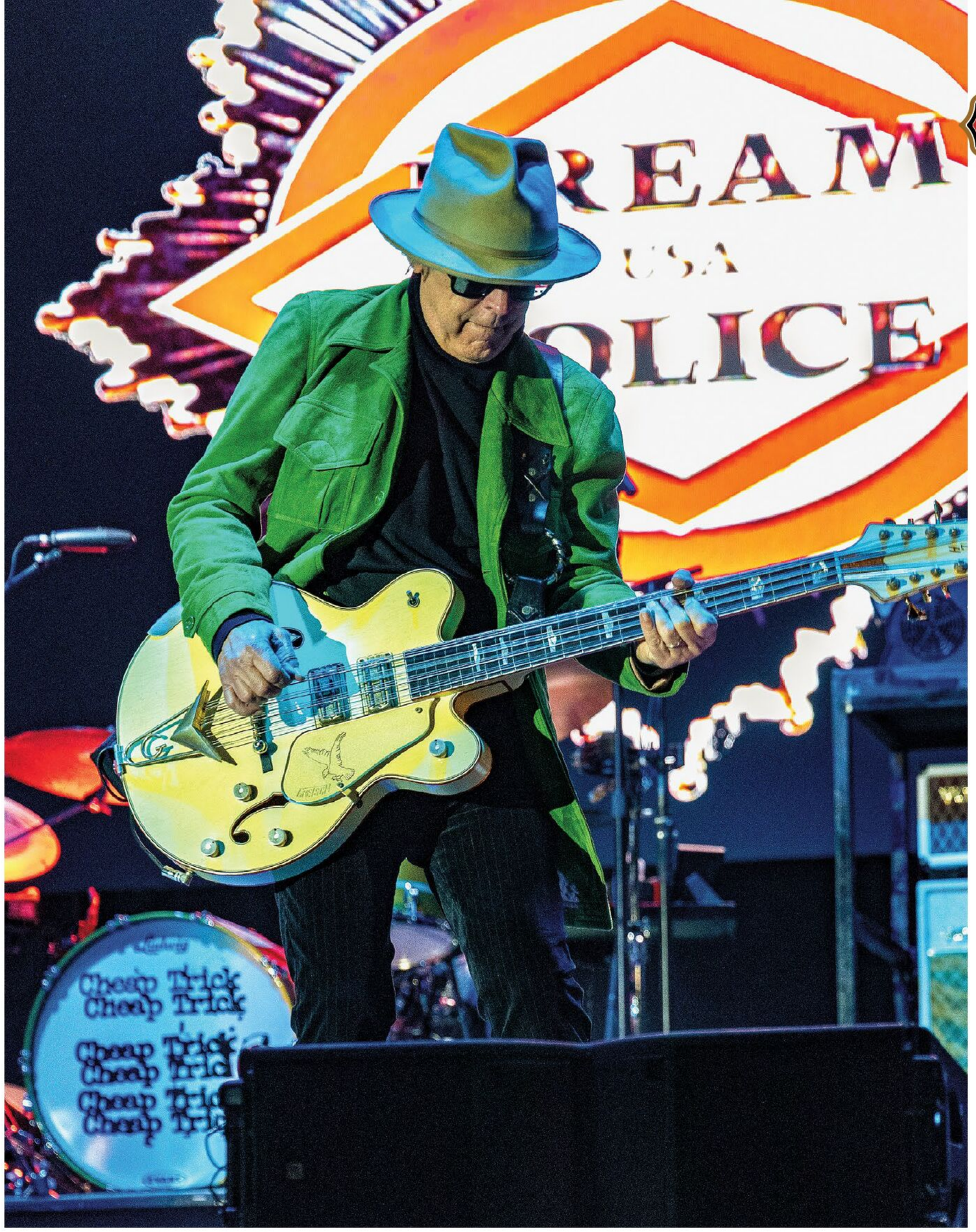
EA: We mostly cut it at the Pow Wow Fun Room in L.A., owned and operated by our bassist, Pete Curry. He has lots of killer guitars; we used a '60 Jazzmaster, '62 Jaguar, '66 Tele, '66 Epiphone Casino, '60 ES-330, '65 Precision Bass and a '57 reissue Strat. Amps were a '62 Bandmaster, '63 Princeton Reverb, and '63 Showman. For sessions at Reliable Recorders, we used a Nacho Tele, made by Nacho Baños in Valencia, Spain. He makes some of the best Telecasters I've ever played. Also, we twanged a Framus semi-hollowbody with Danelectro lipstick pickups on "Virgon."

Lastly, when wearing your Mexican wrestling masks onstage, does it get hot under there? It might drive most players crazy.

EA: (Laughs) Yeah, it can get *very* hot depending on the venue and number of stage lights. But way worse, it's hard to breathe!

– Pete Prown

Los Straitjackets: Jorge Vargas.



TOM PETERSSON

Good Clean Fun

The pride of Rockford, Illinois, Cheap Trick just keeps on going, touring and releasing new albums. The Rock and Roll Hall of Famers' 21st studio album, All Washed Up, features their trademark catchy melodies and crunchy hard rock and power-pop punch. Vocalist/rhythm guitarist Robin Zander, lead guitarist Rick Nielsen, bassist Tom Petersson, and drummer Daxx Nielsen are as reliable as a sunrise. We talked about it with Petersson

***All Washed Up* was recorded at studios in Nashville and one in Los Angeles. You live in Nashville. Do you have a home studio?**

It's not a proper studio, just a room I use. None of us have a studio in our homes that I know about. But we finished the album several months ago. We keep recording because we enjoy doing records. I do demos as a reference and, yes, I use Pro Tools. We come up with song ideas and if something about the idea strikes other people in the band, we end up doing it.

This is the sixth album in a row the band has worked with Julian Raymond as a co-producer. You've nearly always worked with a producer or co-producer. What are the benefits?

I think the key is *a* producer. If it's us, it's four producers and everybody's got a different idea. We're way too close to the stuff. Julian brings out the best in us. He really inspires us to go for it and understands our band. There's no way the four of us would ever come to any consensus on anything. It's like, "What do you think?" Each of us is right about 25 percent of the time. Somebody's right, but we don't know which person. We're not producers, we're not recording engineers. That's not our strong suit. Just because we put these songs together, record them, and have a band doesn't mean we know everything about the technical parts of recording, mixing, and all that. It's a different world.

For a while, the songwriting has often been credited to combinations of band members. How does that work?

It just evolved, like, "I've got this idea." It depended, too, on what kind of gear we had. When we started, you'd maybe have a cassette player and you could record an idea with an acoustic guitar, and then maybe have to have two cassette players so then when you wanted to try a vocal idea, you'd have to play the one cassette player and then sing along with it.

Does the band rehearse new material before going into the studio?

Well, we will put demos together. We've got these ideas on our own and then, now these were decided, we're going to work on these for sure. We try to work it out as much as possible ahead of time, but we're not in a rehearsal space. It's not like it was when we started. Then it was completely different.

Do songs have to be fresh, or do some leftover ideas survive?

Oh, all the time. It doesn't matter. They'll come out of nowhere. "Wow, why didn't we do that?" Or, "Why didn't we finish that?" Usually, they're demos that aren't finished. It's not out of sight, out of mind. Even if you go back, however many years ago, it's like, "Let's revisit this."

What did you play on *All Washed Up*?

I used a different bass on almost every song. I used one of my white Gretsch Custom Shop Falcon 12-strings on about five of them, which I hadn't normally done. It just sounds so good. I also used a '53 P Bass and a '59 P Bass with an anodized guard and a rosewood fretboard, which is really cool because they only did them for a short time like that. On "Wham Boom Bang," that's a '65 Höfner Club I've had for 30 years, at least. I love the sound of those. They sound sort of like an upright. On a couple songs, like "The Best Thing," I used a '66 P Bass with flatwounds, which I *never* use, except with Höfners. I also used my '66 non-reverse Thunderbird and '64 Thunderbird.

My rig was an Orange AD200 – the low end – and an Orange OR30 guitar amp, a Hiwatt Lead 100 head I bought in '72 or so, a Hiwatt 400-watt bass amp and cab, and a little Hiwatt Maxwatt 20-watt head for guitar, which sounds great. All of it was through 4x12 cabinets.

Were you using various basses just for fun or did you want a distinct sound across the songs?

Both. **– *Bret Adams***

Tom Petersson: Brett Tuttle.

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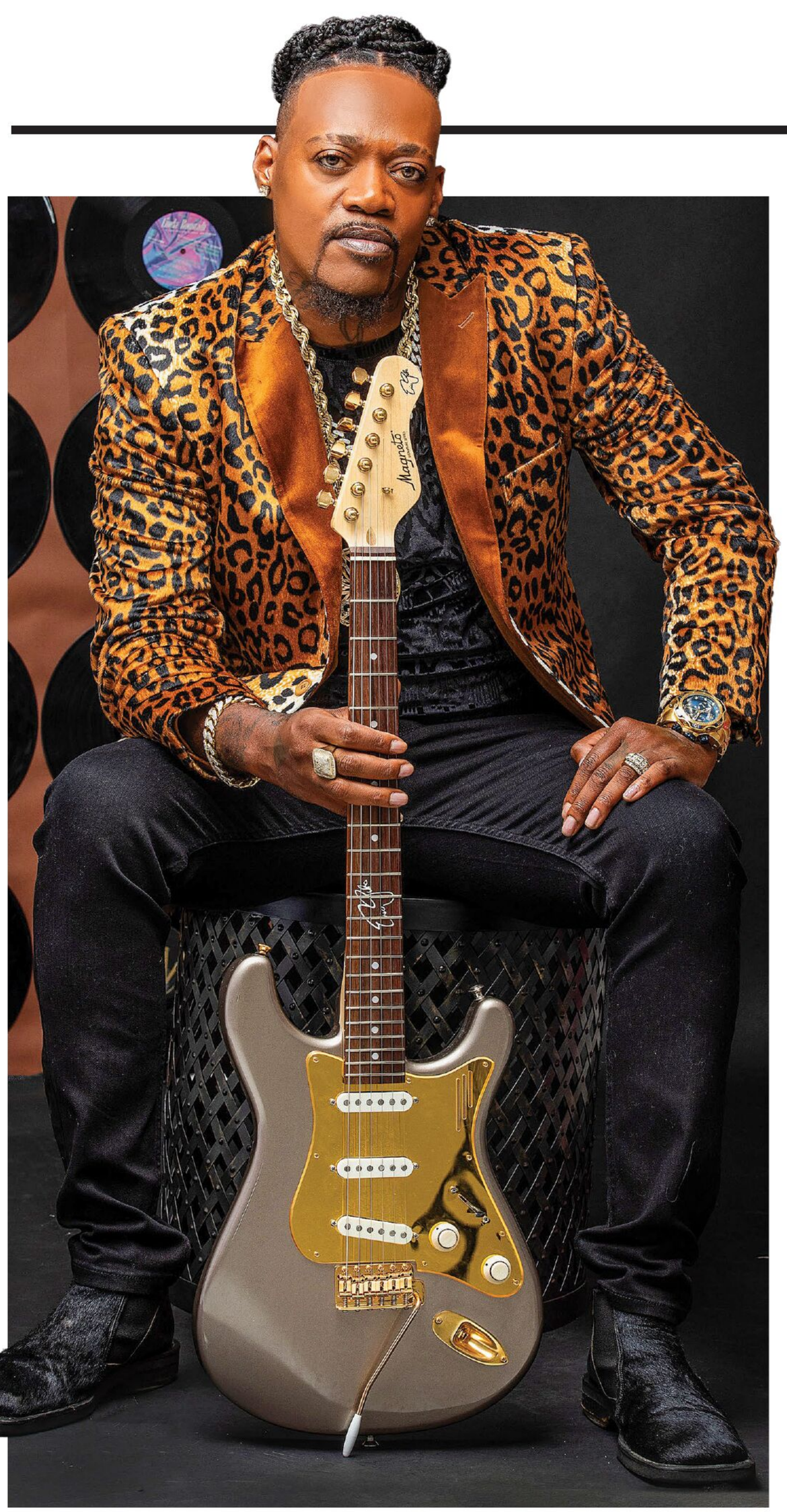

ERIC GALES

Brother To Brother

Eric Gales' latest album is a heartfelt tribute to his late brother, Manuel Gales, also known as Little Jimmy King, who died in 2002. *Tribute to LJK* is a star-studded guitar album featuring Joe Bonamassa, Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, and Buddy Guy, among others. It honors Eric's dear brother, but also pays tribute to the Gales left-handed bloodline.

Are you happy with the way *Tribute to LJK* turned out?

I put a lot of hard work into it and I'm *really* proud of it. I'd been thinking about my brother for quite some time. I mentioned it to Joe Bonamassa and Josh Smith, and they told me they were with me. They did their thing, helped me see my vision, and helped me make it happen. It was a group effort. Everybody involved did their part and it turned out great. I'm a little biased, but I don't think I could be prouder.

Was it tough, reliving your loss?

Of course. Emotionally, it was tough, but I was determined to push through it because musically, I'm an emotional dude anyway. Knowing that every day I was going in, stacking up more thoughts about my brother not being there definitely weighed on me. I thought of him smiling somewhere. He could see his baby brother paying tribute to him and making his name still ring – making the world know how badass he was and still is to me. That, and keeping the Gales family name alive.

There's a whole generation that may not know my brother, and this is the way to relay that message. We're a family who plays guitar upside down and backwards. There's multi-tiered information available for people to find out about this family. Hopefully, it will lead people to his back catalog. It's a memorial to let the world know that I haven't forgotten him. I have a bloodline that comes from some powerful playing. I'm playing his songs with a 2025 twist, and I feel pretty accomplished behind it.

What guitars did you use for the record?

I used my Sonnet Rawdawg guitar by Magneto, and a Paul Reed Smith acoustic. It sounds great. I was handed one of Joe's '56 Les Pauls for "Don't Wanna Go Home."

Did you play through his amps?

It was a combination of my DV Mark Raw Dawg blended with one of his Dumble combos. It sounded really good, so we put them together, and I gotta say, that DV Mark, with those crystal cleans with everything running through it, sounded great along with the Dumble.

How are you getting your lead tones?

I'm using a Seymour Duncan overdrive pedal and my MXR Raw Dawg. For my fuzz, I'm using a Colossus by Mojo Hand Fx. I'll use the Seymour Duncan for distortion, but then also press the Raw Dawg, like a Tube Screamer as a booster. Sometimes I'll use just the Raw Dawg for more-subtle things. But when I want more drive, I'll use them both like an extra gain stage on an amp, but I do it all through the pedals. When I use the Colossus fuzz, I use it by itself.

Buddy Guy and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram are on the album!

Man, that wasn't even on purpose (laughs)! My wife was like, "You should have Buddy Guy on the album." Buddy is the last living legend between him and Bobby Rush. Those are the last two of us black folk! That's it! Buddy said "Of course" because there was a connection between him and my brother. They played festivals together back in the day. Kingfish said my brother was a big influence on him. So there was a purpose in incorporating them. Who wouldn't smile at the opportunity to have a legend like Buddy Guy be part of their project? He knocked it out of the park and brought it all home. I couldn't be more elated. It was so emotional.

Little Jimmy King has been gone for 23 years, and bringing his memory back to life to this new generation bridges the gap between the young and old. With the young, we have Kingfish, me in the middle, and Buddy Guy on the latter end. It's a trifecta. I got Joe and Josh on guitar and Mono Neon on bass. It's just a good old party, all in honor of my brother. I couldn't be happier, and I want the world to know that Eric Gales is back with a vengeance, so watch out! I'm on the way! **– *Oscar Jordan* VG**

Eric Gales: Dirk van den Heuvel/Katrena Wize.

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JOHN SEBASTIAN'S 'BURST

Inspirational Icon

BY WILLIE G. MOSELEY

The mere mention of a Gibson Les Paul Standard made between 1958 and 1960 will command attention from nearly any guitar buff. This one was made famous in the hands of John Sebastian, who used it with the Lovin' Spoonful until he went solo in '68.

As the Spoonful emerged from the folk-music scene of his home turf in Greenwich Village, Sebastian and fellow Spoonful guitarist Zal Yanovsky (1944-2002) "went electric"; Sebastian recalls acquiring this '59 Les Paul (serial number 9 1352), in '63 from a local player named Skip Boone, whose brother – Spoonful bassist Steve Boone – found it in a pawn shop.

"The group was going to be a bit folk, a bit country, a bit blues, with a bit of Phil Spector (influence)," Sebastian said. "I thought that guitar – I didn't know what a Les Paul was – would be good for that. I mentioned it to Skip, who was saving up for a Gibson semi-hollow; one of the fancier models wired in stereo and with [the Vari-Tone circuit]. So he sold me the Les Paul for $125. I put medium-gauge flatwounds on it so it would resemble instruments I was used to."

A week and a half after the sale, Boone contacted Sebastian, wanting to undo the deal. Sebastian declined. "I said, 'Skip, that's all of my money; I can't trade it back, and I don't want a different guitar,'" he recalled. "The Les Paul was unique-looking; I thought the sunburst finish gave it an old-timey vibe.

"In the '60s, bands did not have 18 guitars and a guy who would tune them," he added. "We had *two* guitars – Zally's Guild Thunderbird and the Les Paul. We were trying to sound like more than four people in a band by overdubbing, and Zal and I would often trade guitars – me playing the Thunderbird, him playing the Les Paul – and they had an entirely different sound, even though we were both fingerpickers who used thumbpicks. It created a weave, rather than 'You're the lead player, I'm the rhythm player.' But I would often be the bare-bones/framework guy and he would be the decoration guy."

Steve Boone played a semi-hollow Guild Starfire bass in the Spoonful, and because Yanovsky played a Thunderbird, the band began to endorse Guild instruments. But Sebastian was so dedicated to his Les Paul that he did not appear in a publicity photo with a Guild. Rather, he held an autoharp!

"Zally's Thunderbird was an incredibly comfortable guitar," Sebastian said. "The neck was one of the best. Maybe it was the fretboard radius, which was sort of halfway between a Gibson and a Fender."

At times, Sebastian said, his Les Paul drew special attention from other musicians. One who looked and listened very closely was Mike Bloomfield, of the Butterfield Blues Band.

"My friendship with Bloomfield started when the Butterfield band came to New York," he detailed. "I had a very close relationship with (Butterfield producer) Paul Rothchild.

John Sebastian's 1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard: Rick Malkin.

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Duane Betts

Sebastian and Zal Yanovsky during the recording of the soundtrack to *One Trick Pony*.

Bloomfield and Yanovsky began to trade licks a lot, and I was hanging out with them. When he saw my guitar, he was absolutely gobsmacked! He wanted to know what it was, and said he had seen a gold one, but not a sunburst one. I put it in his hands and said, 'I don't know much about these things.'

"He loved it," Sebastian continued. "And the next time we crossed paths, he opened a case at a gig, and showed me a much more dramatic instrument! It had a lot more (maple) curl. For years after that, our conversations began with talk about Les Pauls. And he was a lead player, so he knew how to get the best sounds from an instrument."

After departing the Lovin' Spoonful, Sebastian kept his Les Paul for three decades, pulling it out on one occasion when the band reunited to record for the soundtrack to the film *One Trick Pony*, starring Paul Simon.

He watched the value of 'Bursts rise and sold his in the late '90s. While bemused by the fact 'Bursts have continued to rise in value since, he has no regrets. And naturally, it's gratifying when he hears other guitarists, such as Greg Martin, of the Kentucky Headhunters, talk about how they became interested in 'Bursts after seeing him play one with the Spoonful.

The guitar now belongs to Gordon Kennedy, one of the busiest guitarist/songwriter/producers in Nashville (and one of three sons of Jerry Kennedy, who played the lick on Roy Orbison's "Oh Pretty Woman").

"I think my generation became more interested in what we were playing than the previous generation," said Kennedy. "One time, I asked Jerry Reed which guitar he played on 'Amos Moses,' and he responded, 'I don't know... it was a piece of wood!' When I've asked my dad about amps on certain hits he played on, he says, 'Probably whatever was in the studio.' My generation holds these records, and the players, in such high esteem that we chase the same sounds and gear, to hopefully re-create them."

Kennedy never dreamed he'd own a 'Burst.

"By the time I started thinking about how I'd love to get one, they were an investment, ya' know? But, like a lot of guys, I wanted a guitar made the year I was born – 1959!"

Kennedy acquired the guitar from Gary Dick at Gary's Classic Guitars, and tried five of them before choosing it.

"It sounded the best," he recalled. "The other four – two '58s and two '59s – were in better condition and had these stories about people playing them for just 30 minutes, then putting them away. But the Sebastian guitar sounded great. When I heard it through a blackface Deluxe Reverb, it was *over*."

The guitar has a headstock repair, the damage having been caused by a baggage-handling incident with an airline during Sebastian's ownership, and Kennedy had it examined at Gibson's Nashville plant.

"I took it to Tom Murphy, and he told me there was a small screw in the headstock that appeared to do nothing," he said. "He backed it out slowly, and all is well. In essence, Tom repaired the repair. And we replaced the non-original Grover tuners with a set of Schallers from the correct year.

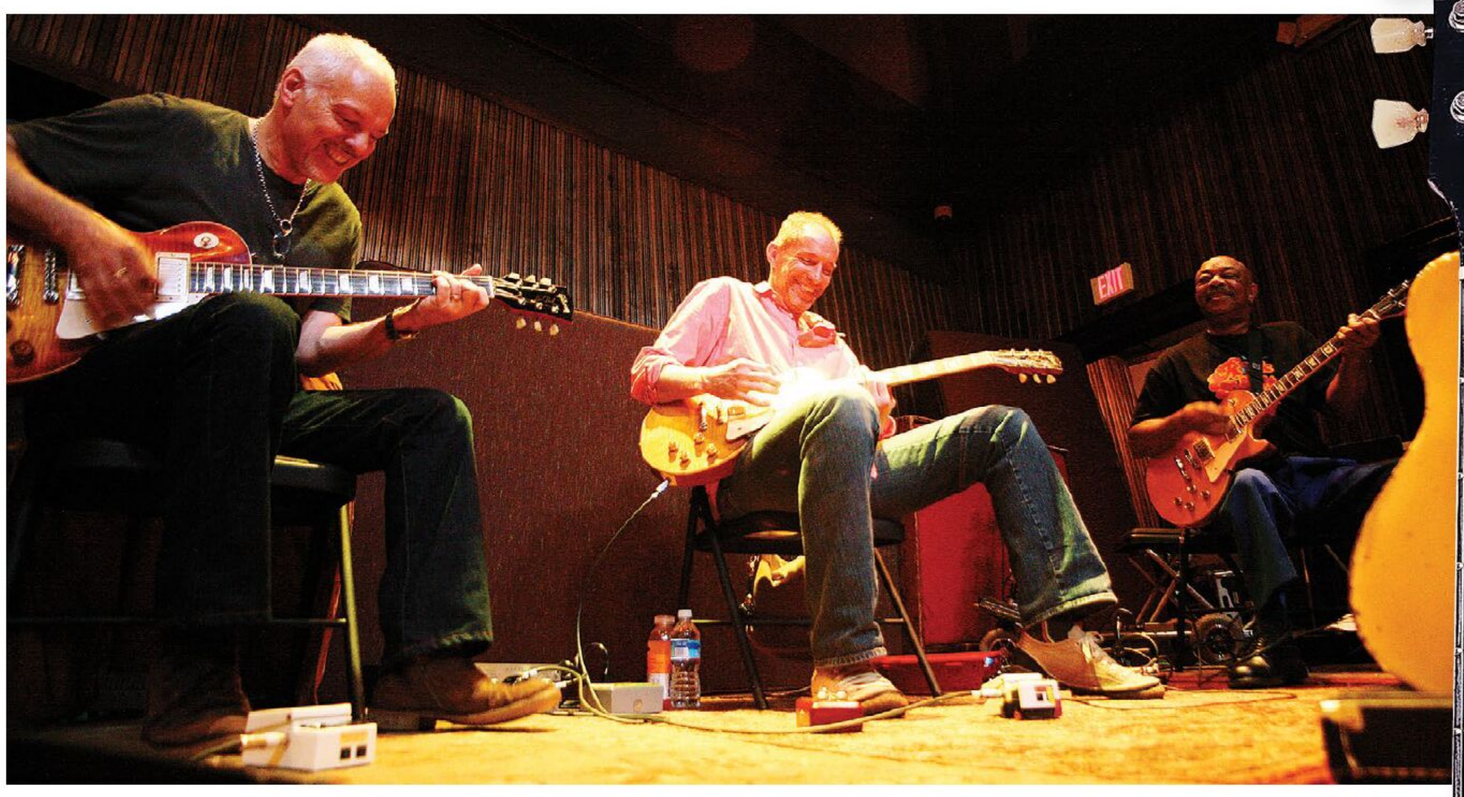
"I've done one other thing recently," he added. "I noticed that turning down the Volume on the bridge pickup resulted in a dramatic loss of high-end response, so I invited Phil Crabtree, from Gibson, to look at it. He took the plate off and found that one pot was different – from around '68. As fate would have it, my friend Phil Bennett was there, and said, 'I have a pot from '56 that could work.' When Phil saw it, he said 'This is from '59!' He installed it, and the guitar sounded better!"

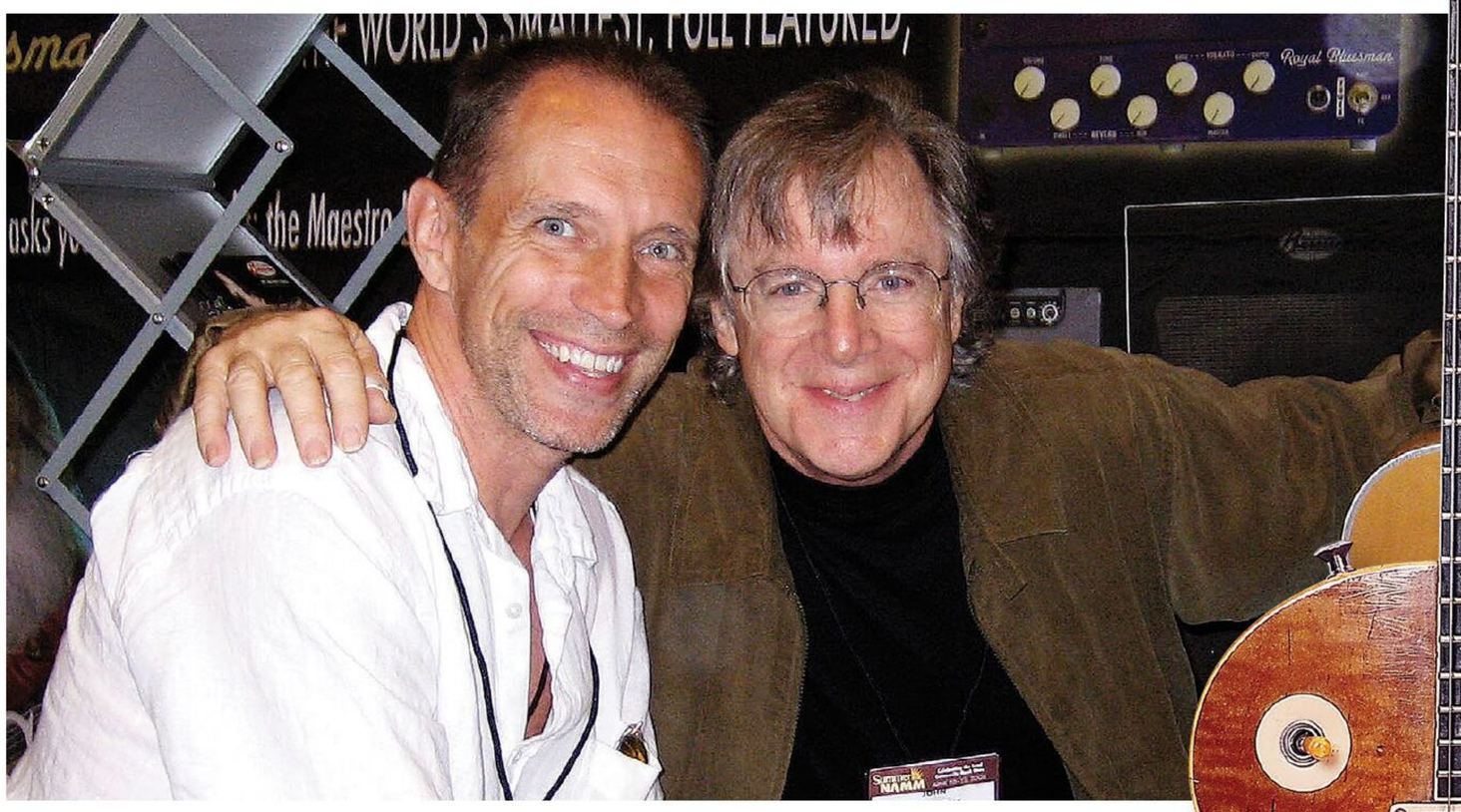
Kennedy uses the 'Burst in recording sessions.

"I used it on Peter Frampton's *Thank You Mr. Churchill*," he said. "And it's all over Little Big Town's *A Place to Land*." He has also worked with Faith Hill, Carolyn Dawn Johnson, SheDaisy, and on Ricky Skaggs' *Mosaic*.

One of the more memorable sessions

Sebastian, Yanovsky: CSP Images/Catherine Sebastian.





Peter Frampton, Gordon Kennedy, and Motown legend Eddie Willis recording "Invisible Man," for Frampton's *Thank You Mr. Churchill* album (top). Kennedy and Sebastian at the Summer NAMM show in 2009.

Frampton, Kennedy, Willis: Glen Rose. Kennedy, Sebastian: Danna Holmes.

involved recording "Invisible Man," on the Frampton album. Co-written by Frampton and Kennedy, the song was a tribute to Motown's Funk Brothers; guitarist Eddie Willis was on hand.

"We tracked the song at Blackbird Studio in Nashville," Kennedy recalled. "Eddie is the man who came up with – and played – the intro to (the Temptations') 'My Girl,' and he played on countless Motown hits. Peter and I showed up 90 minutes early because we were so thrilled to be working with Eddie and other Funk Brothers. We each had a part in mind, and kept saying to each other, 'Wouldn't it great if Eddie did the little stabs like he played on those old hits?'

"When Eddie sat to learn the tune, he listened through once, then, on the second run-through, there they were – the stabs – done only the way he can! It was *such* a magic moment! We were like kids at a music-fantasy camp! He was inducted to the Musician's Hall of Fame the same year as my dad, and those session players from that generation remain true heroes to me."

Kennedy used the 'Burst while backing Garth Brooks on "The Tonight Show," "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," and at a gig with Frampton at the Ryman. He loaned it to Gibson for examination and enjoys letting other musicians check it out.

"I love handing it to other players and watching the fireworks," he said. "One of my favorite reactions was from (Nitty Gritty Dirt Band guitarist) Jeff Hanna. He has a gorgeous 1960 'Burst, and he invited me to bring the guitar one day when I went to write with his wife, Matraca. We went into a room where there was a Deluxe Reverb. Well, I knew what was about to happen... Jeff held both guitars and was looking at their tops; they looked so much alike. He plugged in and played a few notes. I said, 'That's a beautiful-sounding guitar!' He said, 'Thanks,' then plugged in the Sebastian guitar, played the same several notes, and five seconds later stopped and simply said, 'Oh...'

"That's probably the best and most accurate review!"

Sebastian and Kennedy have gotten to know each other because of the instrument.

"I contacted him after I bought it," Kennedy said. "He might come to town and pet it some day! And he let me be a fan – answered all of my questions about how he did this and that."

The two met in person at a National Association of Music Merchants (N.A.M.M.) show in 2009, and had a long conversation about their mutual respect for the instrument. "There's nothing like meeting someone you admire," Kennedy enthused. "And finding him to be such a good soul. They don't make them like John Sebastian anymore... or the John Sebastian guitar, for that matter!"

This feature was first published in the February '12 issue.

Bryan Kimsey with an in-progress '72 D-28 at his shop in Angel Fire, New Mexico.

BRIDGE-PLATE BLUES

The Secret That Haunts '70s Martins

BY CLIFF HALL

In the fall of 1967, C.F. Martin & Company started circulating an ad that said, "Martin dreadnought guitars feature a very rich tone often copied but never equalled. A Martin guitar is always superior in tone." But within two years, the company quietly made changes that would undermine the very quality of sound it so confidently boasted.

The late 1960s and early '70s were a period of significant change and mounting pressure for Martin as material shortages and increasing demand forced the company to adapt. *The Washington Post Magazine* editor Marion Clark highlighted some of those challenges in a 1969 article discussing the scarcity of Brazilian rosewood.

"A few years ago, when the Brazilian government embargoed the rosewood which the family has always used for the body of its guitars, the Martins bought up all the rosewood logs they could get out before the embargo went into effect," wrote Clark. "They had to pay 70 cents a pound for the wood in log form, with each log weighing one to two tons."

This change was significant, and though most players didn't notice, luthiers recognized a distinct difference between Brazilian and East Indian rosewood. In his 1973 book *Guitar Repair: A Manual of Repair for Guitars and Fretted Instruments*, Irving Sloane noted "...it is particularly important to collect and store Brazilian rosewood. Recent restrictions on the export of rosewood logs by the Brazilian government have forced guitar manufacturers to switch their production to East Indian rosewood, which is different in both color and density. Guitars of quality manufacture and almost all custom-made guitars have until recently been made of Brazilian rosewood. For many years, at least, a considerable portion of repair work will involve rosewood guitars, so wood for splints and patches must be stockpiled."

Within this framework of external pressures and company responses, on April 9, 1968, Martin began replacing maple bridge plates with Brazilian rosewood – a harder, oilier wood with very different acoustic properties. By '69, the company had dramatically increased the size of the plates and transitioned to Indian rosewood. This was part of a shift aimed at increasing production to meet surging demand while also seeking to ensure the structural integrity of its instruments. In the face of these changes, did Martin's craftsmanship remain consistent, or was there an early indication of a dip in build or sonic quality?

Martin historian Mike Longworth, who began working at the company in '68, offered perspective on these shifts in a 2000 interview with *Vintage Guitar*. Until early '69, he said, the only thing the company used maple for was to make bridge plates, but then it "...went to the larger rosewood bridge plate [because it suddenly] had a large amount of rosewood."

Beyond alterations to materials and design, Martin faced substantial operational

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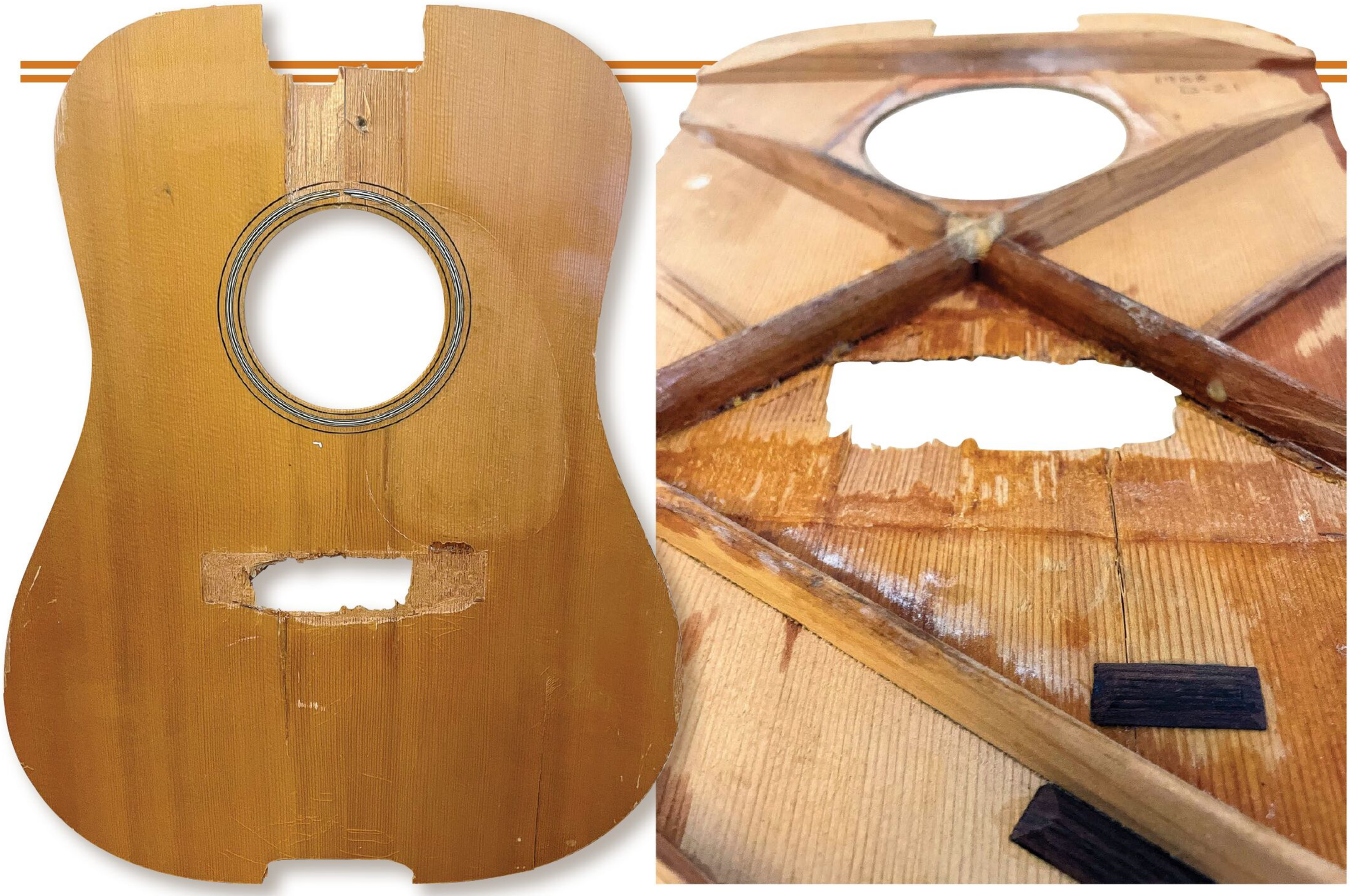


challenges including a rapid expansion of its workforce, as Clark observed while describing the production pressures.

"The Martin family has been handcrafting guitars for 134 years," she wrote. "The business, started by Christian F. Martin, Sr., has been handed down through four generations. Today, business has gotten too good for the Martin boys (there are two) to handle alone. A few years ago they were faced with a three-year backlog of orders. So they've trained 200 craftsmen to help. Nevertheless, stores must still place orders for Martin guitars at least a year in advance."

Longworth didn't see any problem with this change, saying, "It wasn't poor workmanship or quality control. Martin was expanding. When they hired a new person, they didn't turn them loose on the floor until they were ready to do their job right."

But Clark's observation of Martin's growth in the late '60s suggests this period may have marked the beginning of a strain on quality control. The need to train 200 new craftsmen to alleviate a three-year backlog points to a possible compressed training timeline, which increases the potential for production mistakes and worker dissatisfaction. In the intricate craft of guitar making, where precision is paramount, a sudden influx of relatively inexperienced hands could lead to inconsistencies in construction and a departure from the company's established standards. This pressure within Martin, symptomatic of the broader economic unease of the Malaise Era, likely contributed to the overt issues that surfaced later in the decade.

The Malaise Era was a period characterized by economic challenges and labor unrest across American manufacturing, rooted in well-publicized struggles in Detroit. Just as the auto industry saw strikes and declining productivity, Martin also faced labor strife. In November of '77, local paper *The Morning Call* published an article on the strike by 195 Martin workers who were members of the United Cement, Lime and Gypsum Workers International Union Local 552. At that point, the strike had been going for 73 days, with no resolution in sight.

According to the paper, workers felt they were being "punished for unionizing" in May of that year, which was the first time in Martin's 144-year history that the workers had engaged in collective organization. Company President Frank Martin denied this, explaining that the reason the workers were not receiving an improved pension plan and vacation pay was that the company had not shown a profit in three years.

This top from a '69 D-21 top stands in testament to the aggressive intervention required to address perceived tonal flaws. The cavity left by the removed bridge plate underscores the risks associated with such modifications, while the underside reveals the internal bracing and the void left by the removal of the bridge plate and highlights the size of the original.

After eight months, workers returned to the line, quietly resigning from the union out of loyalty to the company and Christian Frederick Martin, III. But the strike was not an isolated event; it was likely both a symptom of underlying issues within Martin and a cause of further disruption and potential impact on quality. Even in this environment, in 1976, management saw an opportunity in the increasing prices of pre-war Martins and started offering the HD-28 for 25 percent more than a D-28, which had a small maple bridge plate, scalloped top bracing, herringbone top border, and "zipper" backstrip.

This economic context, however, is only part of the story. Martin's decisions during this period also deserve a closer look, particularly regarding their impact on the guitars. While Longworth offered insight on Martin's internal reasoning during a time of upheaval, his perspective is increasingly challenged by today's luthiers, who point to

Mark Stutman works on a 1970 D-35 (left). Ted Woodford at the bench in his Ontario workshop.

tonal degradation linked to these very decisions – especially the adoption of oversized rosewood bridge plates. For modern repair experts, these changes are not just historical footnotes – they can literally be tone killers. But was there a method to Martin's madness?

Ted Woodford, a luthier whose repair and restoration of vintage guitars has garnered him a substantial Youtube following, offers a critical assessment of the instruments produced during the '70s in a recent video, "'70s Martins' shameful secret." Echoing the earlier discussion, Woodford describes the period as a time when Martin faced a host of serious problems.

"It's a true low point for the company in almost every respect. They'd grown too big too quickly [and] were on the cusp of bankruptcy because they were buying up little companies all around the world… They lost the plot," he said about Martin's financially ruinous acquisitions that included Vega Banjo Works, Fibes Drum Company, and A.B. Herman Carlson Levin Company. "And unfortunately, it shows up in the instruments."

The resulting turmoil and financial pressure, according to Woodford, directly influenced the design changes.

"I think a bit of dread started to rise in the management around the idea of warranty repair work," he added. "Martin always had that wonderful 'We'll fix it' policy, but that came from a time when they were making 1,500 guitars a year versus the '70s they were up to around 25,000. And the repair room started to get pretty full. So the bracing design started moving into larger and larger extremes. The bridge plate became three times the size compared to their golden era."

Building on his description of overbuilding and cost-cutting measures, Woodford reveals a truly baffling and fundamental flaw that plagued Martin production during the latter half of the '70s.

"Almost incomprehensibly, they started installing bridges in the wrong location. And it was not a one- or two-time mistake. This was built into their assembly process from 1976 into '78," said Woodford. "Someone didn't measure right. It's almost as if they looked at a plan then mixed up the lines for the saddle and the front edge of the bridge, built it into a jig, and never noticed the guitars were seriously out of tune. People are still asking $4,000 for them, but here's the thing: you can get used to being out of tune in some contexts. Still, it's not a selling point."

Luthiers have faced significant challenges attempting to rectify this error.

"Unfortunately, fixing the issue is a cosmetic nightmare because the bridge has got to move, so there's going to be fresh wood that has to be made to be given a patina," Woodford said of the recent repair of a '70s D-28.

Shifting his focus to the rosewood bridge plate, Woodford noted the evidence of pristine-looking pinholes – a testament to the structural integrity of the change – came with unintended consequences.

"Can we attribute that to using rosewood rather than maple for the plate? Probably. Maple is 1,400 on the Janka hardness scale. Rosewoods are all over 2,000 – much harder. Does that make rosewood a better choice? Maybe, because it's also much stiffer. Does that improve the sound, or impair it?" asks Woodford. "You'll never get a straight answer."

But it wasn't just the large quantity of rosewood cited by Longworth, its quality was also a concern. At the 2023 Fretboard Summit in Chicago, repairman T.J. Thompson, who had been removing bridge plates from '70s Martins for years before becoming a specialist in pre-war models, said, "I found the bulk of the Indian rosewood plates were

either quarter-sawn, which in almost every case will quickly split through the pin holes, or flat-sawn, which doesn't have much strength. This is one of the reasons I took [them] out. It was throwaway [rosewood]. And once I'd removed it, I saw that it was obviously too flexible to be useful as a bridge plate."

Thompson suggested that a higher-grade rosewood would likely yield a better tonal outcome.

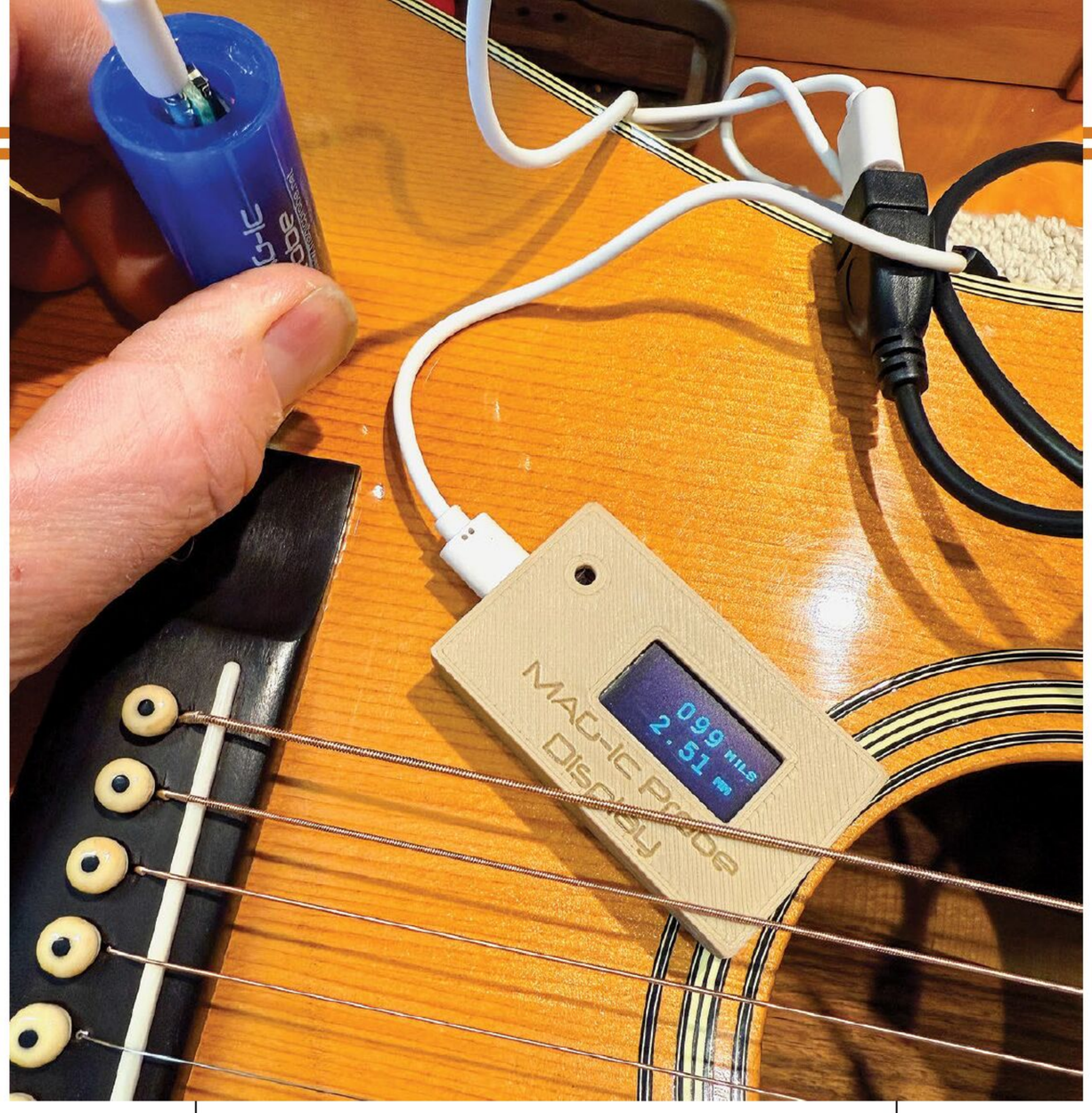
"You could put in a nice piece of Brazilian rosewood or maple, and you're way more likely to get the response that the client was hoping for," Thompson said in a session with fellow luthier Mark Stutman from Folkway Music. "But not that Indian stuff that they had in there. It was just awful."

Beyond the mere shift in bridge plate material from maple to rosewood, the poor quality of the rosewood combined with the plate's increased size is widely considered to have a detrimental effect on a guitar's tone. Referencing Stutman's revealing a consistent pattern of thinner wood near the bridge, Woodford also believes the size of components created significant sonic and structural issues.

"Mark made a video about these plates and the idea of removing them to put in a more-vintage size and material might not be a great idea," said Woodford. "Lots of people have tried it over the years."

One of those people is Bryan Kimsey, who built a cottage industry around improving the tonal limitations of '70s and '80s Martins by replacing the bridge plates. Favoring more-resonant maple and dimensions closer to vintage Martins, the delicate operation is a key element in his work. Acknowledging the inherent risks in such elective surgery, Kimsey views the replacement of the bridge plates as a worthwhile endeavor that demonstrably alters the tonal characteristics of the instrument, though not to everyone's preference.

"I have been able to A/B a control guitar with a test guitar many times," he said. "My experience is that replacing a large plate results in a snappier sound with a quicker attack and quicker decay. While I like this for flatpicking – where too much sustain can get in the way – not everyone does. Some people like the richer sustain of a large plate."



Mark Stutman's Hacklinger gauge at work.

Expanding on the specifics of his work, Kimsey clarifies that while "smaller" is the operative word, the wood is carefully considered to subtly shape the guitar's tonal characteristics, with the realistic understanding that the goal isn't to replicate the sound of a pre-war instrument.

"While maple is a common replacement and was traditionally used in small-plate Martins, I don't always use it," Kimsey adds. "I also use black locust and 'hot' rosewoods – basically anything but Indian – depending on the sound we're after. My goal in modifying a '70s D is not to turn it into a '30s D, but to keep its essence of a focused, punchy midrange while letting the guitar be more of what it can be. To this end, I sometimes use a small rosewood plate as a nod to the late '60s, when Martin used small Brazilian rosewood plates. Using a small rosewood plate will give the guitar a slightly more powerful, thicker bass. Maple will lean to a crisper and lighter sound. Black locust splits the difference. These are small changes but they can fine-tune toward your goal."

This discarded Indian rosewood bridge plate exemplifies their issues of insufficient strength and the tendency to split through pin holes.

Kimsey emphasizes that the bridge plate replacement is rarely an isolated modification, but rather one crucial element in a comprehensive package of adjustments aimed at optimizing overall tone and responsiveness of '70s Martins.

"I also swap Grover Rotomatics for lighter open-back tuners, remove the popsicle braces and replace with a trapezoid, scallop X braces in different configurations, scoot the bridge back to correct intonation, cut a long saddle slot, slot the bridge and use non-slotted pins, do a neck re-set with my tricks there, and swap Micarta for bone."

Stutman's early enthusiasm for bridge-plate replacement eventually gave way to caution as he began to see structural issues in guitars that had undergone the procedure.

"I did it many times," he said. "But when those early conversions started coming back with top bulges and separated X braces, I was tipped off to it not being a good idea. I bought a Hacklinger gauge to measure top thickness and it all became quite clear. I now measure top thickness on every guitar that's on my bench, before starting any repairs."

Woodford offers a possible reason for this pattern.

"The idea about accidentally thinning the top over and around the larger bridge plate was actually raised by former Martin museum director/historian Dick Boak," he said about an exchange at the Fretboard Summit during which Boak dismissed the idea that Martin might have intentionally thinned the tops to make up for the bigger plate. "Boak suggested that the stiffer plate behaved differently under the pressure of

the stroke sander used on tops. This area is more resilient and doesn't deflect as much under the sander, so it was sanded thinner. He didn't have faith in the 'mystical guitar Jedi knowledge' idea."

However, Stutman offers clarification on the extent of this thinning, stating that his own measurements reveal '70s Martin tops are consistently thinner everywhere, not just in the area of the bridge plate. With experience being the best teacher, Stutman has learned examining the widespread thinning of these tops is a critical factor to consider before undertaking significant modifications.

"It's a bad idea to take those plates out or put scallop braces in these guitars, as their tops are not up to the challenge," says Stutman. "I feel strongly that those rosewood plates are keeping the tops from distorting under string tension.

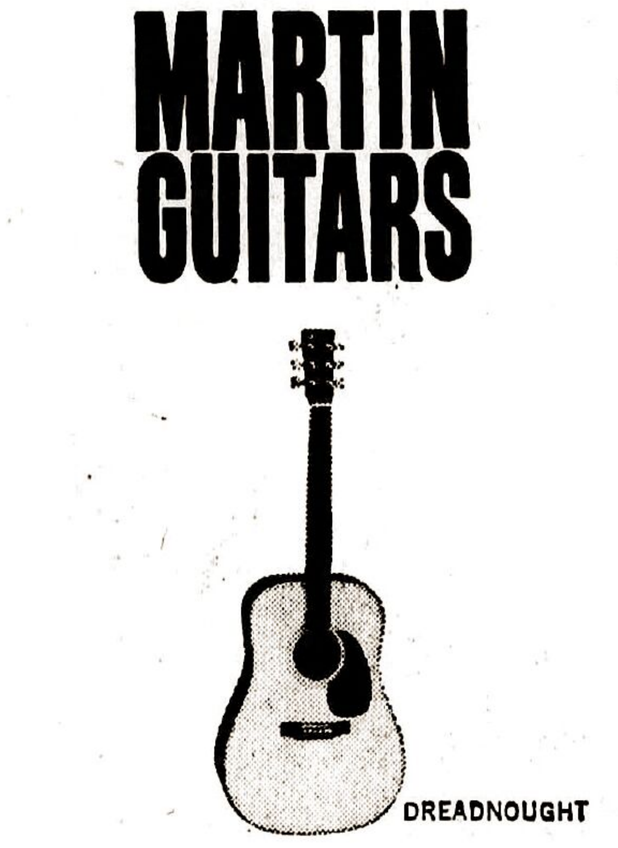
"Do I agree that a smaller maple plate will make a '70s Martin sound better? Of course, I do. But I still don't advise that it be done in most cases, or in any case where the guitar's top measures .105" around the bridge."

In contrast, Kimsey offers perspective grounded in long-term success he has witnessed.

"The proof for me is that '70s guitars that I've overhauled are going on 20-plus years and I'm not aware of any issues. I have seen a few with some belly bulge, but for me that's the sign of a top that's not overbuilt," he says. "A belly is only a problem if it's a problem, and I don't see a slight belly after 20-plus years as a problem. I've seen equal bellies on stock '50s guitars with the extreme rear X braces and that is the sturdiest bracing Martin has ever made."

Martin reverted to maple bridge plates in 1988, but didn't decrease their size in all models until 1990. This measured response suggests the company was resistant to rapid design changes, even when it involved a return to tradition. However, this change did not fully resolve disagreement within the guitar-making community. Despite the evidence and experience shared by luthiers on both sides the debate remains, ultimately hinging on individual comfort levels.

"My bottom line is that if a person isn't comfortable with a modification, then don't do it," says Kimsey. "If you buy a modified '70s Martin with a smaller plate and you're uncomfortable with it, remove it and put a big plate back in." **VG**



A 1967 dealer in *The Patriot News*.

KILLER BEE

The Mesa/Boogie Mark IIB

BY DAVE HUNTER

Wedged between the Mark I that started it all and the high-gain Mark IIC+ of '80s metal legend, the Boogie Mark IIB doesn't get much attention. For many guitarists, though, this humble Boogie was the most versatile early Mesa.

1982 MESA/BOOGIE MARK IIB COMBO

- Preamp tubes: four 12AX7
- Output tubes: two 6L6GC
- Rectifier: solid state
- Controls: Volume 1, Treble, Bass, Middle, Master 1, Lead Drive, Lead Master (Presence on back panel)
- Speakers: Originally one 12" Black Shadow (replaced in this example)
- Output: approximately 60 watts RMS

Mesa/Boogie has come to mainly represent the massive crunch of Metallica, the singing shred of John Petrucci, and the

Photos by Dave Hunter.

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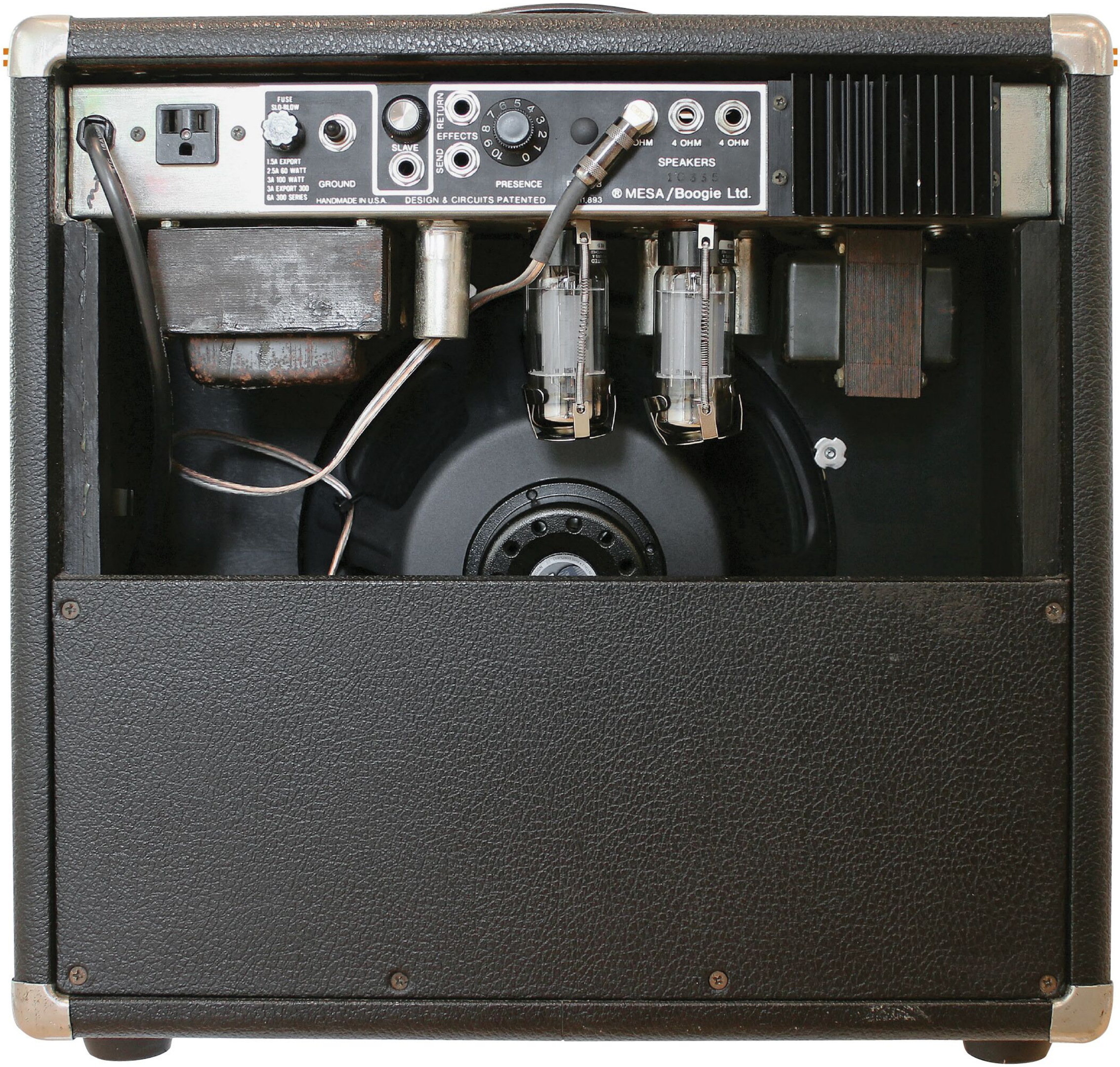


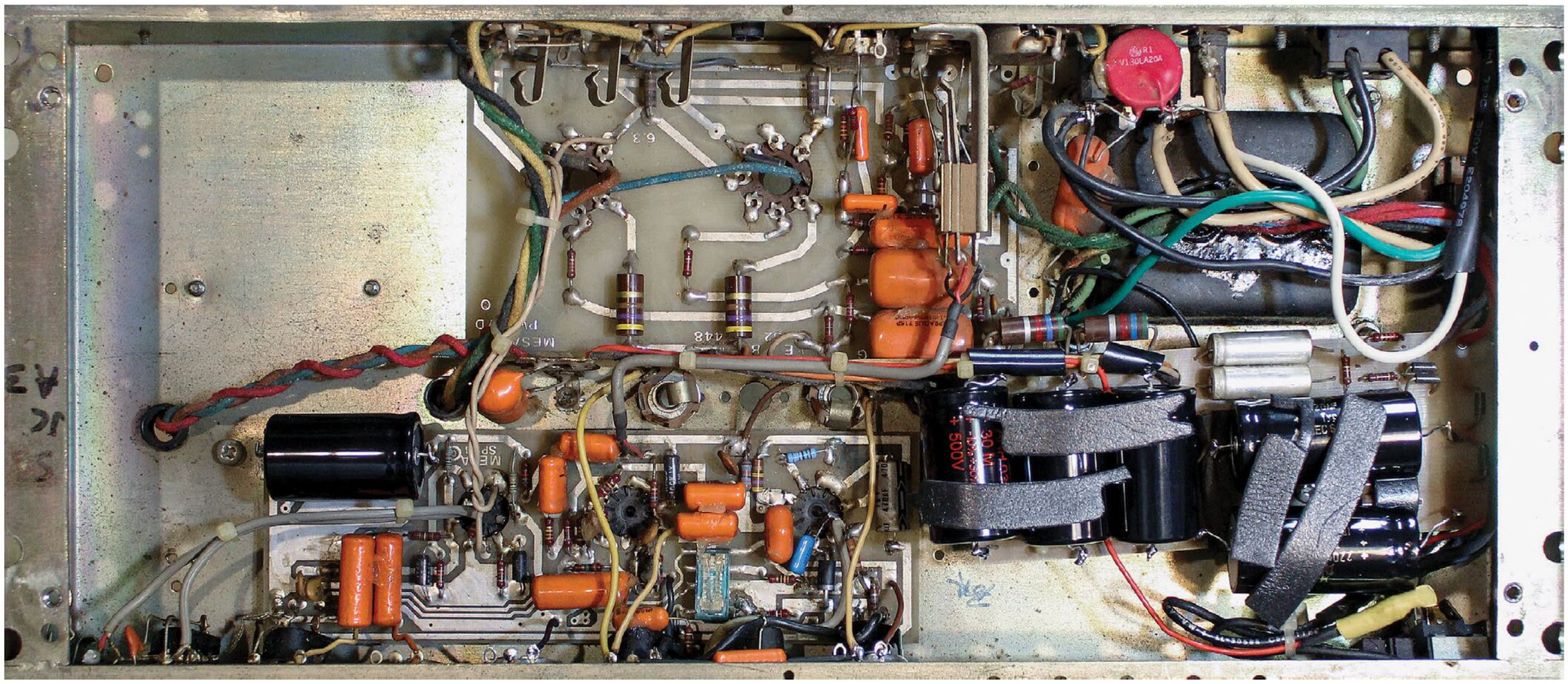
endless sustain of Carlos Santana, but isn't much associated with good old rock and roll. Meat-and-potatoes rock is where the brand started, though, in a circuit designed to attain the cranked-up overdrive of a big non-Master-Volume amp at more-usable decibels, and to be more portable than your average Marshall stack.

Among the artists plugging into the Mark II and similar models in the '80s were Prince, Todd Rundgren, Larry Carlton, Berton Averre (The Knack), the Michael Stanley Band, Mark Knopfler (who played a Mark IIB on much of *Love Over Gold* and *Brothers In Arms*), Al Di Meola, Mick Jones of the Clash, Lindsey Buckingham, Jerry Garcia (mostly with the Jerry Garcia Band), Michael Gurley (dada), Johnny Marr, and Paul McCartney. Before the Mark IIB's arrival in 1980, the Mark I had been added to the backlines of Keith Richards and Ron Wood of the Rolling Stones, who introduced their sound for the recordings released as the 1977 album *Live at the El Mocambo* and the tours that followed (see our feature on one of Keith Richards' Boogie combos in the March '23 issue).

That amp that would become known as the Boogie Mark I started hitting the street in prototype form circa 1973, following founder Randall Smith's conversion of 200 or so Fender Princeton combos to his high-powered, high-gain specs in the late '60s and early '70s. Mark I amps had two inputs – one for high-gain lead sounds and one for clean. The Mark II added footswitchable Rhythm and Lead modes, a feature that earned Smith his first patent. But there were several other important circuit upgrades.

The 60-watt Mark IIB required no power-mode switch, but it does display the proper Effects loop with Send and Return that was new to the model.

One of the biggest changes to the amp's sonic signature was moving the Mark I's added gain stage in Lead mode after the tone



stack in the Mark II, so there was then just one triode preamp/tube stage prior to the tone pots rather than the two in the Mark I's Lead mode. Yet another triode stage was added after the tone stack. The resultant gain staging slammed the tone stack a little less while still increasing the amp's overall gain, and offered a more-controlled EQ in Lead mode as well as a tighter overdrive sound.

In addition, the Mark II added a Lead Master control to better balance the Rhythm and Lead modes, meaning the amp had seven front-panel knobs versus the Mark I's six (both had Presence on the rear panel). Four of these – Volume 1, Master 1, Lead Drive, and Lead Master – were dedicated to governing gain and output, and in Lead mode, the signal passed through all four. Later users have noted that the configuration can make it tricky to find an ideal balance between Lead and Rhythm volumes, yet the arrangement afforded a lot more control than most amps of the day, and habitual Mark IIB users can easily find their sweet spots.

The Mark IIB generated a lot of sound from its seven knobs, and in Lead mode, all four gain- and volume-related controls were active.

The Mark II circuit found the Boogie's gain staging fairly close to that of the Dumble Overdrive Special, which had a similar two-knob overdrive stage after the tone stack. Both are often referred to as "two-channel" amps offering clean and overdrive sounds, but properly speaking, they are single-channel with an added overdrive stage that can be engaged/appended to the "clean" signal chain. An independent Bright switch for the Lead mode was also added to the Mark II (as a push/pull switch on the Lead Master control), the new model gained a Pull Shift switch on the Treble control that boosts the

Production Mark Series amps were built on high-quality printed circuit boards.

upper-midrange frequencies, and the Gain Boost push/pull was moved from the Volume 1 to the Master 1 control.

Despite all these significant changes, one of the more talked-about additions to the Mark IIB is the buffered effects loop. The Mark IIA had a rear-panel jack labeled "Pre Amp Out/Pwr Amp In," but no obvious effects loop. Another jack on the underside of the chassis, however, provided a "send" from the preamp that could be used to chain effects between it and the "Pwr Amp In." The Mark IIB arrived with this loop in place via proper Send and Return jacks on the rear panel, and a tube-buffering stage besides, with the "Pre Amp Out/Pwr Amp In" jack on the amp's underside. Even so, many guitarists complained about its function, in particular its propensity to drive some effects too hard. The Mark IIC of 1983 improved the buffer circuit so it operated better with a wider range of external units, but it also lost one nifty trick – the ability to plug a passive volume pedal into that junction between the preamp and power amp for remote control of the Master 1 level.

Prior to the C's unveiling, the higher-powered B was given an innovative new output stage that Mesa dubbed Simul-Class. Instead of the 60-/100-watt option, the rear-panel switch enabled the amp to run on two

Born to Boogie, as dubbed by Carlos Santana even before the Mark I arrived.

of the four output tubes for a stated 15 watts in Class A, or all four with two in Class A and two in Class A/B for a totally output of about 75 watts. Circa 1984, the final iteration of the circuit saw the Mark IIC+ adding significant gain and high-end sizzle to the Lead sound, creating one of the most collectible Boogies in the process. This sound formed the cornerstone of so many metal and heavy-rock artists of the era, but for those merely seeking a beefy, crunchy lead tone, it was too much.

The Mark IIB featured here is a characterfully worn example from the heart of the period. It exhibits the juicy overdrive and singing sustain that solidified the Boogie's reputation, without being so searing and saturated as to be excessive for middle-of-the-road lead sounds. Often noted, too, is how good the amp's clean (a.k.a. Rhythm) sounds are – a robust, dynamic, and balanced tone in the camp of the bigger late-'60s and early-'70s Fender amps upon which many elements of the circuit were based, arguably with better gain-versus-output control.

Fancier Boogies of the day display optional extras such as reverb, graphic EQ, 100-watt output rating (with 60-/100-watt switch or Simul-Class), exotic hardwood cabinets, and an upgraded EV or Altec speaker (from the standard Celestione Black Shadow; our featured combo has a replacment Jensen Jets Tornado Classic). But if you were a hard-working musician stretching your budget to buy your first Boogie, the Mark IIB is likely what you went for, which proved to be sturdy road warriors for the happy guitarists who landed them. **VG**

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'61 Fiesta Red/Slab Rose neck 100% original. Near Mint condition.
'62 Sunburst/Slab Rose neck 100% original. Near Mint condition.
'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
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'70 Sunburst/Rose neck 100%original in Near Mint condition, We have 2 in stock.
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'71 Black/4 Bolt Rose neck only changed nut & SW, Amazing tone!!
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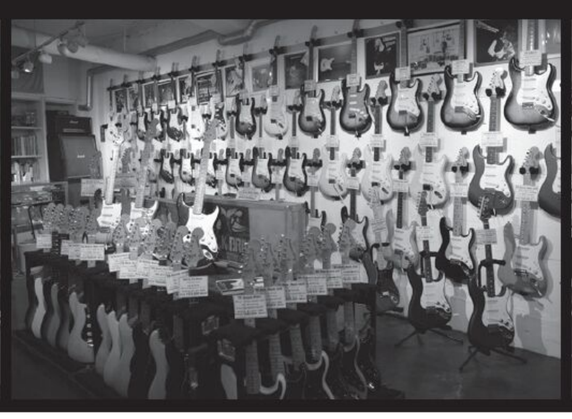

Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Ram W. Tuli

1973 Veleno

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1960	Alamo Mid-Power Tube		$500	$650
1968	Ampeg G-20 Gemini 20	Tubes, mid-power, 2x10	$700	$875
2000s	Analog Man King of Tone		$700	$1,000
1989	B.C. Rich Gunslinger	Class Axe era	$650	$1,000
1965	Baldwin Exterminator	100 watts, 2x15, 2x12, 2x7, ss	$600	$750
2012	Blackstone Appliances Mosfet Overdrive	Billybox Limited Edition	$200	$300
1997	Boss Tremolo TR-2	Keeley modded	$130	$175
1998	Carr Slant 6V (Dual 6V6)	8/22/40 watts, 1x12	$1,875	$2,500
1954	Danelectro Model 68 Special	1x12	$500	$625
1980	Dean Golden E'Lite		$2,000	$5,000
1960s	Diamond Ranger		$600	$1,200
1979	DOD Analog Delay 680		$150	$350
2016	EarthQuaker Devices Acapulco Gold	Grandma Cyclops	$90	$120
1967	EKO Ranger 12 Electra		$500	$1,200
1999	Electro-Harmonix Poly Chorus/ Stereo Polychorus		$150	$200
1967	Epiphone Newport EBD		$2,000	$2,500
1953	Epiphone Triumph Regent (Cutaway)	Cutaway, natural	$3,800	$5,500
2010	EVH Wolfgang Special	Opaque finish	$1,200	$1,800
1975	Fender Bass VI	Natural	$4,750	$6,500
1953	Fender Deluxe	Wide panel	$4,250	$5,500
1964	Fender Esquire	Rare Color	$40,000	$50,000
1965	Fender Marauder	2nd generation	$9,000	$12,000
1996	Fender Prosonic	Cab	$375	$500
1959	Fender Stratocaster	Blond, nickel hw, slab 'board	$42,500	$85,000
1985	Fender '72 Stratocaster (Japan)		$1,200	$1,800
1981	Fender Gold Stratocaster		$2,000	$3,000
2016	Fender Special Edition White Opal Telecaster	Mexico	$700	$1,000
1998	Fender American Deluxe Telecaster	Alder or ash	$1,200	$1,800
2011	Fender Brown's Canyon Redwood Telecaster	COA	$2,800	$4,000
1998	Fender Toronado/Deluxe/ HH/Highway 1/GT		$600	$900
2004	Fender '57 Twin/'57 Custom Twin	40 watts, 2x12 LTD	$1,875	$2,500
2020	G&L Kiloton	Premium figured	$1,250	$1,625
2010	Gibson Randy Scruggs Advanced Jumbo Limited Edition		$3,500	$5,500
1969	Gibson B-25/B-25N	Below belly bridge	$1,400	$1,800
1997	Gibson CL-40 Artist		$2,000	$3,200
2016	Gibson Firebird V 1963 Aged (Custom Shop)	$4,000	$6,000	
1978	Gibson Les Paul Jimmy Wallace Reissue	Kalamazoo, high flame	$8,500	$12,000
1977	Gibson Les Paul Standard	Sunburst	$4,500	$6,000
2020	Gibson 1956 Les Paul Goldtop Reissue		$4,000	$6,000
1943	Gibson LG-1		$3,000	$4,000
2012	Gibson SG Jeff Tweedy Signature		$3,500	$4,800
1965	Gibson Trini Lopez Standard	Sparkling Burgundy	$10,000	$13,000
1955	Goya Steel	M and S Series	$200	$400

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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
1963	Gretsch Corvette (Solid Body)	Custom color, 2 pickup	$2,000	$2,500
1960s	Gretsch Model 6154 Super-Bass	70 watts, 2x12, tubes	$950	$1,250
1949	Gretsch Synchromatic Sierra		$1,750	$2,250
1972	Guild Custom F-612 12-String	Brazilian rosewood	$5,000	$7,500
1988	Guild GF-25C	Cutaway	$1,000	$1,500
1990	Hamer Maestro		$1,200	$1,800
2000s	Harmony H62VS (Reissue)	Sunburst	$850	$1,125
1965	Hilgen Metero T-2511	1x12 combo, compact	$400	$550
1965	Hofner Model 500/2 and Club		$2,000	$2,500
1990	Ibanez Digital Chorus DSC10		$100	$125
1968	Idol Hobby 45		$175	$275
2007	JHS Pedals Colour Box V2		$275	$350
1961	Kay K571 Speed Demon	1 pickup	$400	$600
2013	Larrivee D-04E		$1,600	$3,000
1955	Magnatone Mark II		$2,000	$2,500
1981	Marshall JCM 800 Model 2204 Head	50 watts	$2,000	$2,500
1980	Marshall Model 1960A/ 1960B 4x12 Speaker Cabinet	Black	$850	$1,500
1993	Marshall Model 8222			
	Valvestate Cabinet	2x12 cab	$175	$250
1999	Martin 000-15		$1,000	$1,500
2021	Martin 00L Earth	Earth art top, FSC-certified	$1,200	$1,800
1998	Martin Backpacker		$200	$300
1960	Martin D-18		$6,000	$8,500
1999	Martin D-28GE Golden Era	Brazilian, Adirondack	$8,000	$12,000
1998	Martin D-45SS Steven Stills	Brazilian, 91 made	$30,000	$50,000
2013	Martin GPCPA4	Rosewood	$1,000	$1,500
1996	Mesa-Boogie Heartbreaker Head	100 watts	$1,500	$2,250
1969	Microfrets Stage II		$2,000	$3,000
1996	Music Man Axis		$1,500	$2,200
1986	Peavey Patriot Tremolo		$400	$500
1950s	Premier Bantam Custom		$900	$1,400
1999	PRS McCarty Brazilian		$5,000	$7,500
1960s	Regal Dreadnought 12-String H1269			$325
$500				
1980	Rickenbacker Model 320		$2,750	$3,500
1988	Rickenbacker			
	Model 381JK (John Kay)	250 made, black	$5,000	$7,500
1986	Robin Freedom I Passive		$750	$1,000
1932	Selmer Concert	Gut strings	$12,500	$18,000
1967	Silvertone Model 1464	SS, 2x12 piggy	$500	$750
2020	Supro Black Magick 1695TJ		$800	$1,000
1996	Taylor 955	12-string	$2,875	$3,750
1998	Taylor 710ce	Cedar	$2,125	$2,750
1971	Univox Precisely		$550	$750
1973	Veleno Original	Standard	$15,000	$20,000

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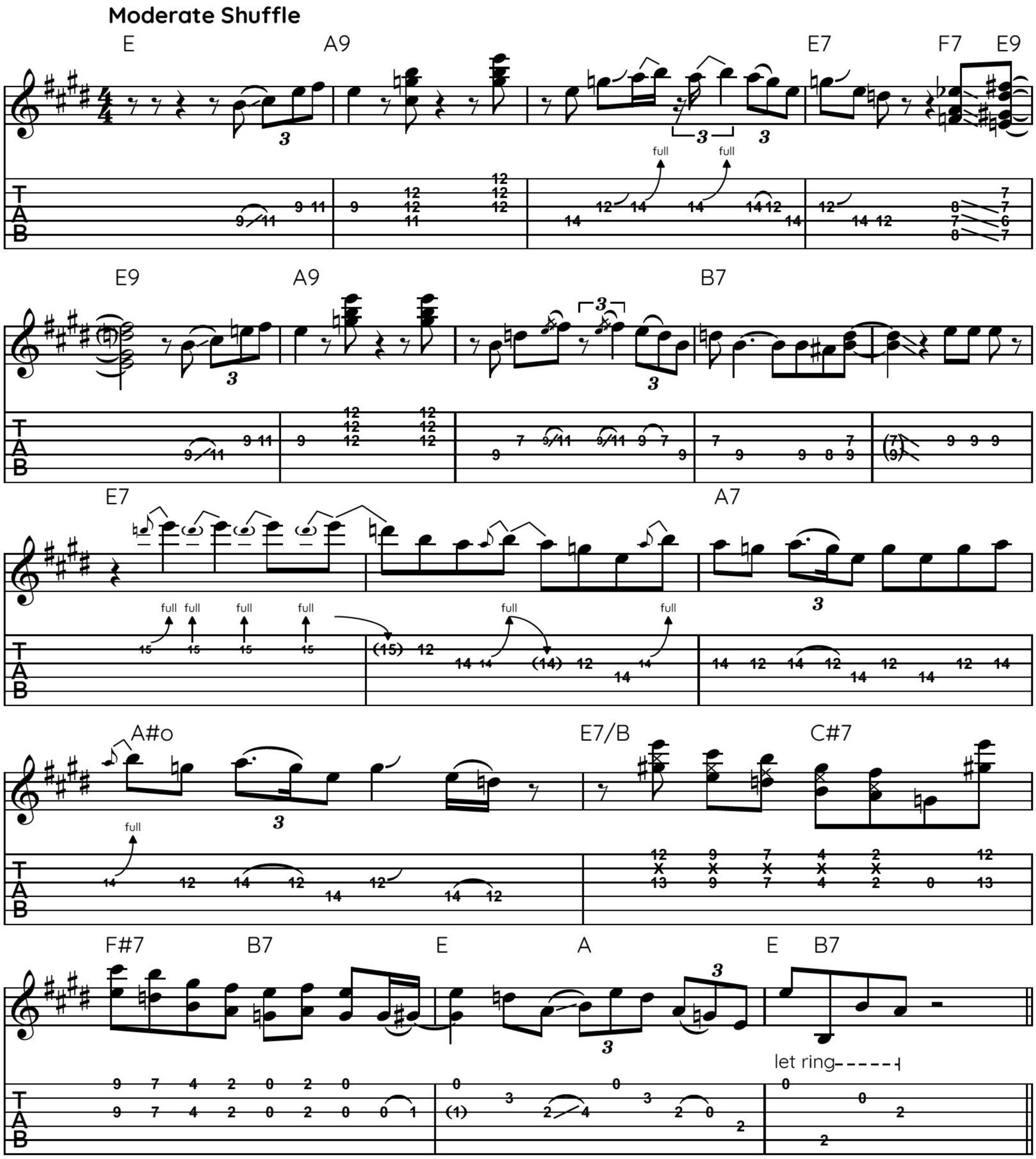
FREDDIE KING
King of Instrumental Blues

By Wolf Marshall

Freddie King exerted a singular influence on blues – not just with his imposing presence, emotional vocals, and guitar mastery, but his flair for the instrumental. *Let's Hide Away and Dance Away with Freddy King* is an album equivalent to (and arguably as influential as) any jazz instrumental and marks one of King's crowning achievements. After the success of "Hide Away" (#29 on Hot 100, #5 R&B, with a 10-week chart run in '61) he was equally formidable as singer and guitarist marketed as an instrumentalist – a role he didn't prefer. Federal, subsidiary of Cincinnati-based King Records, initially specialized in country/hillbilly and subsequently jazz, blues, soul, and funk. Federal launched James Brown, recorded Hank Ballard, Ike Turner, Earl Bostic, Johnny Guitar Watson, and Joe Tex, but Freddie was their rising star. With a Les Paul goldtop slung saucily on his right shoulder, he was the quintessential modern bluesman and spurred a worldwide blues/rock movement. Eric Clapton emulated his tone and attitude in Bluesbreakers, and fellow Brits followed suit alongside American players.

Instrumental rock exploded in the late '50s and early '60s, ignited by Link Wray, Duane Eddy, the Ventures, Booker T. & the MGs, Dick Dale, et al. "Rumble," "Rebel Rouser," "Walk, Don't Run," "Green Onions," and "Misirlou" dominated radio alongside pop ditties, dance/novelty songs, "girl groups" and seminal soul music. In this period, Freddie delivered more than 30 instrumentals for Federal, projecting authentic Texas and Chicago blues aesthetics. Recorded between August 25, 1960, and July 26 of '61, *Let's Hide Away i*s essentially a collection of singles with additional studio tracks combining classics and lesser-known but ingratiating tunes rendered as a dozen instrumental pieces. Its success spawned two spin-offs – *Freddy King Goes Surfin'* ('63) and *Freddy King Gives You a Bonanza of Instrumentals* ('65). Freddie and songwriting partner/pianist Sonny Thompson were joined in the studio by Fred Jordan (rhythm guitar), Bill Willis (bass guitar), Phillip Paul (drums), and saxophonists Gene Redd and Clifford Scott. Though Freddie preferred a mid-'50s Gibson GA40T, he might've plugged into Federal's house amps, a standard studio M.O. But, according to neighbor Jay Lewis, he claimed to have recorded the tracks with his new Gibson ES-345SV instead of the '54 Les Paul. His unique sound was the result of plastic thumbpick and metal fingerpick articulation (reputedly inspired by Jimmy Rogers and Eddie Taylor), dynamic attack, judicious palm/hand muting to personalize his phrasing, and the timbre of both pickups blended.

"Hide Away," intended as B-side of "I Love the Woman," became Freddie's signature song and began the pairing of vocal and instrumental numbers on his singles. Named after the Chicago blues club Mel's Hideaway Lounge, it's as indispensable as Buck Owens' "Buckaroo" is to country or Dick Dale's "Misirlou" to surf music. Embraced by bar bands and surf groups, it has been covered by Clapton, Jeff Healey, and SRV. Its 12-bar E blues is made more interesting by alternating shuffles and straight 4/4 grooves, along with catchy hooks and riffs – some familiar, some obscure, some reinvented. King reworks Hound Dog Taylor's "Taylor's Boogie" in the shuffling head. The tune was also recorded by Magic Sam as "Do the Camel Walk"; the 4/4 contrast riff came from pianist Jimmy McCracklin's "The Walk." A boogie-bass-line riff reinstates the shuffle groove. Freddie strums an E9 chord shape learned from Robert Lockwood Junior (Johnny Winter dubbed it the "Hideaway chord") as a fanfare over ensemble stop-time rhythms, followed by his signature break in parallel-sixth dyads. A double-time 4/4 feel and muted quote of Mancini's "Peter Gunn" theme distinguish the chorus along with a brief nod to "Guitar Boogie Shuffle" in its turnaround. The final section recaps the theme and ends on a traditional blues cadence line.

Freddie King photo courtesy of Bear Family Records.

"The Stumble" was a masterpiece, second in significance only to the album's title track. This excerpt is definitive. Freddie's conception emerges in his economic pentatonic lines in E major (over E9), E minor (over A9) and B minor (over B7); setting up short call-and-response statements in the theme. Freddie punctuates these fragments with syncopated chord hits in measures 2, 4 and 6. He improvises blues licks over stop-time rhythms in 10-13, renders a trademark line in parallel-sixths over the turnaround in 14-15, and concludes with reinterpreted country-blues mannerisms utilizing open strings and sustained chord shapes.

"Butterscotch" is one of eight tracks recorded in a productive April 5 session. The altered C blues employs an uncommon 44-bar blues-with-bridge structure in A-A-B-A form, found in many jazz standards. Each A section is a 12-bar blues while the eight-bar bridge moves through F7-C7-F7-G7 changes. King develops a characteristically catchy melody over the moderate shuffle, immediately establishing his intuitive soulful melody style, with alternation of a solid minimal riff answered by improvised lead responses. His two-chorus solo flaunts textbook electric-blues mannerisms reconciling his Texas/Chicago lineage. Freddie's theme restatement is abbreviated (two A sections), colored by additional muted textures, and concludes with a reinterpreted swing-jazz ("A Train") gesture.

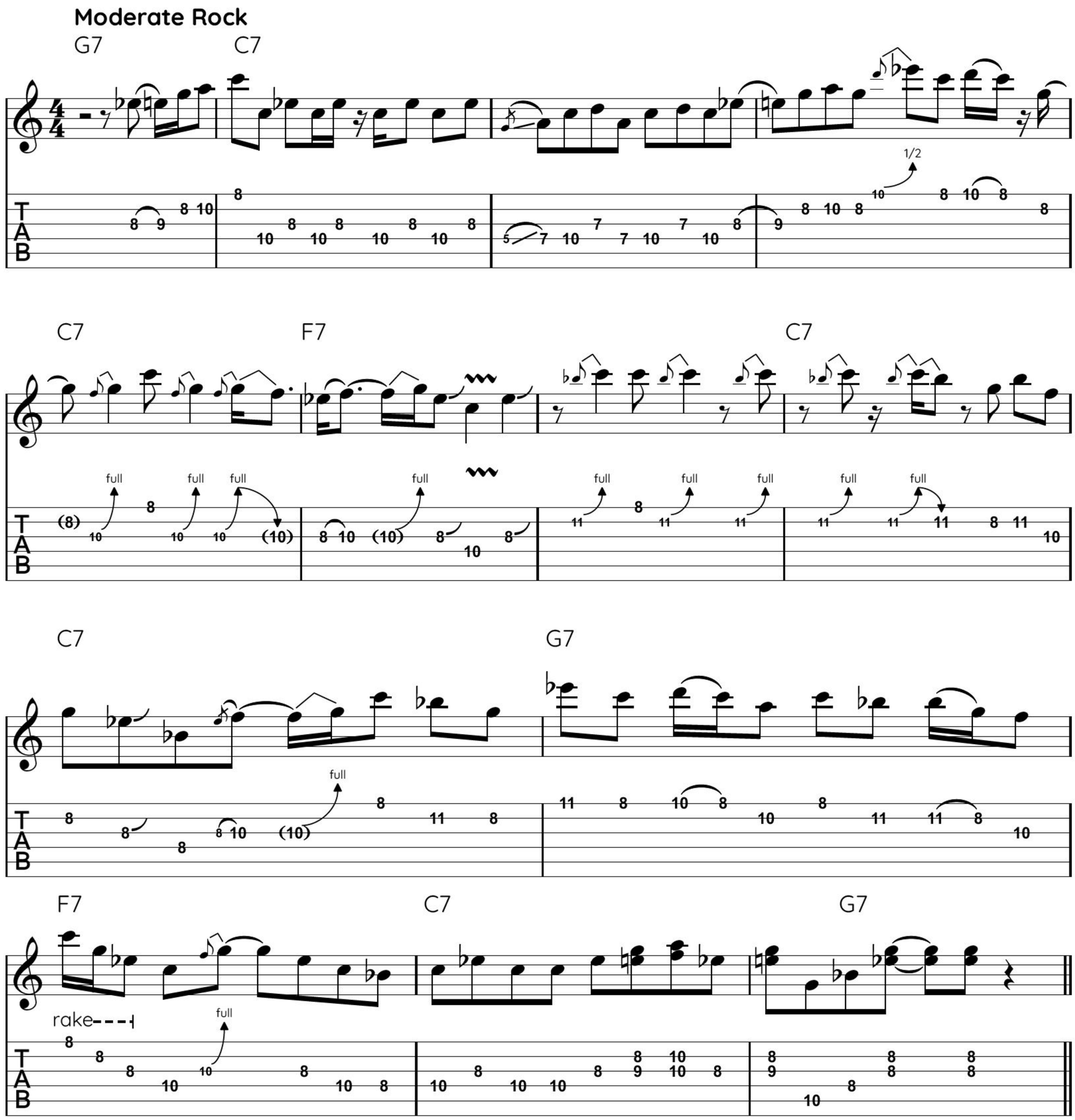
"Sen-Sa-Shun" ("I'm Tore Down" B-side, Oct '61) hit #5 on R&B charts, increasing the reach of Freddie's instrumentals. His loose take on "Got My Mojo Working" affected enumerable instrumental bands and was highly influential to upcoming rockers, Jerry Garcia chief among them. Freddie maintains a sense of structure during multiple choruses of the 12-bar A blues with thoughtful pacing and musical contrasts. He decorates the "Mojo" theme with double-stops, rake-picked embellishments, and chord stabs, improvises a BB-inspired single-note solo, develops low-register ostinato figures, milks an open-string trill lick, suggests slide-guitar impressions, recalls previous ostinatos, and reprises the "Mojo" theme, closing with a blues cadence line and jazzy A7♯9 chord.

"Side Tracked," attributed solely to King, purveys an unusual repetitive chord-outlining theme conjoining Jimmy Reed Chicago and T-Bone Walker Texas blues with Ventures surf rock. Cruising on a moderate shuffle, it's another example of blues-with-bridge A-A-B-A form. The four-bar intro begins on D7 (V chord in G), a familiar blues strategy. "Side Tracked" utilizes standard 12-bar structures in G, modulates to C9 (IV chord) for the eight-bar bridge B section, returning via an enriched A7-D7 (II-V) cadence. Freddie takes two improvised choruses where his T-Bone influence is evident in longer strings of triplet lines. He recalls the bridge theme with its characteristic bends, and ends with a single A section, final cadence of tritone dyads and an A♭9-G9 cadence.

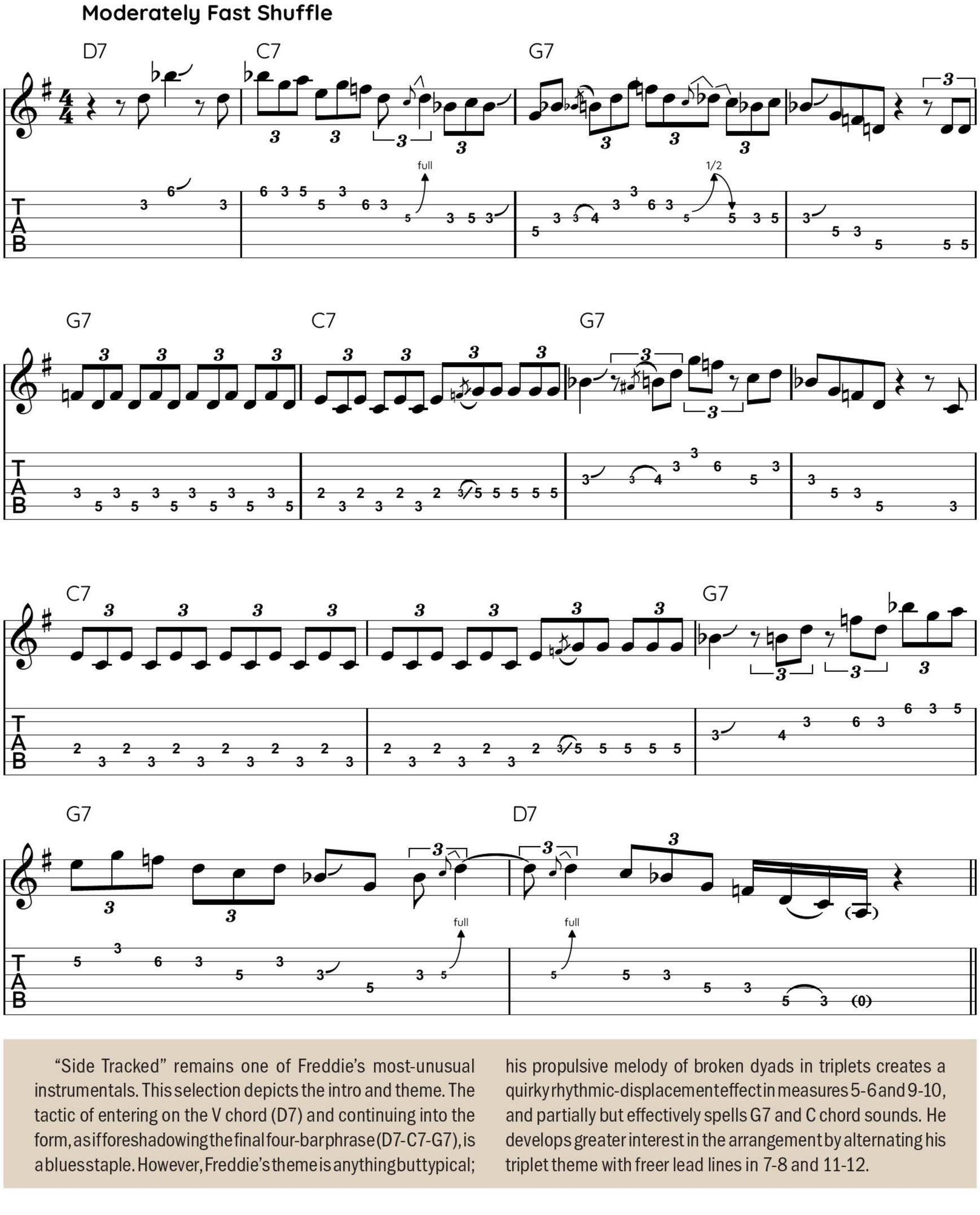
"The Stumble" (A-side of "Takin' Care of Business," '62) is a King classic covered by Jeff Beck, Peter Green, Dave Edmunds, Gary Moore, et al. Freddie develops a catchy pentatonic theme in E, reminiscent of "Hide Away" and equally weighty, applying stop-

time lead breaks and signature parallel-sixths in the head. The altered 16-bar E blues enters on A (IV), repurposes idiomatic blues lead licks as hooks, and acknowledges jazz/gospel roots in the diminished sonority and sophisticated chords of the turnaround – A♯–E/B-C♯7-F♯7-B7. He adopts a hook-conscious approach in his two-chorus solo with a mix of single-note lines in different registers, double-stop riffs, and winding triplet phrases.

"Wash Out," a 12-bar G blues, implies a Jimmy Reed influence in the relaxed shuffle feel and streamlined arrangement, while the simple main riff of walk-up bass-line melody and dyads suggest a brisk reinterpretation of Magic Sam's "All Your Love." Freddie states the theme twice (24 bars) and improvises one of his most succinct and swinging solos, distinguished by suave triplet runs offset by soulful string bending and terse rhythmic ornaments. He returns to the theme and closes authoritatively with a simple descending blues-scale run and chromatic cadence (Ab9-G9).

"San-Ho-Zay," another chart success (#47 on Hot 100, #4 on R&B, '61), was the most straightforward of Freddie's instrumentals. The 12-bar C blues exploits hypnotic riffs of dyads and single notes over a cycling moderate-rock groove, interrupted only three times by stop-time breaks. The deceptively simple, concise arrangement suited the era's twist-party dance ethos, however, in its course Freddie transcended predictability. He solos over 16-bar altered-blues forms (doubling the first four bars to eight) while retaining 12-bar-blues structures elsewhere. Freddie builds complementary improvisations; conveying forward motion from a basic eighth-note feel to aggressive unison-bend riffs and more active 16th-note rhythms. Its allure wasn't lost on blues-rock insiders; Magic Sam covered the tune and Jerry Garcia confessed "I got almost all my ideas and phrasing off that record."

"San-Ho-Zay" was a solid hit. After establishing an effective theme that alternated simple riff patterns with freer solo sections, Freddie created a strong set of improvised solos, underscoring his soulful musicianship. This climax chorus (1:39) finds him gaining momentum with more energetic phrases containing 16th-note figures and rhythmic surprises. His line in measures 1-4 exploit a familiar major/minor/major blues move adopted by countless blues-rock players. Also noteworthy are his expressive string bends and tasteful major/minor blues combinations over the final four bars.

"Just Pickin,'" credited to only King, presents a precursor of Buddy Guy's "Mary Had a Little Lamb" (also associated with Earl Hooker and covered by SRV) instrumentally. The key, chord changes, feel and attitude are virtually identical. The altered 16-bar E blues, arranged in eight-bar sections, applies IV-I-V-I changes and bears a familiar call-and-response theme alternating low-register single-note phrases with chord strums and arpeggiations. A traditional quasi-country mood a la "Midnight Special" pervades the open arrangement while Freddie's lead lines, emphasized by stop-time breaks, provide the undeniable Chicago/Texas blues quotient.

"Heads Up" is a 12-bar G blues enlivened with Freddie's patented feel changes and breaks. The head demonstrates his balance of singable jazzy major-blues melodies and simpler pentatonic riffs. The arrangement exploits an infectious moderate-rock beat that would appeal to teenage twisters and

"Side Tracked" remains one of Freddie's most-unusual instrumentals. This selection depicts the intro and theme. The tactic of entering on the V chord (D7) and continuing into the form, as if foreshadowing the final four-bar phrase (D7-C7-G7), is a blues staple. However, Freddie's theme is anything but typical; his propulsive melody of broken dyads in triplets creates a quirky rhythmic-displacement effect in measures 5-6 and 9-10, and partially but effectively spells G7 and C chord sounds. He develops greater interest in the arrangement by alternating his triplet theme with freer lead lines in 7-8 and 11-12.

the surf-music crowd contrasted by bustling Latin rhythms aimed at martini-swilling hipsters. Freddie plays a solo before restating the theme. His brief coda employs the familiar tactic of repeating the last four bars. "Heads Up" was covered by the Grateful Dead and surf band The Lively Ones.

"In the Open," the first of three tracks recorded on July 25, was issued as a single in November '62. The altered A blues expands a common 12-bar progression, maintaining the same proportions into 24 bars. King juggles textures, syncopated figures, and single-note blues fragments for a call-and-response effect in the head, animated by the tune's moderate-rock groove and cooking vamp feel. He alludes to open-string licks and arpeggio sounds of country blues in his first solo then improvises freely, changing register, varying rhythmic approaches from short riffs to longer lines, and inserting double-stops into lead phrases. Freddie recalls his vamp theme and rides the section into a fadeout. Though it remained esoteric, SRV chose "In the Open" to open his early shows (*In the Beginning*).

"Out Front," is a 12-bar E blues highlighting Freddie's alternation of groove and rhythmic breaks, heard at the outset. The showy dyads over dramatic stop-time accents is pure blues-guitar theatre; originating with T-Bone, jump blues and Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" histrionics, it's also prominent in SRV's "Pride and Joy." The two-part idea dominates the head, where Freddie alternates dyads and a boogie riff based on "The Walk." He blends single-note licks and dyads over a straight shuffle in his solos, adding an abbreviated quote of "The Stumble" along the way (:59). An interlude of dyad riffs similar to Jimmy Smith's "Midnight Special" signals a return to the opening theme.

"Swooshy" boasts an atmospheric arrangement offering hints of country and doo-wop mixed with urban blues, rock and roll, and soul line-dancing. Sax riffs over the slower half-time R&B groove in the head deepen the mood and provide a key timbral element. One of Freddie's most altered blues, the B♭ blues-with-bridge features additional chordal refinements in the 12-bar A sections, where a IV-I-IV-I-V-IV-I progression is used. He establishes a simple riff theme punctuated with 9th-chord jabs but adopts a double-time swing groove and improvisatory rhythmically motivated lead attitude in the eight-bar bridge.

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.

THE UGLY, THE BAD, AND THE GOOD

Tackling a '59 P-Bass Disaster

By Dan Erlewine

One of the more bizarre repairs I've ever tackled began recently when a customer sent photos of a '59 Precision Bass he'd just bought with a 1965 neck. He hoped it could be salvaged despite numerous issues including a horribly modified body, missing nut, chipped nut slot, broken truss rod, pickup that was falling apart, and wiring harness that needed an overhaul. Figuring it best to tackle the hardest part first, I started to restore the body.

1) So much wood had been carved away that I thought long and hard about taking the job.

2) I removed the wood that couldn't be saved then bought an aftermarket swamp ash body, sawed it into three parts, and joined it to the original center with the pickup cavity and its penciled-in date of 7/59.

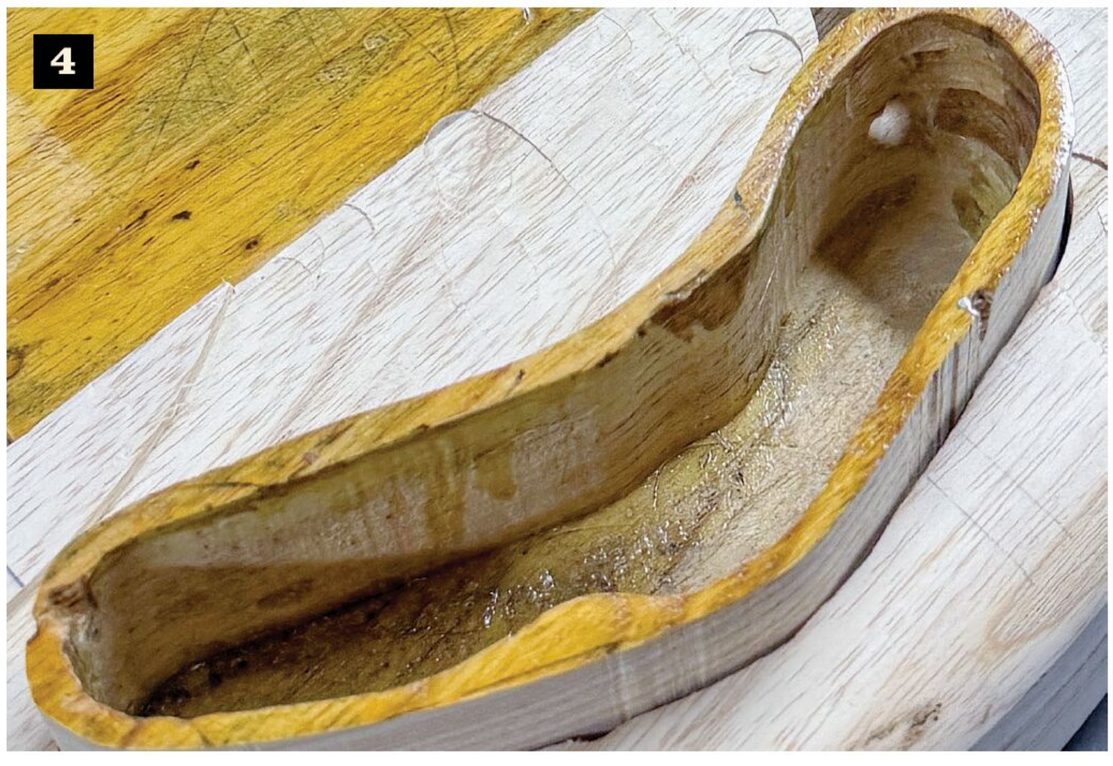
3) There was so much wood carved from the bridge area that I had to fit a new piece. After installing it, I ran the body through a thickness sander, leaving a smooth surface while also hiding the joints.

4) I removed the original control cavity and put it in the new body to retain the look – crazy, I know, but that's the kind of thing that makes it fun to do such difficult and time-consuming jobs.

5) My shopmate, Isaac, used his band saw to cut slabs from a block of swamp ash standing on edge, producing two laminates – one that was .1" thick (so it can bend over the body cut on the top) the other for the back of the bass (.25"). We removed just enough wood to keep final thickness close to original.

6) The laminates were pinned together and glued in a vacuum press that slowly and evenly pulled the top over the arm carve.

7) I drilled holes through the top laminate so I could drop a flush-cut router into the cavities, then routed the overhangs with a roundover ball-bearing bit to replicate the body's curved edges.



8) I installed the neck to make sure the pickup rout was on center and the bridge was properly located. With the pickguard in place, I drilled mounting holes for it and the bridge. After final-sanding the body, I handed it off to finisher Keith McGrath.

9) While Keith had the body, I figured out why the truss-rod nut was so deep in the hole...

10) ...cleaned the pickups and their copper ground plates, and installed new rubber risers.

11) I'll repair the nut slot and make a new bone nut.

12) Fellow repairman Gene Imbody saved what he could from the original wiring and made a new anodized pickguard.

13) I believe this bass originally had a Mary Kaye finish because there are remnants; in the pickup cavity, the ground plate was stuck to

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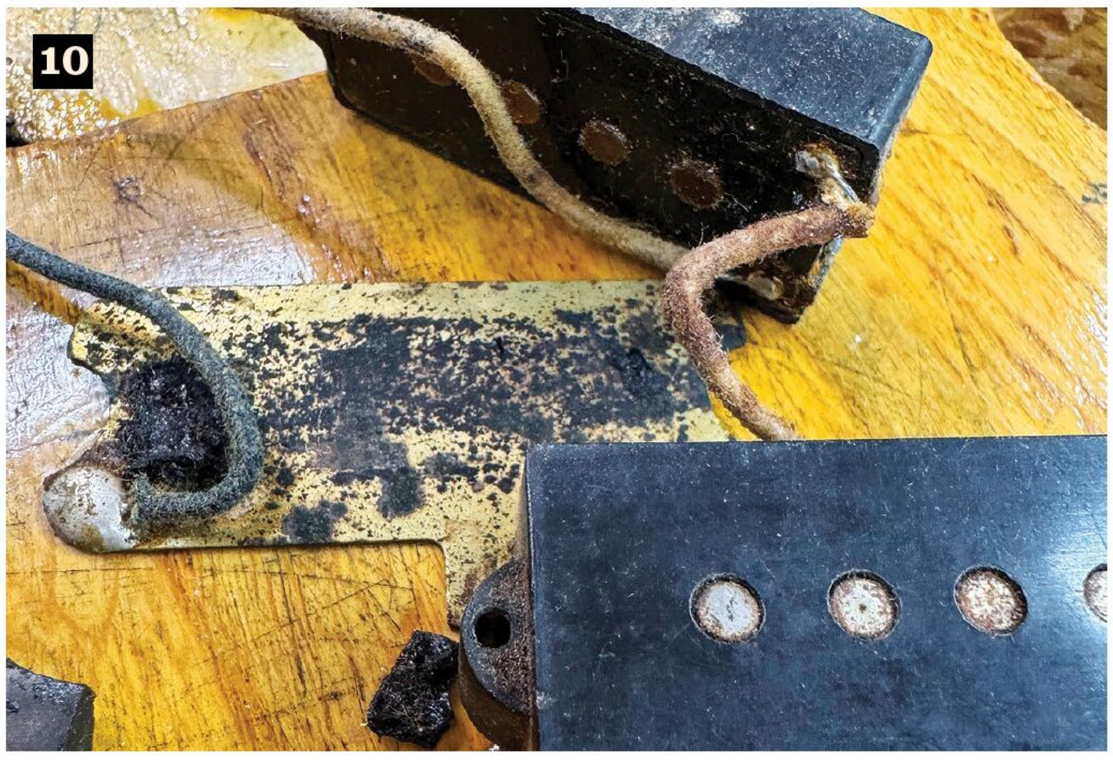
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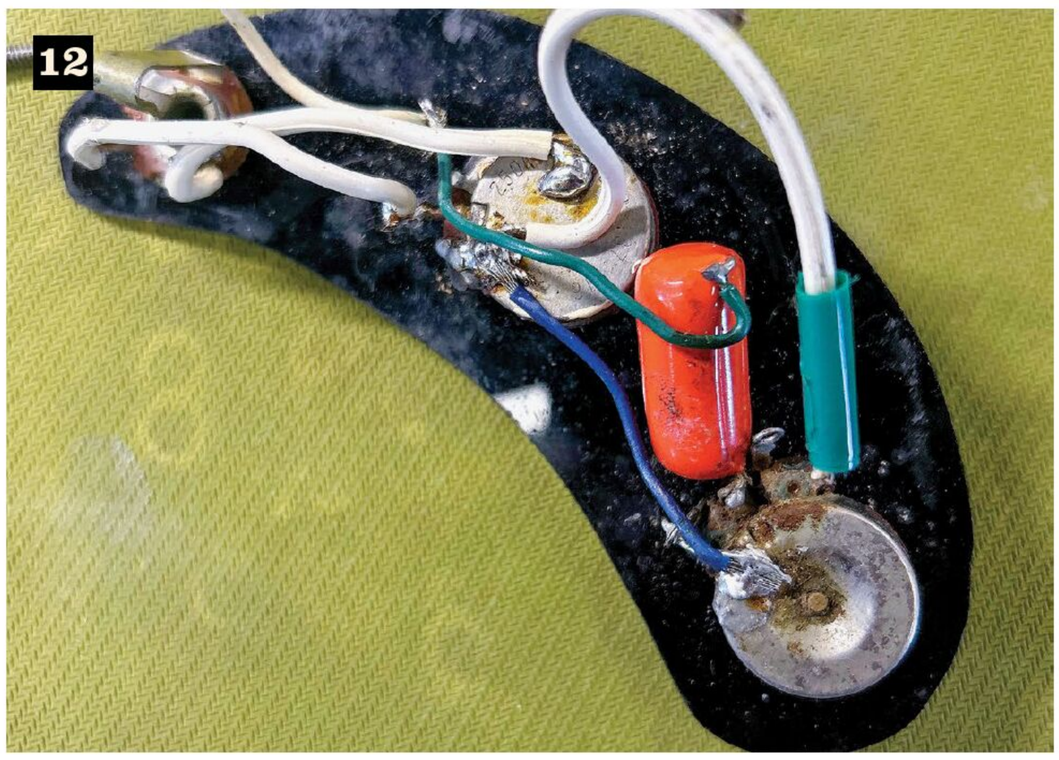
the thick yellow varnish, and when a section pulled loose, it exposed the original finish. Also, though very worn, the strap buttons show gold plating – another sign of a Mary Kaye finish.

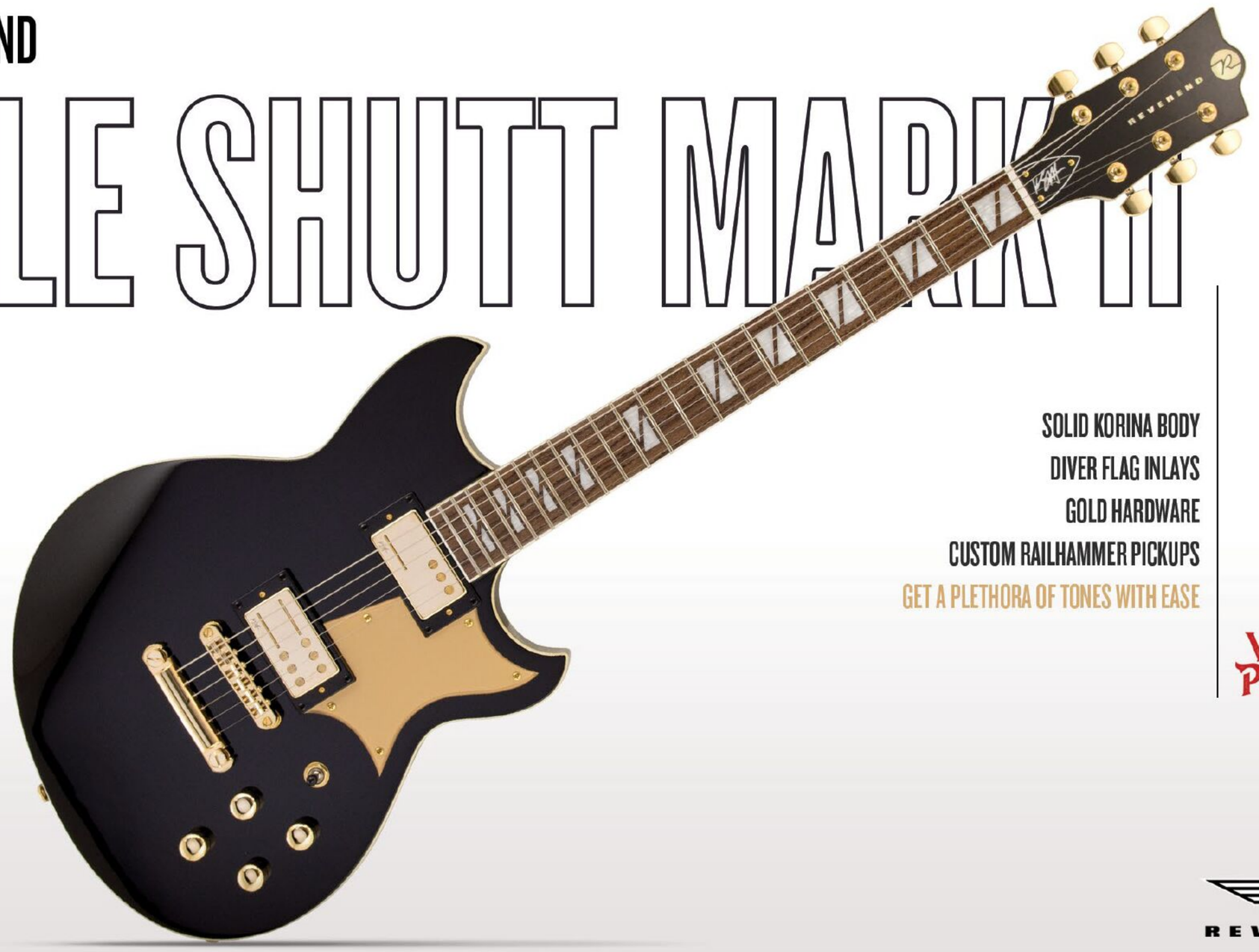
While it would have been tempting to finish the body in a Mary Kaye blond, the owner's daughter will inherit this bass and she definitely wants sunburst, which will go great with the anodized pickguard. In the February '26 issue, we'll address all the smaller repairs mentioned earlier and pop in on Keith to see how the finish is coming.

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



THE REVEREND

KYLE SHUTT MARK III



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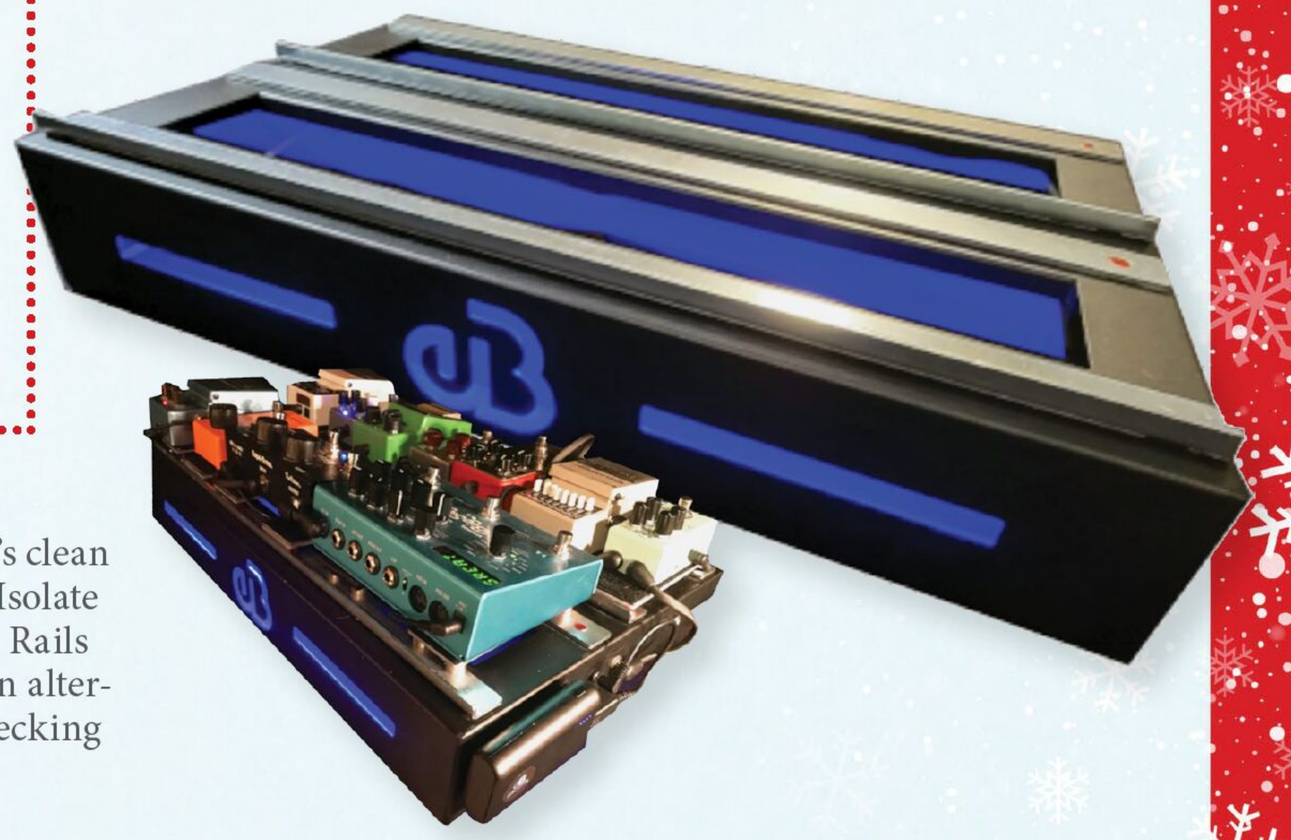

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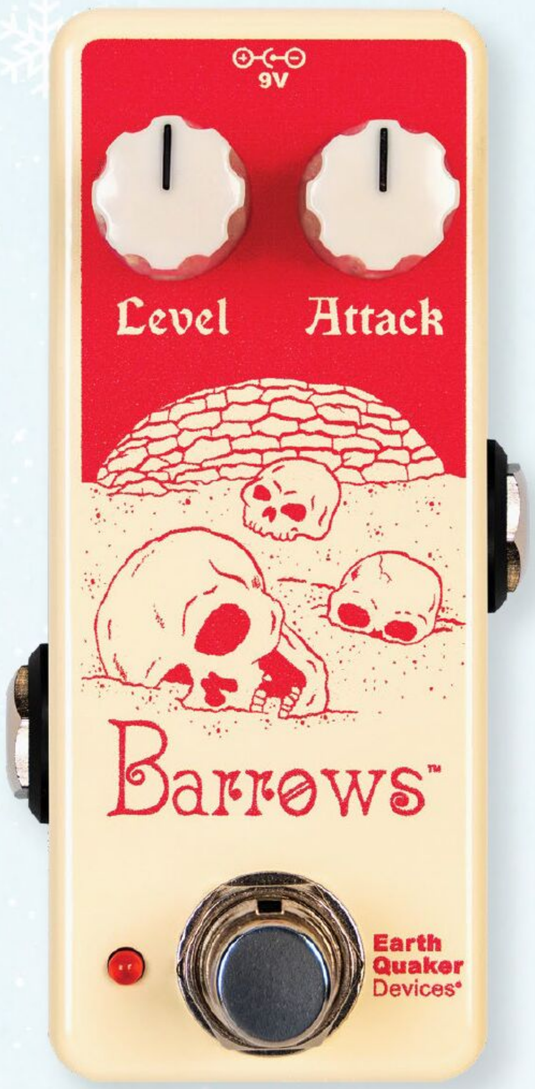

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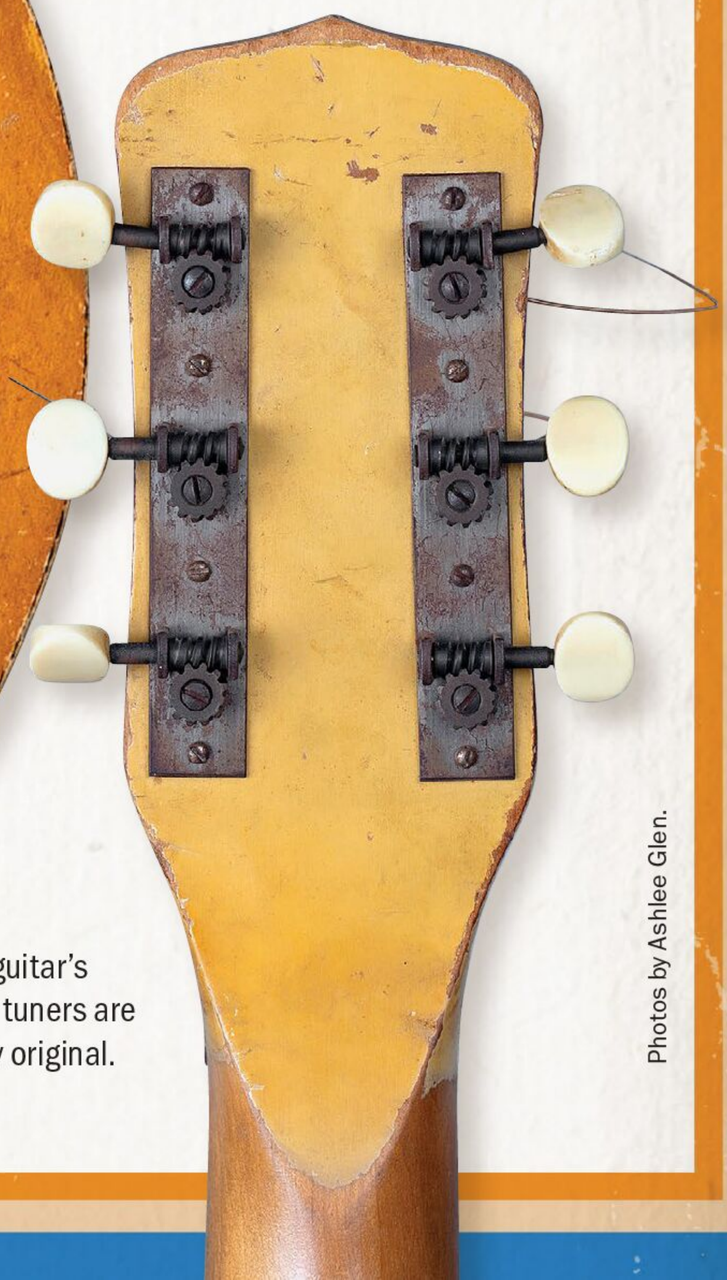
A Hero's Harmony

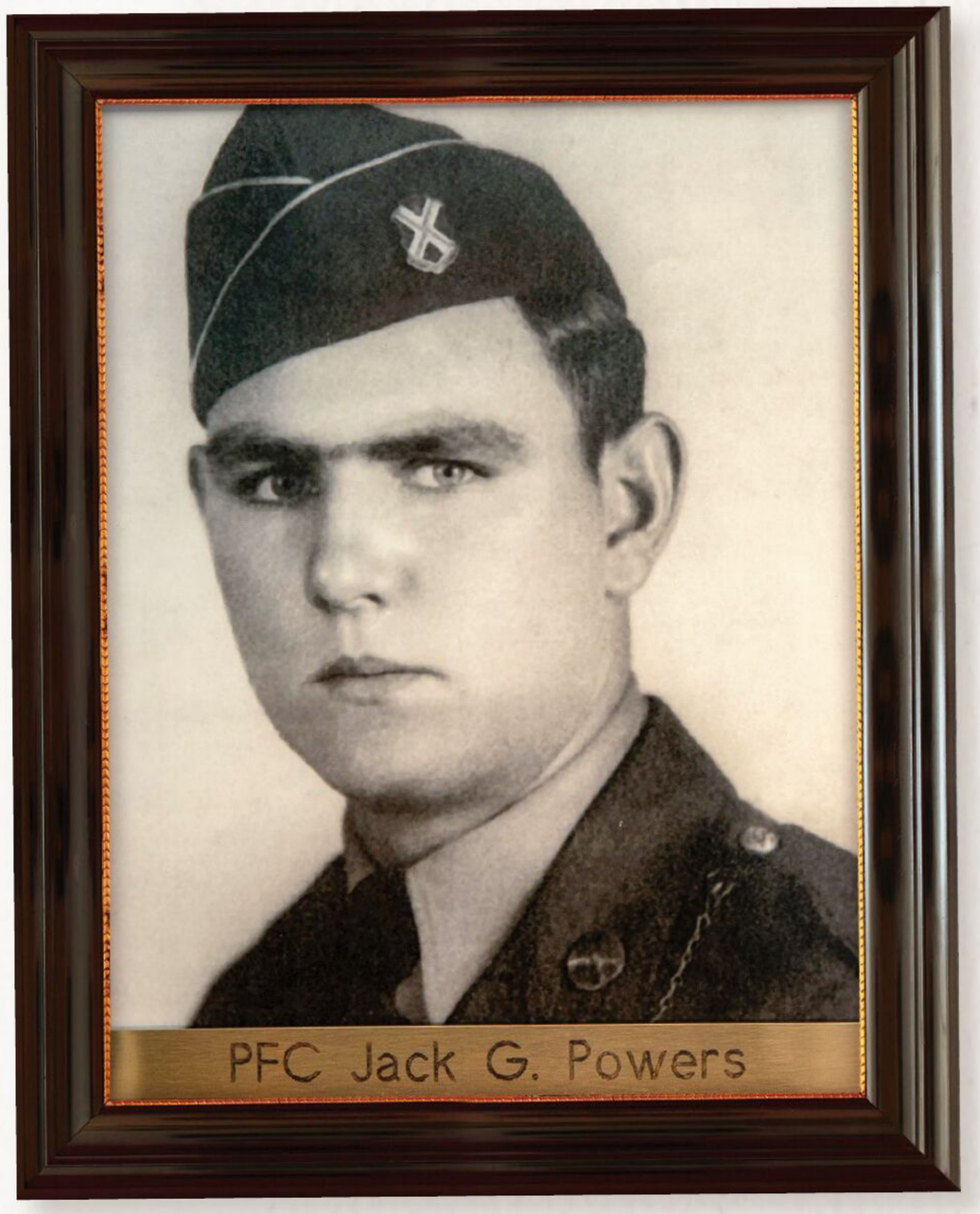
Jack Powers and his Harmony archtop were inseparable. Born and raised in Bedford, Virginia, 34 miles west of Lynchburg and shadowed by the Blue Ridge Mountains to the north, the muscular, six-foot-tall man loved to dance to the sounds of Tommy Dorsey. But what thrilled him most was playing guitar.

BY MITCH YOCKELSON

Younger sister Eloise told writer Alex Kershaw that Jack "was always practicing," and would gather with "neighborhood children and they made wax recordings."

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, 21-year-old Jack, his brother, Henry, and 36 other young men from Bedford were already serving in a Virginia National Guard unit that became part of the 116th Infantry then formed into the 29th "Blue and Gray" Infantry Division, which would be

The guitar's strip tuners are likely original.

Photos by Ashlee Glen.



Powers in '41 (left), when Company A became part of the 116th Infantry, and in England, 1943.

immortalized in *The Longest Day*, starring Robert Mitchum. The story of those 38 men is told in Kershaw's 2004 best-seller *The Bedford Boys: One American Town's Ultimate D-day Sacrifice*.

To prepare for combat, they trained at Fort Meade before being deployed to England in late September, 1942. They sailed from New Jersey aboard the Queen Mary for nearly two weeks before arriving in England. On the journey with Powers was his prized Harmony.

Prior to being shipped out, none of the Bedford Boys had been outside of the United States. Seeing the United Kingdom for the first time, Powers likely marveled at the English countryside, which slightly resembled the Shenandoah Valley near his home, with quaint farms and lush green landscape. Assigned to Tidworth Barracks southwest of London, the unit was stationed at Ivybridge in Devon, a village that today still evokes the memory of the 116th Infantry.

After several months of training, the 29th (along with the 1st Division) was assigned to spearhead the D-Day attack on Omaha Beach, one of five Allied landing spots along the heavily fortified Normandy coastline in France. Facing the 43,000 American troops were machine-gun nests, landmines, log ramps, "Czech hedgehog" obstacles, and 12,000 German soldiers.

Powers with the Harmony and a fellow soldier playing slide on a jobber/catalog flat-top in England.

Poor weather postponed the Allied assault by one day, and on June 4, Company A boarded the British naval transport SS Empire Javelin and sailed to a rendezvous point in the English Channel. At 4 a.m. they climbed aboard the British Landing Craft Assault (LCA) boats, and at 6:36 a.m., the LCA ramps were lowered about 30 yards from shore so the men from Company A could step into the cold water. Normandy had already been pummeled by Allied bombers and was teeming with American and British paratroopers who dropped in a few hours before, but Company A was nonetheless hit by heavy fire from German machine guns, artillery, and small arms. Within a few hours, 19 of the 38 men from Bedford were struck down, including Jack Powers.

A War Department telegram sent to the Western Union teletype at Green's Drug Store broke the news to Mr. and Mrs. H. Buford Powers, saying their son was missing in action. Two months later, they were notified that Jack had died in France on June 6. The family chose to have his remains stay near where he fell; he's buried in Plot H, Row 2, Grave 18, at the Normandy American Cemetery in Colleville sur-Mer.

After the Germans surrendered on May

7, 1945, Jack's personal belongings arrived home. This included the Harmony, which remained in the Powers family, played only a time or two in the decades since.

Before visiting Normandy for the 75th anniversary of D-Day in 2019, Oklahoma City residents Ken and Linda Parker had learned all about the small Virginia community and its heroes. Wanting to pay tribute, they decided to collect mementoes of the Bedford Boys. Not knowing how to reach the families, they sent a letter to 53 pastors nationwide, asking for help. The response was overwhelming. Relatives lept forward to loan ephemera, photographs, and other gems to honor loved ones who had served in Company A. The Parkers actually moved to Bedford, renting space at the former Green Drug Store on N. Bridge Street to open the Bedford Tribute Center.

Jack's niece, Connie Powers, knew that her uncle's guitar deserved a place there, and visitors can now see the Harmony in a case dedicated to Jack. Along with it are several photographs including the only known image of him playing his guitar in England, sitting next to another guitar-playing soldier.

The Harmony likely dates from the '30s. Wear on the its fretboard and neck stand in testament to Jack Powers' fondness for playing the instrument.

Bedford also boasts the National D-Day Memorial, which uses sculptures, a reflective pool, and exhibits to pay tribute to the Bedford Boys and all the Allies who fought that day.

"It's easy to forget that soldiers killed on D-Day – or any battle – were flesh-and-blood young men with hobbies and talents and dreams of the future," said John Long, the Memorial's Education Director. "Jack Powers' love of music reminds us of his humanity. He wanted to come home, sit on his porch, and play tunes for his kids. But he never got the chance. He and his buddies knew there were greater things at stake, things worth dying for."

The memorial's focal point is a wall containing the names of more than 4,400 Americans and Allies who lost their lives on D-Day. Jack G. Powers' name is inscribed on Plaque W-75. **VG**

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FIRES, FLOODS, ART, GUITARS

JOHN 5's HAUNTING ROCK

« BY WARD MEEKER »

Actions, they say, speak louder than words. So it's no wonder the workaholic perfectionist guitar phenom John 5 is elated when discussing his latest album, *Ghost*, on rare downtime.

After six days playing Vegas with Mötley Crue, he speed-shifted to prepping for a joint tour with Richie Kotzen. Music being his calling, Level 10 enthusiasm is part of his DNA.

"I'm 55 now, I feel *so* good, and I'm thankful that I'm still so hungry," he said. "I never want to get comfortable, and it's *so* important for me to always be creating new songs. I like to push my limits and see what happens."

Also an unapologetic guitar collector, scenes from the 21st century have taught him to live for the day.

"You think about how guitars have been lost to fires, floods, and theft... I can't help but be reminded that more and more, cool old guitars can go away. Remember that flood in Nashville in 2010 and all those guitars that were ruined? And who knows how many were lost in the fires here in California. *That's* what makes vintage guitars so important, so special."

John 5: Jen Rosenstein.

Completing John 5's "Tele from every year" collection are this '72 Thinline and an example from '69.

Spiffy clean – a '66 Strat.

Ghost, which delivers everything fans crave along with some twists that lean mainstream including (almost) straight jazz and heavy blues, is J5's 11th solo album. Born John Lowery, his career now spans more than 30 years bolstering the work of David Lee Roth, Marilyn Manson, Rob Zombie, Alice Cooper, and Rob Halford as well as non-rockers KD Lang, Dolly Parton, Ricky Martin, and cellist Tina Guo. In 2022, he joined the Crue after Mick Mars retired.

What inspired the songs you created for *Ghost*?

Plain and simple – the desire to make new music. I play *a lot*; I sit on the couch and come up with riffs, licks, and ideas. I watch a lot of TV at night and I'll hear something that makes me remember a song from when I was a kid. That's why I did [Benny Goodman's] "Moon Glow," which is a song my parents loved. Then I saw a documentary on Robert Johnson and thought about doing one of his songs with a modern vibe, and that became "You, Me And The Devil Makes Three." I really enjoy new ideas and new music. I *love* it.

Do you record while you're sitting on the couch?

Yeah, with my phone. I don't have a studio in my home because I don't want it to be too easy to do a bunch of takes. Instead, I just prepare. I'll practice a song for weeks then go to a studio and record it like it's a performance. Kind of like how they did it

in the ’30s and ’40s. Doing that means I have to be completely prepared. Before Pro Tools, there were pros. A lot of bands don’t record much new music these days because it’s a lot of work, it’s expensive, and it’s time-consuming.

You followed the increasing common model of releasing a series of songs leading up to an album.

Leading up to *Ghost*, I released a new song every month or two, and it worked wonderfully. And when people come to a show, they’ve had time to get to know the songs even though the album is very new. Hopefully, they’ve been enjoying the singles and are motivated to buy the vinyl or CD because they can get it signed at a show or whatever. I use myself as an example; I *want* that stuff from artists I listen to!

Colored vinyl and old-school album packaging are a huge part of merch sales.

Yeah, people *love* it – thank God! And it’s *really* been working for me.

The first single was “Strung Out.”

That came out in 2023, which seems like a long time ago, but that’s how careful I was with this music. When I was with Marilyn Manson, I remember being up really late trying to finish a record because it had to be in the label’s office at 8 a.m. It’s strange to think about that now, and I definitely don’t work that way.

“A Hollywood Story” is described in the publicity notes as biographical. That’s a bold thing to say about an instrumental.

Yeah, the video helps it make sense. When I watch it, I think, “Wow, I did a lot of stuff,” and I’m proud of it. I love that song, and it’s pretty unorthodox, as well.

It’s more melody-driven.

Yeah. Most of my stuff is so frantic, but I like that it feels kind of therapeutic, because we’re all running, living our lives. I don’t go to the gym, so I get all my crazy energy out with my music.

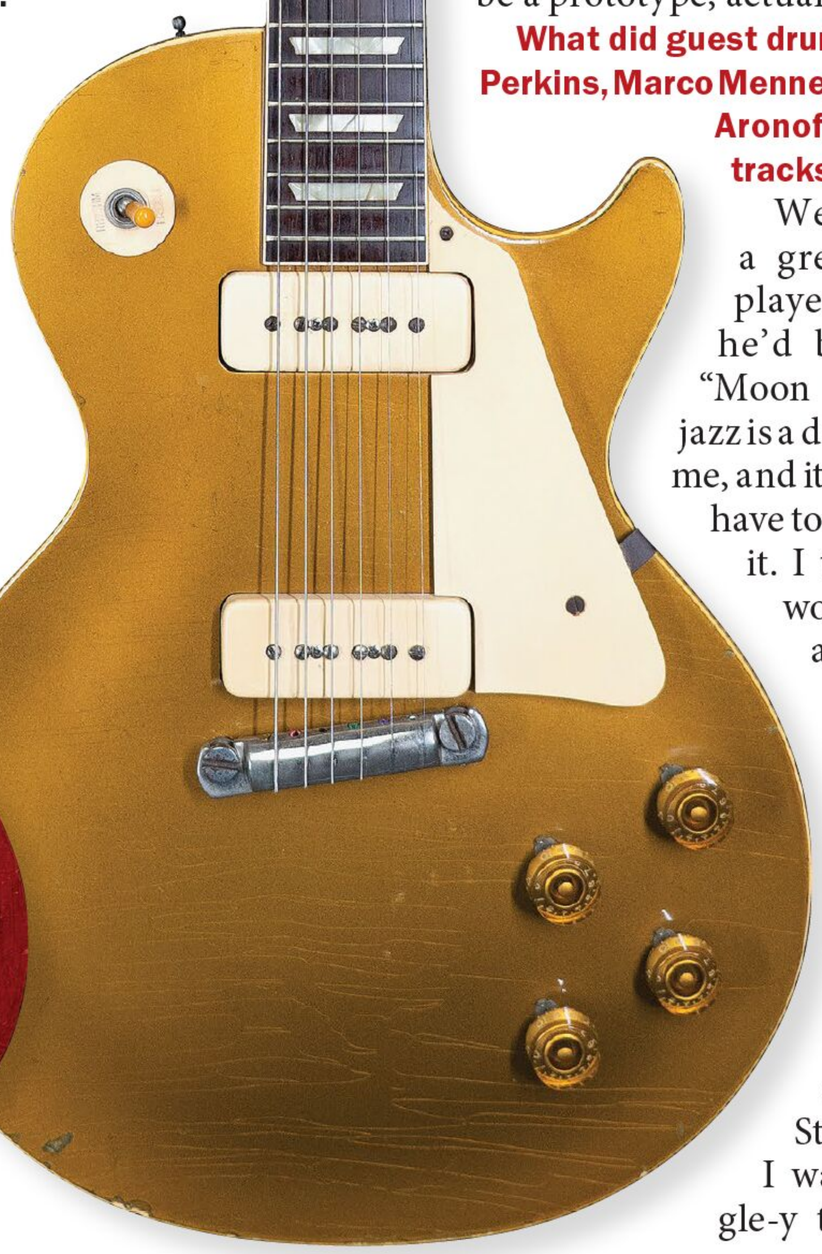
What should listeners look for/appreciate in the guitar parts you created for “Strung Out,” “The Ghost,” and “Deviant”?

“Strung Out” is a very unorthodox guitar instrumental. It starts with all these strange sounds not made with effects, but just from my hands working the guitar, like harmonics, playing behind-the nut, arpeggios... strange sounds like that.

“The Ghost” is the title track, which I love a lot. It’s very fast, aggressive, and it just never takes a breather. I think people enjoy this one the most.

“Deviant” has a really cool, heavy groove to it and a lot of moving arpeggios to go along with the chords. Stephen Perkins did a great job on it.

Among J5’s recent acquisitions are this ’63 SG and ’54 Les Paul, which its current owner calls “...a work of art.”



Is the intro to “The Ghost” an homage to “Eruption”?

It has kind of a “Eruption” type of intro, but really it’s a very cool new technique called “selective picking,” then I go into leads going up the neck and going down the neck then ending with a very wide arpeggio.

Is there a difference between a ghost and an influence?

I think there’s a *big* difference between a ghost and an influence. I believe we’re always surrounded by ghosts. We don’t really even know it. Not bad ghosts, but good ghosts. I believe that we get our influences from everywhere – at least I do; music, movies, TV. I think being influenced is one of the most important things in life because it can change you and your life.

Your rig is pretty straightforward – a few vital Boss pedals and VH 5150 amps. How did you land on the 5150s and why have you stuck with them?

I talked to Eddie Van Halen quite a lot on the phone about the *5150* album, and I was always so amazed by his attention to detail. I was using Marshalls for a long time, but I really loved how EVH always sounded. Eddie gave me one of his early heads and I still think it sounds amazing. It may be a prototype, actually.

What did guest drummers Stephen Perkins, Marco Menneman, and Kenny Aronoff bring to the tracks?

Well, Marco is a great all-around player and I knew he’d be perfect for “Moon Glow” because jazz is a different style for me, and it ain’t easy – you have to be educated on it. I thought Marco would be perfect, and so was Matt Bissonette on upright bass.

I knew Kenny would be great at the driving rock of “Fiend,” and he *killed* it, of course. And Stephen Perkins... I wanted this jungle-y tom-tom thing

John 5's latest album is *Ghost*.

on "Deviant," and he was absolutely brilliant. And of course, my regular drummer, Alex Mercado, is so good that he can play all this stuff live. He really shines on "L.A. Express," with the rad drum solo.

What inspired your inviting guests?

Well, I love, Steely Dan... actually, I *worship* Steely Dan. I listen to every story that anyone has to tell about Steely Dan (laughs).

What's the draw?

The perfection, because I'm such a horrible, horrible perfectionist (laughs). I'm talking *beyond* perfection. It's really a *thing*. That's what Steely Dan was about; it took them six weeks just to find a good chair for the studio (laughs). And when they'd record, they'd say, "You know what? Larry Carlton would be great on this song. Jeff Porcaro would be great on this song. Bernard Purdie would be great on this song."

That's how I started to think about my own music: "I would love to hear Kenny on this, Marco on that, and Matt on that." Same with Gregg Bissonette. So I thought, "I'm going to do this Steely Dan-style," and that's how I performed it – with utter perfection. If I screwed up, I'd start over from the beginning. I didn't ask the guys to be there for that, but that's how *I* tracked it. It was wonderful, and I'm super excited about it because of all the hard work.

I'm proud of the artwork, too. I got this incredible photographer, Jen Rosenstein, who is absolutely brilliant. The picture on the cover is chrome, so it kind of looks like *Double Platinum* by Kiss, but a little better, I gotta say. It's just beautiful.

Other than "Moon Glow," did you do bass parts yourself?

I did! I'd lay down a bass track right after, usually doubling my guitar part, which I think is really cool. A lot of jazz players do that – double the horn or some other part. I really love how that sounds, which is why I love the way Billy Sheehan plays.

Is there a track where you particularly dig your bass part?

Probably "L.A. Express" just because it's a really cool song.

Which bass did you use?

I used a Nelson Instruments Paramount, and it's really great. I also used a '68 Precision that's just *beautiful*. We had a lot of fun with it.

Which guitars do we hear on the album?

Mostly you hear my Fender Ghost Tele. But on a couple songs I used a new signature model called the Phantom, which will be out next year with Fender. It's what I'm using with Mötley right now.

What are the details on each?

Both were absolutely inspired by vintage Telecasters; the top binding is from early-'60s Tele Customs and the large one-piece pickguards are from the Thinline.

The Ghost has DiMarzio Super Distortions, the pickup toggle near the top – like a Les Paul – and one Volume knob with the kill switch below it. I'm so thankful for that guitar. The Phantom is all black and has a beautiful neck cutaway and body contour that's just *incredible*.

It's been a decade or so since we talked about your collecting a Telecaster from every year. What's the latest?

John 5's signature Ghost Tele.

Well, it happened, and I'm super happy because I'm a completist; I'm *so* OCD, I'm just such a mess (laughs).

Which pieces finished it?

A black '72 Thinline and a '69 sunburst. Both are really pretty.

Other swanky vintage bits you've acquired include a goldtop and an SG with the ebony block.

I *love* vintage guitars. Teles are my favorite, but when I see something amazing, I'm going to jump on it. I *love* the look of the SG – it's *so* cool – and Les Pauls are just such works of art. Classic guitars are like classic cars – they will *never* go out of style. They're beautiful and made with such perfection. I especially love to find West Coast guitars because they usually aren't weather-checked.

You're set to do an intensive tour with Richie Kotzen. Through October and November, you barely have any days off.

Isn't it wonderful (laughs)? I *hate* days off *so* much. Next year, I'm hoping to do 50 shows in 50 states in 50 days. I'll have backups for everything; there'll be a van following the bus with backup gear and I'll have backup techs in case one can't make a show, because *nothing* can stop the show (laughs)!

Are you taking a bass player on tour?

I'm not. The way I tour is grueling, so instead of asking another musician to go through all that, I'll have bass tracks coming out of a bass amp. I saw Bucket-head at the Dolby Theater in L.A. with just a guitar amp, cab, and some pedals. He played to bass and drum tracks, like it was a clinic, and it was incredible. The place was packed. It was inspiring – and smart. So, this tour will be just me and Alex, who is an amazing musician and can handle the rigors of the road. I *love* feeding off a drummer, so I think I'll always have one to play live. **VG**

Upcoming Events

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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

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

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

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 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

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 www.WestCoastGuitarShows.com

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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 amigoshows@stringswest.com 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, (352)735-0025 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 amigoshows@stringswest.com www.Calshows.tv

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, January 30 - 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 Morty Beckman www.guitarexpo.net **(See Advertisement on page 69.)**

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

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 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

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 www.GuitarShow.com

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

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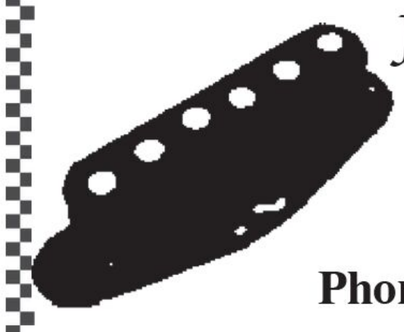

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Statement of Ownership, Management & Circulation:
Title: Vintage Guitar. Publication Number: 10672605. Filing Date: Oct. 1, 2025. Issue Frequency: Monthly. Number of Issues Published Annually: 12. Annual Subscription Price: $33.95. Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: PO Box 7301, Bismarck, ND 58507. Mailing Address of General Business Office: Same. Name and Address of Publisher: Alan Greenwood, same address. Name and Address of Editor: Ward Meeker, same address. Owner: Vintage Guitar, Inc., Alan Greenwood, all same address. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees and Other Security Holders: None.

Extent & Nature of Circulation:	Avg. last 12 mo.	Actual last iss.
Total No. Copies (Net Press Run):	14,675	14,491
Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions:	12,635	12,445
Sales Outside the Mail:	335	335
Other Classes Mailed USPS:	553	538
Total Paid/Requested Circulation:	13,523	13,318
Free Distribution by Mail:	40	53
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Total Free Distribution:	1,065	1,003
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Copies Not Distributed:	87	170
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Percent Paid/Requested Circulation:	93%	93%
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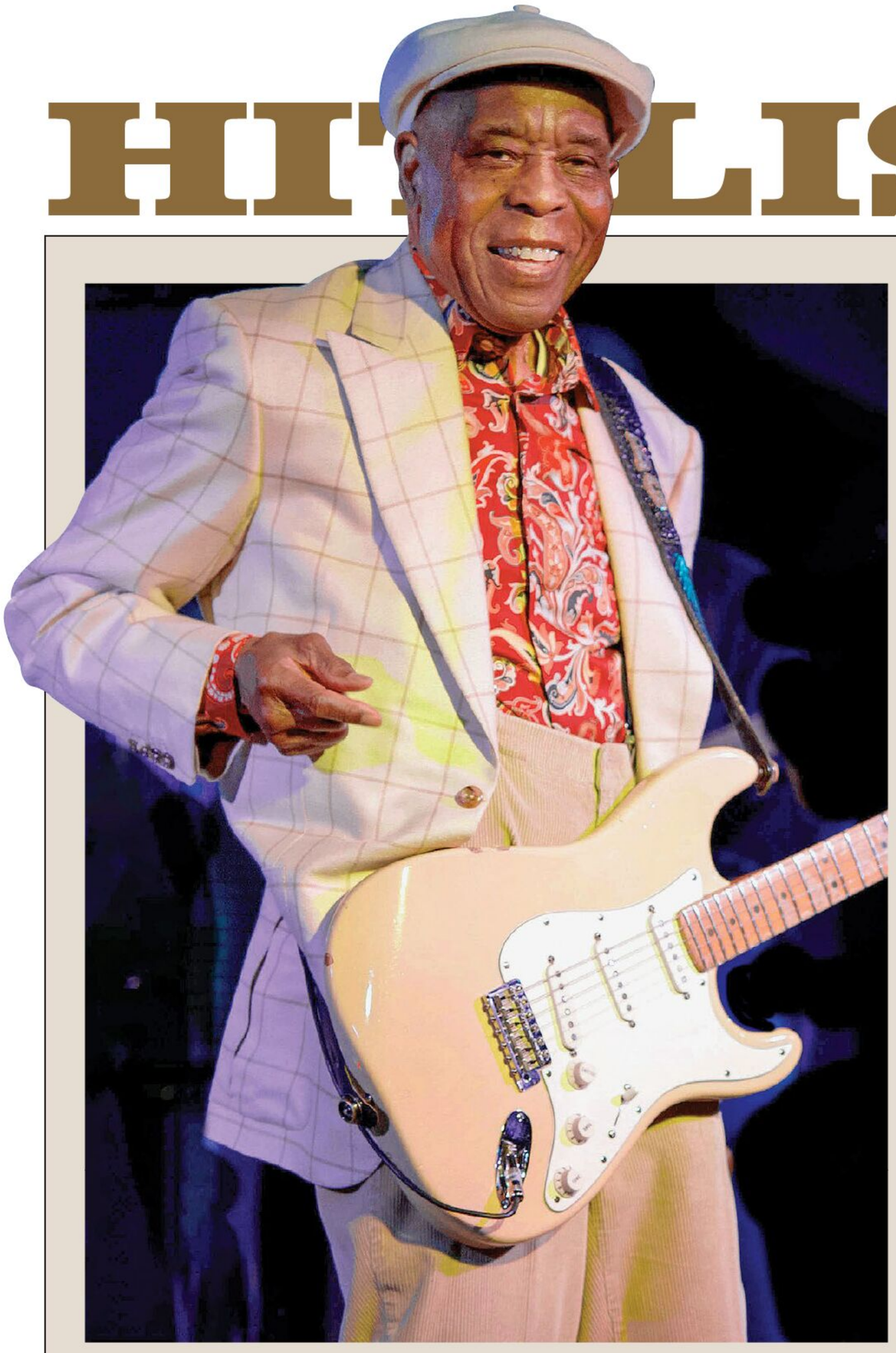


MASTERPIECE REMINDER

Buddy Guy
Ain't Done With The Blues

At 88, Buddy Guy is literally the last man standing from a generation of blues heroes that includes Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker, B.B. King, and many others. This 18-song brew of traditional and modern arrangements with heavy-hitter guests (Frampton, Bonamassa, Walsh, "Kingfish" Ingram, and the Blind Boys of Alabama) reiterates his stature.

Three acoustic interludes feature Guy and his Martin BG paying homage to Hooker ("Hooker Thing"), Lightnin' Hopkins ("One From Lightnin'"), and J.B. Lenoir ("Talk to Your Daughter"). The variety continues with a stomping cover of Guitar Slim's "I Got Sumpin' For You" and the protest tune "Upside Down."

Things get raw and funky with Ingram on the contemporary, funk-flavored "Where U At?" In duets with Frampton and Walsh respectively, Guy doubles down on classic sounds on "It Keeps Me Young" and "How Blues is That." The groove is modern, the message is traditional gospel and the guitars snarl on "Jesus Loves the Sinner" with the Blind Boys. Guy's virtuosity, constant touring, and stream of quality albums cemented his stature decades ago; consider this masterpiece a reminder. **– *Rich Kienzle***

Spinal Tap
The End Continues

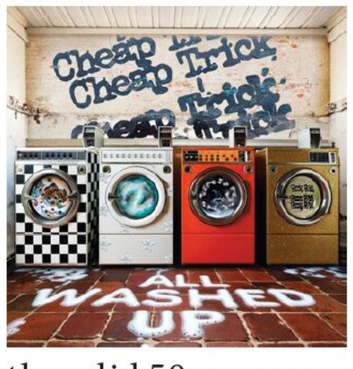
Thank God for contractual obligations. Due to a loophole in a long-forgotten agreement, Britain's legendary Spinal Tap reunited for one last concert. To quote "Let's Just Rock Again," the metal deities, "Mounted [their] mighty steeds yet once again – like men."

Despite years of relative inactivity since 1984's *This Is Spinal Tap*, bassist Derek Smalls, rhythm guitarist David St. Hubbins, and guitar hero Nigel Tufnel haven't lost a step. Tufnel's volume-for-volume's-sake approach is intact. His trademark shredding resembles a nest of angry wasps on "Rockin' in the Urn," part of the "cremation rock" subgenre pioneered by Smalls.

Hoping to break Tap's well-known curse, Didi Crockett drums like her life depends on it – literally.

After some tense moments when Paul McCartney tried to throw his weight around during a Tap rehearsal, he joins in on their classic "Cups and Cakes," illustrating the profound influence Tap exerted on the Beatles. Similarly, Elton John fulfills a boyhood dream of performing "Listen To The Flower People" and "Stonehenge" – the latter spotlighting Nigel on mandolin, as two "little people" danced around the actual Neolithic monument onstage.

The question remains: Not *if*, but *when*, will Spinal Tap be inducted to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame? **– *Teisco Del Rey***



Cheap Trick
All Washed Up

With its tongue-in-cheek title, this platter proves that 70-somethings can still crank it up like they did 50 years ago. Rick Nielsen, Robin Zander, and Tom Petersson are all in fine form, with Nielsen's son, Daxx, on drums (and Zander's son joining them on tour with guitar and backing vocals). Better still, Robin's voice is in amazing shape for a 71-year-old.

In patented CT style, "The Best Thing" delivers garage pop that makes a ballad sound heavy. The single "Twelve Gates" is a nod to Revolution-era Beatles, with crunchy 12-string bass from Petersson and a modulated solo. "All Washed Up" alludes to their punky '70s stompers like "He's a Whore" and "On Top of the World." Nielsen shreds briefly on "All Wrong Long Gone," and he takes a pugnacious solo on "The Riff Won't Quit."

Still, Cheap Trick is all about power chords, not solos. Cue up "Rock with the Band, Dance with the Band" to hear Rick and Robin's rhythm slashing, underpinned by Tom's eighth-note bass anchor. Drummer Bun E. Carlos may

Buddy Guy: Peter Hurley.

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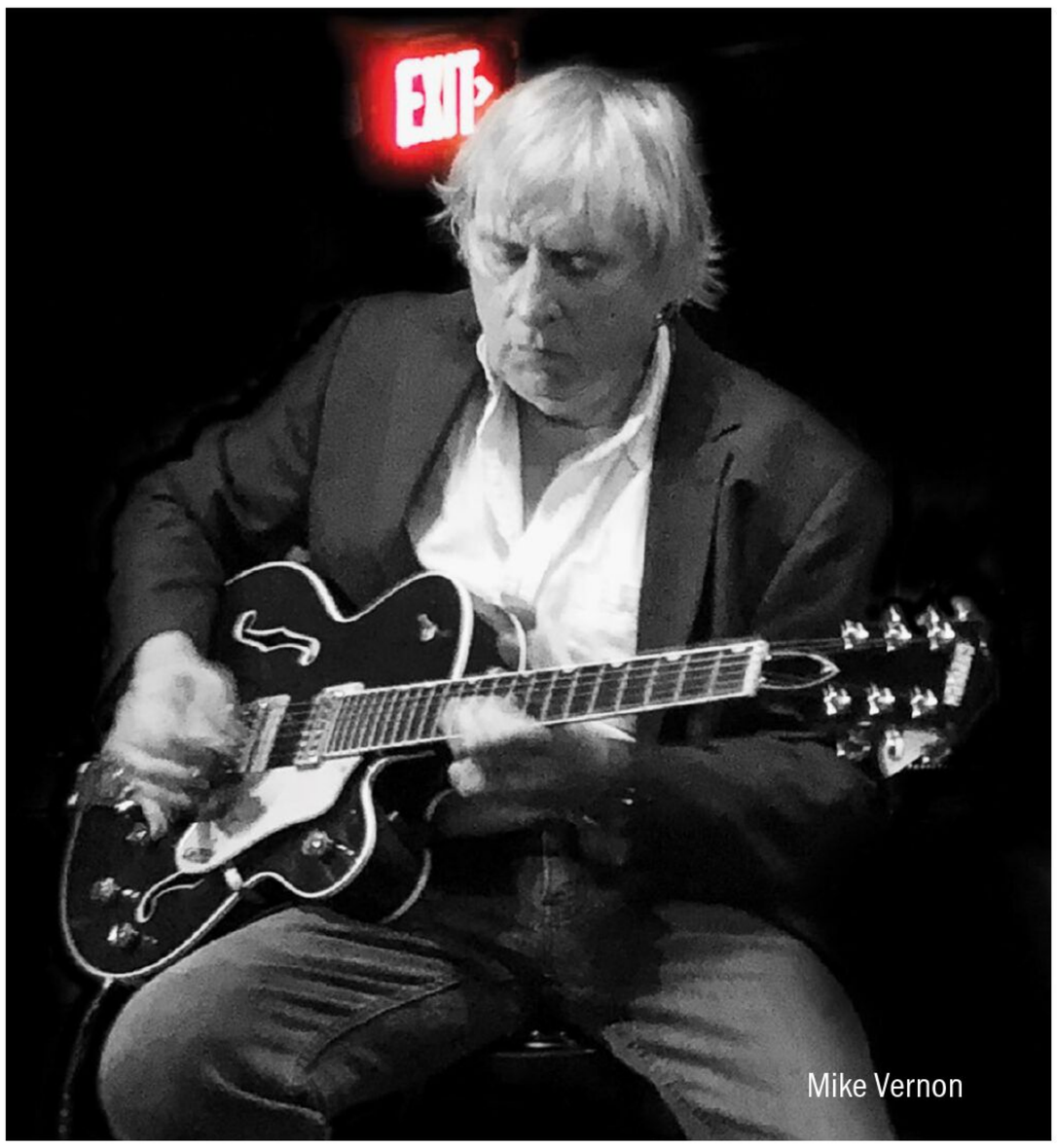

Mike Vernon

WHO SAYS CRIME DOESN'T PAY?

By Dan Forte

Mike Vernon is a double-agent of instrumental guitar, playing surf music as leader of 3 Balls Of Fire and cinematic jazz with his **M-Squad Crime Jazz Quintet**. Logic would dictate the opposite, but he plays surf in landlocked Austin and the moody, noir stuff near the beaches of Los Angeles. M-Squad's latest offering, *To Kill A Dead Man*, mixes his originals with silver-screen soundtrack pioneers Henry Mancini, John Barry, and Pete Rugolo.

From the 1950s into the '70s, there was a subgenre called "crime jazz." Typically the themes and soundtracks of movies and TV shows, it spotlighted fantastic composers, like Lalo Schifrin's *Bullitt*, Duke Ellington's *Anatomy Of A Murder*, Don Ellis' *The French Connection*, Jerry Goldsmith's *Chinatown*, and Dave Grusin's *Three Days of The Condor*. Bernard Hermann composed the music for *Taxi Driver*, the "Twilight Zone" TV series, Alfred Hitchcock's TV series and *Psycho*, *The Birds*, and *Vertigo* movies.

Bob Bain played the memorable guitar on the "Peter Gunn" TV theme, penned by Mancini, who also scored *The Pink Panther*, *Experiment In Terror*, and *Touch Of Evil* – the latter featuring Barney Kessel's hellaciously rocking guitar.

John Barry's music played a major role in the James Bond movies, and he scored *The Ipcress File*, with the distinctive sound of a cimbalom. There was also Mark Isham's score for *Romeo Is Bleeding* in 1993. But as Vernon says, "It's almost a lost art."

The 71-year-old played in rock and jazz bands in Fort Worth and studied Spanish guitar at University of Texas El Paso. After moving to Austin in '85, he formed 3 Balls Of Fire, releasing their self-titled debut two years later. He has backed Link Wray and staged "13 Guitar Rumble" tribute shows to him two dozen times. His 11 Balls albums include one featuring live performances with George Tomsco of the Fireballs, Nokie Edwards of the Ventures, and Wrecking Crew session guitarist Jerry Cole.

Among influences, Vernon lists Gary Duncan of Quicksilver Messenger Service ("one of the most underrated guitar players ever"), Jeff Beck, Jimi Hendrix, the Ventures, Duane Eddy, and his dad's Chet Atkins records. "I also loved Buddy Merrill on 'The Lawrence Welk Show,'" he adds.

Dead Man was produced by Brian Wilson percussionist Nelson Bragg, whose bongos are an essential ingredient.

Of the concept, Vernon says, "As a kid, I couldn't wait to hear the "Perry Mason" theme or "The Fugitive." It was magical. I started collecting that stuff a long time ago, just for fun. It was really being in L.A. and meeting the guys in Brian's band. 3 Balls Of Fire are beautiful guys, but they wouldn't be qualified to play this stuff. You really have to have the caliber of people who would play with Brian Wilson." That included Nick Walusko, former guitarist with Wilson, who passed away in 2019. "The pianist, Ted Hamer, is the engine of the band," Mike stresses. "I'm the weakest link in the whole thing, but I was able to get these guys together and pull this music off."

Vernon played exclusively with his fingers until around 2008. "There were some songs where fingers were better, but for the double-picking in surf music, you need a pick," he explains. "It took awhile, but the pick opened up a whole new world."

A Gretsch Tennessee Rose is the album's main axe, with Strat on a couple, and a Danelectro Hodad Baritone on "From Russia With Love." "Our Man Flint" utilizes a Carl Martin TremO'vibe pedal set to stun and, of "Walkin' Bass" from *More Music From Peter Gunn*, Mike says, "I hate to use the word 'genius', but Mancini was on another planet.

"One thing I really like about crime jazz – with Bob Bain on guitar, or Mundell Lowe and some other guys – if you listen, the guitar playing is not that hard; it's what they did with it," he concludes. "With a lot of musicians, the song is only a vehicle for their guitar playing. I'm not doing anything fancy, but it's the material that counts. If you started playing a bunch of notes, it wouldn't be the same. It's the simplicity and arrangements. The guitar should serve the song, not the other way around. How many people are into this, how many will buy this record, I doubt it's a lot. But I'm very pleased with the outcome."

These days, with thrift stores clear-cut by hipsters, the only vinyl bargains you might still find are the sturdy gatefold '60s LPs on the Time, Command, and Project 3 labels, like *Ping Pong Percussion* – seemingly all produced by Enoch Light. I highly recommend wading through titles like *Bongos And Brass*, *Provocative Percussion, Vol. 3*, *Seductive Strings*, and *The Persuasive Trombone Of Urbie Green*, because you just might find *Mr. Big* by Tony Mottola, *Percussion and Guitars* by Al Caiola, or *Murder, Inc.*, featuring jazz guitarists Barry Galbraith, Bucky Pizzarelli, and Art Ryerson.

Start your own crime wave!

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Mike Vernon: Julia Ewan.

be long gone, but these ageless Tricksters still make plenty of noise. **– *Pete Prown***

Christone "Kingfish" Ingram
Hard Road

Clarkdale, Mississippi, continues its tradition of spawning powerhouse artists such as 26-year-old "Kingfish" Ingram. His latest continues his evolution as a forward-thinking bluesman with a deeply personal musical perspective. Co-produced by Ingram, the prodigy comes of age with emotional storytelling and explosive guitar playing that transcends blues, rock, funk, and smooth R&B.

Borrowing a page from the real-life hard knocks playbook, "Truth" and "Bad Like Me" tell the tale of rising from adversity to become a musical force. Stories from the concrete jungle collide with funk grooves, super-melodic guitar solos, and mature wah usage. Kingfish gets lowdown and dark on "Crosses" with a foot-stomping pulse and excellent use of Leslie, Uni-Vibe, and technique.

Themes explore love, loss, heartbreak, backstabbers, and fame, all within the blues-rock tradition, like on the magnificent "Voodoo Charm" and "Hard to Love," which feature six-string melodic intensity and soulful vocals. Kingfish pivots to smooth R&B, which suits his voice, like on "Standing on Business" and "Clearly." Christone is a bona fide monster on guitar and vocals, and *Hard Road* is ample proof. **– *Oscar Jordan***

Richard Bennett
Some Kinda Summer

When he began work on his latest solo album, Richard Bennett had a tough act to follow – namely, himself. His seven prior efforts were all outstanding, but 2021's global/Americana Tall Tale Tunes absolutely crackled. Some Kinda Summer upholds the highest standards set by himself and generations of guitar greats.

As impressive as his solo work is, Bennett is best known as an accompanist, having toured and recorded for decades with Mark Knopfler and Neil Diamond. In addition to sessions with Glen Campbell, Sheryl Crow, Billy Joel, the Four Tops, and a dozen with Rodney Crowell, he has produced Steve Earle, Marty Stuart, and Emmylou Harris.

Bennett's solo albums showcase his beautiful instrumental compositions. On Summer, he summons mentor Al Casey and close friend Duane Eddy, but also shows he's adept at country, jazz, and steel. For "Kava Keen," he grabs an acoustic four-string Del Vecchio cavaquinho, and on the serene "Beauty and the Beatnik," his heavily tremolo'd Gretsch 6120 trades solos with a Crown gut-string.

Richard's tasteful playing is masterful without resorting to chops, and his wordless compositions invite listeners to envision their own screenplays. Phil Spector called the records he produced "little symphonies." Bennett's songs are little movies. **– *Dan Forte***

Various Artists
Can't Get Enough: A Tribute to Bad Company

Though guitarist Mick Ralphs passed away in June, Bad Company hasn't gone away – anthems from the original lineup with him, vocalist/guitarist Paul Rodgers, bassist Boz Burrell, and drummer Simon Kirke endure on FM radio. In fact, the band's profile has risen with its induction to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and this first-ever tribute album showcasing its widespread influence on veteran and newer artists.

Singer/songwriter Hardy's "Ready for Love" has a droning, modern guitar crunch, while the Struts' "Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy" has the original's feisty groove with distorted guitars. "Feel Like Makin' Love," from Slash featuring Myles Kennedy & the Conspirators, finds the Guns N' Roses axeslinger taking soulful solos. Black Stone Cherry's "Burnin' Sky" rumbles with authority.

The most-reverent versions are Blackberry Smoke and Rodgers collaborating for "Run with the Pack," along with Dirty Honey's "Rock Steady." Surprises include Charley Crockett's ghostly country-rock take on "Bad Company," and Def Leppard's Joe Elliott and Phil Collen – with Rodgers and Kirke – performing "Seagull." Another is the Pretty Reckless impressively handling Free's "All Right Now." The BadCo faithful will love it all. **– *Bret Adams***

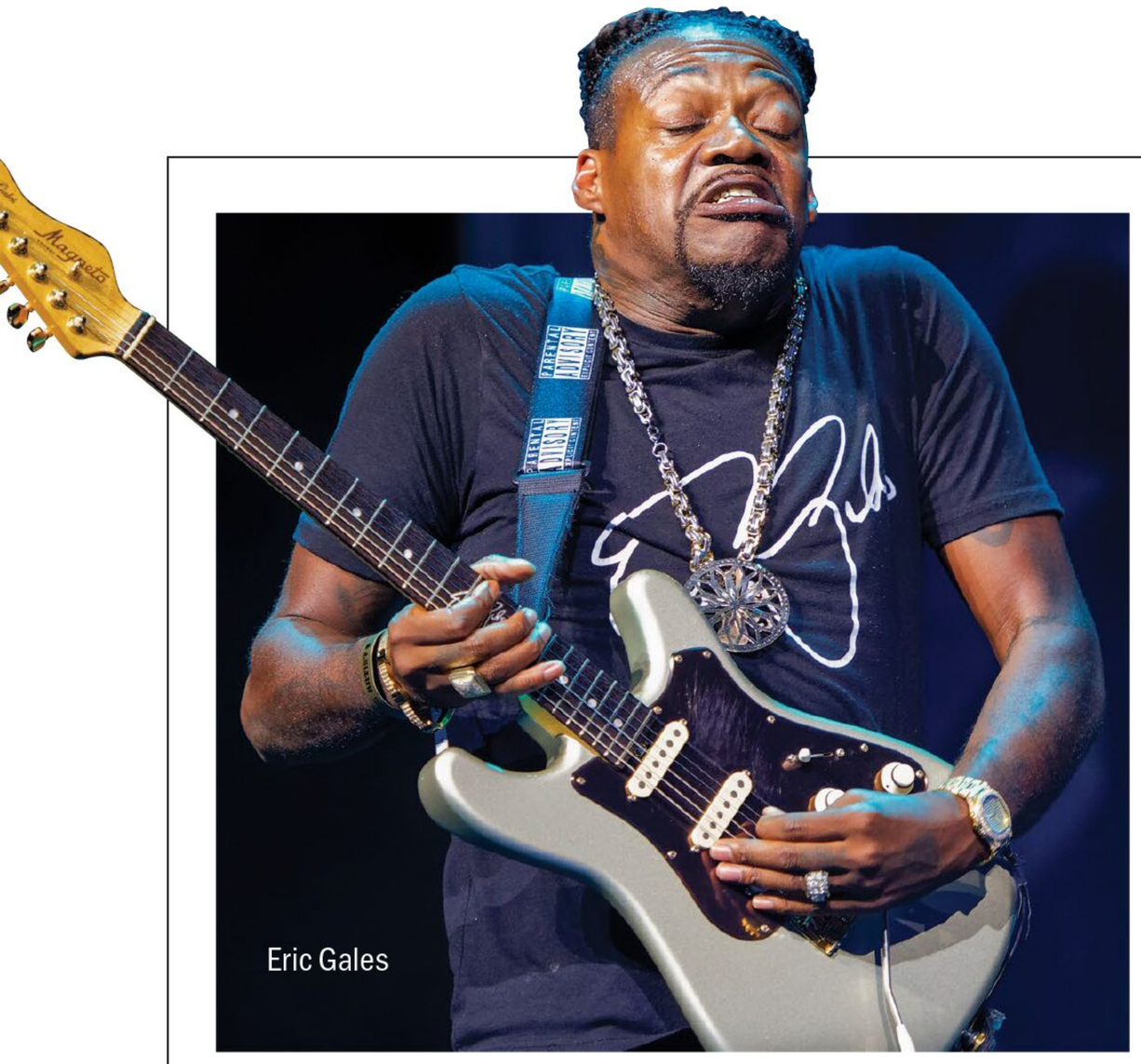
West, Bruce & Laing
Out Into The Fields – The Albums 1972-1974

West, Bruce & Laing was one of those hyped "supergroups" of the '70s, bringing together heavy heroes Jack Bruce and Leslie West. The act imploded after 18 months, drugs figuring heavily, but their brand of boogie crunch – reissued here on three CDs – remains a blast from our FM past.

1972's *Why Doncha* is the better of their two studio albums, opening with a title cut that pairs West's Sunn-powered thud with Bruce's blast-furnace bass. West's slide on "The Doctor" and Cream-like riffing on "Turn Me Over" feel specifically crafted for large coliseums, where the band was a rising

Rick Nielsen and Robin Zander onstage.

Cheap Trick: Jeff Daly.


Eric Gales

sensation. "Pollution Woman" stands out for the Scotsman's fuzz bass and stellar songwriting.

From 1973, *Whatever Turns You On* continues in the molten-boogie vein, but without the focus or audio punch of their debut. Jack Bruce's Gibson EB bass is still explosive during the fadeout of "Token," while Leslie West delivers a Claptonesque break in the ballad "November Song" then rocks madly on "Rock n' Roll Machine." Lastly, West, Bruce & Laing's posthumous live album, *Live 'n Kickin'*, has just four jam-style tracks including a respectable "Politician." More importantly, it captures the trio's thunderous merger of Cream and Mountain. **– *PP***

Eric Gales
A Tribute To LJK

Eric Gales' latest album is a powerful love letter to his late big brother, Manuel Gales, a.k.a. Little Jimmy King, who passed in July of 2002 at the age of 37. Co-produced by the ubiquitous team of Bonamassa and Smith, guests include pedal-steel sensation Roosevelt Collier, "Kingfish" Ingram, and Chicago legend Buddy Guy. Beginning with an eerie introduction by LJK's twin brother Daniel, the Memphis groove of "You Shouldn't Have Left Me" prepares listeners for an atypical Eric Gales experience.

"Rockin' Horse Ride" was a popular track from the Gales Brothers' *Left Hand Brand* album and features Ingram off leash and incendiary. Gales and Bonamassa trade bullets on "Don't Wanna Go Home" and "Takes A Whole Lot Of Money," a masterclass in contemporary blues improvisation, groove, and musicality. Other LJK gems include "Something Inside Of Me," "Worried Man," and "Blues Been Good To Me." Guy and Collier join Gales on the poignant "Somebody."

The spirit of Little Jimmy King is pervasive as Gales digs deep, resulting in some of the most emotional guitar playing of his career. In all, *A Tribute To LJK* is a musical feast that pays homage to a long lost brother and bluesman. **– *OJ* VG**

Eric Gales: Dirk van den Heuvel.

extra EXTRA

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Stax Revue: Live in '65!

Sixty years on, Stax/Volt power vibrates in these Memphis and Los Angeles concerts. Featuring previously unreleased tracks, Booker T. & The M.G.s dominate with a slightly fast "Green Onions" and two versions of the slinky "Boot-Leg." Steve Cropper's tone is grittier than usual. Wilson Pickett burns through "In the Midnight Hour." Rufus Thomas commands a then-saucy 19-minute "The Dog." Listen to the sweat! **– *BA***

NEIL BARNES
The Ponderosa Sessions

Blues harpist "Bar-B-Q" Barnes has worked with West Coast blues luminaries like Luther Tucker, Mark Naftalin, Ron Thompson, Lady Bianca, Sonny Lane, and Kid Andersen. Here, he and guitarist/vocalist Mike Schermer deliver a solid set of Chicago blues, zydeco, and the humorous "Tin Foil Hat." They even turn the TV theme from *Bonanza* into an uptempo blues romp. **– *DF***

VERNON REID
Hoodoo Telemetry

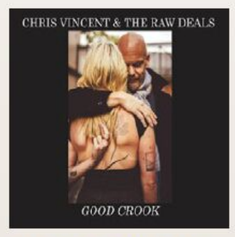
Vernon Reid's latest is a glimpse into the mind of a socially conscious, eclectic musician. Fearless distortion explodes the borders between jazz, rock, politics, hip-hop, and drum and bass. Reid crafts a pastiche of urban psychedelia, blending electronica and samples with live horns, drums, and vocals. With musical guests galore, he delivers magnificently free guitarmanship. Highlights include "Dying to Live." **– *OJ***

THE REPLACEMENTS
Let It Be: Deluxe Edition

Don't confuse it with that other album by the same name. The Mats' landmark 1984 indie-rock classic has been remastered and expanded with demos, alternate versions, outtakes, and a 28-song live gig. Songwriter Paul Westerberg pits his guitar against Bob Stinson's, unreeling raging punk and raucous rock with a devil-may-care 'tude. Available either as a four-LP or three-CD set. **– *Michael Dregni***

GLENN HUGHES
Chosen

The Black Country Communion and ex-Deep Purple bassist's latest release is hard rock with modern "active rock" production. Hughes' bass and Soren Andersen's guitar jump out in "My Alibi." The melody-driven "Heal" and ominous "The Lost Parade" mix things up; "Hot Damn Thing" and "Black Cat Moan" update '70s blues-rock. Bassists will appreciate the full-frontal positioning of Glenn's instrument in the mix. **– *BA***



CHRIS VINCENT
Good Crook

From New Orleans, Vincent uses a 1947 Gibson L-7 to deliver drone-like blues with just guitar, drums, and his own gravely voice. "Come Clean" rocks with understated potency – picture Keith Richards sweltering in the Big Easy. Chris somehow threads the needle between John Lee Hooker, ZZ Top, and George Thorogood on "Midnight After All." Swamp boogies don't get greasier than this. **– *PP***

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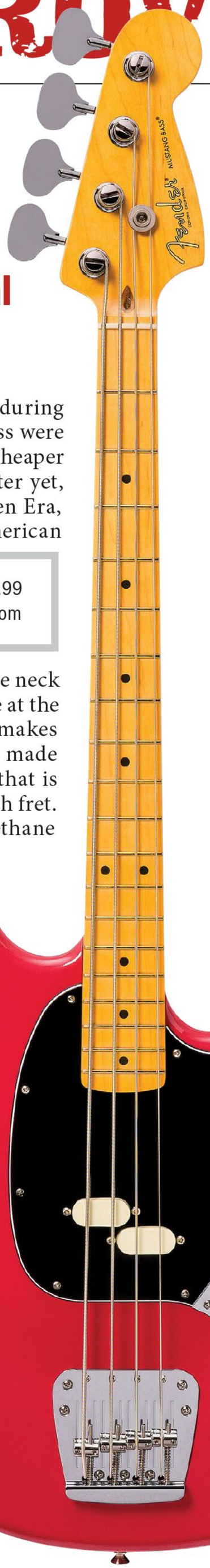
WORTHY SHORTY

Fender's American Professional Classic Mustang Bass



Part of Fender's reach into the beginner market during the '60s guitar boom, the Mustang guitar and bass were smaller and simpler than Dad's electric. They were also cheaper and more fun, especially in a cool custom color (better yet, with racing stripes!). In its latest homage to the Golden Era, Fender just launched a Mustang Bass as part of its American Pro Classic line.

Price: $1,599.99
www.fender.com

The Mustang's identity is rooted in ergonomics, and the American Pro Classic doesn't stray. Its weight (eight pounds), 12" body, and shallow cutaways are prime factors in its ease of play. The maple neck is more Precision than Jazz in dimension – 1.625" wide at the nut with Fender's Modern C shape – but its 30" scale makes it a different animal for note roving, an experience made especially pleasant thanks to a satin urethane finish that is indeed silky smooth. The neck joins the body at the 14th fret.

The Mustang's alder body is offered in gloss urethane Sunburst, Faded Fiesta Red, and Faded Sherwood Green and the neck has a subtle tint to complement. All are nicely executed. The nickel-chrome ClassicGear tuners resemble vintage Schallers and work well. The maple fretboard (an option only with Faded Fiesta Red, the others get rosewood) has a 9.5" radius.

Plugged into a 200-watt Class D amp and 2x10 cab, the Mustang was a pleasant surprise. Traditionally, some players have shied away from short-scale basses because they lacked low-end clarity/punch. With just a Volume and Tone knob, the slightly overwound Alnico-magnet Coastline pickup (which boasts vintage-style bobbins and cloth-covered wire) brought a warm high-output sound. Fender's Greasebucket Tone Circuit, which rolls off high-end response while leaving lows unchanged, offers plenty of usable high snap once the knob is moved beyond halfway.

Fender is also doing American Classic Precision and Jazz basses listing at the same price. None are offered left-handed.

If you'd like to join the likes of Bill Wyman, Tina Weymouth, Trevor Bolder, Alan Lancaster, and Denny Laine in the Mustang dabbler's club, this is worth a try.

–Ward Meeker

Price: $269.
www.silktone.org

DRIVE TIME

The Silktone Expander

Inspired by the multifaceted lead tones of the '60s, Silktone's Expander is a Germanium/JFET drive pedal designed by builder Charles Henry to imitate the function of the first tube in an amplifier's output stage.

The Expander's controls are interactive yet straightforward – Volume, Choke (which shapes low-end response from full to aggressive), Gain, and a tiny three-way toggle that tweaks overall voicing.

Plugged in between a superstrat and a Deluxe Reverb, the Expander made tones that would cut through most mixes, even with the lowest gain settings. Bumping the Gain knob introduced tube saturation and breakup – classic Germanium sounds. And because the JFET transistor is known for excellent headroom, dialing it back made for a very band-friendly clean boost. These sounds can be manicured using the Choke and Voice switch (left is dark, middle is natural/normal, right is bright). Pushing Gain up a notch enabled low-gain rock and roll.

The Expander didn't play favorites between the superstrat's single-coils and humbucker, effortlessly shifting between subtle sweetening or steroid versions of "Foxy Lady" fuzz with easy-to-handle overtones. Using 9-volt DC power, it covers vast territory, making it ideal for performers looking for a drive box that offers simple operation *and* a bevy of harmonic textures. ***– Oscar Jordan***

RETURN OF A CLASSIC

The DOD OD250-X

Introduced in 1974, the DOD Overdrive Preamp 250 debuted as an alternative to the MXR Distortion Plus and became the go-to pedal for rockers of the ’70s and ’80s. Famous for its gritty, gain-sensitive sounds, the first version used an LM741 op-amp and Germanium diodes to produce clipping. Through the years, the OD250 underwent component changes including chip alterations such as the 351 and 4558 (in later models).

Inspired by the DOD OD250 50th Anniversary model released last year, the DOD 250-X is the 10th version, and its maker, Digitech, says it offers improved sound and versatility.

Key to its sound is a mini-toggle that offers three modes – Silicon yields symmetrical clipping like the original 250; Lift removes diode clipping from the signal path, providing clean boost at moderate levels or dirty boost at high levels; ASYM produces asymmetrical clipping and even-harmonic distortion. All are driven by a vintage-style LM741 op-amp.

Running between a Strat and a Marshall DSL40, the 250-X helped create a walk down memory lane. It retained the tone, gain, feel, and levels of an ’80s original, and its mode toggle proved to be a treat! With Gain maxed and the Level set at 11 o’clock, Silicon mode offered raw, malleable Alcatrazz-era Malmsteen tones. Lift Mode introduced a volume and midrange bump along with a warmer, smoother ride, and ASYM offered similar sounds but reacted differently to the guitar’s Volume control.

Price: $199.99
www.digitech.com

Rubber met the road at a gig. Starting with the amp set for clean sounds and the 250-X’s Gain and Level dimed, it worked as an edgy clean boost and produced vivacious chunk for rhythm work. It also shined for pushing the amp’s dirty sounds to greatness without going anywhere near over-the-top saturation. Notes sang and sustained, manifesting rockin’ overtones.

The Preamp 250-X is a solid pedal with true hard-wire bypass, accepts a 9-volt adapter, and takes up very little space. It’s great for boosting cleans, increasing dirt, or even stacking with other OD/fuzz boxes, and it does it all with versatility and character. – ***Oscar Jordan*** **VG**

GEARIN’ UP

MESA/BOOGIE MARK IIC+ HRG

Mesa/Boogie’s Mark IIC+ HRG is a 6L6-powered 100-/60-watt Class A/B head with footswitchable dual-mode preamp with controls for Volume 1, Lead Drive, Lead Master volume, Treble, Bass, Middle, and Presence. Other features include assignable/footswitchable reverb, five-band graphic EQ, slave out, IR readers, and buffered effects loop. Its Baltic Birch cab is offered in black or Black Bronco vinyl with wicker grille.

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Seymour Duncan’s Joe Bonamassa Bolin Burst pickup set is based on 1960 PAFs from a Les Paul Standard once played by Tommy Bolin. Dressed with aged covers to match the look of the original, they have Alnico II magnets. The first 500 sets are signed by Bonamassa and Seymour Duncan.

WAMPLER MINI EGO 76

Wampler’s Mini Ego 76 Compressor has controls for Level, Blend, Compression, and Attack. Three-way switches adjust Attack and Release. Built in the U.S. and using 9-volt DC power, it’s finished in Chameleon Sapphire and has aluminum knobs.

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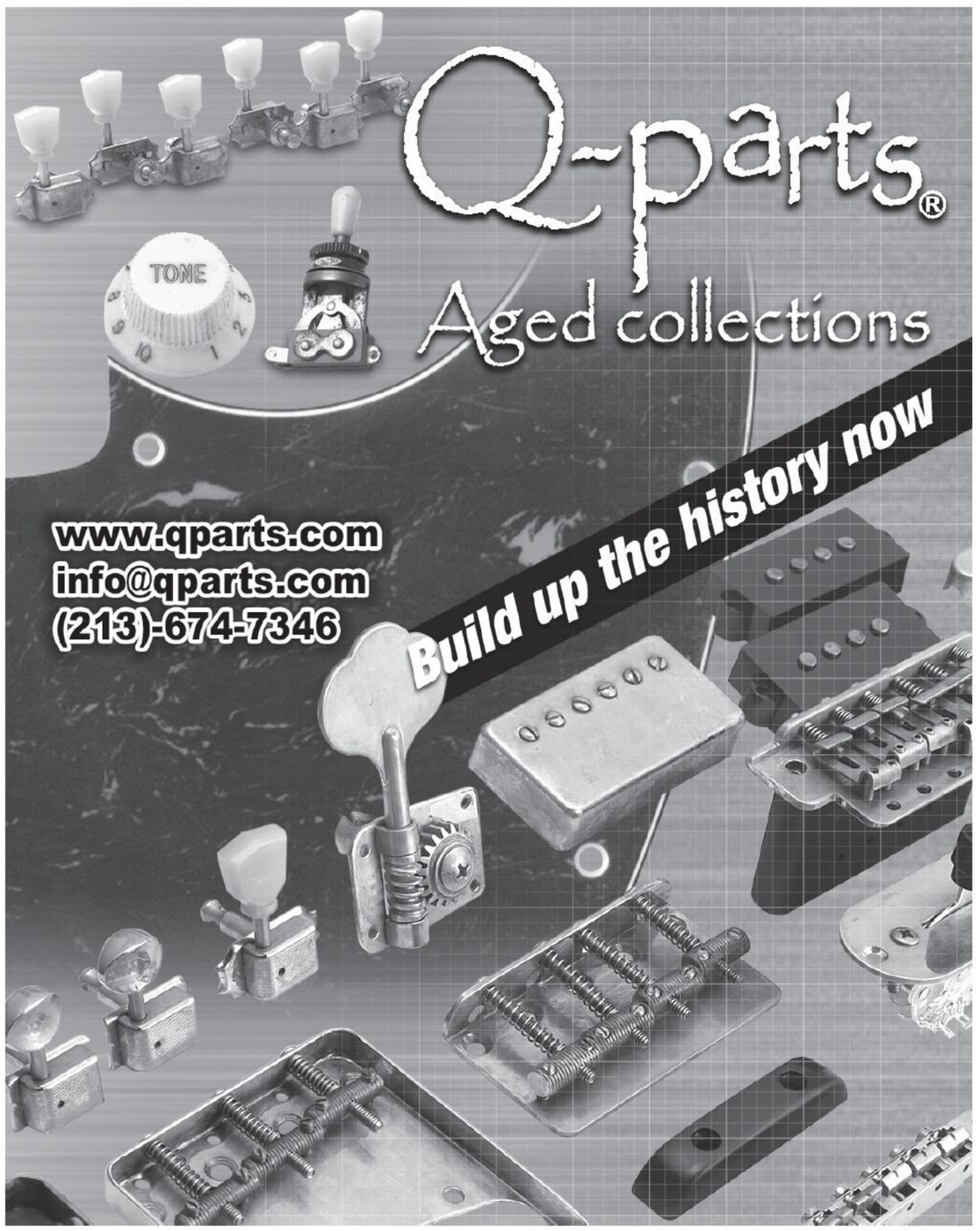
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01 Feeling the need for a major hit of (custom) color, Ed Matthews gathered his favorite Strats "... from the days when Leo had it right." From left are a '68 Olympic White (with maple-cap neck), a '69 in Lake Placid Blue, black '57, '65 Candy Apple Red, '61 Fiesta Red, and a '65 Olympic White.

02 "I'm a longtime subscriber and have discovered many great artists in VG," says Larry Strickland, who gathered his collection for this shot. In back are import and American Vintage Tele Customs, a '72 Tele Thinline reissue, and PRS SE Custom Semi Hollow. In front are a parts Tele, Guild G-37, and a Jazz Bass Special.

03 Mark Ray perched his Driskill Diablo between his McNaught Phoenix Rising models for this photo. All have quilted-maple tops; the McNaughts have one-piece limba backs and necks while the Diablo has a one-piece mahogany back and rosewood neck.

04 "1951 was a very good year," says Jeffrey Smith. "I was in diapers when these two beauties rolled off the line in Kalamazoo." His Gibson LG-1 (left) and CF-100E flank an Emery amp set up to emulate a Fender tweed through a 10" speaker. "That 74-year-old P-90 in the 100E really sings!" he adds.

05 Nick Peringer is a fan of square-neck tone-ring Dobros from the turn of the (21st) century. From left are an '07 Tut Taylor TTV Custom, '02 Tut Taylor Tennessee, '02 Al Perkins, '04 Model 27 Deluxe, and a '00 Tom Swatzell.

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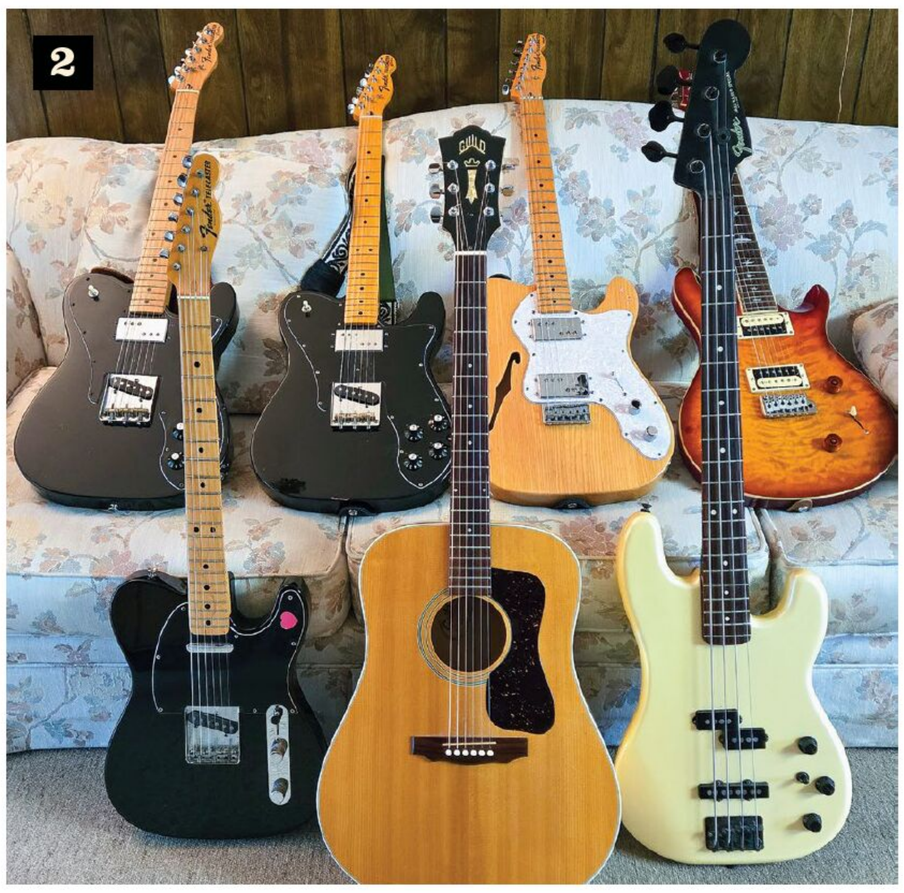
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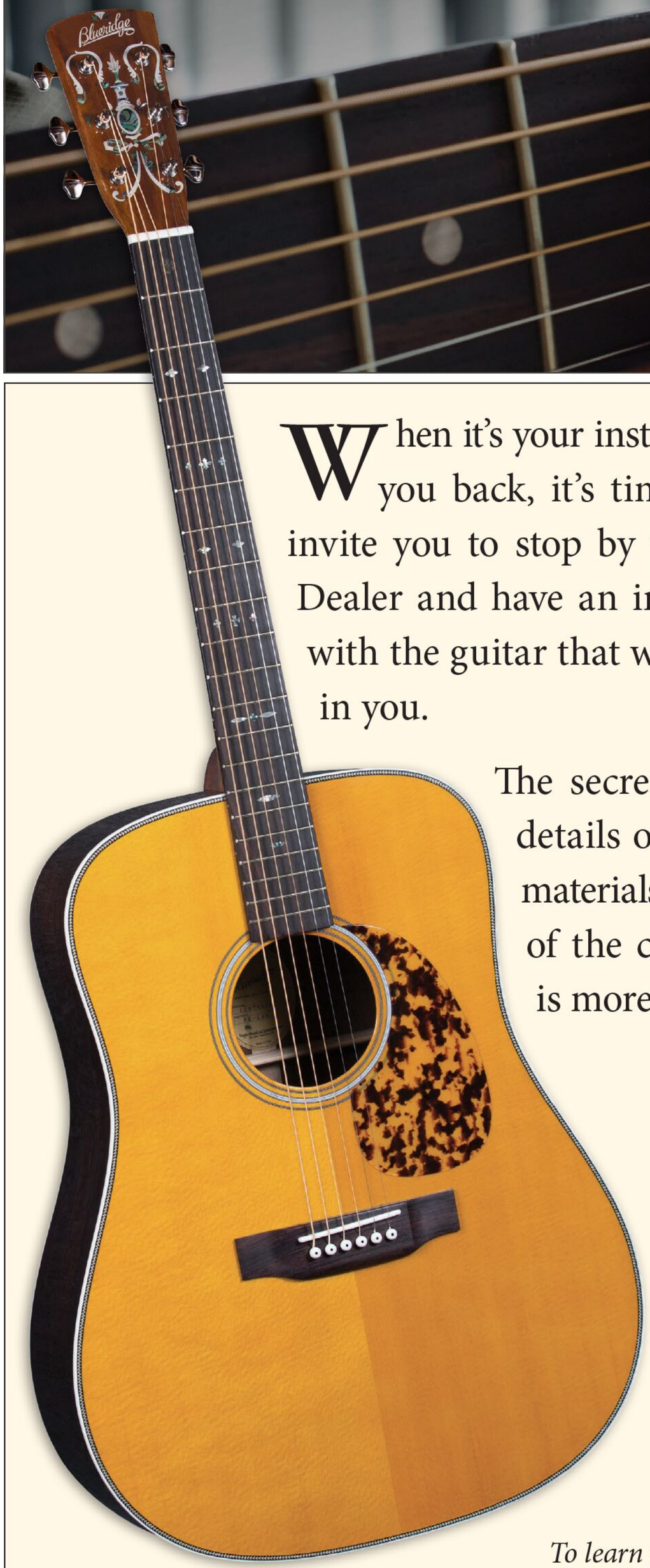

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