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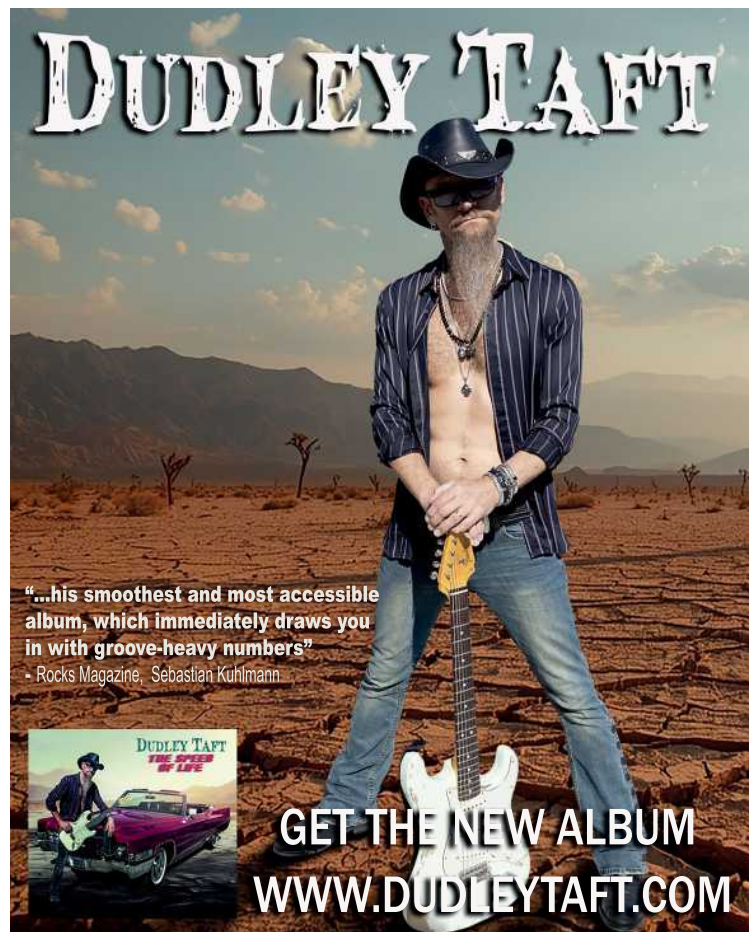
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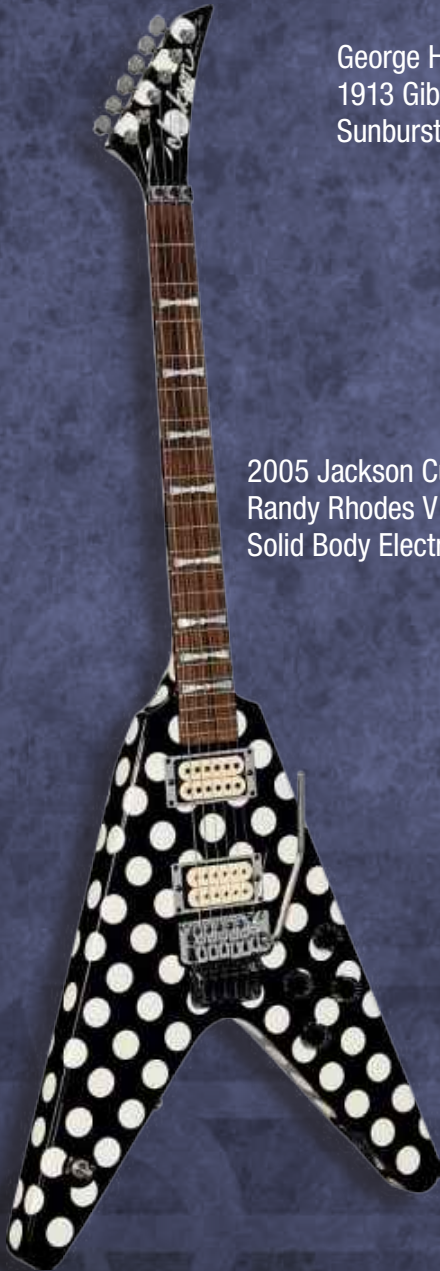
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We continue to mark 40 years of publication, this month with an examination of basses, amps, effects, mandolins, ukuleles, resonators, and lap-steels that have become exceedingly collectible. | *By Ram Tuli and Peter S. Kohman*

- 56** **BILL FRISELL**
Different Kind of Guitar Hero
Guitar philosopher in a sea of gymnasts, he's no stranger to avant-garde, aggressive free improvisation. Often referred to as a guitar anti-hero, to a multitude of fans and peers, "hero" is the perfect label.
| *By Dan Forte*

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COVER: Bill Frisell: Rudy Royston. Selwyn Birchwood: Marilyn Stringer. Fender Jazz Bass: VG Archive.

THIS PAGE: Bill Frisell: Rudy Royston.



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RODNEY'S STEUART SALUTE

I enjoyed Rich Kienzle's interview with Rodney Crowell (March '26), and was especially pleased to see that Mr. Crowell and Vince Gill spoke admiringly of their old bandmate, guitarist Stuart Smith. I've been listening to Mr. Smith since back in the Rodney/Roseanne/Shawn Colvin days, and have always dug his distinctive sounds and great playing. I wasn't surprised when he went with the Eagles, who knew he was *the guy*. Guitar nuts who are unfamiliar should check out the live trio stuff he did with Shawn Colvin and Larry Klein.

Thanks also for the groovy guitar pics of the instruments Rodney was lucky enough to receive from Stuart and other generous friends. I gotta find *me* some friends like that!

Keith Grimes
Chevy Chase, Maryland

I was so happy to see the sidebar on Stuart Smith in the Rodney Crowell feature. I was familiar with his work with the Cicadas in 1997, and first saw him live with Shawn Colvin in a small club in New York City in 2015; I was blown away by his quiet demeanor coupled with outsized talent, and have been a devout fan ever since. He is *brilliant*, and hit a bit of a career jackpot by joining the Eagles for 25 years or so. Sadly, he had to leave the road due to Parkinson's, and Vince Gill is an appropriate sub as their skills are similar.

Stewart co-produced the Eagles' last LP, *Long Road Out Of Eden*, co-wrote three of its songs, and is one of those tasteful guys, like Gill and John Leventhal, who can do it all.

Bill Nollman
Norwalk, Connecticut

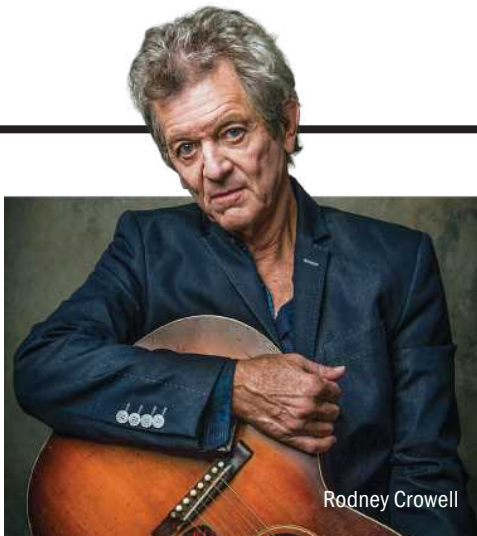
BRUCE WAS BOSS

I really enjoyed Tom Mulhern's response to the question about Jack Bruce's Bass Tone in "VG Q&A" (March '26). The tone of Jack's EB-3 on "Sitting on Top of the World," from *Goodbye Cream*, is the reason I became a bass player in 1969; the Gibson EB-0, EB-2, and EB-3 are my weapons of choice. I always thought his tone came from overdriven Marshalls, but wherever it was from, I doubt anyone will ever catch that groove without those hands.

Todd Shuffler
Syracuse, New York

TINSLEY TRIBUTE

I gotta say, your piece on Tinsley Ellis (February '26) was really great. I've been hearing about



him for years, but never seriously listened to his music. I've since discovered that he's my brother from another mother – the Beatles getting him going in the early stages, the Allman Brothers hittin' the note for him; I was fortunate to see them perform in Erie, Colorado, for four magical hours in 1971. There's also his love of Fenders and Gibsons, Mississippi travels, and SRV memories. Thank you for bringing it to us!

Curt Dreiling
Lyons, Colorado

Your interview with Tinsley Ellis really took me back in time. Tinsley mentions buying his '59 Strat from a shop in a house in Atlanta that also sold Persian rugs. Well, I used to go there two or three times a week just to hang out. It was on Grandview Avenue just off of Pharr Road, in Buckhead and was owned by the famous Tutt Campbell. The living room was filled with custom-color Firebirds and a plethora of dot-neck 335s. As Tinsley says, Strats weren't very desirable at the time, so they were kept in the back. I went in one day to buy a '59 335 for \$2,500. The manager, Larry, showed me a blond dot-neck; I didn't even know they existed, but he talked about how few were made and that it was Tutt's guitar and not for sale. At that point, I no longer wanted a sunburst 335 – I *had to have* the natural finish. A few days later, I got a phone call saying Tutt was willing to sell, but the cost would be \$3,000. Done!

I was able to use it on several 38 Special records and sold it a few years back. For a long time, I was a prisoner of that guitar, but it helped send my daughter to college.

Jeff Carlisi
Co-founder, 38 Special

WAX(ING) ON PAPER

Of all the guitar magazines I have subscribed to, *Vintage Guitar* is the only one I still have. I read it cover to cover each month and par-

ticularly like record reviews and discussions of classic albums.

Rodger D. Frantz
Akron, Ohio

I love VG and have been a fan since May, 2007, when a friend turned me onto it. For me, every issue becomes a learning experience because I become exposed to players or gear I know little to nothing about. The March issue was especially nice because it reintroduced me to Rodney Crowell, whom I liked years ago and hadn't listened to in a long time. It also introduced me to John Shannon. I'm an old guy who still plays out, and I don't know what I would do without my monthly dose of *Vintage Guitar*.

Rick Kolan
Sherwood Forest, California

VG's profiles are great, especially when the pros talk about why they prefer the gear they use. Lost and found iconic guitar stories are also super. There might be a little too much "In Memoriam" at times, as many great players from the classic-rock era are passing, but that's to be expected. Great job overall!

Marty Miller
Houston, Texas

VG's "Hit List" reviews are my lifeline to new music. I listen to almost all the albums listed; the section could be expanded or maybe linked to your site with more music recommendations.

Lorr Safratowich
Butte, Montana

(*Ed Note: Thank you, Lorr, including for the chance to remind readers of the free Spotify playlists we build to accompany each issue.*)

March was the best issue in quite some time. The articles on Martin archtops, modded Dumbles, and the interview with Rodney Crowell made it stand out. When VG does in-depth reporting, it really excels.

Rick Krause
Highland Park, Illinois

I enjoy every issue of VG immensely! The product reviews are especially helpful, as are the interviews with my heroes – Joe Bonamassa, Eric Johnson, etc. – but also the new guys like Matteo Mancuso. Keep it up!

Mike Jones
Peachtree City, Georgia

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Ritchie Blackmore
in 1971.

NGM HONORS BLACKMORE

The National Guitar Museum (NGM) recently honored Ritchie Blackmore with its annual Lifetime Achievement Award. Recipients are recognized for their contributions to the legacy of the guitar and historical importance to the development and appreciation of the instrument.

NGM executive director H.P. Newquist cited Blackmore's six-decade career and multifaceted playing for inspiring generations of players.

"Most people know Ritchie from being the driving creative force behind two of the defining hard rock bands of all time – Deep Purple and Rainbow. But before starting those bands, he had a long career as a London session musician, performing on records by numerous artists including U.K. instro band The Outlaws. And then, after helping define hard-rock guitar in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, he formed Blackmore's Night, incorporating medieval and Renaissance acoustic music into his immense repertoire.

"Ritchie was one of the first electric guitarists to add classical melodicism to his playing, along with classical speed and finesse. Most of the early-'80s guitarists who played lightning-fast riffs and claimed to be learning from Bach and Mozart were, in fact, borrowing from Ritchie."

"I'm rather thrown by the magnitude of this honorable award," said Blackmore, who joins previous winners including Honeyboy Edwards, Jeff Beck, Bonnie Raitt, Liona Boyd, José Feliciano, and B.B. King. "I'm grateful [for] this recognition."

OOPS DEPT!

The March feature "The Enigma of Martin Archtops" incorrectly referenced the company patriarch as Charles Friedrich Martin. His name was, in fact, Christian Friedrich Martin. VG apologizes for any confusion created by the error.



ROBBEN FORD

Still Evolving

Enjoying life in Tuscany, blues/jazz icon Robben Ford is set to release his 30th album as a leader or co-leader, *Two Shades of Blue*. Recorded in the U.S. and England, it reinforces what he has said in the past: "I don't have two albums that sound the same."

Four songs with vocals and four instrumentals, highlights include "Make My Own Weather," which Ford says was, "Written with Shamil Bakhtiyarov and one of my favorite straight-up slamming blues things I've ever done," and a bluesy version of John Lennon's "Jealous Guy."

Does the album have an origin story?

It began as a tribute to Jeff Beck and Alexander Dumble – Jeff being the incredible guitarist that he was and Alexander having made the amplifier that I considered to be half of my voice on the electric guitar for most of my career. I wrote a bunch of music and took a band of A-list musicians into Sweetwater Studios in Fort Wayne, Indiana – Darryl Jones, Larry Goldings, and Gary Husband. Somehow it just didn't feel the way I wanted it to feel. Only three (songs) were worthy of the record. So, I went back to England and recorded with my group there – legendary Welch drummer Ianto Thomas, and Jonny Henderson on B3 organ. We did more of the blues thing we had been playing on the road. The last three songs are instrumentals cut with the group in the U.S. The rest, "Make My Own Weather," "Perfect Illusion," "Black Night," "Two Shades of Blue," and "Jealous Guy," were all cut in the U.K. with my British group.

Was your playing different on this album?

Because it began as a Jeff Beck tribute, I was inspired to pursue a new way of playing. I started working with a Stratocaster and using the vibrato and different effects, which has been a blast. Before this album I would use the Strat only in a supportive role, as I did with Miles Davis and David Sanborn. For this record, I bought a Custom Shop 1966 reissue and went to work on a fresh approach. I also used my '60 Telecaster and a '52 Les Paul for the recordings done in London.

Did you road-test songs before recording?

The songs cut in London were things we'd been playing live other than "Perfect Illusion," which I had earlier recorded with Mike McDonald. Everything we recorded at Sweetwater in the U.S. was brand new. The only two albums I've recorded where the music had been played on the road were *Talk To Your Daughter* and the first Blue Line album. Otherwise my habit is to spend a couple months writing and then go straight into the studio.

Do you have any plans to tour the U.S.?

Not at this time. I have shows scattered across the calendar in Europe and hope to go to Japan at the end of the year. I try to keep things really comfortable for everyone when touring longer periods of time, and traveling in the U.S. is a lot of work.

How do you think this album fits into your discography?

It's one of my favorite things I've ever done. And the ones that stand out for me are not necessarily the ones that others would pick. I really love the *Bringing It Back Home* album... *Tiger Walk* is a real favorite. And *Talk To Your Daughter* had so much energy built up behind it; it reminds me of a lot of other first records by artists I grew up listening to including the Beatles, the Kinks, Hendrix, and many others. Hard to beat that first record.

How is it different from your previous albums?

I was inspired to find a new way to approach the guitar. I gave myself a challenge and pushed myself to learn new things. Also, the use of horns in a prominent role, that's something I've been wanting to do for years.

When you've played the songs live, is there one that gets more attention from the audience?

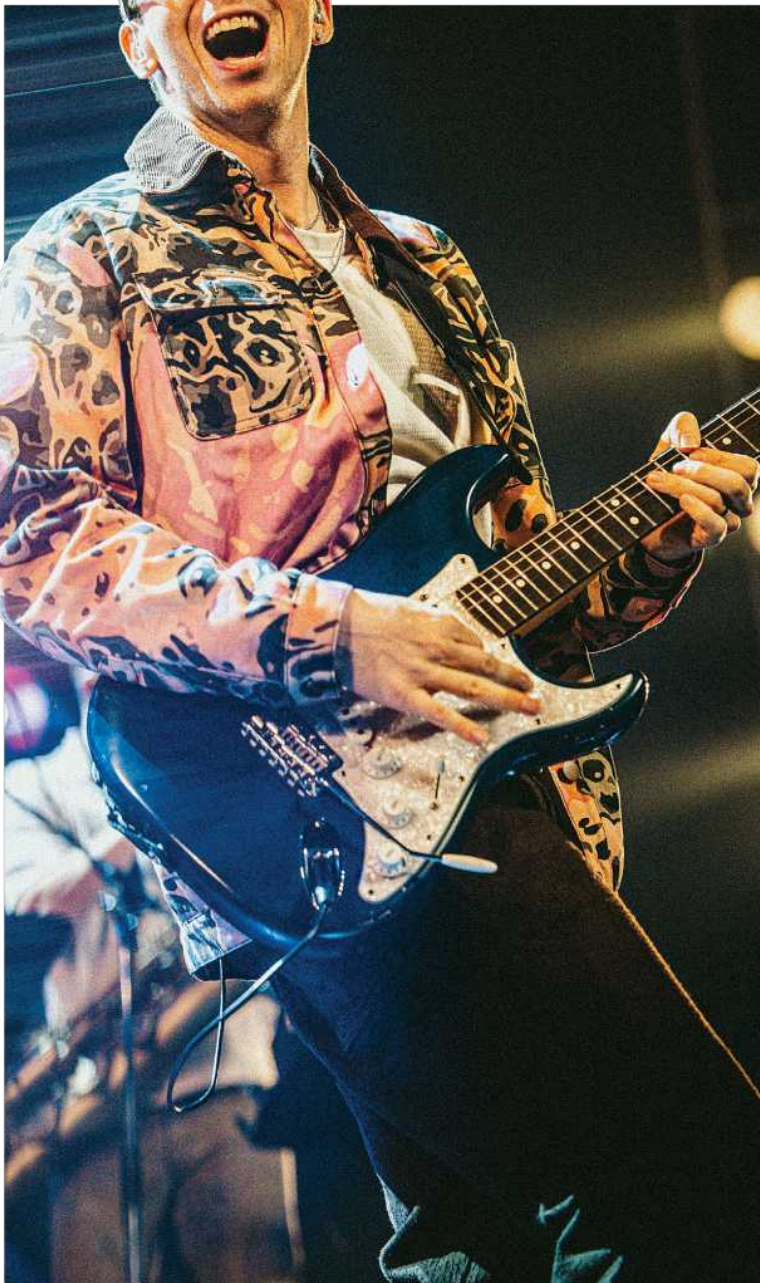
"Jealous Guy." Everybody just flips out when we start that.

How is *Two Shades of Blue* special to you?

It feels like a product of everything that happened before it, and it's the best vocal record I've ever done. That came from learning about my vocal range, in particular, and the importance of choosing the right song. That's a big deal for a singer, unless you're Aretha Franklin! It can take a lot of time to learn... and it's nice when you feel yourself still in a process of evolution – **Bob Dragich**

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CORY WONG

Plugged Into The Wonder

Cory Wong's latest displays magnificent chops as both a producer and a guitarist. He collaborates with a legion of top-notch vocalists including Dutch songwriter Benny Sings. *Lost In The Wonder* is a modern pop tour de force, but the funk remains ubiquitous.

Lost In The Wonder sounds like a huge undertaking.

I feel good about it. It's one of those things

where you work so hard on something for so long, and it feels good to have it out there.

Collaborating with so many different artists pulled fresh ideas from your tool kit.

If you've seen my live shows, aside from having guest vocalists, it's pretty much instrumental music. One of the good things about *Lost In The Wonder* was exploring a different side of my artistry. A lot of people know me as a guitar player, but this showcases me as a producer, writer, arranger, and bandleader. On this record, I wanted to express this side of what I do. It was fun to distill that into a bunch of collaborations and have an outlet for it.

Youshine through-out, even with input from the other artists.

The creative vision came first. As a producer, how do I best serve the artist's vision? Then it comes to me as a guitar player. Of course, my personality and my musicianship are going to shine through, but it shows up even

if my last job is being a guitar player. Part of my vision was to showcase the guitar in modern pop music. There have been a lot of ways the guitar has been replaced, and I wanted to explore how it could be used. Especially with the way I approach guitar as a rhythm guy – but there's guitar solos too.

Did you use your signature plug-in by Neural DSP?

That's what I use on everything. I still have

the original, but I also use the new X version. Do they sound different? Maybe one percent. They updated the code so everything would work with the Quad Cortex. There are a few little updates, but it's the main thing I use. I treat the plug-in as if it's miking the amp in a studio. After you're done recording your guitar, you would still use EQ, compression, saturation, or modulation effects afterward. Sometimes I'll do that sort of thing.

On "Lost In The Wonder" with Benny Sings, I used the XLN RC-20 Retro Color. It adds a little tape warble, a little saturation, and has a lot of different options. I just wanted to add a bit of vintage vibe. That one does it quite effortlessly, and it feels natural.

You're a rhythm guy, but you play a sweet solo on "Blame It On The Moon."

That's the plug-in and a little bit of the FabFilter Pro-Q 3 or Pro-Q 4. It's my Strat into my plug-in and a Tube Screamer plug-in. Then the Big Rig, which has a Klon or Timmy sort of overdrive vibe. They're both on, set to a kind of light level with the tone knobs turned down a little. I was going for a Steely Dan reference. Go figure – real original (laughs). I was thinking of Jay Graydon or Carlton. It felt like the chord changes and the vibe of the tune were asking for that sort of thing. It's kind of a danceable Steely Dan tune.

That one was fun because there were a couple of tunes where the solo was kept from my original demo. It had a quirky, cool thing to it that felt very Dan in nature. I didn't overthink it. That one and "Lisa Never Wanted To Be Famous" are straight from the demo.

How do you replicate that guitar tone onstage?

I use my plug-in with the Quad Cortex. That's the sound.

You have a signature Strat with single-coils and another with humbuckers.

The signature Stratocaster is the one people easily identify my sound with. The Stingray II is a guitar I helped collaborate on with Ernie Ball Music Man. It's less of a signature guitar and more like something I helped design. It's an incredible instrument, and I love that shape. I'd never seen a compelling guitar with that teardrop pickguard. There have been some things, but that one was so iconic. I thought it would be great to have a guitar version of the Stingray. I wanted a really good humbucker guitar that would be a counterpart to my Strat.

What's next?

I'm working and writing. I love creating and exploring. When my kids go off to school, I go to my studio and start working. I put in a whole day honing my creative and technical instincts to become better. – **Oscar Jordan**

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SELWYN BIRCHWOOD

Swamp Fever

Selwyn Birchwood is a renaissance bluesman – rooted in the past, grounded in the present, and looking to the future. The singer/songwriter/guitarist has dazzling six-string and lap-steel chops and gritty vocals belying his 41 years. Better yet, he writes memorable songs and fronts a killer band. *Electric Swamp Funkin' Blues* is his eighth album, and the first self-produced of his five on Alligator. It displays the further evolution of Birchwood's heady blend of contemporary blues, rock, soul, funk, jazz, and more. He has earned mountains of critical praise and several prestigious awards. Birchwood spoke with VG about his focused musical vision.

Beyond your guitar playing, having strong songs is obviously important to you.

That's exactly what it's about. It's refreshing to hear that because sometimes people are like, "He's not playing a ton of loud rock guitar and fast solos." It's like, "Well, it didn't call for it in that song." That's not the emotion or color I'm wanting to get through. Where I'm coming from, it's 100 percent about the song 100 percent of the time. For me, it's about emotion. I've always used it as a vehicle for expressing an idea or an emotion or a feeling and instead of using it as a vehicle to just get off on the guitar.

Jimi Hendrix and Buddy Guy were two of your major influences, then you toured with lap-steel player Sonny Rhodes. How did you balance learning and practicing both instruments?

It was a simultaneous thing because I

had wrist problems and problems with my fingers early on, playing guitar. I couldn't practice as long, and I still can't practice as long as I'd like to. There was a period in college when I could hardly make a fist with my left hand and could only practice for 45 minutes, maybe an hour. For a musician, that's torture. But I was able to practice lap steel once it became too painful to play guitar and bend strings. I was using steel as my way to get the music out. Early on, I didn't play a lot of slide on a normal guitar but I was able to find the blue (note) sounds on my lap steel.

Apparently, I was practicing incorrectly and ended up straining my hands and wrists. It got pretty bad and took years to get over.

Having a great band behind you makes the songs come alive on the new album.

As I write, I'm hearing all of those parts as I go. It's like painting and you have to have the right colors to make sure the picture looks the way you want. I've been able to get 100 percent of the sound I hear in my head.

Many of your songs have clever lyrics – some are serious and autobiographical, like "Labour of Love," which is about fatherhood, and "The Struggle is Real," which deals with racism.

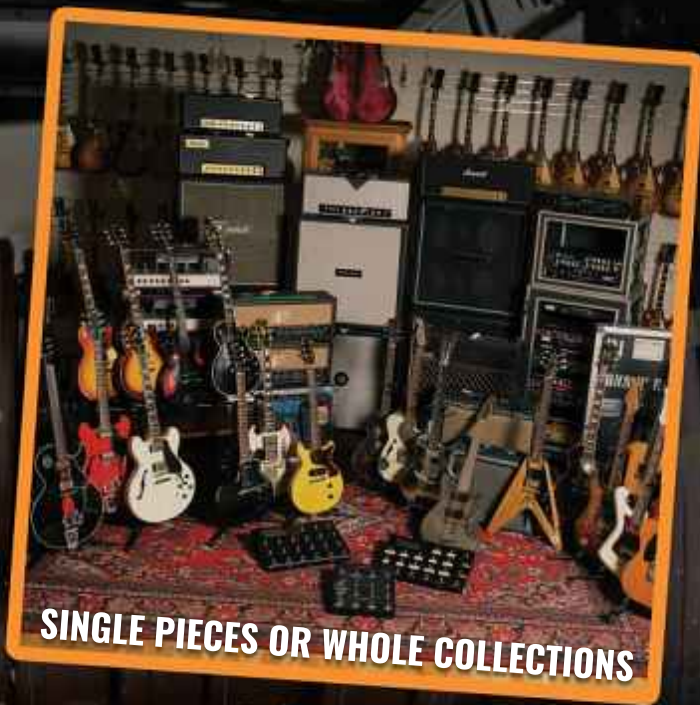
It's therapeutic. It's a weird thing because I don't put any of myself out there on social media. I don't talk about my personal life. I'm a private person and an introvert. But, for whatever reason, I don't mind getting on a stage in front of thousands of people and screaming my diary through a microphone.

You have a signature Caladesi lap steel and you endorse Gibson guitars.

I've played Gibsons for 14 years. Before that, I had a couple Epiphones because I couldn't afford a real Gibson. My first was one that I won at the International Blues Challenge in 2013 for the Albert King Guitarist of the Year award. It's a blond 335. On this album, I played my Flying V quite a bit. It's stock because it sounded great out of the box. I've also got a purple Les Paul Standard with gold hardware, and two SGs I play slide on. I put Lollar pickups in a lot of my guitars. For acoustics, I've got a '70s Guild and some old Harmonys. – **Bret Adams**



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TOM PRINCIPATO

Memorable Mixes

Tom Principato lives life – and makes music – at his own pace these days. A friend of late Washington, D.C. legends Danny Gatton and Roy Buchanan, his new album, *Twangin'!*, takes a musical smorgasbord approach that includes songs by some of his favorite players. It's also his fifth instrumental album, including *A Guitar for Christmas* from 2022.

Principato adjusted his recording style during the Covid pandemic, and applied the technique to the new effort.

"I really took it ass-backwards," he said. "I first recorded the rhythm tracks and solos, then went into Jim Robeson's studio to overdub bass and drums. Some players also did their parts at home and just sent them to the studio, where we synced everything. It goes against everything I did in the past; I always went

for live in the studio and live guitar solos, to capture the interaction. But it seemed that while I captured my performances at home – which were basically duos of me soloing over a rhythm guitar track I created – there was a good amount of spontaneity and emotion happening.

"I also played a lot of the solos with my fingers, which I think helped me play in a more-economical way – playing the spaces more. My playing is more heartfelt on this album."

While Buchanan's influence can be heard in a lot of Principato's riffs and licks, he eschewed an overabundance on *Twangin'!*.

"I made it a point to try material that was more oriented toward melody and more to the point rather than chops," he explained. "Most of the songs are only three minutes long."

Most feature sparse instrumentation, but first takes were rare.

"I worked on this album for well over a year, and I don't remember which (first) takes were keepers, but 'Love Letters' was. I'm not good for more than four or five takes at any given time, so if I make a few passes and it's not happening, I go on to something else or put it down for another day."

Principato's guitars included two Telecasters he had built to spec, as well as a Stratocaster.

"One of the things I got into while being off the road was assembling guitars that had different features," he noted.

Less than half of the songs were penned by Principato, and his selection of covers was intensely personal, saluting numerous genres.

"One of the first albums I got as a kid starting on guitar was *The Ventures' Walk, Don't Run '64*," he remembered. "I included two songs from that album that have always been favorites – 'Night Walk' and 'Blue Star.'"

Bakersfield legend Roy Nichols is referenced on a cover of a rare Merle Haggard track.

"I've always been a Merle fan, and I saw him live in the late '60s when he first broke big. Of course, Roy Nichols has always been one of my Telecaster heroes. 'Champagne' is from a lesser-known live Merle album, *I Love Dixie Blues*."

Other songs take listeners even further into Principato's past musical influences.

"My first inspiration for guitar was my parent's record collection, which included Charlie Christian with the Benny Goodman Sextet, and Les Paul and Chet Atkins. I later discovered blues and the Telecaster, but those first three have been inspirational lifelong influences. 'Kentucky' is, I think, one of my favorite Chet Atkins recordings. And I've always loved gospel music, starting with quartets like Dixie Hummingbirds. A long time ago I saw Ray Charles perform 'All Day & All Night (Angels Watching Over Me)' on TV with Andraé Crouch. I decided to include that on *Twangin'!*.

"I got my first portable radio in 1962, and used to listen to shows every Sunday night from stations like WGAR in Cleveland. I'd hear Kitty Lester's incredible rendition of 'Love Letters.' It's an incredible and simple performance with an intimacy that has always been one of my favorites. I decided to see if I could capture some of the feeling from the original, and I think it turned out really nice – just me and Steve Wolf on upright bass.

"I feel like my playing is more heartfelt on this album," Principato summarized. "I'm really pleased at the way it turned out, and I hope everyone will enjoy it." – **Willie G. Moseley**

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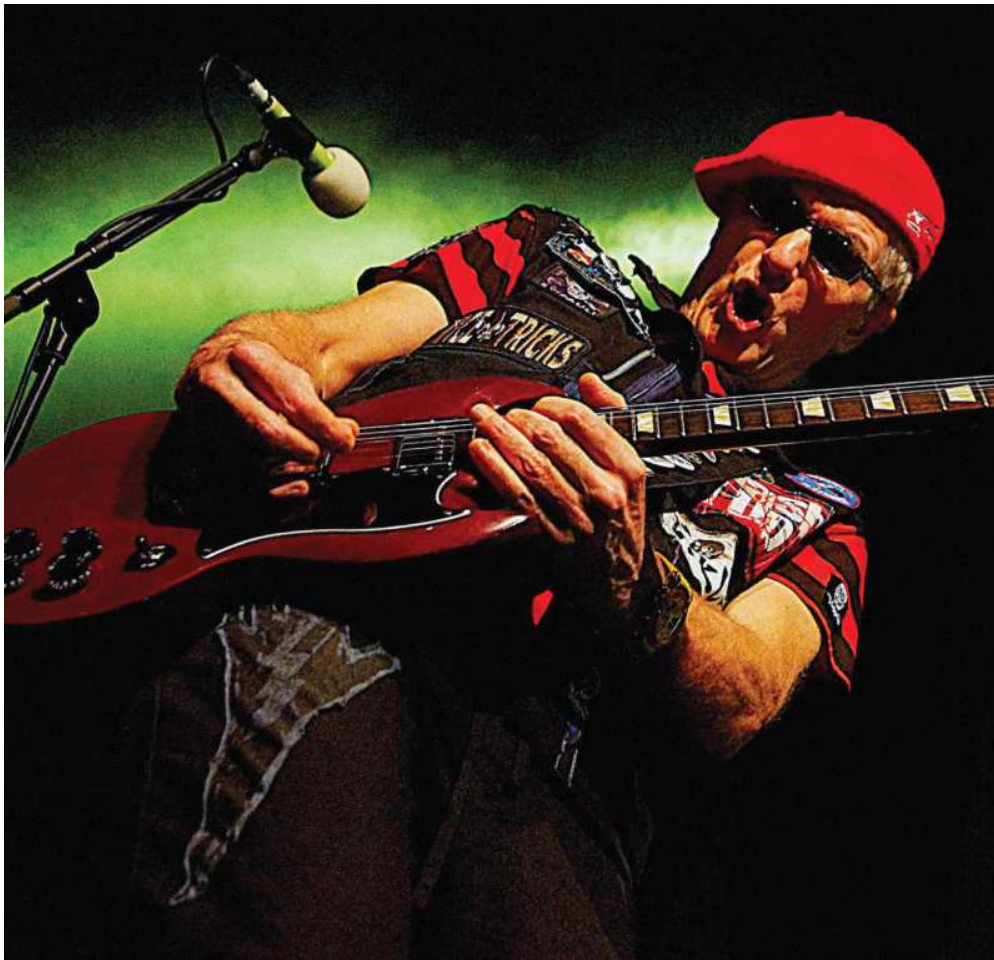
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CAPTAIN SENSIBLE

Forever Damned

Exploding out of London in the '70s, The Damned are an English punk band that once attacked FM institutions with anthems like "New Rose" and "Smash It Up." After many detours, the group is now thriving with three original members and a new album, *Not Like Everybody Else*. Dedicated to founding guitarist Brian James, who died in 2025, the record contains snarling covers of The Yardbirds, Lovin' Spoonful, Rolling Stones, and Pink Floyd classics.

Captain Sensible was at first The Damned's bassist, but switched to guitar after James left – and he's been riffing madly ever since. We checked in with the punk icon.

Surprisingly, covers of "See Emily Play" and "Heart Full of Soul" fit perfectly into The Damned sound. Does '60s Brit-pop resonate with you?

Of course I still love that '60s sound; you can hear the musicians all playing in the same

room and recording to tape with none of the infernal Autotune that sends me running out of shops. The psychedelic scene of 1967 was a music revolution of experimentation and innovation, like Syd Barrett playing echo-drenched glissando guitar with a lighter. Everyone was trying new ideas in the studio.

Talk about Brian James.

Without Brian, The Damned would never have existed. We got the bad news about his passing while on a six-week U.S. tour and decided to do this album as a tribute to a really nice bloke. Never having played most of these songs, and with no rehearsals, we had five studio days tagged onto the end of the tour and steamed through the tunes, knocking them off one by one. It was just the five of us in this retro-themed studio full of vintage guitars and keyboards.

What should people know about Brian's playing from the early Damned era?

Before I joined Brian in his mission to give

British music a much-needed kick up the arse, I was playing guitar with my Croydon chum Johnny Moped and wouldn't have swapped guitar for bass for any old band. But Brian James had an amazing bunch of tunes ready to go – short, sharp, and aggressive – and he had a guitar technique to match. He also had fluent riffing interspersed by blistering runs, as can be heard on "I Fall" on our debut album. It was quite advanced compared to the show-off heavy rock style that was a bit overdone by then. Something needed to happen – and it was punk.

You take fiery solos on "Summer in the City" and "Gimme Danger." Do you try to nail a lead in one or two takes, or do you work on it?

"Gimme Danger" was a one-take wonder, with the odd mistake left intact. I got a nice sound and ripped off a quick solo before lunch. I was going to replace it, but on return it just sounded perfect. On the other hand, the "Summer In The City" solo was an arranged part; in fact, over the years I have started to compose solos a bit more often. I was listening intently to *Led Zeppelin II* when it dawned on me that many of Jimmy Page's guitar parts, full of lyricism and melody, were proper arrangements and not just off-the-cuff lines.

For guitars, you're dedicated to the Gibson SG.

SG Standards are I what play these days; it has to be a Standard because my crap eyesight can't see the fret dots of a Special, and they're the budget range. They're called '60s Tributes and don't have the shiny lacquer of the upmarket models, but I like that they look less glamorous and any dings give it that road-beast look. For me, the bridges are also essential because [Damned frontman Dave] Mr. Vanian will roll his eyes and tap his watch if there are tune-ups between songs. I could be mistaken, but I don't think Keith Richards has to put up with that (laughs).

What's it like to work with the same bandmates for 50 years?

Backstage boozing can cause problems in some groups – it certainly did for us in the past – but now, with our consumption considerably reduced, it's more like a gentlemen's club on the road. We try not to get on each others nerves too much. I mean, we've all changed as people, but I find them all interesting in their own right. [Drummer] Rat Scabies always has something esoteric to say, and continues his search for the Holy Grail and [bassist] Paul Gray will be online, looking at Rickenbacker gear porn; Dave reads *Motorcycle Monthly*. And then we all jump onstage and make that fabulous noise for an hour and a half. If you ignore all the hanging around in airports and motorway schleps, it's the best job in the world! – **Pete Prown**

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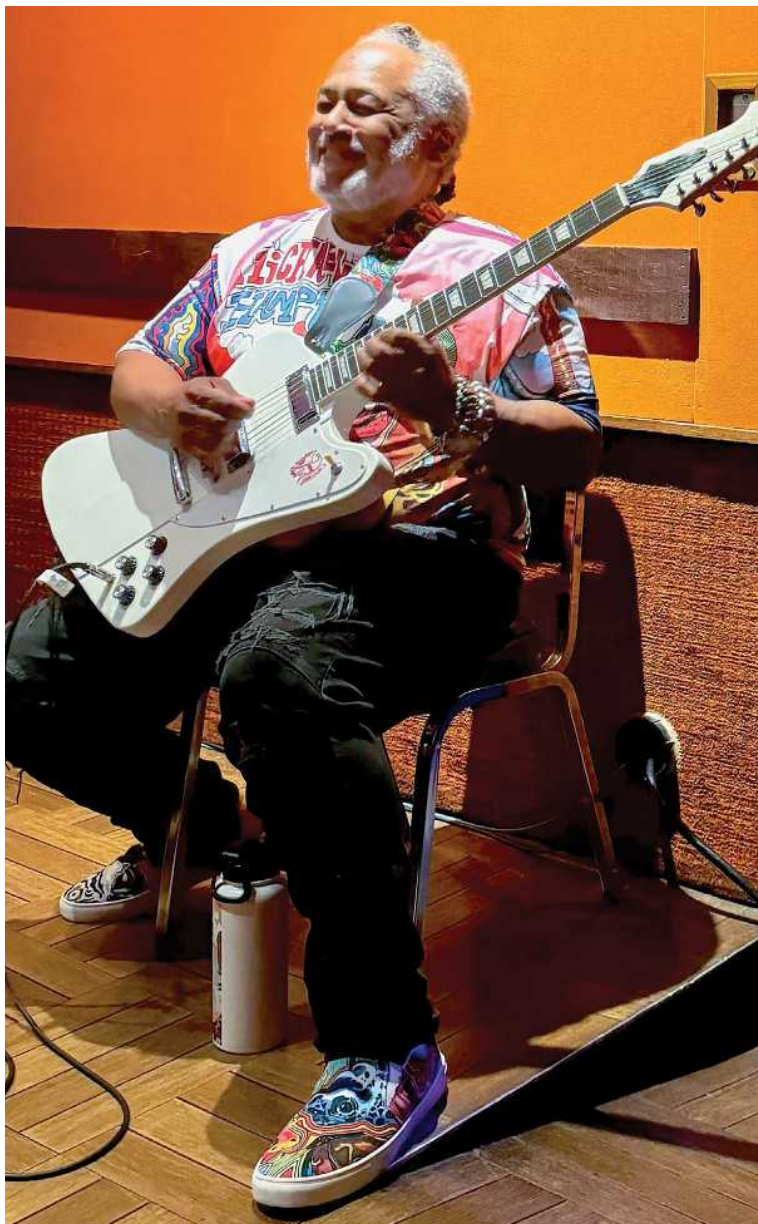


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MICHAEL HAMPTON

Kidd Funkadelic Returns

Known as a founding father of power-funk electric guitar, Michael Hampton has made a mighty noise with Parliament-Funkadelic since 1973, joining the band when he was just 17. Still performing with P-Funk and its leader George Clinton, Hampton is also releasing a series of solo EPs including *Into the Public Domain*, which blends funk, fusion, heavy rock, and more with the

room. It was like kids getting yelled at by Mom: “Turn down that rock and roll!” (laughs)

Which guitars did you use?

I don’t own a million pedals and amps. For me, it’s really all in the fingers; I feel like I can express myself how I want with any gear, any guitar. For that track I had an Ibanez RG seven-string. I also used my favorite PRS, but the one I used most was a customized Epiph-

axe man’s ever-incendiary solos. Another bonus: fellow guitar hero Phil Keaggy guests on “Savanna.”

“Steve’s Kaddillac” feels closer to a classic Funkadelic vibe. And what is that wah pedal?

Our co-producer was Joe “The Butcher” Nicolo, and P-Funk is one of his all-time favorite bands. So for “Steve’s Kaddillac,” he chopped up what we played and rearranged the parts, turning it into the most P-Funk song on the record. That pedal is a Morley wah, which is one of my old-school favorites. It’s the same model I used on “Butt-to-Buttresuscitation” on *Tales of Kidd Funkadelic*.

The guitar on “Fight or Flight” sounds like you recorded it pretty loud.

We actually did record at a massive volume. Joe built his studio near his house; not right against the house, but a good 150 feet away. Yet his wife could still hear us from their living

one Firebird with a Gibson USA humbucker in the bridge and this cheap, high-output ceramic humbucker in the neck. It was made in New Jersey by a friend, so it has a sound all its own. I was using .009 to .042 strings, the DR color-coded ones, which lets me get nice, easy bends and a real bright sound.

How about pedals?

For delay, I used a Boss DD-3 or DD-4. We were joking around, calling it the “Hillsong United” tone; they’re a famous worship band and have been using that U2-style delay feel forever. And to get that full midrange overdrive, I used a mid-gain boost called the Monsterbox Gay Frog, which was this custom pedal the guys found.

You’ve played the iconic “Maggot Brain” solo onstage zillions of times. What does it mean to you?

I’ve given different meanings to it over the years. In the beginning, I learned it to prove I could play. To make a mark, I had to play something the band and the audience already knew, so they could reference it and say, “Okay, Mike can do this for real.” Back then, I tried to do it as closely as possible to the original, but my perspective definitely shifted over time. “Maggot Brain” can be a sad piece, but I didn’t really give it a specific feeling until I started connecting it to things happening in my own life – heartbreak, tragedy, or the moment you learn life-changing news.

Do you play the solo as somewhat of an homage to late P-Funk guitar hero Eddie Hazel?

I remember Eddie’s widow once asking me to let Eddie “come into me” while I played it. I remember trying to channel him during a show when I was having a lot of technical difficulties. Still, I got really emotional that night because of her asking me that and what was happening onstage with the music.

Let’s go back to 1973 – you’re 17 years old and just joined Funkadelic. What was that like?

The first time I met them, they’d asked me to come jam, and it evolved into me officially becoming a member of P-Funk. Drummer Tiki Fulwood asked me to fly to D.C.; the fact that they were trying to get me out there really helped me relax. When I got to the Capital Centre, I went to the dressing room and hunkered down with Tiki. I was incredibly nervous, so I started practicing pretty hard – so hard that I busted my high E string. I started looking for a replacement, but no one had one. I ended up having to tie the string back together, which was something I used to do back when I didn’t have extra strings. Believe it or not, I went onstage with that tied-up string – for a sold-out arena show!

– **Pete Prown VG**

Photo courtesy of T. Principato.

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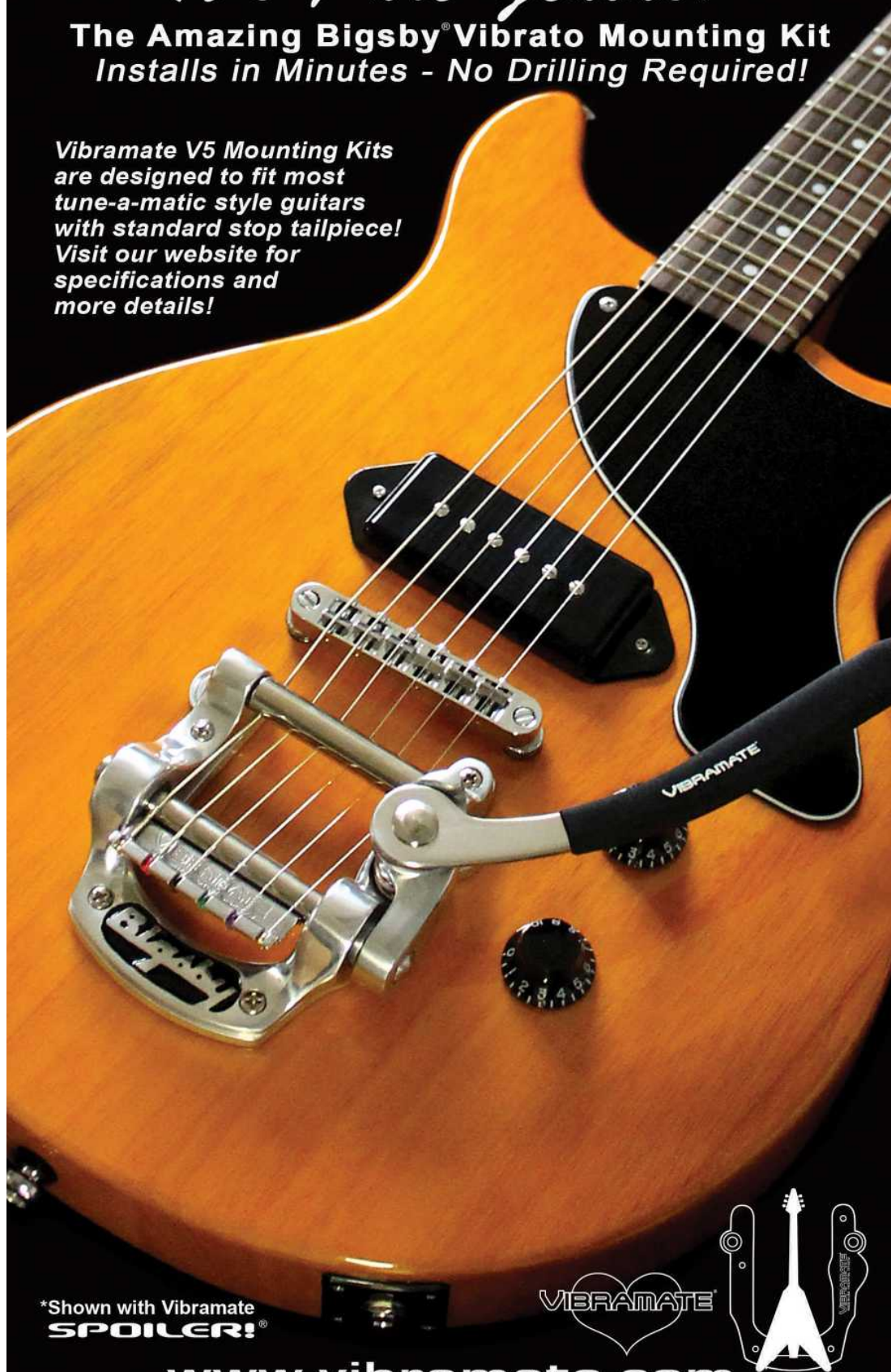
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Classics

As a youngster in Chicago, David Kalman Raskin's early days as a music fan were informed by the city's South Side blues. Once his teen-aged guitar chops were up to snuff (thanks to a Kay gifted to him by an uncle followed by an ES-175), he joined an old-school dance band, playing standards on a Gibson Byrdland, then hooked up with a Top 40 group that put Raskin and his new Tele to work by sneaking blues and R&B tunes by Howlin' Wolf, Jimmy Reed, and Muddy Waters into the set.

The Rovin' Kind, which was, David recalled to VG's Willie Moseley in 2010, "...strongly influenced by Buffalo Springfield.

"Paul and I developed this two-guitar style without realizing that it would influence other bands," he said. "He was a lead player and a lead singer; I was a lead player and a lead singer."

They released a handful of singles before moving to Los Angeles and changing their name to Illinois Speed Press, which played its first gig at the Newport Pop Festival in August of '68, sharing a bill with Jefferson Airplane, Blue Cheer, and the Byrds.

One day in '69, David took the Tele for a neck repair at Music World, the Hollywood shop owned by renowned studio/jazz guitar-

In 1961, the 18-year-old adopted a stage name (in honor of his grandfather, Kalman) to form Kal David and the Exceptions with bassist friend Peter Cetera, which played the city's clubs for a few years before David was offered a contract on a local record label; with fellow guitarist Paul Cotton, in '65 he formed a garage-rock band called

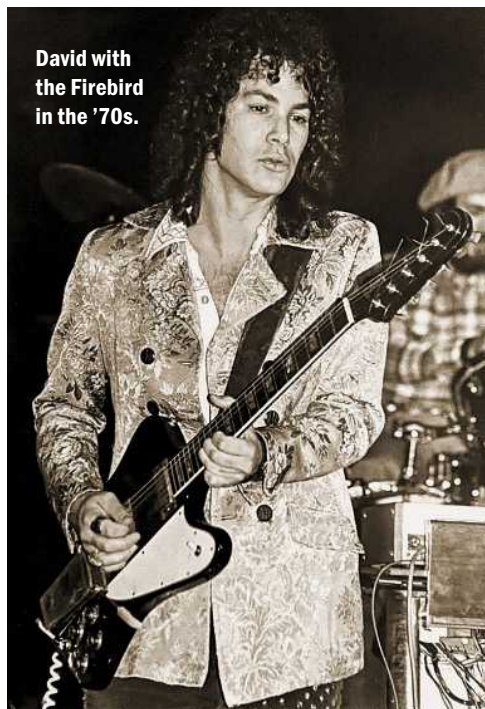
Among the replaced parts are the tuning gears, these mostly from a Firebird VII.



ist Barney Kessel. There, he was shown a sunburst '64 Firebird V.

"I thought 'Boy, that's an ugly guitar.' But I fell in love with it, and ended up getting it for \$175."

From that day until his passing in 2022, it was his main axe as he chased music stardom across the globe; Illinois Speed Press became the house band at the Whisky a GoGo, and toured with acts playing top-tier venues and festivals while also recording two acclaimed albums. Eventually, David and Cotton moved in different musical directions – Cotton joined country-rockers Poco while Kal teamed with bassist Harvey Brooks to form the Fabulous Rhinestones, which moved to Woodstock, New York, where they recorded three albums and gigged until disbanding in '76. The following year, David met the woman who would become his wife, singer Lauri Bono, and the two began performing together.



David with the Firebird in the '70s.

Guitar photos by Robert Bruns. Kal David photos courtesy of Lauri Bono.



Character marks adorn the back.

In '78, the couple moved to Los Angeles and readily found work backing Etta James, Al Kooper, and Johnny Rivers, with whom they recorded *The Memphis Sun Recordings* and twice toured the world. In the early '80s, Kal played in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, helping to record *Cross Country Blues*. As a duet, they recorded two albums for a local label and Kal led a weekly jam at the China Club, in Hollywood, drawing some of the city's most famous singers

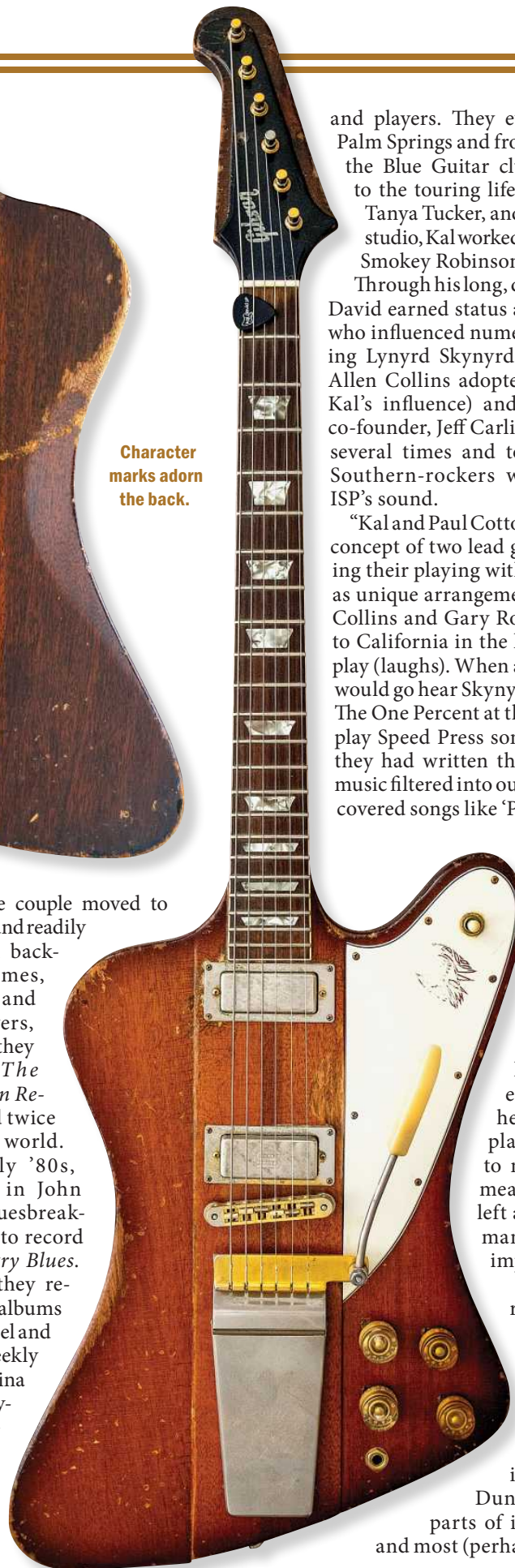
and players. They eventually moved to Palm Springs and from '98 until 2004 ran the Blue Guitar club before returning to the touring life with Rivers, James, Tanya Tucker, and Bette Midler. In the studio, Kal worked with Robbie Dupree, Smokey Robinson, and others.

Through his long, distinguished career, David earned status as a "player's player" who influenced numerous others, including Lynyrd Skynyrd (legend has it that Allen Collins adopted a Firebird due to Kal's influence) and 38 Special, whose co-founder, Jeff Carlisi, spoke with David several times and told him how much Southern-rockers were influenced by ISP's sound.

"Kal and Paul Cotton helped pioneer the concept of two lead guitarists interweaving their playing with harmonies, as well as unique arrangements," he said. "Allen Collins and Gary Rossington *hitchhiked* to California in the late '60s to see them play (laughs). When all of us in 38 Special would go hear Skynyrd – they were called The One Percent at the time – they would play Speed Press songs and we assumed they had written them. Of course, that music filtered into our sonic DNA, and we covered songs like 'PNS,' 'Free Ride,' and 'Hard Luck Story.'

"In 2009, I got to sit in with Kal at a club in Boston called Sculler's. He and I started a friendship that lasted until his passing. I was glad to tell him what an influence and inspiration he was on so many players who went on to notoriety. I think it meant a lot to him. Kal left an impression on so many players and more importantly, the blues."

Kal's Firebird carries all the signs of an instrument that has seen action during thousands of nights on hundreds of stages. Replacement parts include a Seymour Duncan bridge pickup, parts of its vibrato tailpiece, and most (perhaps all) of its "banjo"





David (center) at a China Club jam in the '90s with Johnny Rivers and Lauri Bono.

tuners. All contribute to its character, along with the well-worn hardware and marks on the back and along the edges of the headstock.

"Kal dedicated his life to his art and had a long, productive career doing what he loved most," said Bono. "From the day he bought it, the Firebird he called BadBoy was by his side. He was a truly authentic guitarist and equally powerful singer and songwriter. I was honored to be his partner for 45 years, and his music lives on." – **Ward Meeker VG**

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REVOLUTION NOW

Gibson's GA-20RVT Minuteman

BY DAVE HUNTER

While all the major amplifier manufacturers left the golden age behind at some point, Gibson segued out of its classic years a little more quickly than most. Yet there's still fun to be had with one from the twilight of the maker's tube-amp years.

Gibson moved itself out of "classic" status by following trends in mid-'60s guitar design; its moving to the narrower 19/16" nut, chrome hardware, a 14-degree headstock angle, and other changes in 1965 demarcates the "Woah!" from the "Meh!" eras in the eyes

of collectors. Meanwhile, corporate-level changes like the exit of M.H. Berlin from Chicago Musical Instruments that year and a slide toward its sale to Norlin in '69 furthered the impression of the sun setting on the company's golden age.

The Minuteman's control panel presents a layout familiar from other popular two-channel amps of the era, with reverb and tremolo on the second channel.

1967 GIBSON GA-20 RVT MINUTEMAN

- Preamp tubes: three 6EU7, two 12AU7
- Output tubes: two EL84
- Rectifier: solid-state
- Controls: Volume, Treble and Bass on each channel; Reverb, tremolo Depth and Frequency
- Speakers: 12" CTS ceramic-magnet
- Output: 12-18 watts RMS

We're not sure whether any particular "trends" were followed on the path of the company's amp design and manufacture through those years, but it feels as if someone up the ladder decided it wasn't worth trying anymore – or, if they were still trying, it wasn't with an eye or ear to the designs with which the competition was achieving major success.

Amp and photos courtesy of Steve Luebke.

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The 6EU7 (inside metal shields) and 12AU7 preamp tubes lead to the dual EL84 output tubes (left); note the footswitch in its holder.

On one hand (stylistically at least), Gibson combos had finally turned a corner to the top/front control panels that were standard with many makers by this time. And, Gibson had already beat Fender to the punch by including reverb alongside the tremolo on their more fully-featured amps, including good-sounding renditions of the effects with a hard-wired, two-button footswitch. But, sonic elements that many players find important today – a robust core tone, broad and flattering frequency range, and a smooth and musical onset of distortion – are generally lacking in latter-day Kalamazoo-made tube amps.

Yet for all that, this 1967 GA-20 RVT Minuteman has its charms, and even its usefulness as an alternative tone tool. This model and the range it was part of were manufactured between '65 and '67, after which Gibson ceased production of tube amps in Kalamazoo. As such, this combo

has the dubious distinction of being among the last of its line, while perhaps shedding light on the company's general concept of what a tube amp should do at that time. With the likes of Marshall and Vox setting new standards for toothsome overdrive from the U.K. and powerful Fender amps making a big noise this side of the pond, Gibson had decided – if the Minuteman is anything to go on – that clear, clean, and bright was the way to go... arguably all couched in a distinct lack of personality. Which isn't to say that some character can't be induced from these amps with a little nudging.

One popular genre offered by many makers today is the "pedal platform," an amp that doesn't produce much overdrive on its own but excels at coupling with drive ped-

als. As early as it was in the pedal boom, it's unlikely Gibson was thinking along those lines. But reapproached today, the Minuteman makes a nifty pedal platform itself, and that's likely the best use for it, without undertaking some invasive modification to reconfigure the gain stages for better onboard overdrive.

You'll see the Minuteman billed as producing anywhere from 12 to 18 watts, but it's likely nearer the lower end of that range, considering the relatively low voltages (spec'd at 289 volts DC on the plates of the EL84s) and smallish output transformer as compared to, say, a Vox AC15. In addition to the two EL84 output tubes (a.k.a. 6BQ5s) it uses a selection of preamp tubes less-common to American guitar amps, but



which Gibson turned to frequently through the years – two 12AU7s and three 6EU7s. The former is a dual-triode that fits the common 12AX7/12AY7/12AT7 pin-out, but which has an even lower gain factor than any of those more-common preamp tubes. The 6EU7 has a gain factor similar to a 12AX7, but is wired differently and therefore isn't a direct substitute.

Otherwise, in some ways the preamp topology isn't dramatically unlike Fender's black-panel amps of the period and the silver-panel amps that followed. They have in common the positioning of the Tone and Volume controls between two gain stages (of a 6EU7), with the latter following the former. Many component values and the general circuit layout are quite different, however, and other details unique to the Gibson indicate they were in no way following Fullerton's lead.

In addition to a rats nest of a circuit wired on a cramped board, the amp appears to carry five transformers – though one is actually a choke coil to reduce noise within the power supply. That leaves the power transformer, output transformer, and reverb transformer we expect, along with one after the preamp to split the signal into reverse-phase strands for the push/pull

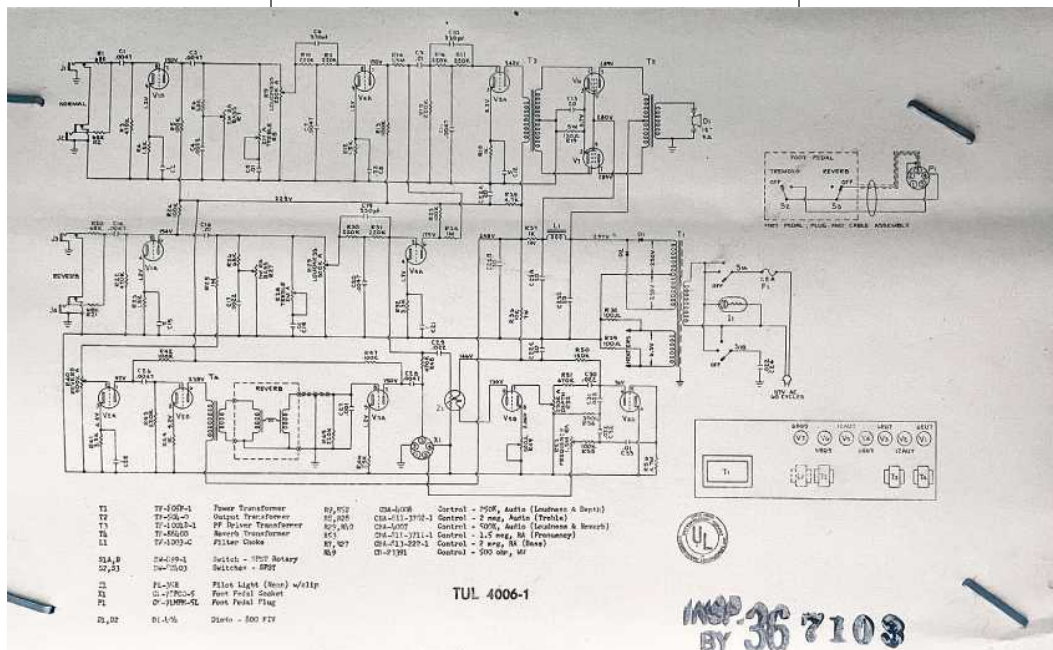
output stage. It's an odd configuration rarely seen in guitar amps, which usually use a tube phase-inverter for this function. The use of a transformer here might eliminate the distortion that some tube phase-inverters are prone to when driven hard, but that also reduces some of the overall character and coloration that contribute to most tube amps' voices.

Good luck, mister repairman! The Minuteman displays a real rats nest of a circuit, though construction isn't dramatically worse than other B-list amps of the era.

sound great. And it is definitely on the bright side of the treble spectrum; when I play it, I run a Boss GE-7 EQ pedal pulling down high frequencies, and I've used it with an Ibanez

Sonic Distortion pedal I bought in the '80s."

In all, the '65-'67 Minuteman employs a bizarrely complex circuit for an amp its size and with relatively limited capabilities, when it could have done as much – or more, and far more simply – by replicating some of the common circuits of the time. Perhaps it further signals that Gibson was still resolutely trying to avoid copying the Fender amps that were



The owner of this '67 Minuteman, VG reader Steve Luebke, has learned to work within its limitations to get the most out of the amp.

"I bought it from an older gentleman about 10 years ago," he said. "I replaced the caps and re-coned the speaker, but other than that I believe it's all original and in great shape. It really doesn't break up and stays pretty clean, more on the jazz side. It takes pedals well and the reverb and tremolo

outstripping them on the market, but it seems like a lot of effort (or pig-headedness?) to achieve what was ultimately a failure, considering the range it was a part of didn't spur sales enough to warrant continued amp manufacture. The flip side of that "failure" is that you can purchase one on the vintage market for a mere 20 percent (or less) of the cost of a Princeton Reverb or Deluxe Reverb combo of the same era, providing an easy access that a lot of players will enjoy. **VG**

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- '65 Olympic White. 100% original, Excellent condition, Mint-Green pickguard
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- '70 Olympic White/4-Bolt Rose neck only refrets changed nut, Super clean!
- '70 Black/Rose neck. 100% original
- '71 Black/4Bolt Rose neck. Only changed Nut & 5Way-SW in VG condition.
- '71 Sunburst "Lefty"/4-Bolt One Piece Maple neck. Refret & Changed nut.
- '71 Black/3Bolt Rose neck. Early 3-Bolt neck Strat, 1Strings Tree Steel Tremolo Assy

- '72 Sonic Blue/3-Bolt Maple neck 1Strings Tree Steel Tremolo Assy
 - '72 Sunburst 1Strings tree Maple & Rose neck. We have both in stock.
 - '73 Black Rose neck. 100% original in Near Mint condition
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Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Ram W. Tuli



1965 Gibson
ES-335

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1960s	Alden H-45 Stratotone		\$500	\$800
1967	Ampeg J-12 R Reverbojet	18 watts, 1x12	\$500	\$650
1980	Applause AE Models	Import	\$200	\$400
1986	B.C. Rich Platinum Series		\$300	\$600
2010	Carr Artemus	15/30 watts, 1x12	\$1,500	\$2,000
1966	Dallas/Dallas Arbiter	Rangemaster Fuzzbug	\$2,500	\$3,000
1989	Dobro Dobjo		\$1,000	\$1,500
1981	DOD Performer Wah Filter 545		\$75	\$150
1960	Egmond Electric		\$500	\$1,200
		maple sides and back	\$2,250	\$3,000
1965	Epiphone EA-14 RVT Ensign	50 watts, 2x10	\$600	\$850
1965	Epiphone FT 98 Troubadour		\$1,700	\$2,500
1965	Epiphone Rivoli (1 Pickup)		\$2,500	\$3,500
2005	Fender Blender	Reissue	\$200	\$300
2018	Fender Limited Edition 60th Anniversary Classic Jazzmaster		\$1,200	\$1,800
2009	Fender Sonic Youth			
	Signature Jazzmaster	Lee Ranaldo	\$1,800	\$2,800
1996	Fender The Ventures Limited Edition Jazzmaster		\$1,800	\$2,800
2017	Fender Parallel Universe			
	Volume II Strat-Tele Hybrid		\$1,500	\$2,200
1963	Fender Pro	Black tolex	\$2,250	\$3,000
2020	Fender Eric Clapton Signature			
	Journeyman Relic Stratocaster		\$4,000	\$6,000
2016	Fender Artisan Series			
	Stratocaster (Custom Shop)	Tamo Ash	\$3,500	\$5,500
1992	Fender Stu Hamm Urge (USA)		\$1,250	\$1,750
2003	Fender '64 Vibroverb (Custom Shop)		\$1,500	\$1,875
1970s	Gallagher 71 Special		\$2,000	\$3,000
2021	Gibson 1963 Firebird V (Maestro Vibrola) Murphy Lab Aged	Light Aged	\$5,000	\$6,500
1960	Gibson ES-140 (3/4) T	Sunburst	\$2,000	\$3,500
1958	Gibson ES-335 TD	Sunburst bound neck, Bigsby	\$40,000	\$55,000
1965	Gibson ES-335 TD or ES-335N TD	Mid '65, narrow neck	\$7,000	\$9,000
1965	Gibson ES-335 TD or ES-335N TD	Early '65, wide neck	\$12,000	\$15,000
1969	Gibson ES-355 TDSV	Various colors, Bigsby	\$4,500	\$6,000
1965	Gibson Firebird III	Sunburst, reverse, 2 P-90s	\$9,000	\$12,000
1974	Gibson G-105	ss, 100 watts, 2x12, r	\$450	\$600
1946	Gibson L-12	Post-war	\$4,000	\$5,000
1950	Gibson L-7 C/L-7 CN	Natural	\$5,000	\$7,000
2009	Gibson Les Paul Custom			
	Jeff Beck 1954 Oxblood	Signed	\$18,000	\$25,000
1962	Gibson LG-1	Plastic bridge	\$2,000	\$2,500
1996	Gibson Roy Smeck Radio Grande Hawaiian Reissue	Grenadillo back and sides	\$3,800	\$5,000
2006	Gibson SG Special New Century	Dbl cut SG Special	\$1,600	\$2,200
1974	Gibson SJN Deluxe (Country-Western Jumbo)	4-ply top binding	\$2,000	\$3,000
1966	Gretsch Corvette (Solid Body)	Mahogany, cherry, 1 pickup	\$1,000	\$1,250
1965	Gretsch Model 6070		\$1,625	\$2,000
1990	Gretsch Synchronatic G400C		\$1,125	\$1,750



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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
2006	Guild CV-1C		\$900	\$1,400
1987	Guild GF-50	Rosewood	\$1,200	\$1,800
1979	Guild S-70AD		\$1,200	\$1,800
1954	Harmony H88 Stratotone Doublet	Small body, 2 pickups	\$1,250	\$1,500
1970s	HiWatt SE 4129 (Bass) Speaker Cabinet		\$2,250	\$3,250
1970s	Hohner Standard Series - RR Custom		\$300	\$500
1979	Ibanez Flanger FL301		\$120	\$150
1975	Ibanez Model 2387			
	Rocket Roll/Rocket Roll Sr.		\$4,000	\$6,000
1968	Kay K48/K21 Jazz Special	3 pickups	\$500	\$800
1983	Korg KCH-301 Chorus		\$40	\$50
1986	Kramer ZX Aero Star Series (Import)		\$150	\$300
1995	Larrivee D-10 Deluxe	Indian, Sitka, Abalone trim	\$2,800	\$4,800
1986	Marshall Micro Stack 3005	Black	\$450	\$575
1973	Marshall Model 1992	Black, printed C.B., Super Bass 100-Watt Head	\$2,250	\$3,000
1850s	Martin 2-40		\$8,500	\$12,000
1947	Martin 000-21		\$10,500	\$14,000
1874	Martin 0-28		\$10,000	\$15,000
2020	Martin D-16/D-16E Mahogany	Mahogany	\$1,500	\$2,200
2009	Martin D-28 1955 CFM IV	Madagascar	\$4,500	\$6,500
1991	Martin D-45 Custom Shop	Brazilian rosewood	\$20,000	\$35,000
1961	Martin F-55		\$3,000	\$4,500
1985	Martin J-65 / J-65E / J-65M		\$3,000	\$4,500
1982	Mesa-Boogie M-180		\$800	\$1,000
1969	Microfrets Wanderer		\$1,800	\$2,800
1976	Mossman Great Plains	Indian rosewood	\$3,500	\$4,500
1976	MXR Flanger	AC power cord, 2 inputs	\$250	\$350
1970s	Ovation Little Dude		\$200	\$300
1995	Peavey Delta Blues	TV front	\$450	\$600
2010	Peavey Vypyr Series	75 watts, combo	\$200	\$300
2005	PRS Dragon Doubleneck		\$35,000	\$50,000
1998	Ramirez R3	Cedar, rosewood	\$1,200	\$1,800
1940	Rickenbacker Electro			
	Tripleneck Steel		\$1,500	\$2,000
1975	Rickenbacker Model 362/12	double neck 6 /12	\$5,000	\$7,500
1950s	Sherwood Deluxe Lap Steel		\$350	\$450
2016	Strymon Ojai		\$125	\$175
1998	Taylor 815ce		\$2,500	\$3,250
2002	Taylor NS64ce		\$1,500	\$1,875
1966	Traynor YGA1 Head	45 watts	\$550	\$750
1973	Veleno Original (Aluminum Solidbody)	Rare color	\$20,000	\$25,000
1966	Yamaha SG-7/SG-7A		\$800	\$2,500

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THREE-PEAK

Triumph's *Allied Forces*

By Bret Adams

After five years of steadily building a fan base with four albums and dazzling lights-and-lasers concert spectacles, the Canadian trio known as Triumph was at a peak when it released *Allied Forces* in 1981.

Vocalist/guitarist Rik Emmett, vocalist/drummer Gil Moore, and bassist/keyboardist Mike Levine released their self-titled debut in 1976 and gained immediate attention. But true momentum came with their third album, 1979's *Just a Game*, which scored a *Billboard* Top 40 single with "Hold On" and the MTV/radio staple "Lay It On the Line." Emmett was also gaining attention for his versatility as a guitarist, songwriter, and singer.

The band's biggest-selling album (and often cited as their best), *Allied Forces* stormed rock radio with the title track as well as "Magic Power" and "Fight the Good Fight." Emmett spoke with *Vintage Guitar* about making this crucial album, which by design put him at the forefront; the way the band was operating, one album would be songs where Emmett sang the most, then the next would be for Moore. "Progressions of Power was 'Let's get Gil on the charts,' then it was going to be my turn again," he said.

"I was starting to think about the writing, like 'Magic Power' and 'Say Goodbye.' There were tunes where I definitely was thinking about radio and things that would recapture what happened with 'Lay It On the Line' and 'Hold On.' One of the big songs was 'Fight the Good Fight,' and there was a lot of writing because I had the tune, but Gil and I were doing a lot of writing together in the studio, [working on] arrangements. The understanding always was that I would bring a song and [it] would get Triumph-ized. It was like, 'Okay, what is suitable on big stages in arenas? What's suitable to be on album-oriented radio?'"


"That kind of thinking would affect how songs were done because I would bring in just voice and acoustic guitar; I'd play the changes and sing the melody and lyric and they would go, 'It's too Neil Young,' 'It's too

Gordon Lightfoot,' or 'It's too folksy.' And I'd go, 'It's not a folk song. We can do it any way you want.'

"'Magic Power' was a tribute to radio because I had a transistor radio when I was a kid; transistor radio was like a passport to the universe for a kid. It was like, 'There's a big wide world

out there.' There I was in a rock band, flying on jet planes into towns that I'd never been to and getting up in front of audiences singing my lyrics back at me. I'm going, 'Oh my God, what is this witchcraft? What makes it occur?' Well, it was radio.

"'Fight the Good Fight' coalesced that sense



Mike Levine, Gil Moore, and Rik Emmett with his Yamaha SBG3000 in 1981.

of what the band stood for. It was the anthem that says ‘There’s a good fight that you have to go through inside, and that’s what you offer out to the world – your sense of what’s good, what’s right, what’s just, and what’s true.’ The majority of us are trying to leave the campsite better than we found it. The good fight becomes this thing of self-empowerment. Triumph became a band that was saying, ‘Believe in yourself, follow your heart, hold on to your dreams, never surrender.’”

While RCA Records was conscious of radio airplay, Emmett said the band wasn’t hassled to record hit singles.

“We didn’t have record-company pressure very much in the early days because we were self-managed and left to our own devices. RCA did say, ‘You’re never going to sell multi-platinum, but you’ll go gold, you might even go platinum if we get enough airplay on FM radio. Just do your thing.’ In Triumph’s case, sometimes we were a little too heavy for our own good – heavy enough to make it onto Heavy Metal Day at the US Festival, but too heavy to cross over to AM radio.”

Triumph also had the luxury of recording in its own studio – Metalworks Studios, which Moore founded in ’78 just outside Toronto. Today, it remains a world-class recording, mixing, and mastering facility.

“*Allied Forces* was the first full album we made in Metalworks. It was like having a secret bunker where I could go and be self-



Emmett in the day with his guitar collection, which includes standards like a Strat and Tele, the Framus Jann Akerman he played at the US Festival in ’83, a Gretsch Chet Atkins, Gibson EDS, the Yairi slothead he bought as a teen, and others.

the room here.’ So, he turned that on and we laid one down. That was the take.

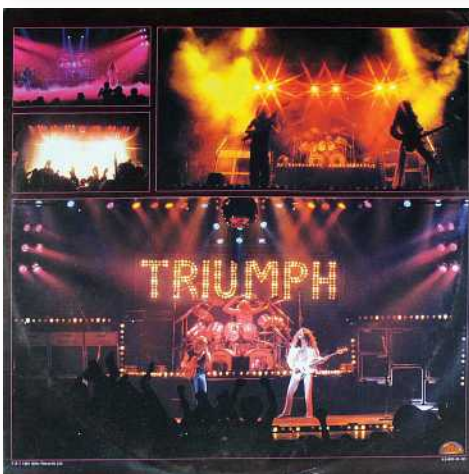
“If you don’t have the clock ticking, you don’t arrive at those kinds of things. But part of that was experience; we’d made enough records that we were starting to learn *how* to make them. We were maturing *and* we had this clubhouse.”

On *Allied Forces*, Emmett played a Gibson Howard Roberts Fusion and Les Paul, Framus Jan Akkerman, Fender Telecaster, and Ovation six- and 12-string acoustics. For the solo classical guitar piece “Petite Etude,” he used a Yairi factory second he bought in high school.

Allied Forces reached #23 on *Billboard* and went platinum in the U.S. Emmett believes songs from *Just a Game*, *Allied Forces*, 1984’s *Thunder Seven*, and ’87’s *Surveillance* represent the best of

Triumph. Expect *Allied Forces* favorites when Triumph reunites for its 50th anniversary and The Rock & Roll Machine Reloaded tour starting this spring. Emmett knows *Allied Forces* as a whole was special.

“Song-wise and recording-wise, there was a little bit of pixie dust magic on that album,” he said. “*Allied Forces* is the one that galvanized what Triumph was.” VG



indulgent. The ‘Ordinary Man’ solo took a long time because I couldn’t get the sound right. At one point I played a lick while the engineer, Ed Stone, had the talk back mic on and I went, ‘It sounds really different when you got the talk back on.’ He goes, ‘Yeah, because the mic that’s up in the room is on.’ And I said, ‘Well, that’s the sound. We’ve got to get more ambience. We need distance miking in



The Beatles at their impromptu January '69 concert on the roof of the Apple Corps headquarters in London, just prior to recording *Abbey Road*.

ROUTE TO IMMORTALITY

The Beatles *Abbey Road*

By Wolf Marshall

By 1969, the Beatles had reinvented popular music, transcended teen-idol trappings, became a global phenomenon, and set the bar for rock-band aspirations. Pursuing serious composition, they developed their music in the studio for *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver*, and *Sgt. Pepper*. After years of artistic friction, business disputes, compartmentalizations of the “white album” and *Get Back* portending the group’s demise, *Abbey Road* proved their most mature, focused effort. Making another album in the original band tradition with producer George Martin (who’d left during *Get Back*) renewed their enthusiasm and sparked adventurous sounds woven into memorable compositions.

Recorded from February 22 through August 20, 1969, Martin and engineers Geoff Emerick, Phil McDonald, John Kurlander and Alan Parsons harnessed the solid-state EMI TG 12345 console, which offered improved sonics. The band’s instrument arsenal changed; at the forefront was the ’57 Les Paul dubbed “Lucy,” played by Eric Clapton on “While My Guitar Gently Weeps” after being gifted to George Harrison. Previously owned by Rick Derringer, it was factory-refinished red, revealing its non-matched maple top. George also used his ’68 Rosewood Telecaster, “Rocky,” a ’61 Strat

repainted in day-glo colors, and a J-200. John favored his ’66 Epiphone Casino (stripped of its finish), a D-28, Framus 12-string acoustic, and a ’64 J-160E (also stripped). Paul used a ’63 Höfner 500/1, ’65 Rickenbacker 4001S stripped to match the other two, ’62 Casino, and a D-28. The Beatles had an array of amps but George frequently plugged into a Leslie 147RV rotating speaker cabinet (gifted by Clapton), and after ’67 they often recorded direct to the console. Other instruments included a Jazz Bass, Bass VI (played by George and John), and a Rhodes 73 electric piano. Harrison, who championed the Beatles’ Indian influences, brought in a Moog IIIP synthesizer that was prominent throughout *Abbey Road*, presaging synth sounds in prog rock.

Lennon wrote “Come Together” for Timothy Leary’s gubernatorial campaign. Begun as a fast blues inspired by Chuck Berry’s “You Can’t Catch Me,” he slowed it to a laid-back groove and added gobbledegook lyrics. Lennon lifted “ol’ flat-top...” for which he later settled a lawsuit by recording three Berry songs. The basic track (vocal, hand-claps, tambourine, Harrison’s rhythm guitar, McCartney’s bass, Ringo Starr’s drums dampened with towels), was recorded on July 21 on four-track and

transferred to eight-track for overdubbing. On July 22, McCartney added a swampy Rhodes part, Harrison provided power-chording in choruses, and Lennon re-recorded his vocal with tape echo. Other overdubs included Lennon’s interlude guitar parts and Starr’s maracas. One of Lennon’s favorites, “Come Together” was cited by Martin as quintessential Beatles synergy.

Inspired by James Taylor’s “Something in the Way She Moves,” Harrison wrote “Something” on piano and made a demo on February 25. The ballad is one of two *Abbey* tunes marking his growing compositional prowess. Sinatra called it “the greatest love song of the past 50 years,” though mistakenly credited Lennon/McCartney. The basic track was cut May 2 (George’s guitar, Paul’s bass, drums, John’s piano, Billy Preston’s Hammond organ),

while bass, vocals, and second guitar (Les Paul/Leslie) were overdubbed at Olympic on May 5. Harrison’s double-tracked vocal was recorded July 16 and his iconic one-take solo on August 15, while Martin conducted strings on the only remaining track.

Lennon didn’t participate in “Maxwell’s Silver Hammer.” Dismissing it as “Paul’s granny music,” he and Yoko Ono remained onlookers as McCartney’s vaudevillian tendencies resurfaced. Offsetting music-hall campiness, Paul’s interest in avant-garde theatre elicited its “murder ballad” story line. Laboriously constructed in the studio, a basic track was recorded on July 9 (Paul’s piano, George’s Bass VI, drums) after three days and 16 takes. Many overdubs followed, including McCartney’s lead, George/Ringo harmony vocals, Harrison’s Tele/Leslie parts, Martin’s Hammond, and anvil. Paul added multiple Moog parts on August 6.

McCartney channeled ’50s doo-wop, R&B, particularly Fats Domino’s sound, and Louisiana “swamp pop” in “Oh! Darling.” Originating in *Get Back* sessions, the basic track (bass, Tele/Leslie backbeat strums and arpeggiations, drums, John’s piano) was captured on April 20. Paul spent a week in July singing over the track without headphones for a live effect, perfecting the rough vocal timbre. Lennon later remarked he would’ve preferred singing the lead because it was more his style.

Since the band’s inception, one Starr spot per album was mandatory. One of only two songs written by the drummer (with George’s assistance), “Octopus’s Garden” flaunted



1950 Stromberg G-3 Cutaway



1958 Guild X-500 w/2 D'Armond's



1958 Gretsch 6122 1st Country Gent



1963 Gibson Johnny Smith Double Mint



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1965 Rickenbacker 360/12 12-string



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1958 Gibson Les Paul Junior Single Cut



1968 Gibson Les Paul Std. 1 original owner



1969 Gibson Les Paul Std. Gold Top P-90's



1980 Gibson Les Paul Heritage Std. 80 Elite



1981 Gibson Les Paul Custom Harvert Gold



1984 Gibson Les Paul Guitar Trader Bootleg



1984 Gibson Les Paul Jimmy Wallace '59 Re.



1985 Gibson Les Paul Std. early '59 Reissue



1930 National Triolian "Polychrome" Clean !



1932 National Style O near mint



1933 Gibson L-00 1st issue very Rare



1940 Martin D-18 Tortoise H'stock



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1980 James Olsen rare Dreadnaught



2013 Paul Reed Smith Angelus "Brazilian"



1960 Fender Precision Bass rare Black finish



1960 Fender Jazz Bass Olympic White "Stack"



1964 Fender Precision Bass Olympic White



1967 Fender Precision Bass rare Teal Green



1965 Ampeg BB-4 Baby Bass Clean !



1989 Steinberger XL-2 5-string Bass White



1997 Spector NS-4 Bass Purple Quilt



2009 Citron AE-4 Swallow 4-string



1958 Gibson EB-2 rare 1st year Mint



1960 Gibson EBO Bass Exceptional !



1961 Gibson EB-3 near mint example



1964 Gibson T'bird IV Bass ultra clean



1982 Wal Pro I Bass rare 'bursted Neck



1998 Curbow XT-33 USA Petite 5-string



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country influences and is the last Ringo number released by the Beatles. Inspiration came during a trip to Sardinia, where he heard fanciful stories about mollusks building undersea gardens. The basic track (drums, bass, George's Strat/Leslie and John's Casino chordings) was cut on April 26 with overdubs (Ringo's double-tracked lead, harmony vocals, Paul's piano) in mid July. Like "Yellow Submarine," a number of sound effects were also added (gurgling into milk with a straw and singing through a Leslie) to reinforce the underwater impression.

Lennon's "I Want You" was the first song recorded but one of the last finished. Begun February 22 at Trident, it's essentially a 26-bar altered-blues in Am with mixed meters and surprise E7^b9 ending. The basic track included John's lead-guitar/vocal unison parts – in the classic blues tradition, drums and bass. Lennon's guide vocal was used on the master. April 18-20 yielded other overdubs including George's doubled Les Paul intro, distorted rhythm guitar, conga, and Preston's Hammond. The second section, "She's So Heavy," begun August 11, shifts from 4/4 to 12/8; the three-minute outro expands the hypnotic arpeggiated intro riff and builds to a dramatic climax, complete with Lennon's white-noise Moog effects, ended abruptly with Emerick's tape slice.

Where side one was a conventional six-song program, side two was introduced by two pieces before launching a sprawling medley epitomizing art rock, a medium practically invented by the Beatles. The intricate compilation, proposed by Paul and encouraged by Martin, gathered and assembled unfinished bits into a large-scale thematic work. It represented a programming compromise between Paul and John.

Harrison's second landmark composition embodied his growing rhythmic complexity. "Here Comes the Sun" reflected optimism and

Slow Ballad

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a treble clef staff for guitar and a bass clef staff for bass. Chord changes are indicated above the guitar staff: C, Cmaj7, C7, F, D7, G, Am7, G/B, Am, Am(maj7), Am7, D9, F, Eb, G/D, and C. The guitar staff includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and 'full' markings. The bass staff shows fret numbers and some rhythmic markings like '12/14' and '1/2'. The piece is in 4/4 time and consists of 26 bars.

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Harrison's solo in "Something" finds him posing melodic rock sounds over sophisticated chord changes. The blues/rock factor is felt in his string bends, phrase placement, and pentatonic vocabulary, however his unique sensibilities defy traditional cliches. He uses repeated ideas in measures 1-3 and emotional pre-bends, throughout. In 5-6, he outlines

chords melodically, albeit with bends and thoughtful note choices, in the sense of a jazz player. Note his use of chromaticism to spice up the G/B chord. His string-bending motifs on Am in 7-8 are reminiscent of gamaks – ornaments common in Indian classical music – which he studied assiduously, transplanted into Western pop music.

sunniness – a respite from the Beatles' business nightmares. The basic track (George's capoe J-200, bass, drums) was made on July 7 with overdubs in the following weeks: George and Paul's vocals, hand claps, harmonium, and additional acoustic guitars. Martin's orchestral score and George's Moog parts were recorded August 15, just before the final mix.

John considered "Because" a variant of

Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, which he initially asked Yoko to play backwards on piano, for inspiration. The tune is regaled for its cycling unresolved harmonic structure and circular arpeggio figures, gorgeous three-part harmony vocals arranged by Martin, Lennon's electric-guitar arpeggiations doubled by Martin's electric harpsichord, and Harrison's Moog lines in the bridge.

Slow and Heavy

Chords: Dm, Dm/F, E7b9, Bb7, A7b9

Gtrs. 1 & 2

Gtr. 3

Moderate Rock (Double Time)

Chords: Am7, C, C/E, F, N.C., Am7

Gtr. 1

Lennon's "I Want You (She's So Heavy)" has a two-part structure implicit in the title. The intro (Gtrs. 1 and 2) briefly presages the closing sequence. John's arpeggiated, mildly dissonant progression in 12/8 (Dm-Dm/F-E7^b9-B^b7-A7+) has classical implications, over which Harrison (Gtr. 3) plays a signature melodic rock line in measures 1-3. Note the added 2/4 bar before the shift

to 4/4, an example of John's fascination with mixed meters. The verses follow an elongated blues form in Am with occasional Beatles tweaks such as added chords Am7-C-C/E-F-Am7 in 11-14 and shifting meters. The lyrics are a study in Lennon minimalism, channeling classic blues traditions. He recites the repeated melody in tandem with his guitar shadowing his voice.

Paul's "You Never Give Me Your Money" referenced the cynical side of the band's business hassles. The sectional piece initiated the medley, beginning gently and building to a harder

edge with feel and timbre changes. The basic track (Paul's piano, John's distorted Casino, George's Tele/Leslie, drums), was recorded on May 6. Paul added bass as counter melody

lightly with piano, George's Bass VI, and Martin's 30-piece orchestral accompaniment, overdubbed August 15. Drums enter at 0:32, providing rock momentum into the

throughout, a prime example of his interest in bass as a lead instrument cultivated during *Sgt. Pepper*. Noteworthy is the standard-jazz cycle progression in verses, not unlike "Fly Me to the Moon." A double-time change (1:09) ushers in a boogie-woogie groove. In guitar-dominated sections (1:31), Lennon plays lower-register lead parts, Harrison higher chiming arpeggiation. Guitars converge (2:12) then resume rhythm/lead roles (2:28) where John plays lead licks against George's boogie comping and gradually fading C-G/B-A chord phrases.

The fade morphs into wind sounds, crickets, George's reverb-drenched tremoloed riffs and John's fingerpicked arpeggiations setting up two Lennon fragments. "Sun King," "Mean Mr. Mustard," recorded as one basic track on July 24, depicted mythic characters out of the Yellow Submarine playbook. "Sun King" is a slow ballad with lush harmony and Spanglish lyrics. "Mustard" paints a contrasting cartoonish picture, underscored by Paul's fuzz-bass lines. "Polythene Pam"/"She Came in Through the Bathroom Window" were also recorded together on July 25 with John's 12-string, Paul's bass, George's Les Paul, and Ringo's redone drums with overdubs (vocals, percussion and George's solos) on July 28 and 30. "Pam" is pure Lennon fantasy while Paul's "Bathroom Window" takes poetic license with a home invasion by an overzealous fan. Both were edited into "Mustard" on August 14. John wasn't present for the paired recording of Paul's "Golden Slumbers"/"Carry That Weight" captured on July 2. The former, based on Thomas Dekker's Elizabethan poem, "Cradle Song," begins

COLUMN Fretprints

Moderate Rock

A7 D7 A7 D7

Grtrs. 1 & 2

Paul ^{1/2}

George

A7 D7 A7

John

D7 A7 D7

Paul

George

A7 D7 A7 D7

John

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with a treble clef staff and a guitar fretboard staff. The first system shows a 4-measure phrase with A7 and D7 chords. The second system shows a 4-measure phrase with A7 and D7 chords, including a triplet and a vibrato. The third system shows a 4-measure phrase with D7 and A7 chords, including a vibrato. The fourth system shows a 4-measure phrase with A7 and D7 chords, including a vibrato. The fretboard staff shows fingerings for the treble (T), middle (A), and bass (B) strings.

George, Paul, and John were proficient lead guitarists, showcased on “The End,” begun July 23. While George was the lead guitarist onstage and handled the lion’s share of solos, Paul soloed in “Ticket to Ride” and “Taxman,” while John did likewise in “Get Back” and “You Can’t Do That.” Their immortal jam, recorded August 7, featured the three trading two-bar phrases. Following Ringo’s solo (his only on a Beatles record) and A7-D7 vamp, guitars emerge (0:53). The Beatles were notorious for experimenting with sounds, and Emerick remembers crafting a distinct tone for each. The soloists were recorded together in one take after developing different approaches; Paul’s taut and rhythmic, George’s flowing and elegant, and John’s aggressive and distorted. It was the only time Lennon asked Yoko to leave the room, ensuring unrestrained camaraderie while jamming. The ending (1:29) dissipates energy, dissolving into piano chords, harmony vocals, Martin’s orchestral pads and George’s melodious solo over C-D/C-E^b/C-F/C-C changes. A 20-second silence and stray piano chord (from the “Mean Mr. Mustard” edit) provided the codetta, “Her Majesty.” Paul initially jettisoned the humorous music-hall ditty, recorded solo on July 2 with vocal and D-28. It was subsequently approved by McCartney when Kurlander, loath to discard Beatles recordings, spliced it into the master for safekeeping.

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 End” spotlights each band member, starting with Starr’s drum solo. After establishing an A7-D7 vamp, McCartney, Harrison, and Lennon (in that order) trade solo phrases. This excerpt presents the first two sections. All three stick to Am pentatonic melody but find different expressions in the interplay. Paul’s (likely his Casino/Twin) is rhythmically involved with syncopated funky phrasing and a twangy semi-

distorted sound. George’s approach is Clapton-inspired, relying on a thicker, overdriven midrange timbre (Les Paul/Deluxe, possibly beefed up with FuzzFace or Tone Bender) and smooth blues-based bends and vibrato. John’s sound is very bassy and heavily distorted (Casino neck pickup/Vox Conqueror with built-in fuzz) and exploits double-stops, chord partials and rootsy rock-and-roll mannerisms.

penultimate piece, “Carry That Weight,” which also features piano, Bass VI, Ringo’s drums (plus timpani) and Lennon’s vocals in choruses. “You Never Give Me Your Money” is momentarily reprised as an orchestral

interlude (0:25) supplanted by George’s brief solo (0:35) leading to vocal-harmony choruses (0:44). “Carry That Weight” returns (1:07) and closes with an abbreviated recall of C-G/B-A changes heard earlier.

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National Tricone #2, '30, Wild Rose, Sq neck,exc,ohsc.....\$4500
National Tricone Style 1, 2000, nickel/silver, nm ohsc.....\$3500
Duolian, 1932, grey frosted crinkle finish, exc, case.....\$3900
Deneve Square Nk Dobro, birdseye top, fancy and loud.....\$1900
**Dobrato parlor sized metal cutaway, Bigsby & B-Bender,
with National style cone, exc, gigbag.....\$2100**
Rick Lap Steel, B6, 1948, Bakelite, ohsc.....\$1650

Mandolins & Banjos

F-4, '13, Black top, double Flowerpot, Handels, ohsc...\$6900
Gibson F-12, 1949, sunburst, Braz board, exc, ohsc.....\$3500
Gibson H-1 Mandola, 1914, pumpkin top, vgc+, hsc.....\$2350
Gibson A-4,1917, reddish sb, Handel tuners, vgc+, hsc.....\$2500
Lyon & Healy Style A Prof Mandolin, ca 1920, ohsc vgc.....\$3500
National Triolon '29, brown/yellow sb, metal bod ohsc.....\$2100
Weber Yellowstone Deluxe F-style, exc, ohsc.....\$4250
Gibson TB-3 Mastertone, 1933, 5-String neck by Frank
Neat, 40 hole archtop, exc, hsc.....\$5900
Bacon Professional Style 3, 5-string c. 1925, exc.....\$2500

Amps

Amplified Nation Dumble style Wonderland Overdrive.\$3750
Bogner Goldfinger 45 Watt head & 2-12 Bottom, exc.....\$1900
Fender Bassman, 1962, Head and 1-12 Bottom, exc.....\$3250
Fender Deluxe Reverb, 1965, black Panel, exc.....\$3950
Fender Princeton Reverb, 1965, Black Panel, vgc+.....\$3950
Fender Pro, 1952, 5B5 circuit, Wide panel Tweed,.....\$3950
Fender Super, 1960, Brown tolex, 2 Weber 12"s, vgc .2750
Fender Vibrolux 1961, Tweed, Jensen P-10R ,vgc.....\$5500
Vibroverb '63 Re-issue, Brown, 2-10" Rev & Vib , exc..\$1695
Fender Reverb Unit, c 1964, White, vgc+.....\$1650
Magnatone 410 Combo, 1962, 1-12", Vibrato, vgc.....\$1500
**Marshall 4x10 Bluesbreaker, 1969, Plexi, orig speakers
& transformers, signed by Jim Marshall, exc-.....\$9,900**
Marshall JCM-800/85, 50 Watts, 1 channel, case.....\$2250
MESA BOOGIE MK III, 1985, 60w, 1-12 spker, exc.....\$1550
SWART Space Tone Amp, Tweed, 2007, 8" spkr exc...\$1250

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MOST VALUABLE A HOST OF COLLECTIBLE BASSES, AMPS, BANJOS, MANDOS, AND MORE

Vintage Guitar is marking 40 years of publication, continuing with an examination of basses, amps, effects, mandolins, ukuleles, resonators, and lap-steels that have become exceedingly collectible. Using data accumulated in research for *The Official Vintage Guitar Price Guide 2026*, we offer a fresh look.

**BY RAM TULI &
PETER S. KOHMAN**

BASSES



2 1958-'60 Custom Color
Fender Precision
(\$32,000-\$40,000)

The 1958-'60 Precision Bass is another cornerstone – the refined, post-'57 iteration of Leo Fender's groundbreaking invention that defined electric bass. The late-'50s examples have the single split-coil pickup, one-piece maple neck, and gold-anodized aluminum pickguard. Standard sunburst finishes dominated production, but custom colors are worth big bucks. Sunbursts from the period go for \$20,000-\$28,000.



3 1951 Precision Bass
(\$25,000-\$35,000)

The earliest Precision, introduced in late 1951, it was the first mass-produced electric bass, designed to provide musicians with a portable, fretted, amplified alternative to the "doghouse" upright. Production began in October 1951, with a "slab" (non-contoured) body made from ash with an offset double-cutaway shape (later used on the Stratocaster) finished in blond nitrocellulose like the Telecaster. Like most first-year Fenders, the '51 is a bit more desirable; the '52 runs about \$5,000 less.



4 Zemaitis "Heart Hole"
(\$25,000-\$35,000)

The '70s Zemaitis "Heart Hole" represents the pinnacle of British luthiery from Tony Zemaitis, the English maker renowned for his wildly creative hand-built instruments. While Zemaitis crafted numerous iconic electric guitars, he made very few basses, and those with distinctive heart-shaped soundhole are even more scarce.



1 1960-'62 RARE COLOR FENDER JAZZ
(\$48,000-\$150,000)

Introduced in 1960 as Fender's upscale follow-up to the Precision

Bass, these early models employ the concentric "stacked" knob configuration that make them holy grails, especially in original, well-preserved rare finishes like Sonic Blue or Sea-foam Green. More common colors, like Olympic White and Black sell for \$38,000-\$45,000. Standard sunburst models fetch \$25,000-\$35,000.



7

6 1964 Pelham Blue Thunderbird IV (\$23,500-\$30,000)

Introduced in '63, the Thunderbird IV had the angular "reverse" body designed by automotive stylist Ray Dietrich, matching the Firebird guitars. The T-bird's humbucking pickups deliver a growling tone that defined artists like Pete Quaife (The Kinks), John Entwistle (The Who), and later Jack Bruce (Cream). Pelham Blue – a vibrant, striking metallic finish – was a rare custom option in '64, making it one of the most-coveted. Sunburst Thunderbirds from the era sell for \$10,000–\$15,000.

7 1961-'63 Rickenbacker Model 4001 Fireglo (\$20,000-\$25,000)

Introduced in '61 as the deluxe two-pickup version of the 4000 (with stereo "Rick-O-Sound" capability via the famous "horseshoe" bridge pickup and "toaster top" neck pickup), the earliest 4001s have the signature semi-hollow maple body with white binding, neck-through construction, rosewood fretboard with triangle inlays, Kluson tuners, and the distinctive "horseshoe" headstock. Fireglo – the classic fiery red-orange sunburst – was the most popular and recognizable color for early Rics, giving them an instantly identifiable look.



8

8 1972-'75 Rickenbacker Model 4005L Lightshow (\$20,000-\$25,000)

One of the rarest vintage basses, the 4005L was a variant of the semi-hollow 4005 with Rickenbacker's internal "Lightshow" circuitry. The 4005 (introduced in '65) had a double-cut maple semi-hollow body, neck-through construction, rosewood fretboard with triangular inlays, dual toaster-top pickups (with stereo Rick-O-Sound), and that signature ringing, mid-forward Ric tone. The 4005L was given colored lights (often multi-hued) that pulsed beneath a translucent plastic front panel on the body, activated by playing notes, creating a trippy, stage-visual effect inspired by the era's light shows. It was built in extremely small numbers and it's believed that five or fewer survive today.

10 1964-'66 Rickenbacker Model 1999 Rose-Morris (\$18,000-\$25,000)

The ultra-rare British export version of the 4001S, distributed through Rose-Morris (Rickenbacker's U.K. distributor in the mid '60s), it was essentially a 4001S (single-cut, unbound-body, mono-output version of the 4001). They were built to Rose-Morris specs with minor tweaks such as the addition of "Made In U.S.A." on the truss cover for export compliance. They have the classic Ric semi-hollow maple body,



9 1968 PAISLEY TELECASTER BASS (\$18,000-\$25,000)

Introduced in '68 as a revival of the '50s Precision, the Telecaster Bass had a solid alder body, 34" scale, split-coil pickup under a chrome cover, slab maple fretboard, and Tele headstock. Briefly offered in finishes dubbed Pink Paisley and Blue Floral, they were Fender's nod to hippie counterculture. Blue Floral is rarer than the Pink Paisley and features a vibrant blue background with swirling floral motifs, while Paisley variants often lean red/pink. Both versions were short-lived and produced in limited numbers (estimates suggest 200 or fewer).

neck-through, rosewood fretboard with triangle inlays, toaster-top pickups (with Rick-O-Sound stereo via the bridge pickup), and Fireglo finish. Production was limited – only two known shipments went to the U.K. from '64 to '66, making them far scarcer than the U.S.-market 4001. They gained legendary status through associations with British rock royalty – Entwistle, Quaife, and others including Chris Squire (Yes) favored similar export models. The unbound body and headstock give them a sleeker look compared to the 4001.



5 1961-'62 RARE COLOR BASS VI (\$20,000-\$30,000)

Introduced in 1961 to compete with the Danelectro six-string "tick tock," early examples have a 30" scale, offset alder body, three single-coil pickups (with individual on/off switches and rhythm/lead circuits), master Volume and Tone controls, a floating vibrato bridge/tailpiece, and slab rosewood fretboard. Marketed as a "bass guitar" for players wanting deep tones without the full commitment, they became popular in session work (perhaps the best known example is the solo on Glen Campbell's "Wichita Lineman"). Like most pre-CBS Fenders, rare custom colors command a premium. Common custom colors sell for \$16,000-\$25,000 while sunburst models fetch \$8,500-\$12,500.



1 DUMBLE OVERDRIVE SPECIAL

(\$175,000-\$275,000)

The Dumble Overdrive Special is one of the most sought-after guitar amplifiers. Built by Howard Alexander Dumble (VG, April '22), it's his flagship, with production beginning in '72 and in limited numbers – approximately 300 total – until Dumble's death in '22. The ODS was inspired by hearing Robben Ford play through a Bassman head into a 2x12 cabinet, leading Dumble to evolve his earlier designs. It aimed to capture an evolved Fender-style tone – thick, creamy overdrive with long sustain, rich harmonics, exceptional touch sensitivity, and dynamic response that rewards precise playing. Each amp was built to order, typically after an “audition” where Dumble assessed the player's style. No two were identical because Dumble tailored components, voicings, and power ratings to the player.

AMPS

2 Trainwreck (\$25,000-\$45,000)

Ken Fischer was a self-taught electronics wizard with roots in TV repair, Ampeg design work, and custom amp mods. He started building in late '82/early '83, initially as favors for friends and pros like Mark Knopfler and Eddie Van Halen. Unlike mass-produced amps, each



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Trainwreck was hand-built using new-old-stock parts, transformers designed by Fischer, and obsessive attention to layout, lead dress, and component voicing. Instead of serial numbers, he gave them feminine names (e.g. “Agatha,” “Sally,” “Jan Marie”). No two are alike.

3 1962 “Coffin Logo” Marshall JTM45 (\$20,000-\$35,000)

The JTM45 is the original guitar amp built in England by Jim Marshall. Launched in late '62, this 45-watt head with its matching 4x12 cab was designed as a response to Fender amps that were expensive and hard to find in the U.K. While it copied the basic circuit of the '59/'60 Bassman 5F6-A, Marshall tweaked components that gave it an aggressive, mid-forward “British” edge.

4 1958-'59 Fender Twin (\$18,000-\$25,000)

The model 5F8-A, often called the “High Power Twin” represents the pinnacle of Fender's tweed era. Produced from late '57 through early 1960, it's widely regarded as one of Leo's greatest achievements and the most-collectible standard-production Fender ever made. This amp produces odd and even harmonics better than any other Fender and rivals the legendary 5F6-A tweed Bassman in influence and desirability (but with double the power).



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5 1965-'66 MARSHALL JTM45 “BLUES-BREAKER” COMBOS (\$12,000-\$25,000)

The '65-'66 Marshall JTM45 Model 1961 and Model 1962 represent the pinnacle of early Marshall combo designs – portable, powerful versions of the JTM45 circuit that bridged the company's head-focused origins to combo versatility. These are the amps that earned the “Bluesbreaker” nickname after Eric Clapton used the 2x12 Model 1962 on John Mayall's iconic 1966 *Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton* (a.k.a. “Beano”) album. The 4x10 Model 1961 is rarer, often seen as a “lead” variant with tremolo.

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7 1958-'60 FENDER BASSMAN

(\$8,000-\$12,000)

The model 5F6-A was the final and most-celebrated version of the narrow-panel tweed Bassman. It is often hailed as one of the greatest guitar amplifiers ever built – if not the greatest. Introduced in 1958 and produced through early 1960, this 4x10 combo perfected the tweed-era formula – massive headroom, thick midrange punch, musical compression, and creamy overdrive when pushed. Its circuit directly inspired Marshall's JTM45 (and the “British stack” era), countless boutiques, and modern high-gain tones.

6 1965-'66 Marshall “18 Watt” Combos

(\$12,000-\$20,000)

The Model 1973 (2x12) and Model 1974 (1x12) are part of Marshall's original 18-watt “practice” series. The low-wattage EL84-powered combos were introduced to compete with smaller amps like the Vox AC15 and Fender Deluxe Reverb. Marshall's first dedicated small combos (alongside the 2x10 Model 1958), they were built during the company's expansion beyond JTM45 heads and larger combos. They offer classic Marshall crunch and overdrive at bedroom volumes, earning cult status today for their sweet, compressed tone and influence on boutique 18-watt designs.

8 1959-'60 Fender Bandmaster

(\$8,000-\$12,000)

The 3x10 version of the Bandmaster was a transitional model between the 1x15 and 1x12 piggyback versions. A



9 1966-'69 MARSHALL MODEL 1959 SUPER LEAD CUSTOM COLOR

(\$8,000-\$12,000)

The '66-'69 Marshall Super Lead defined classic rock tone. Introduced as a response to demands for more power, this non-Master Volume 100-watt head with its signature gold plexiglas control panel delivered massive saturated overdrive, mid-forward punch, and harmonic richness. Most left the factory in the standard black Tolex, but a handful were ordered in white, red, and purple. These colors add significant rarity to an amp that is already elusive.

highly coveted piece of Fender history, it occupies the sweet spot between Bassman and high-powered Twin in the narrow-panel tweed lineup. Often called the “best of the big tweeds” by collectors for its balanced power, punchy tone, and relative compactness compared to the 4x10 Bassman or 2x12 Twin.

10 1963 Fender Vibroverb

(\$8,000-\$12,000)

The model 2x10 brown Vibroverb is one of the most legendary and collectible Fender amplifiers ever produced. It's a true milestone as the first production Fender amp to feature both onboard spring reverb and vibrato (tremolo) in a single unit. Introduced in early '63 and produced for approximately one year, it blended the best of late tweed-era warmth with emerging blackface clarity and features. Fewer than 300 were made, making pristine originals extremely rare.



1972 EMS SYNTHI HI-FLI

(\$8,000-\$50,000)

This groundbreaking multi-effects processor was released in '72 by Electronic Music Studios (EMS) in London. David Gilmour was its most famous adopter, using it during the *Dark Side of the Moon* era, but Steve Hackett of Genesis also used one. Designed by EMS engineer David Cockerell, it was conceived as a guitar synthesizer/effects unit, though it works brilliantly on other instruments, vocals, or as a studio processor. Very few were made, so it's one of the most-collectible guitar effects.



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5 1976-'77 Tycobrahe Octavia (\$3,500-\$5,000)

One of the most-controversial octave fuzz pedals, it was made by Tycobrahe Sound Company in Hermosa Beach, California (founded by Jim Gamble), and was the commercial release of a circuit designed by Roger Mayer in '67. Mayer built custom versions for Hendrix (germanium-based with ferrite transformers, later evolutions using silicon). After Hendrix's death in 1970, a Mayer unit was allegedly brought to Tycobrahe for repair, where an employee reverse-engineered the circuit and Tycobrahe began making their own version. Mayer has long disputed this as an unauthorized copy, and few were made.

4 1966-'67 THE DALLAS ARBITER FUZZ FACE (\$3,000-\$8,000)

The original version of a legendary two-transistor fuzz, it was introduced in late '66 by Ivor Arbiter (of Arbiter-Western, based in London). Designed as a simple, affordable fuzz inspired by earlier designs like the Tone Bender, it was refined for better control and dynamics. The enclosure's circular shape, knob placement, and "smile" logo gave it the "Fuzz Face" nickname. Earliest units, made before the merger with Dallas in '68, have NKT275 germanium transistors and are prized as the holy grail, delivering classic warm, smooth, touch-sensitive germanium fuzz a la Jimi Hendrix. Fuzzfaces with BC108 transistors cost about \$1,000 less.



EFFECTS

2 1994-'97 Klon Centaur Professional Overdrive (\$6,000-\$10,000)

The Klon Centaur Professional Overdrive (a.k.a. Klon Centaur or "gold Klon") is one of the most sought-after pedals ever made. Bill Finnegan released the Klon Centaur in late '94 as a "transparent" overdrive/boost designed to enhance an amp's natural tone without coloring it too much – adding dynamic overdrive, a touch of tube-like compression, and clean signal blending for clarity and headroom. Why are they so expensive? Ask someone lucky enough to own one. After '97, the gold case had no "longtail horsie" logo, but it's the same pedal and about a thousand bucks cheaper. The later silver-case version is also the same, but two thousand bucks cheaper.

3 '60s Binson Echorec (\$3,000-\$10,000)

The Echorec is one of the most-unique

analog delays from the '60s, made in Italy by Binson. Unlike common tape-loop delays (e.g., Echoplex, Roland Space Echo), the Echorec used a magnetic "drum" – a rotating steel/alloy disc wrapped with a thin magnetic wire or tape – instead of a tape reel. This design, invented by engineer Bonfiglio Bini in the '50s, provided stable timing, minimal flutter, and a warm, organic echo with natural degradation on repeats. David Gilmour relied heavily on one for many Pink Floyd recordings.



6 1968-'73 UNIVOX UNI-VIBE

(\$3,500-\$5,000)

The most highly regarded modulation effect, it was the North American version of the Shin-ei Uni-Vibe designed by engineer Fumio Mieda in the mid '60s. First appearing in Japan as the Honey Vibra-Chorus (or Psychedelic Machine variant), it evolved after Honey's 1969 bankruptcy, when Shin-ei took over production and added an external speed-control pedal. Univox (via Unicord in the U.S.) imported and distributed it starting in '68. Marketed as a simulation of a rotating Leslie speaker, it ended up sounding nothing like one – instead delivering a thick, throbbing swirl that's part phaser, part chorus/vibrato, with a unique pulsating character. Associated with Hendrix and Gilmour, Robin Trower famously used it for his soaring, creamy leads on "Bridge of Sighs."



7

7 1965-'68 Zonk Machine

(\$3,000-\$6,000)

This early British fuzz pedal was made and distributed by John Hornby Skewes & Co., a Leeds-based instrument importer/retailer. Introduced in late '65 (with most surviving examples from '66 onward), it was one of the earliest U.K. fuzz boxes to follow the Sola Sound Tone Bender MkI and is widely regarded as one of its closest derivatives – essentially a Tone Bender MkI clone with subtle tweaks. Designed/built by Charlie Ramskir (of Wilsic Electronics in Doncaster), it was aimed at the burgeoning British rock scene. Being hand-made, production was small-scale; exact numbers are unknown but low, so surviving originals are extremely scarce.



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8 1965-'66 Sola Sound Tone Bender MkI

(\$2,500-\$5,000)

One of the earliest and most-legendary fuzz pedals, it was designed in mid '65 by electronics engineer Gary Hurst, a former Vox employee. Hurst created it at the request of session guitarist Vic Flick, who wanted a pedal that could replicate the sound of the American Maestro FZ-1 Fuzz-Tone but with more sustain and volume. The Maestro ran on about three volts, which limited its output and sustain, so Hurst modified the circuit to run on nine volts and tweaked resistor values for a louder, more aggressive and sustaining fuzz.

10 1974-'77 Mu-Tron Bi-Phase

(\$2,000-\$3,500)

From Musitronics (often branded as Mu-Tron), the Mu-Tron Bi-Phase is regarded as the world's first dual phaser and one of the most flexible and sought-after phasers of the '70s. Introduced in '71 and made into early '80s, it was designed by Mike Beigel and the Musitronics team, building on optical-electronic tech from their envelope filters like the Mu-Tron III. It used two six-stage phaser circuits with independent sweep generator (LFO), allowing for swirling, stereo-like phasing, synced sweeps, and out-of-phase effects.



9 1966 DALLAS RANGEMASTER TREBLE BOOSTER

(\$2,000-\$5,000)

Perhaps the most-influential treble booster from the British Invasion/early blues-rock era, the Rangemaster was made in London by Dallas Musical Ltd. Introduced in '65-'66 as a simple germanium-powered preamp/boost, it addressed a common issue with mid '60s British tube amps – they tended to sound dark, muddy, or compressed when overdriven, especially with humbucker guitars like Les Pauls. The Rangemaster provided clean gain boost focused on the upper mids and highs, adding cut, clarity, sparkle, and harmonic bite without excessive distortion. Its most-famous association is Clapton's use on the "Beano" album.



1 1929-'39 GIBSON GRANADA RB

(\$175,000-\$250,000)

Bluegrass banjo playing stems largely from Earl Scruggs, and his choice of instrument set the standard. Some version of a pre-war Gibson Mastertone with a one-piece flange and flathead tone ring is the goal – and they're extremely rare. In the '30s, Gibson was not making a lot of banjos and nearly all of them were tenors, not five-strings. Many have been converted with a replacement neck, but an all-original five-string Granada – the most-celebrated of Earl's choices – would be the ultimate to any bluegrass player. The less fancy but sonically equal RB-4 is not quite as rare, but also holds holy grail status, with examples made from 1929-'37 bringing \$80,000 to \$100,000.



Gibson All-American Tenor/Plectrum banjo

ing a Florentine famously featured by comic legend (and lifelong banjo picker) Steve Martin.

3 Bacon & Day Ne Plus Ultra #9 1925-'30

(\$15,000-\$20,000)

The most-sought after vintage *non*-Gibson banjo is the stunningly fancy Ne Plus Ultra #9, top of the Bacon Banjo Company's high-end professional Bacon & Day Silver Bell line. Ne Plus Ultra is Latin for "nothing better" and they weren't kidding. The price was \$900, which in the '20s could buy a luxury automobile! B&Ds were famous as the most expensive, highest-grade banjos of this opulent period. Materials for the #9 included Gaboon ebony for the neck and resonator with genuine ivory in set and practically everything engraved and decorated with pearl and rhinestones. A carved elephant head with real ivory tusks was the standard heel decoration. The quality and undeniable flash of made them popular among high-earning vaudeville and variety players. In the late '50s, top-end B&D banjos were sought after collector's items when sunburst Les Pauls were \$250 new!



Gibson K-5 Mandocello



1 1923-'25 GIBSON F-5 LOAR

(\$85,000-\$130,000)

The original Gibson F-5 remains the stuff of mandolinists' dreams. From the subtle shadings of its Cremona sunburst finish to the exquisite grain of the maple back and sides, they are the finest of all mandolins. Bill Monroe set the style of what bluegrass music would be, and his choice of mandolin changed the instrument's history, saving it from obscurity as the 20th century rolled on.

First-generation F-5s had a small interior label signed by chief designer Lloyd Loar; the Master Model was his baby, flagship of the Gibson line, and the most innovative (and expensive) mandolin in the world. Loar's redesign of Gibson's instruments added an f-hole top, raised fretboard, adjustable bridge, and truss-rod neck inventing the modern mandolin – and by extension the archtop guitar; nearly all high-end modern mandolins are their descendants.

After Loar's departure, mandolins took a back seat to banjos, then guitars. Something like 250 Loar-signed were made, and have been highly sought after since the '50s.

BANJOS

2 1930-'36 Gibson All-American Tenor/Plectrum banjo

(\$50,000+)

Gibson's ultimate Orchestra banjo, the All-American was a \$550 Depression-era feast of optimistic patriotic motifs carved into a four-string with a flathead tone ring and one-piece flange. Any Gibson banjo with those features is a sought-after piece; the carved, engraved and gold plated All-American is the fanciest and rarest of them. The \$450 Florentine was nearly as ornate, but built in larger numbers. One five-string All-American is known to have been made (and when most recently put on the market, offered for a cool quarter million), but some have been converted to that format includ-

MANDOS

2 1924-'25 Gibson H-5 Mandola

(\$80,000-\$150,000)

This larger companion to the F-5 has the same features but is far rarer (estimated less than 1/10 the production), but due to a dearth of high-profile mandolinists, it's not nearly as celebrated. In the '20, Gibson tried to create mando ensembles, but the time had already passed with hot jazz, Vaudeville, and Hawaiian music being all the rage, and the mandola – stately low tenor of the mando choir – was sliding into obscurity. Still, a set of Loar-signed instruments is a powerful lure to collectors and an H-5 is the most prestigious mandola ever made.

Gibson Granada RB: Gruhn Guitars. Gibson All American: Carter Vintage.

UKES

1 1929-'30s GIBSON CUSTOM POINSETTIA

(\$12,000-\$22,000)

Among vintage ukuleles, there's nothing like Gibson's beautiful (if over the top) Poinsettia Uke. Martin's beautiful pearl trimmed 5K is often referred to as the holy grail of ukuleles, but that was a catalog model in production for nearly 20 years and sold in decent quantities through the opulent '20s. Gibson's custom ukuleles were offered from circa '28 into the early '30s, individually ordered. Gibson did not picture it in catalogs, but a note in late-'20s catalogs offered "Custom built ukuleles to order."

Though each is unique, they typically feature decorative motifs – painted ivory headstocks and fretboards with rhinestone accents, along with the incredibly elaborate poinsettia floral decoration on almost every wooden surface, hand-painted in multiple colors. A flamey koa 5K exudes class, but Gibson offered a festive explosion of exuberant design, making for a prime uke collector's catch.



1 1927-'39 NATIONAL STYLE 4 TRICONE ROUND-NECK

(\$18,500-\$25,000)

The Style 4 Tricone is the fanciest of all pre-war National Reso-Phonic instruments, and round-necks are especially rare, having been heavily outsold by square-neck Hawaiians. The Tricone was the first (and often considered finest-sounding) resonator guitar, and the Style 4 was National's top of the line from 1928-'40. With elaborate "chrysanthemum" engraving on the nickel-plated German-silver body and a bound ebony fretboard inlaid with pearl diamonds, it was a real showpiece, costing \$195 in the late '20s. Though originally embraced by Vaudeville Hawaiian players, Nationals have become most identified with acoustic blues and slide playing; Tampa Red had a gold-plated Style 4 in the '30s, but Johnny Winter made it collectible in the '70s.

3 1924-'25 Gibson K-5 Mandocello

(\$100,000-\$150,000)

If the H-5 is rare, the K-5 (next piece of the Loar set) is almost nonexistent, with fewer than 20 originally sold. The f-hole K-5 was not built with the same cutaway/scroll-top body as its smaller sisters, but is basically an L-5 guitar with an eight-string neck. As the L-5 was a highly sought after instrument when any mandocello was considered a relic, more than a few were converted to six-string guitars long ago, leaving only a handful of original K-5s in existence. Today, only seven are confirmed survivors, and any mandocello fan or high-end Gibson collector would love to have one.



Rickenbacker Electro Model A-25 "Frying Pan"

RESONATORS/STEELS

2 1932-'35 Rickenbacker Electro Model A-25 "Frying Pan"

(\$7,500-\$8,500)

The Rickenbacker A-25 Electro Hawaiian Guitar (the "Frying Pan") is one of the most historically important guitars, the first commercially successful electrified string instrument. Its 1½" horseshoe magnet was the earliest electromagnetic instrument pickup to be perfected and is still one of the greatest-sounding. While Rickenbacker went on to produce many other instruments, the Frying Pan is where it began for the California company and electric guitars, in general.

The 1932 cast aluminum Model A-25 had a 25" scale, while companion A-22 with a 22" scale soon followed and quickly became more popular. Frying Pans were supplanted by Rickenbacker's Bakelite steels after 1935; many are rumored to have been collected for aluminum drives during World War II, and survivors are the most sought after of all lap steels.

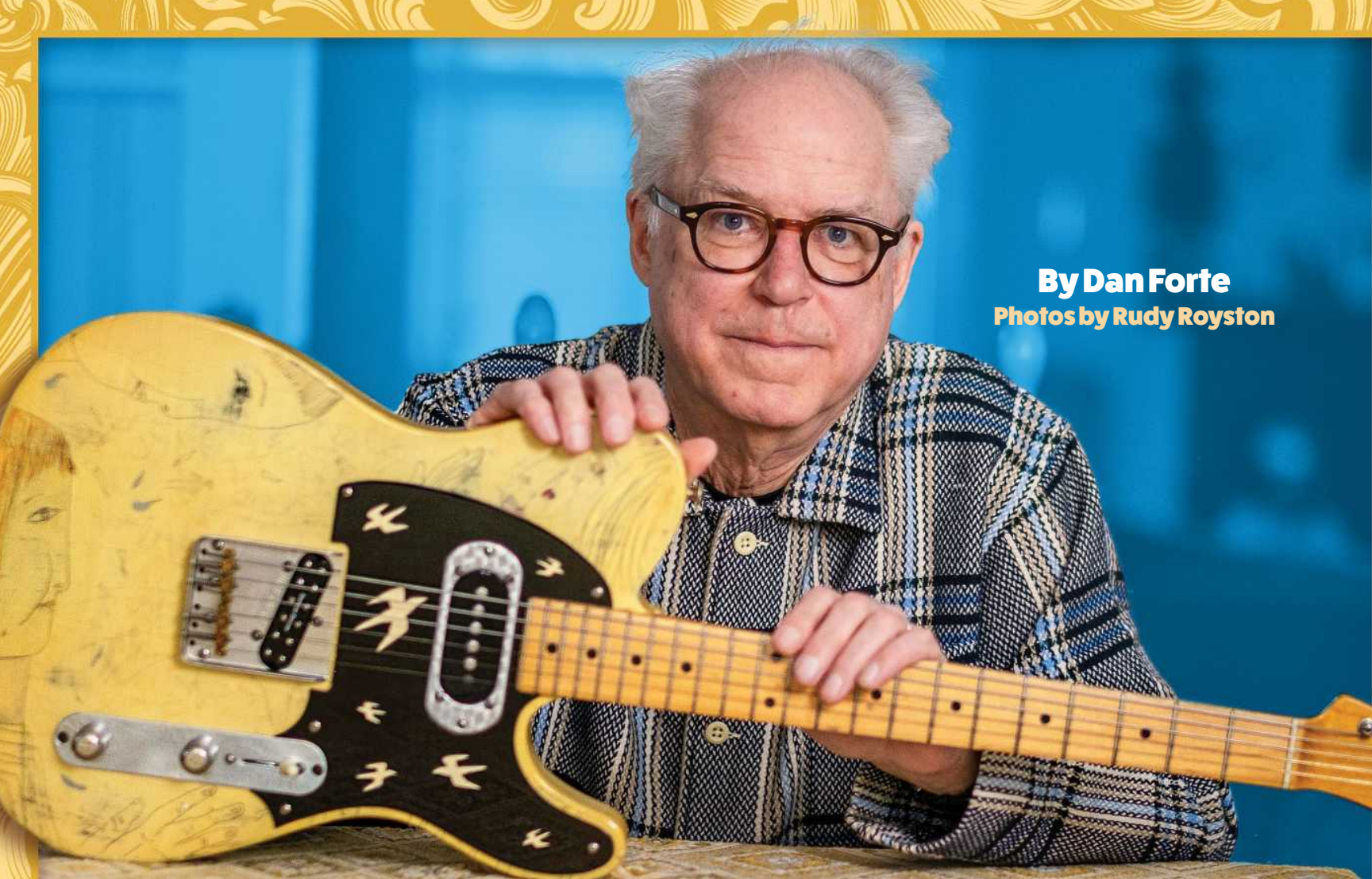
3 1947-'59 Bigsby Triple-8

(\$20,000-\$25,000)

Paul A. Bigsby is a legend in the history of American electric guitars, but the fact he and Speedy West essentially invented the

modern pedal steel is often overlooked. While Gibson and Epiphone had pitch-changing console steels before WWII, Bigsby's late-'40s designs were the first that really worked while the instrument was being played, resulting in a new style of playing. All Bigsby instruments were custom-built by P.A., mixing cast aluminum and birdseye maple, and each was a masterpiece.

These instruments created modern pedal-steel technique. When Bud Isaacs played his Bigsby on Webb Pierce's 1954 hit "Slowly," the days of the straight console steel were numbered. Every pedal steel built since, from Sho-Bud to Emmons and beyond, is a direct descendant of these sought after creations. **VG**



By Dan Forte
Photos by Rudy Royston

BILL FRISELL

Different Kind of Guitar Hero

In a sea of guitar gymnasts, Bill Frisell is a guitar philosopher. Often referred to as a guitar anti-hero, he's nevertheless a real hero to a multitude of fans and peers.

Though no stranger to avant-garde, sometimes aggressive free improvisation, his soft-spoken demeanor in conversation mirrors the thoughtfulness and use of space in his sensitive, melodic playing. His comfort when playing a jazz standard or an early Americana tune like Stephen Foster's "Beautiful Dreamer," along with his use of distortion, delay, and looping, has broadened the notion of "jazz guitarist."

His combination of versatility and singularity has also made him a go-to session player for pop artists like Nora Jones, Bonnie Raitt, Petra Haden, and Rickie Lee Jones. He has teamed up with such six-

stringers as John Scofield, Buddy Miller, Mike Stern, Vernon Reid, Arto Lindsay, Julian Lage and Gyan Riley, and former teachers Dale Bruning and Jim Hall, as well as steel guitarist Greg Leisz. In 1995, he recorded *Deep Dead Blue*, a live duo with Elvis Costello.

Since his interview with VG in December of 2014, Frisell has released eight solo albums and played on releases by Costello, Charles Lloyd, Paul Simon, Lucinda Williams, Allen Toussaint, Woody Jackson, John Zorn, Carrie Rodriguez, and the Count Basie Orchestra, among others.

Following 2022's *Four* (featuring pianist

Gerald Clayton and drummer Johnathan Blake, with Greg Tardy on reeds) and 2024's *Orchestras*, fronting the Brussels Philharmonic and Umbria Jazz Orchestra, *In My Dreams* was recorded live in three cities, "... with lots of editing," the 75-year-old points out. After gigs in Brooklyn and New Haven, a show in Frisell's hometown of Denver was recorded as an afterthought. "My old guitar teacher, Dale Bruning, was there, and the energy was great," he recounts. "A real vibe was happening. A lot of the music on the record is from that gig."

The guitarist leads an ensemble of folks with whom he has long associations, albeit not in this exact aggregation – Jenny Scheinman (violin), Eyvind Kang (viola), Hank Roberts (cello), Thomas Morgan (bass), and Rudy Royston (drums). Along with nine originals and Foster's "Hard



Since it was featured in his 2014 interview, Frisell has added a Bigsby to his '72 SG (left). "Now it's really working great with Ron Ellis pickups. When I moved to Boston in '75, I got it for \$200. It was finished with white house paint, so I scraped all the paint off and varnished it. I played it from '75 into the '80s - my main guitar on everything. It's back and ready to go again." "When I get a call to play on something, I usually take my Anderson," says Frisell of this flat-top. "I got it new in the early '90s, and the sweat in it is all my own. It's a little odd, because it has rosewood back and sides, and the neck is maple, not mahogany. It's a loud guitar and doesn't have much low-end, but it really records well."

"This Collings is an I-30 - all hollow," says Frisell. "Normally it comes with P-90s, but I asked them to make it with humbuckers. I love it; that's where I first experienced Ron Ellis pickups. The Collings factory is amazing. It's so inspiring to see people that really care about what they're doing. They're not just cranking stuff out; every guitar is cared about. They're so consistent."

Times Come Again No More," also featured is "Isfahan" by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. "It's this beautiful city in Iran," Frisell explains. "In 1963, Duke and the band went there, and it inspired him and Strayhorn to write the song. It's so modern; the chords are wild."

In a video announcing the new album, the humble paragon declared, "The guitar is a magic wand, a key to unlock our imaginations. Anything is possible. Infinity."

It's a fair description of the instrument and philosophy of Bill Frisell.

You've done string arrangements in the past. Did you study orchestration?

I went to Berklee College of Music in Boston in 1971 and hated it. I got through one semester and got out as fast as I could. I studied with Jim Hall for a while, then went back to Colorado. By '75, I'd been practicing and playing a lot, so I went back to Berklee. I thought it would be more advantageous for me to major in arranging and composition. I knew how to play the guitar, kind of sort of (laughs), but I thought with that kind of information, I

could really apply it to the guitar more than just taking guitar lessons.

That was a really great time for me. I took all of Herb Pomeroy's and Michael Gibbs' classes; they were the arranging teachers. It was more big-band stuff, but harmony and theory and all that - I guess that's where it came from. I never really studied counterpoint, never wrote a string quartet - the things folks do at someplace like Julliard. Early on, I was just trying to apply those ideas to playing guitar. For me, the guitar is like a miniature orchestra; you have all

those voices. I rely on it for writing for other instruments, imagining, “This sound on the string could be a trombone, or this sound could be a violin.”

This configuration, with strings and the rhythm section, is a whole other ballgame compared to an ensemble with keyboards.

So much of it has to do with the person, rather than the instrument. For many years, I didn’t often play with piano players. I selfishly felt, “Man, that’s my space (laughs!)” I want to be in that place where the piano is. That’s what was so inspiring when I discovered Jim Hall. A lot of the groups he was in, he played the role of what would’ve been the piano. With Sonny Rollins, it was just his guitar doing the orchestration – or Art Farmer or Paul Desmond. Again, it depends on who the person is; with piano and guitar, there’s a lot going on. When I played with Jason Mraz, I could play anything I wanted, and there was never an issue of getting in each other’s way; it was just this amazing conversation. Also, I’ve been playing with Gerald Clayton a lot, including the album *Four*, and those problems don’t exist.

When you’ve written a song, with structure and places for improvisation, do you do any directing regarding how a bandmate is going to solo?

A little bit. With this group, everybody knows what the material is. Before we even play it, we’ll have some kind of discussion. But it’s really exciting

when stuff starts to shift around. Playing with these particular string players, the lines between improvisation and arrangement and orchestra get blurred. That’s what I’m hoping for. That’s kind of what happened at the Denver gig; we got past the point where we were worried about what was on the paper, and things started loosening up more. I’m glad we captured that on the recording.

Do you compose away from the guitar?

I do sometimes, but most of the time the guitar is there – the magic wand. I was reading a biography of Stravinsky, and he said he always used the piano when he wrote. I thought, “If he has that, seems like it’s okay for me to use a guitar.” I do sometimes write melodies using pencil and

“On *In My Dreams*, I only used this Telecaster with artwork by Terry Turrell, an amazing artist from Seattle,” Frisell says of the guitar on the left.

“Jay Black added a shorter-scale neck – Gibson scale, 24.75”, I put that Mastery bridge on it. The neck pickup was made by T.K. Smith, inspired by a Paul Bigsby pickup. To get it balanced with the neck pickup it, the bridge pickup is a Seymour Duncan Little 59 mini-humbucker.”

“Early in the pandemic, Jay Black put this together and sent it to me. I really bonded with it. T.K. Smith made the pickguards for both of them and the pickups on this one were made by Jeff Callahan. The neck pickup looks like a gold-foil and sounds like a P-90, but it’s humbucking. The bridge pickup is like a Firebird.”

paper. I really believe there’s something about the feeling of the pencil, even the friction of the lead on the paper. When you write by hand, the way you space things out on the page, there’s an intuitive thing – writing a rhythm or leaving space on the page. Something gets lost when you’re using the computer and you have to go back and correct what it automated.

I did a project with [composer] Henry Threadgill that was really complex, maybe the most difficult music I ever had to play. It blew my mind how he heard all this counterpoint and complex rhythmic stuff going on. At the rehearsals, you couldn’t get away with anything; he really was hearing every little bit of what he wrote. Sometimes, the computer can run away with people. I’m not always convinced that people are hearing everything that’s getting written down. It’s like the computer took over at a certain point.

Did you ever see Duke Ellington in concert?

I never saw Duke or Louis Armstrong or Count Basie. During the times I could have seen them, I had my head up my ass, wanting to hear all the modern stuff. “Oh, those are old guys.” I wish I had known then what I know now. I did see Jimi Hendrix. It’s amazing, things that

were happening at that time, within just a few years, the stuff that was going on. The first concert I went to was Herman’s Hermits, but within a couple of years I saw Hendrix and Cream,



Paul Butterfield, Miles Davis. Within a period of just three or four years, all that stuff was coming out. I didn't know who John Coltrane was until after he'd already died.

When you were at Berklee, did you also play club gigs around Boston?

Oh, a lot. Soon after I got there in '75, I met [bassist] Kermit Driscoll, who I ended up playing with in my early bands. He got me a gig at the Boston Connection, and we played Holiday Inns, dances. It's wild to think, but Vinnie Colaiuta was the drummer.

It was Kermit, me, and Vinnie, with two women singers and an organ player. I'd play weddings, and when I moved to New York I did a lot of things where you'd just show up and were expected to know all these songs.

You've played mainly Telecaster for a while.

There's something about it. [Fender] just got it right. It's got everything you need, with none of that extra stuff. I like all kinds of guitars, but for traveling, a Telecaster is awesome. You can drop it on the floor or whatever, and then put it back together; you'll be okay.

What are your preferences in regard to amps, live and in the studio?

The amp I used on the Brooklyn gig, at Roulette Intermedium, was my Carr Sportsman. In New Haven and Denver, I used borrowed or rented Deluxe Reverbs. When I'm traveling, I always ask for those, and they work pretty well.

What about some of your acoustic guitars?

I have a Collings that's like a D-18, and I have a really great Gibson J-45, one of those "banner" years. Lee Townsend, who has produced about 80 percent of my albums, owns an old J-45 that I've recorded with. I think it's a '61, and it's worn and cracked, but it's one of my favorite guitars I've ever played.

Your friend Henry Kaiser wants to know "...how your ideas about what you love in 'physical guitar' instruments has changed during your career, from your first guitar to the present."

I don't know if it has. Maybe it comes



Frisell lists his effects pedals as TC Electronic Polytune 3 tuner, Line 6 DL4 Mk II, JAM Pedals Rattler distortion, MXR Carbon Copy Mini analog delay, Strymon Flint Reverb-Tremolo, and a Strymon Ojai power supply.

around in some big, gigantic circle. You keep searching and reaching for something, try to tweak it in some way. But what we were saying about the Telecaster, I keep coming back to that thing that I felt the first time I played those guitars – and smelled those guitars. My first guitar was a Mustang, and I swear to God I still remember when I got home and opened the case. There's something about those instruments. I'm trying to move into the future, right? I'm not trying to recapture what was. But trying to hold on to that, there's the sense of wonder and excitement, having your mind blown when you discover something for the first time. Somehow, the guitar helps me stay in touch with that – the feel of the neck on these instruments, it'll trigger that same feeling. Like, "Wow! This is amazing!" I never want to lose that. I'm not sure if that's answering Henry's question, but it's something that has stayed consistent, or always comes back to it.

You've been known to get well into free jazz and avant-garde, which is very different than a lot of your stuff. What is the attraction?

Well, Derek Bailey inspires me a lot. He's one of my big heroes. I guess I just try to be open to every possibility. I want to be in a place where nothing is blocking anything. When I first heard Derek Bailey, it was

like, "Whoa!" Not that I can say I understand it, but I got to see him play a number of times, and he's not messing around. Every note he plays came from years and years of study. It's not just random – although random things happen, too. I just try to be open to everything. The idea of higher and lower, like folk music is low and classical music is high; I just can't buy into that. All music is difficult. It drives me crazy when someone says, "Oh yeah, man. It's only got three chords" – like that's simple. I'd like to see them play a Bill Monroe song that's only got three chords.

There's a trend of people being condescending about, "It's all pentatonic stuff." But did Albert King ever play outside pentatonic?

Yeah, like Albert King. "Let's hear you do that. What's your name?" (laughs)

When you do an instrumental version of a song with lyrics, whether it's the Beatles or a jazz standard, do you hear the lyrics in your head?

It varies. There's a story about Ben Webster playing some song, and he suddenly stopped. Someone asked, "Ben, why did you stop?" He said, "I forgot the words." (laughs) I'm not like that. But many times when I'm playing "Lush Life," I'm hearing the words in my head.

"Surfer Girl," I'm for sure thinking of the words. But thinking about the Beach Boys – the sound of their voices together, you hear that in your head. "Surfer Girl" was the first record I ever bought, the 45, with my own money. "Little Deuce Coupe" on one side and "Surfer Girl" on the other. Just the sound of those guys singing together – man! Still, it freaks me out; it's so beautiful.

Sometimes it's more general, like I'll know the story of the song. I might play a Bob Dylan song with a whole bunch of words, but I'll think about what the story is. That helps me a lot. It definitely gives you something. For me, it adds weight. I play "What The World Needs Now Is Love," and I'm definitely thinking about what that means. In the midst of all the stuff that's going on now, it's about love. **VG**

Upcoming Events

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Denotes a new or updated listing.

2026

APRIL

The Indiana Guitar Show, April 11 - 12, at Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E. Main St., Danville, IN 46122. For more info contact: www.theindianaguitarshow.com

***Greater Baltimore Guitar Show**, April 18-19, 11 am - 6 pm, at 7900 Ritchie Highway, Glenn Burnie, MD, 21061. For more info contact Doug Lewis 410-760-3353

***Westcoast Guitar Show**, April 25th - 10 am - 3:30 pm. Cedar River Park, Renton Community Center, 1715 SE Maple Valley Hwy, Renton WA 98057. For more info contact bruceadolph@mac.com www.westcoastguitarshows.com

Hub City Guitar Show, April 25, 11 am - 5 pm, at Live at Hub City Vinyl, 28 E Baltimore St., Hagerstown, MD 21740. For more info contact Kris Nigh knigh@sloanschoolof-music.com - 240-217-4956

Central NY Guitar Show, Apr 26, From 10 am - 5 pm, at Phoenix Enterprise Fire Dept Hall, 457 Main St, Phoenix, NY 13135. For more info contact Perry 315-727-4979 elsinore99@hotmail.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

JUNE

Elmira Vintage Guitar Show, June 7, 11 am - 4 pm, at Woolwich Memorial Centre, Elmira, ON. For more info contact John Woods www.elmiravintageguitarshow.ca

Sarasota Guitar & Amp Show, June 5 (Dealer day), 10 am - 5 pm, June 6, 10 am - 5 pm, June 7, 10 am - 3 pm, at Roberts Arena, 3000 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota, FL 34237. For more info contact Kevin Wood 941-993-3098 ktw@clevaone.com www.sarasotaguitarshow.com

The Ohio Guitar Show, June 11th, 11 am - 5

pm, at The Aladdin Shrine Center, Grove City, Ohio 43123. For more info contact www.ohioguitarshow.com

OCTOBER

***Southern Ohio Guitar Show**, October 11th, 11 am - 5 pm, at Chillicothe Highschool, 425 Yoctangee Parkway, Chillicothe, Ohio 45601. For more info contact www.sohioguitarshow.com

If you have information regarding upcoming guitar shows or events, visit <http://www.vintageguitar.com/guitar-show-submission> or e-mail Mike@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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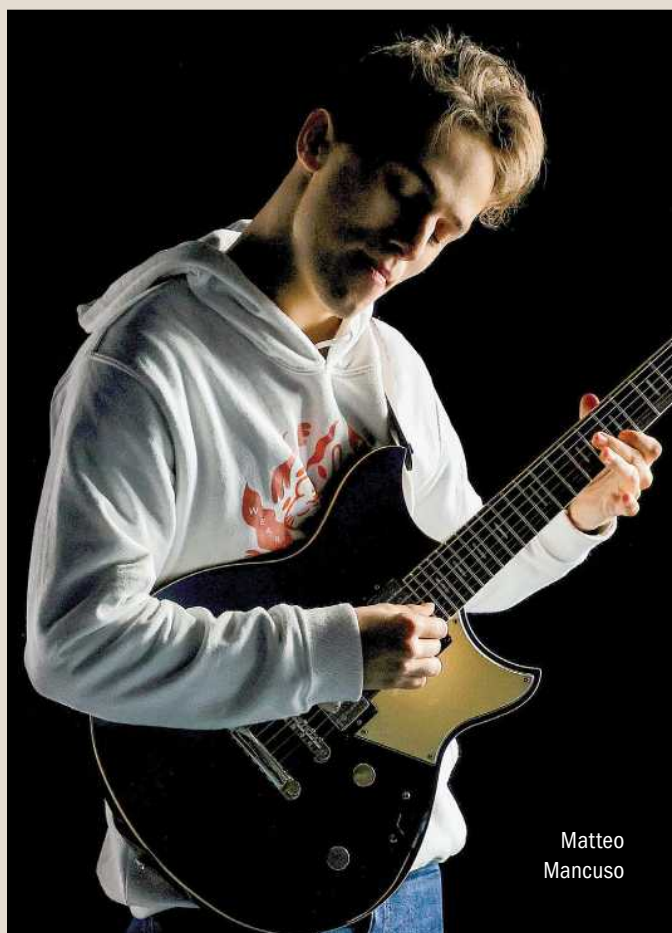
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Matteo Mancuso

SPELLBINDING FINGERSTYLE

In testament to the genius of Matteo

Mancuso, legends like Steve Vai, Joe Bonamassa, and Al Di Meola have praised his playing, shared stages with the young guitar hero, and joined him in the studio. On his sophomore album, Matteo's spellbinding flamenco-adjacent fingerstyle technique gives its jazz-fusion and rock compositions an extra touch of inspiration. The album's title is derived from the Sicilian's year of birth and Vai's recommendation that he record at a 96kHz sample rate.

Here, Mancuso tastefully layers guitars, supported by bassist Riccardo Oliva and drummer Gianluca Pellerito. Vai guests on the psychedelic jazz piece "Solar Wind," while the adventurous sonic explorations of "The Great Wall" include precise melody lines and rhythm guitar punctuated with Mancuso's patented fusion



Matteo Mancuso
Route 96

shred. A rocket-powered cover of Pee Wee Ellis' "The Chicken" includes lightning-fast exchanges between Mancuso (on a crazy rhythm) and guest keyboardist Valeriy Stepanov.

Three years after Mancuso's debut album (and eight years since VG gave an unsigned Matteo his first American interview), this album delivers the goods. Without doubt, *Route 96* advances the art of instrumental guitar. — **Bret Adams**



Black Crowes A Pound of Feathers

As proven by their superb previous album, *Happiness Bastards*, the Black

Crowes are back in a happy headspace and making powerful noise. *A Pound of Feathers* comes out swinging with "Profane Prophecy," a two-fisted rocker with Rich Robinson's slide leading the way. "Cruel Streak" delivers loud, aggressive audio and the Robinson brothers' endless combination of soul, crunch riffs, and sus-4 chords. Look for a fuzzy, octave-laced solo from lead guitarist Nico Bereciartua.

Since "She Talks to Angels" in 1990, the Crowes have been renowned for soulful ballads, and "Pharmacy Chronicles" is no exception, topped by reverb-heavy bottleneck in the Derek & the Dominos pocket. "Queen of the B-Sides" is another slow

beauty, with Rich on acoustic slide. In fact, the entire album is crackling with memorable songwriting and rekindled chemistry of the brothers, as on "Do the Parasite!" with its firecracker guitar solo.

A full 36 years since their debut, the Black Crowes are making some of the best music of their career; fire up "It's Like That," a punchy rocker with Robinson and Bereciartua stomping their guitars into ecstasy. For no-apologies guitar rock, this is the stuff. — **Pete Prown**



Doyle Bramhall & Friends Record Town Presents: Dallas Blues Society Lost Recordings

In 1989 – four years before Doyle Bramhall's solo debut, before his son Doyle II joined Eric Clapton, and before Denny Freeman backed Taj Ma-

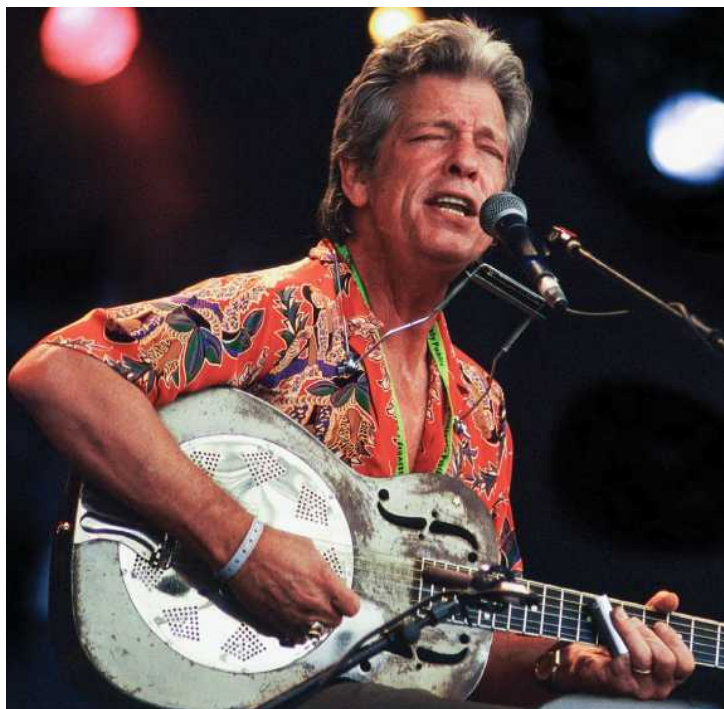
hal and Bob Dylan – a group of musicians entered a studio in Dallas. The bluesy session featured both Bramhalls, Freeman, bassist Jim Milan, and guitarists Robin Sylar and Tom Reynolds, but their collective effort was eventually shelved and forgotten.

"Big Doyle," Stevie Ray Vaughan's longtime collaborator, was a master of feel when singing and/or drumming. At 20, Doyle II was already a formidable six-stringer and soulful vocalist, illustrated on Al Green's "Ain't No Fun To Me." Freeman delivers gnarly baritone and slide on the instrumental "Vigilante" and melodically punctuates the Freddie King obscurity "If You Believe (In What You Do)." Bramhall, Sr.'s rawboned version of Hound Dog Taylor's "She's Gone" features vicious slide by Sylar, who gets low-down on the Coasters' "I'm A Hog For You, Baby." Meanwhile, Reynolds contributes the uptown swing instrumental "Cuttin' In."

Freeman, Sylar, Reynolds, and the elder Bramhall are now deceased, as are producer Chuck Nevitt and engineer Bob Sullivan,

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JOHN HAMMOND, JR. 1942-2026

By Dan Forte

John Hammond cut a figure like few blues artists. His 1964 LP, *Big City Blues*, shows the handsome 21-year-old in a black leather jacket and Cuban-heeled boots, casually leaning against a motorcycle, the New York City skyline as his backdrop. For this suburban adolescent, that was as cool as it got.

I was saddened to hear of Hammond's passing on February 28, at 83.

After I was turned on to electric blues via the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, I started buying as many blues records as I could afford. *Blues At Newport, 1963* introduced me to Hammond. Flanked by tracks featuring legends John Lee Hooker, Rev. Gary Davis, Mississippi John Hurt, and Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, he stood out. Young, white, and hip enough to do Chuck Berry's "No Money Down" with just an acoustic guitar, he had me returning to the blues racks of Berkeley record stores.

I got to see and later interview blues favorites, from Jesse Fuller to Albert King and Eric Clapton, but I wasn't able

to see Hammond live until 1979. I was doubly lucky to interview him that night for *Frets* magazine. "He doesn't just strum his guitar, he beats the daylights out of it," I wrote.

The "intensity of a man truly possessed" that I described contrasted with the humble, shy person offstage. He eventually overcame it, but at the time he spoke with an occasional stutter (like "Mmm-ichael") that disappeared when he sang.

Born John Paul Hammond, he was the son of Columbia Records executive John Henry Hammond, who signed such artists as

Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin, Bruce Springsteen, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. The younger Hammond lived with his mother after his parents divorced when he was five.

At the solo date, the guitarist used a sheet-metal National Duolian and a Martin flat-top. Playing slide in open E and A tunings ("like open D and open G, but up one step"), he used a Sears Craftsman ¹¹/₁₆" socket wrench for slide on the resonator. He listed numerous guitar influences, including Big Joe Williams, Bukka White, Blind Willie McTell, and Spider John Koerner, and credited Jimmy Reed for inspiring him to play guitar and harmonica on a rack. But he cited Robert Johnson as his idol, stating, "When you hear him and you've heard all the other stuff, Robert Johnson just shines."

Many fans first discovered Hammond through his releases as an electric guitarist and/or fronting bands that featured Billy Butler and Wild Jimmy Spruill (*Big City Blues*), Duane Allman (*Southern Fried*), J.J.

Cale (who produced *Got Love If You Want It*), and David Hidalgo (who co-produced *Ready For Love*). For a brief stint in his Greenwich Village days, the singer was backed by a lefty calling himself Jimmy James, soon to be known as Jimi Hendrix.

A 1965 electric outing, *So Many Roads*, pre-dated the Butterfield band's debut and was an early session for Charlie Musselwhite. The legendary blues harpist lived and worked at Chicago's Jazz Record Mart. He told me, "In '63, John came by and we hung out in the basement, and we stayed friends ever since. Mike Bloomfield and I would take the Greyhound to New York City to check out the scene, and we'd always call John, because he knew what was happening. He told us he had a session and invited us. There was no rehearsal; it was just joyful, a great time. Even Dylan stopped by and hung out. I think it stands up."

Future guitar hero Bloomfield played piano, with three members of the Hawks—drummer Levon Helm, keyboardist Garth Hudson, and guitarist Robbie Robertson—who would later form The Band.

In addition to writing and performing the soundtrack to *Little Big Man*, Hammond teamed with Bloomfield and Dr. John for *Triumvirate*, and a pair of albums reunited Musselwhite with Hammond in 2001: the Grammy-winning *Spirit Of The Century* by the Blind Boys of Alabama and *Wicked Grin*, Hammond's highly praised collection of Tom Waits songs.

In 2011 he was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame.

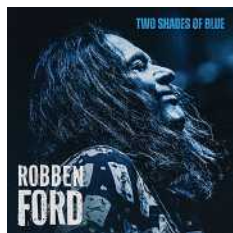
"The beautiful thing about John was that it was always about the music and not about him," Charlie wrote online. "He deeply loved the music and wanted to share it with the world. He always delivered straight from his heart and soul. John was always the humble gentleman. He never tried to hog the spotlight, was never one of those guys that went overtime because they loved basking in the attention. He did his show, gave it his all, and moved on. He was a gentle, caring soul."

Blues singer Shemekia Copeland, who calls Hammond her "first crush," posted a statement that read, in part, "John sang the blues like it was sacred. He made sure the people who made this music were never forgotten, and he honored them with every song he sang."

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HIT LIST REVIEWS

whose resume includes “The Louisiana Hayride” and Fabulous Thunderbirds. Kudos to Ft. Worth’s Record Town – founded in ’57 by the Bruton family (parents of guitarists Sumter and Stephen) – for unearthing this gem. – **Dan Forte**

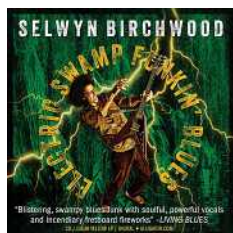


Robben Ford Two Shades Of Blue

The latest from five-time Grammy nominee Robben Ford is a vortex of cliché-free blues, sophisticated jazz harmony, and listener-friendly fusion. Wielding deep-pocket rhythm sections from two continents, it opens with “Make My Own Weather,” on which Ford gets sweet and lowdown with groovy wah motifs in all the right places.

Drummer Ianto Thomas and bassist Robin Mullarkey groove heavily on the vocal tunes. In contrast, drummer Gary Husband and bassist Darryl Jones hold it down for the instrumental cuts “The Fire Flute,” “The Light Fandango,” and “Feeling’s Mutual.” It’s a transatlantic musical odyssey packed with all the Ford trademarks – soul, sophistication, and space. Ford owns the John Lennon ballad “Jealous Guy,” with excellent comping and spicy chord voicings, which has separated him from the paint-by-numbers blues pack for more than 50 years.

For hardcore blues fans, Charles Brown’s “Black Night” is complete with gut-wrenching guitar licks; Ford’s feel is impeccable. On “Two Shades of Blue,” we hear why he is such an important player. Sure, many guitarists can burn up the fretboard with notes, but so few can communicate to an audience with such effortless elegance, soul, and sensitivity. – **Oscar Jordan**



Selwyn Birchwood Electric Swamp Funkin’ Blues

Fans of the form appreciate it whenever a blues player tears up the fretboard. But it’s even better when chops are applied in the service of fine songs. And a solid backing band? Icing on the cake. Florida native Selwyn Birchwood has it all on display for his sixth album, a spicy platter rife with the artist’s signature combination of blues, rock, swamp funk, gospel, jazz, and Southern soul. His lead



Robben Ford



Selwyn Birchwood

guitar and lap steel playing is incendiary, and the blues man’s deep, sonorous voice makes him sound much older than his 41 years.

“The Church of Electric Swamp Funkin’ Blues” is fantastic funk with mighty rhythm guitar and lead breaks laced with wah. “Labour of Love” is about fatherhood, and it includes gentle acoustic guitar and sax, while “Should’ve Never Gotten Out of Bed” is laced with screaming lap steel. Funk and rock are fused on “Talking Heads,” while traditional blues is evident on “What I’ve Been Accused Of” and “Soulmate,” with shimmering lap steel on the former and scalding lead guitar on the latter. Head’s up, y’all – this could be the best blues-rock album of 2026. – **BA**



Bill Kirchen Cat Out Of The Bag

At 77, Kirchen still has the enthusiasm and energy of a teen. At home in a honky-tonk or rock festival, he and his Tele can easily dazzle, but he demonstrates his mettle via tone and taste. Solos are less about licks, more about melody and atmosphere.

On his 12th solo album since leaving Commander Cody, the title cut blasts off with majestic chords and crystalline lines, landing somewhere between Dylan and Costello at their grandest. The Johnny Cash-tinged “Her Gone Is Her Goodbye” features boom-chick rhythm à la Luther Perkins and baritone in the Duane Eddy register, while

Marty Muse’s reverby pedal-steel adds ache to “Inside My Baby’s Heart.”

“City Mix” was written by Moonlighters bandmate Tony Johnson – one of many contributors to an unintentional reunion from various Kirchen signposts. Lending a hand are his wife, Louise, Asleep At the Wheel’s Floyd Domino and Leroy Preston, Cody alum John Tichy, Ann Arbor days’ Sarah Brown, Nick Lowe bandmate Paul Riley, songsmith Blackie Farrell, NRBQ’s Al Anderson, and D.C. folkie Marcy Marxer, all writing or playing. So does the late Austin de Lone, and the set is dedicated to the pub-rock pioneering pianist and Bill’s collaborator on 2016’s *Transatlantica*. – **DF**



Rush Grace Under Pressure: Super Deluxe Edition

In 1984, digital synthesizers and electronic drums were all the rage, yet Rush threaded the needle between computer technology and their progressive/hard rock roots. Somehow it worked, with thick riffs and grimmer-than-usual lyrics reflecting Reagan-era angst of nuclear conflict (“Between the Wheels”), the Holocaust (“Red Sector A”), and death of a close band friend (“Afterimage”).

Within these grooves, guitarist Alex Lifeson and bassist Geddy Lee wove post-punk influences from the Police, U2, and Ultravox into their relentless thunder. For extras, there’s a complete 1984 concert from a Toronto date, its setlist concentrating on



Eric Bibb

Rush's 1980s output. The audio is soundboard quality, but background fan noise is fairly intrusive.

A more interesting factor is that listeners get both the old studio mix and a new stereo version from early Rush producer Terry Brown – who, ironically, was fired *before* the original sessions. Brown's fresh mixes are louder and more spacious than engineer Peter Henderson's originals, allowing us to detail the tones of Lifeson's "Hentor Sportscaster" Strats and Lee's headless Steinberger bass. Also look for Dolby Atmos and HD formats on Blu-Ray. Pick your own audio preference, but the Terry Brown mixes are seriously intriguing. No pressure. – **PP**



Eric Bibb
One Mississippi

Eric Bibb's latest reveals the acclaimed singer/songwriter broadening his horizons on a collection of originals and one cover. All reflect his blues-influenced, deeply personal social commentaries

enhanced with folk, soul, and gospel overtones. Bibb plays acoustic guitar and banjo, while longtime producer Glen Scott lays down keyboards, percussion, and an occasional guitar part; guitarist Robbie McIntosh (The Pretenders, Paul McCartney) handles most of the fretboard heavy lifting.

The Delta-flavored homage "Muddy Waters" is replete with McIntosh's stinging slide, while Bibb's old friend, Janis Ian, co-wrote the title track (the sole cover), ably interpreted with Bibb and McIntosh on guitars. Banjo and guitar surround his intense vocal on the funk/gospel-driven "Didn't I Keep Runnin'," enhanced by dramatic string arrangements and solo fiddle.

Some tracks, such as "No Clothes On" and the witty "This One Don't," feature spare instrumentation, but go heavy on slide and blues harmonica. "Crossroads Marilyn Monroe," a stark and somber reflection on the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till, features a similar pastiche, with McIntosh adding B.B. King-style eruptions. Bibb started playing as a kid backing his dad, folk-revival singer Leon Bibb. He has traveled far from his beginnings, and the journey's clearly not over. – **Rich Kienzie VG**

ERIC BIBB: Jan Malmstrom.

extra
EXTRA



TOM PRINCIPATO
Twangin'

The DC Telecaster ace's first album in 13 years is a refreshing throwback to Fender flavors of yore. On "Night Walk," "Kentucky," and "Smoky Blue," the accent is on clean, fat tones, demonstrating Tom's gift for chord melodies and multi-string bends with the occasional string pop. For "Champagne," Principato doubles the chord vamp before diving into yet *another* perfect Tele solo. – **PP**



TONY BACON
Electric Blues! T-Bone Walker & The Guitar That Started It All

This excellent book covers the father of electric blues, a guitarist who gave us the 1947 masterpiece "Call it Stormy Monday But Tuesday is Just as Bad." Packed with photos, as well as detailed information about Walker's archtop Gibson ES-250, hybrid ES/L-7, once-lost ES-5N (used for most of his career, often modified and repaired), and a double-cutaway Barney Kessel Regular. – **BA**



CORY WONG
Lost in the Wonder

Guitarist/producer Cory Wong's latest is a collaboration with various vocal artists, featuring Dutch songwriter Benny Sings. It's funky, dreamy precision-pop, with hooks and Wong's signature metronomic rhythm style. "Stay With Me" is danceable while "Afterglow" is chill; the album features immaculate production, harmonies, hooks, top-tier vocalists, and a nifty guitar solo on "Blame It On the Moon." – **OJ**



BILL FRISELL
In My Dreams

Jazz-guitar renegade Bill Frisell celebrates his 75th birthday by surrounding his guitar wizardry with violin, viola, and cello. Songs like "Why," "Give Me a Home," and "Home on the Range" offer an acoustically rich, spacious, and wistful countenance – perfect for a Sunday morning with coffee. Frisell and his ensemble artfully deconstruct standards, transforming them into contemplative meditations that mesmerize. – **OJ**



MONDO CORTEZ & CHICAGO BLUES ANGELS
Call On Me

Guitarist/vocalist Mondo Cortez delivers a refreshing mix of Windy City blues (Jimmy Reed's "Honey, Where Are You Going") and roots-rock (his own '60s-styled Chicano garage rocker "Celosa"). Co-produced by the Paladins' Dave Gonzalez, there's plenty of reverb on Cortez's fat-body Guild X-550. Added props go to bassist Bret Coats and drummer Bri Cortez Backman. – **DF**



MICHAEL HAMPTON
Into the Public Domain

On this EP, Parliament-Funkadelic hero Michael Hampton wails his tail off, as heard in the echo/distortion-drenched solos within "Fight or Flight." Phil Keaggy guest-shreds on the fusiony "Savanna," and Hampton finds his Jimmy Nolen-meets-Jimi Hendrix sweet spot on "Canyon Jam" and "Steve's Kaddillac." While the accent here is on improvised jams, Hampton's axe flash is phenomenal. An underrated electric wizard – **PP**

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REMAINING A FAVORITE

Fender's 30th Anniversary Hot Rod Deluxe IV

Fender's Limited Edition 30th Anniversary Hot Rod Deluxe IV marks three decades of one of the most popular road warriors of all time, subtly revamping the 40-watt/1x12" tube combo still seen on myriad stages behind hard-working indie, blues, and rock bands the world over.

Like its predecessors, the 30th Anniversary model is what Fender calls a "three-channel amp," though it could also be defined as a one-channel amp (given the shared EQ stage) with footswitchable gain stages labeled Normal and Drive, plus a "More Drive" boost on the latter, all powered by three 12AX7s and two 6L6GC output tubes.

In addition, the 30th Anniversary carries circuit refinements to glow up the insides alongside the Limited Edition black western covering, '50s-style brown-and-gold grille cloth, tweed-era leather handle, and polished stainless-steel control panel. Fender has modified the preamp circuit for enhanced note definition during overdriven settings, while improving the smoothness in the spring-reverb circuit. It's all housed in a solid-pine cabinet enclosing a Celestion G12M-65 Creamback speaker and weighing a reasonable 41 pounds.

Price: \$1,299
www.fender.com

Tested with a Telecaster and an ES-335, the Hot Rod Deluxe remained the bold, clear performer we remembered from versions I-III, arguably presented a little more gusto and texture. It's both "archetypal Fender" and timelessly contemporary, and a fantastic all-round performer for the price. We've often thought Fender should make a version with a Master affecting the Normal channel, to enable edge-of-breakup settings in addition to the loud, pristine cleans found here, considering the Drive channel kicks quickly into rockier territory. But that's where your overdrive pedals come in – and it's still a great pedal platform, coupling seamlessly with an Analog Man Prince of Tone, Wampler Tumulus Deluxe, and others.

There is indeed more clarity on the Drive and More Drive settings than you might remember from Hot Rod Deluxes past, along with excellent dynamics, so the circuit rejig appears to have succeeded, and both channels roar with full-throated fury and an overtly "American" overdrive sound. And while the reverb gets deep fast, it is rich and lush and hard to fault. Put it all together, and it's likely to remain a favorite of hard-working guitarists for decades to come. – **Dave Hunter**



Price: \$425

www.zanshin-musical-instruments.com

-tone-tweak DREAM

The Kogalashi Sound Magic Swell of Silence

Since his debut at NAMM in 2024, Shingo Koga of Kogalashi Sound Magic has been bringing idiosyncratic ideas to the stompbox arena. The Swell of Silence Four-Stage Twin Phaser is a creation fans call "Very Koga-like," which is a good thing.

Sporting two fully adjustable/combinable channels that can create a myriad of super-musical sounds, the Post side offers mellifluous warmth and thickness, while the Ante side is crispier, yielding crystal-clear phase modulation.

With the help of a Strat and a Deluxe Reverb, combining the channels produced a buffet of modulated goodies that went way beyond your grandfather's Phaser. Each side offers separate Rate, Depth, Bias, and Blend knobs, and On/Off switches. From deep to gentle, light to over-the-top Univibe/Chorus-ing, wah-filtered tones, or triple-thick phasing, the Swell of Silence is a tweaker's dream. It offers flexible warble and vibrato leading to a sensuous tremolo swirl. Powered by a 9-volt adapter, it takes up a bit more pedalboard real estate and will not accept batteries, but it plays exceptionally well with overdrive. The analog high-quality construction and low noise is greatly appreciated.

For players who like undulating "Purple Rain-style" modulation, studio-quality Police-era Andy Summers sounds, or simply want to fatten up an amp's signal, the Swell of Silence is a fantastic addition to any pedalboard. – **Oscar Jordan**



CROWN SOUNDS

The Tone King Royalist Tri-Tube Preamp

Following in the footsteps of last year's American-leaning Imperial Tri-Tube Preamp, Tone King's Royalist Tri-Tube Preamp goes full Britannia with glorious amp tones of the '60s and '70s.

Mirroring the heart and soul of the company's Royalist MkIII amp, the Royalist Tri-Tube brings to life those sought-after sounds from the church of Marshall – JTM45s, plexis, and Super Leads.

Between a superstrat and a Fender Deluxe, the Royalist's three 12AX7s, which run at high voltage, produced rich harmonics and offered tremendous touch sensitivity. Two independent channels each use a Fat switch to add fullness and low-end warmth. The Attenuation knobs act as a Master Volume for each channel, and a three-position Mode selector facilitates time travel – "1964" is low-gain British tones, "1967" brings aggressive bite and midrange, and "1970" offers tight high-gain crunch.

Tone stacks replicate vintage Super Bass and Bassman sounds and can be modified to taste with its three-band EQ. It has IR

cabinet and power amp simulation and connects directly to a PA, DAW, headphones, or amplifier. Plugging into an amp to achieve additional channels requires connections to the front input and the effects loop.

Tones range from clean, crisp, and silky smooth to rhythmic edginess and snarling teeth. A heap of cab, mic, and preamp tones are available with little effort, and the full-on balls-to-the-wall rhythm tones on a full stage will turn heads. Guitar solos sustained longingly, and the reverb is organic-sounding and malleable. The Royalist also has editing software that can store up to 128 presets with reverb, HF, and LP filters, and effects-loop assignments. It also comes with a 12-volt power supply.

If you're looking to update your old workhorse combo and get dependable, band-friendly sounds with musicality, the Royalist is Johnny on the spot. It's also great for "adding" channels or combining sounds with an existing rig. Overall, it's a super-cool asset for live performance or recording. – *Oscar Jordan*

Price: \$599.99
www.toneking.com

GEARIN' UP



BLACKSTAR ID:X

Blackstar's ID:X digital floorboards use the company's ISF tone shaping with selectable EL84, EL34, and 6L6 tube impulse response (IR) technology. Their effects are editable from the top panel, including drives, modulation, delays, and reverbs. Other features include speaker/microphone simulation, USB-C audio interface capability, MIDI input, XLR outs, tuner, streaming input, and headphone connectivity.



WINZZ LEAD BURNER 30W

Winzz Guitars' 30W is a compact guitar amp inspired by British high-gain amps of the '80s with two 12AX7s in its pre-amp and 30 watts of solid-state power. Features include passive EQ, controls for Presence, Bass, Mid and Treble, along with Master and Preamp knobs to manage output and gain. Its impulse response (IR) technology re-creates characteristics of various speaker cabinets.



FENDER 75TH ANNIVERSARY PLAYER II TELECASTER

Fender's 75th Anniversary Player II Telecaster has an alder body, Modern C-shaped maple neck with 9.5"-radius rosewood fretboard, medium jumbo frets, Thunderbolt Telecaster pickups, six-saddle string-through bridge with block steel saddles, ClassicGear tuning machines, four-ply pearlloid pickguard, and chrome hardware. It's finished in Diamond Dust Sparkle.

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

ARCHTOP SCRONK

The PRS SE Hollowbody II Piezo

There are innumerable guitars out there with both magnetic and piezo pickups, making the sonic switch between electric and acoustic tones easy as pie. That said, the implied *acoustic* side is usually fine for live applications, but can often sound thin and tinny. Here, PRS has put piezos into a hollow instrument that can produce a more natural dimension and showcase that concept in the SE Hollowbody II Piezo.

Right off the bat, it's hard not to notice the Hollowbody II Piezo's blissfully light weight, coming in under seven pounds. The Indonesia-built axe is made with mahogany sides, a five-ply maple back and shallow-carved top, with extensive figuring on both. The neck is laminated mahogany (in the PRS standard 25" scale) with a 22-fret ebony fretboard (10" radius) and its Wide Fat neck carve, comfy for those who prefer a chunkier feel.

The fun comes with the electronics package. The LR Baggs/PRS Piezo system can be approached in two ways using the twin outputs. One jack delivers a blended piezo/magnetic signal for convenience, but you can use both jacks and run cables to different sound sources (i.e. one to a regular guitar amp and the other to an acoustic amp, PA, or mixer for more-detailed EQ'ing). Operating the preamp is a breeze since there are no switches or settings to remember – just three knobs. Look for a Volume for the 58/15 LT "S" humbuckers, another Volume for the Baggs piezo, and a master Tone, plus a three-way toggle.

In hand, the SE Hollowbody II has a typically thicker neck, but it's set up for speed and precision. Tone-wise, this hollow design works better than most, so you can hear the acoustic flavors in both magnetic and piezo tone positions; even with heavy gain ladled onto these low-turn humbuckers, you can hear sweet archtop *scronk* a la Steve Howe or Rik Emmett. While no piezo will match a good condenser mic, all things considered, the combination delivers a believable acoustic tone for all kinds of projects. The SE Hollowbody II Piezo is a pro-grade guitar with PRS good looks, useful features, and tones to beat the band.

– Pete Prown VG

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01 Scott Miller has been a "...Fender and Marshall hoarder" for nearly 50 years. From left are his '62, '67, and '65 Strats along with a '69 Esquire Custom. The amps are Model 1987 50 watt-heads from the mid '70s along with 1960A and B cabinets.

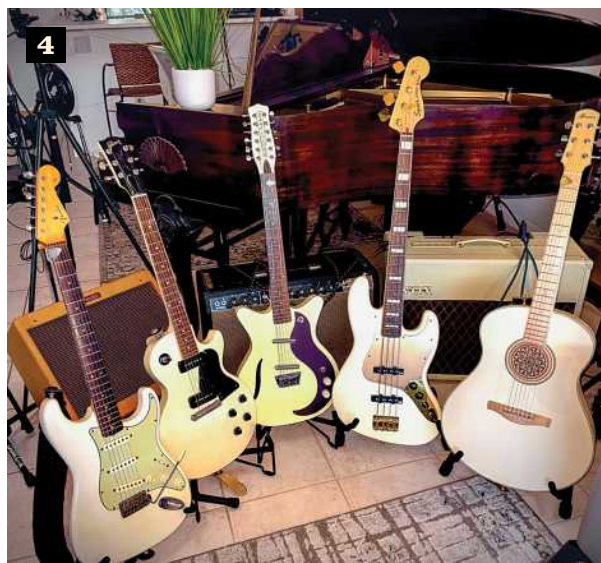
02 Rob Corley's Gibsons are, shall we say, "esoteric." From left they are a '74 Les Paul Signature and matching '74 Signature bass, followed by another pair - a '74 Les Paul Recording and '74 Triumph bass, both in Alpine White.

03 Ed Barry is a fan of guitars that side-step solid bodies. His collection includes (back) a mid-'50s Gretsch 6031, 1960 6117 Anniversary, '66 Chet Atkins Tennesseean, and a modern G5420T. Perched casually on the sofa are a Hamer Echotone and mid-'60s Bruno MaxiTone, and in front are a late-'40s Gibson L-50 (left), '58 Höfner President, and a '56 Guild X50.

04 Charles Delaney's collection includes sunbursts and other colors but he's especially fond of this set - the '63 Strat in Olympic White that started his obsession in 1981, '98 Custom Shop Les Paul Special in TV White, Danelectro DC12, Squier 40th Anniversary Jazz Bass, and an Ibanez AAM370E.

05 Robert Hirsch's collection includes this trio from modern builders - a Frank Bros Arcade Signature, Collings I-35 LCV, and a Novo Solus H2. "All are great-sounding, great-playing instruments that stand on the shoulders of great vintage guitars," he says.

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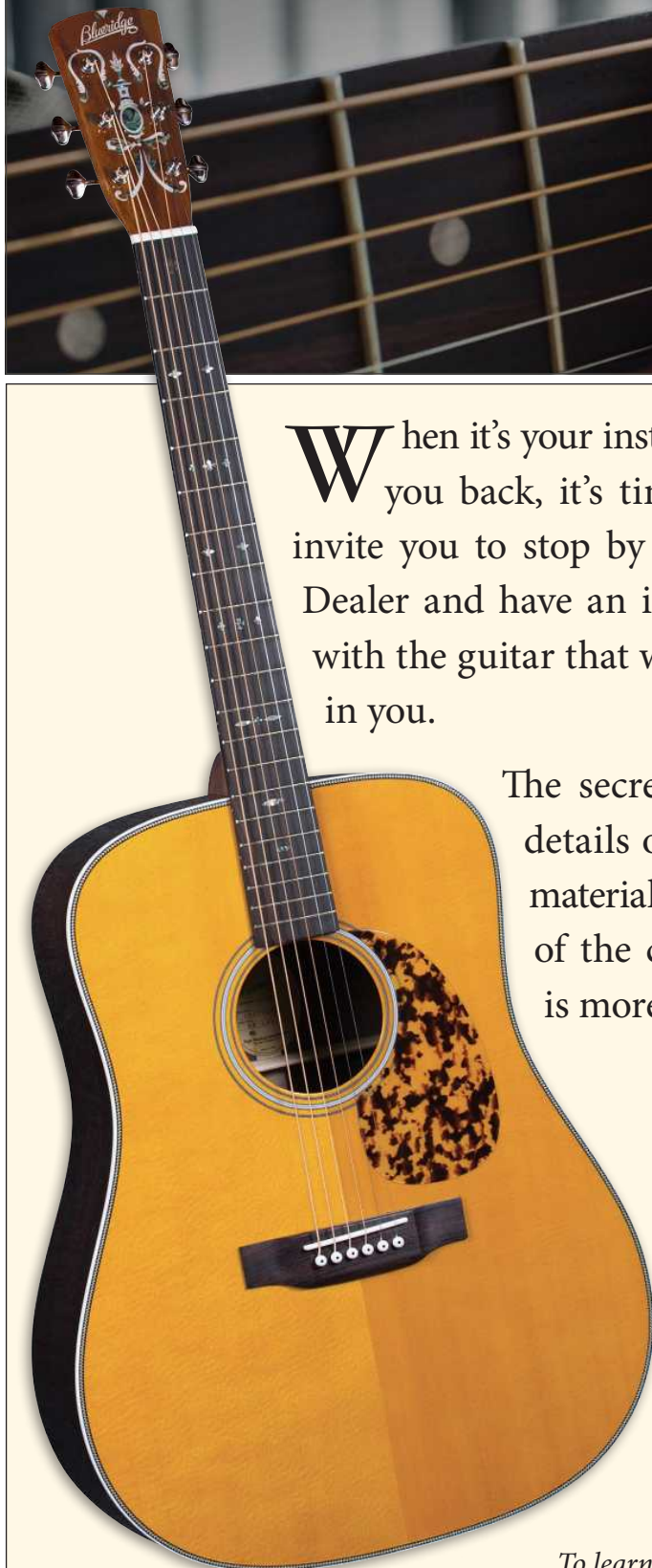
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