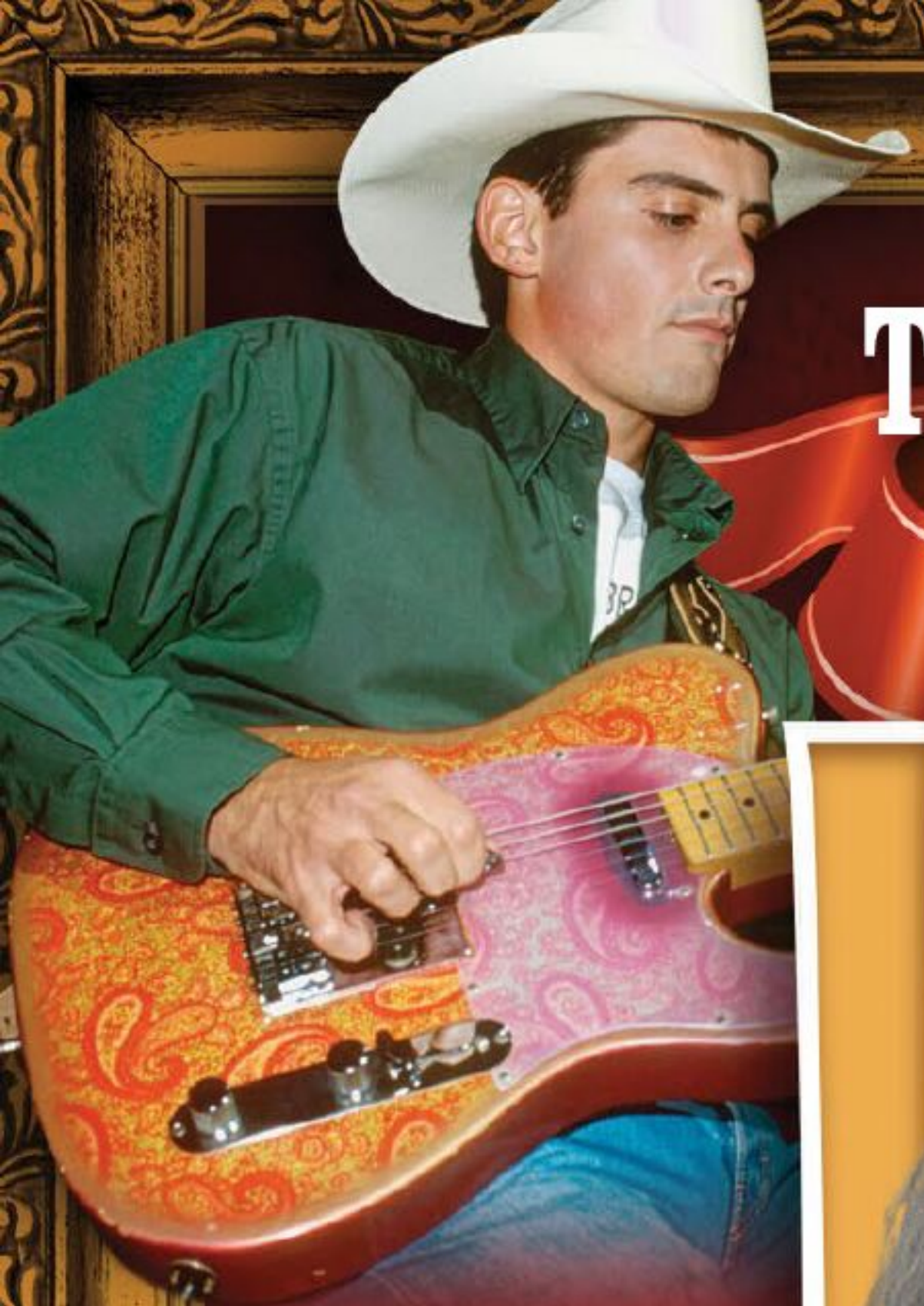


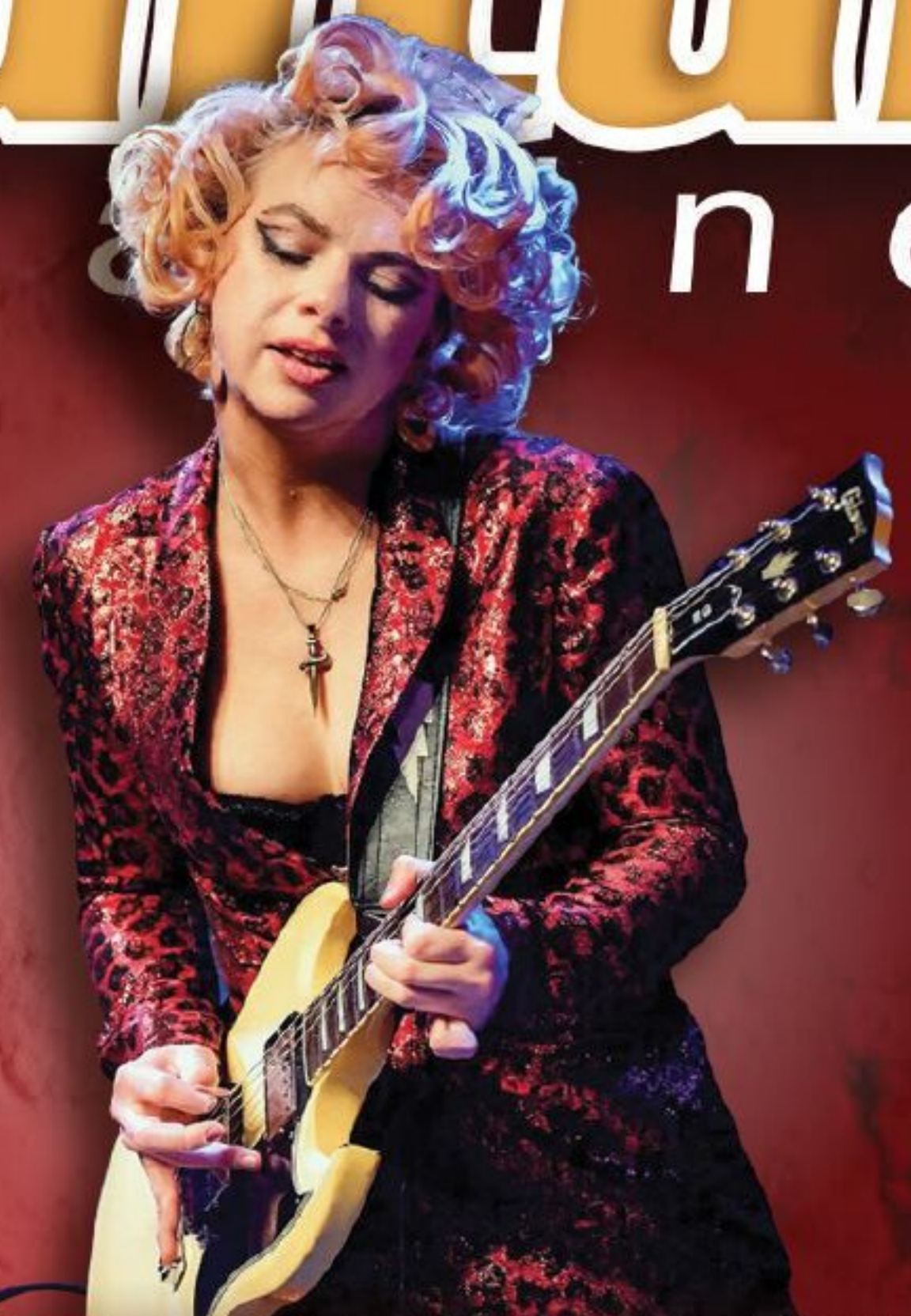


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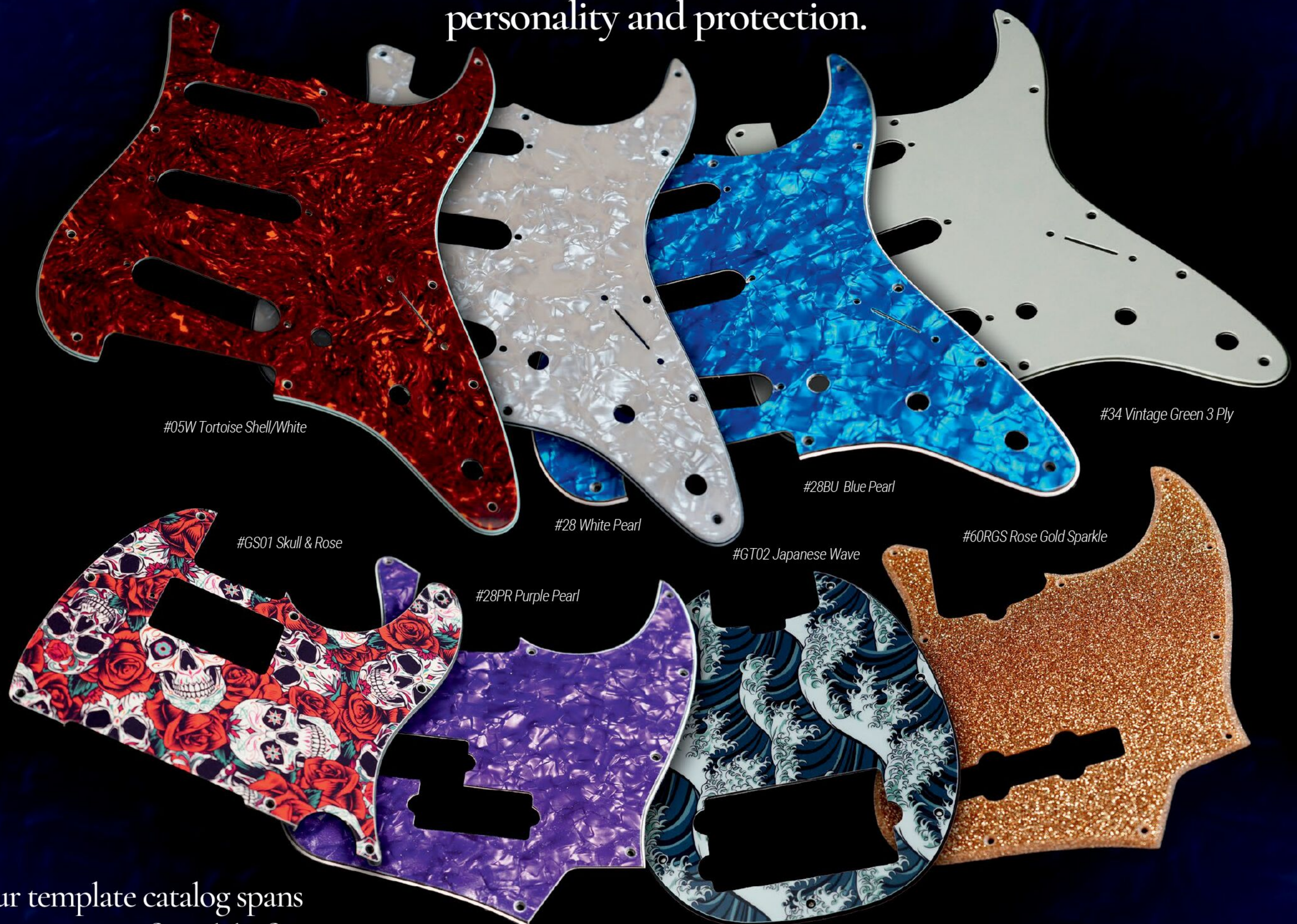
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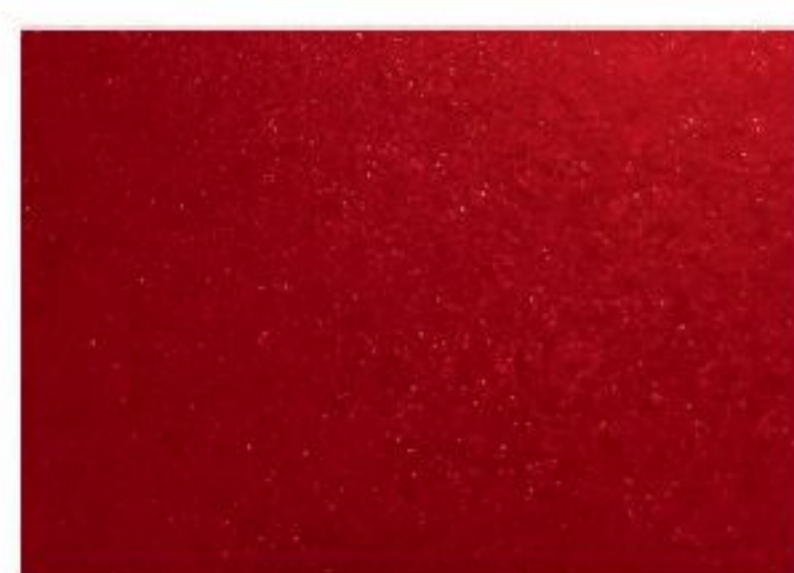


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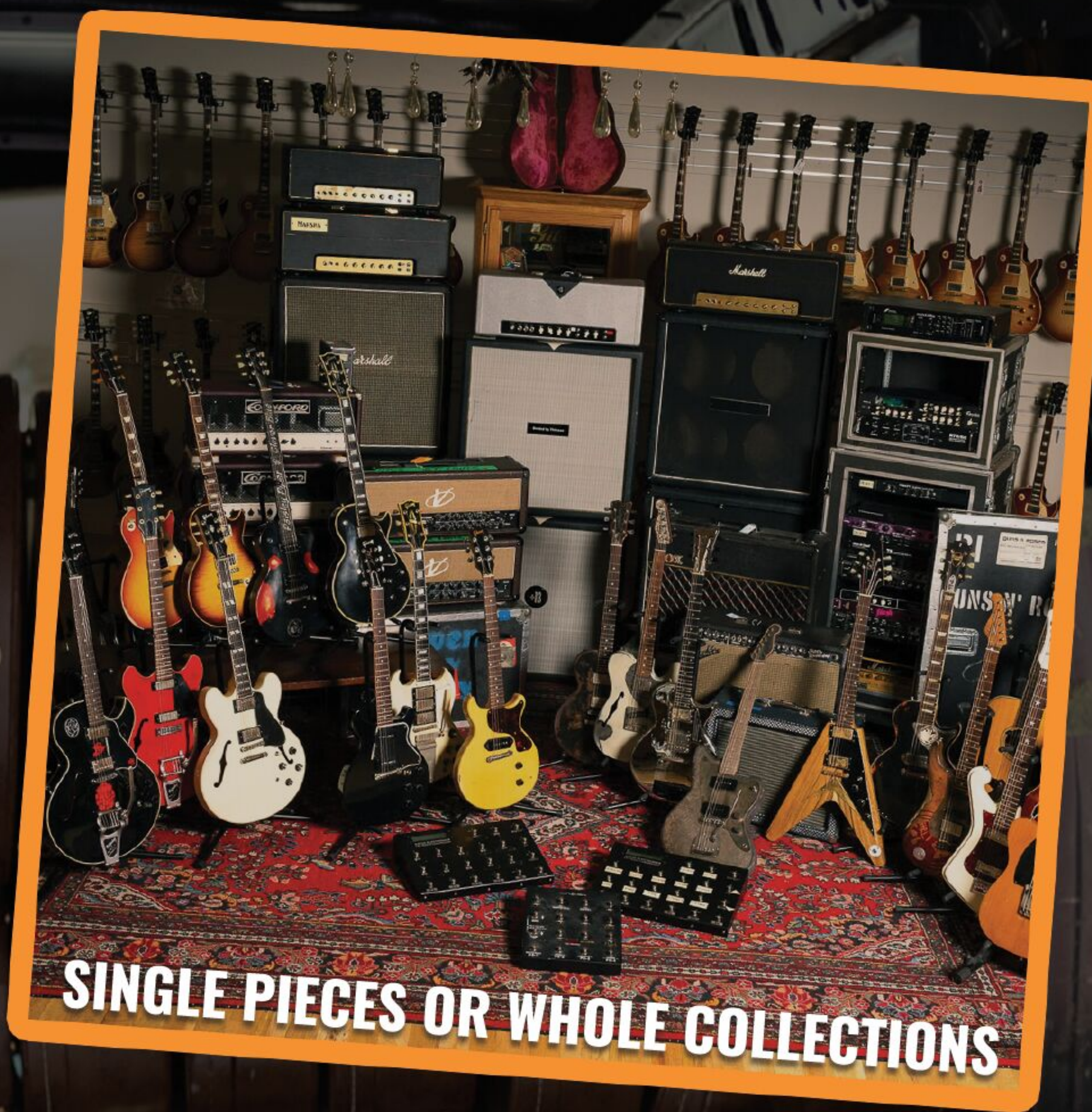
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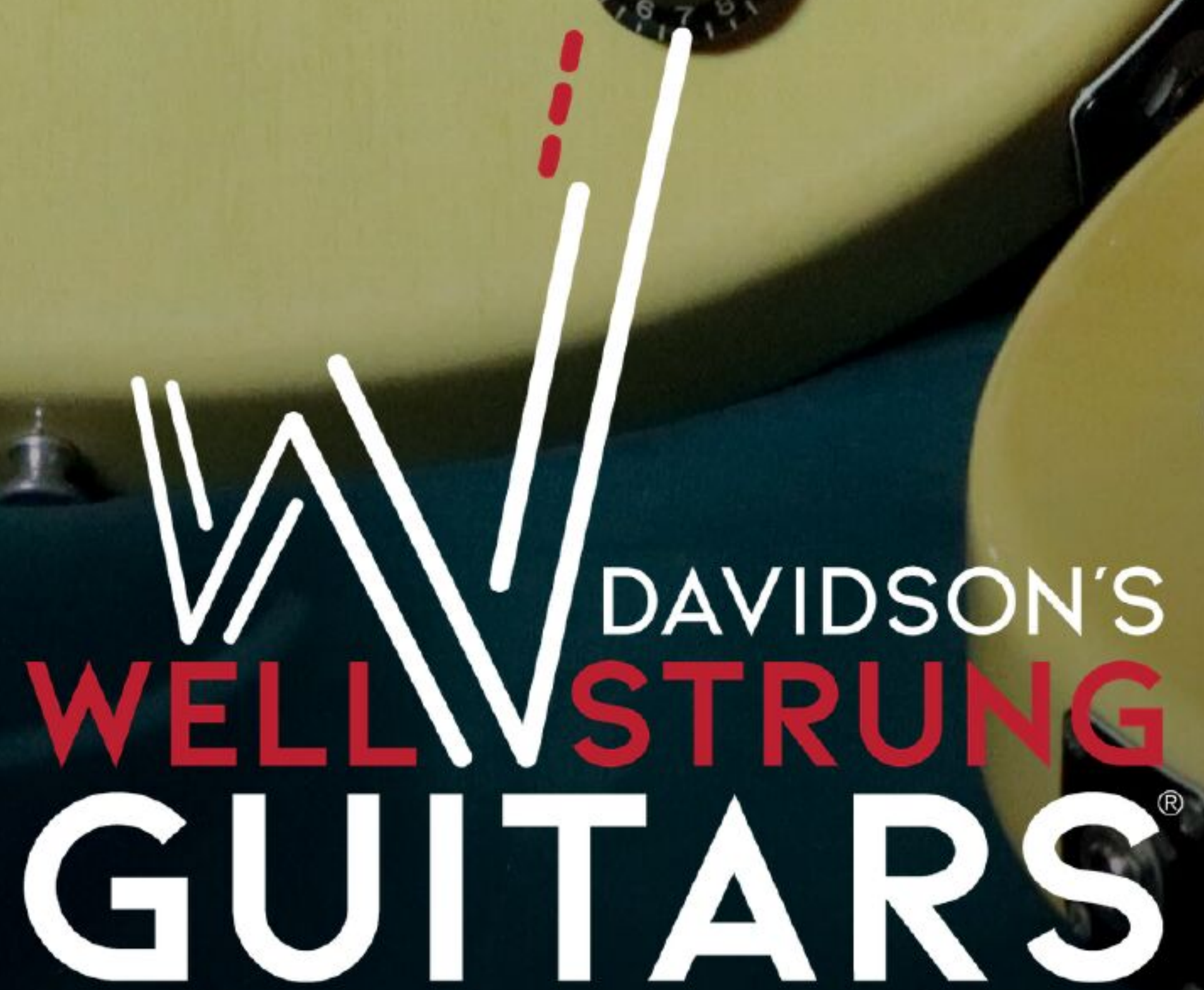


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CONTENTS

JUNE 2026 VOL. 40 NO. 09

FIRST FRET

- 12** **Reader Mail**
14 **News and Notes**
Music Will, Sweetwater Establish National Instrument Fund; Honor Thy Father
14 **Amigos Honor Gruhn**
Dealer Presented "Pioneer Award"
16 **In Memoriam**
18 **Samantha Fish**
Unapologetically Live
19 **Sean McDonald**
Jump Street
20 **Chris Poland**
Six-String Messiah
21 **Murali Coryell**
To Express, Not Impress
22 **John Pizzarelli**
Homage to Bennett
23 **Mateus Asato**
Next Level

DEPARTMENTS

- 38** **Guide to Essentials**
40 **Vintage Guitar Price Guide**
58 **Upcoming Events**
70 **Showcase**
72 **Readers Gallery**

COLUMNS

- 42** **Fretprints**
Steve Cropper and Bob Weir: Requiem for Two Rhythm Giants
| **By Wolf Marshall**
46 **Dan's Guitar Rx**
Unsafe Storage: Case Closed
| **By Dan Erlewine**

REVIEWS

- 62** **The VG Hit List**
Tedeschi Trucks Band, Harris/Hart/Davis, Soft Machine, Joel Hoekstra, Samantha Fish, Gabor Szabo, more!
63 **Check This Action**
Get Punked | **By Dan Forte**
66 **VG Approved Gear**
Fender 75th Anniversary American Ultra II Telecaster, Gizmoaudio Sweet Breakup, Bad Cat Mod Shop Hot Cat 50, Kiesel Mark 66, Trace Acoustic Clarity
67 **Gearin' Up!**
The latest cool new stuff!



Rick Vito

24 **TIMELESS TONES, PART III**
The Telecaster's Honest Bite
Strike a chord on Leo Fender's first solidbody and there's nowhere to hide. Direct, unadorned, and uncompromising, players prize its simplicity while producers respect the way it cuts through a mix with authority. | **By Mike Meiers**

28 **THE HARMONY OPUS XX**
A true jumbo with solid flamed-maple body and quasi-Gibson mustache/pin bridge, it was also the final nail in the coffin of mass manufacture of American guitars. | **By Michael Wright**

30 **BETTER OFF RED**
The Marshall Capri
Alongside the big stacks and loud combos made for clubs and concert halls, most amp manufacturers in the '60s made student amps. Here's one of the cutest. | **By Dave Hunter**

34 **CLASSICS**
As up-and-coming players/collectors in the '70s, brothers Greg and

Bob Tekippe remember a friend telling them about old Les Pauls with humbuckers. Soon, they each had a 'Burst of their own... until they didn't. | **By Ward Meeker**

50 **RICK VITO**
Sliding Home
With or without the slide that made him a household sound thanks to Bob Seger's "Like a Rock" and a TV ad for pickups, his playing has also graced projects by John Mayall, Bonnie Raitt, Roger McGuinn, Boz Scaggs, John Prine, Roy Orbison, Peter Frampton, Jackson Browne, and others. The title of his new album says it all – *Slidemaster*. | **By Dan Forte**

54 **MOSELEY GUITARS**
Mosrite By Any Other Name
After the doors closed at Mosrite, Semie Moseley barely took a breath before jumping back into the guitar game. The short-lived instruments bearing his name fill a niche that remains fascinating to collectors. | **By Willie G. Moseley**



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READER MAIL

HAMMOND HISTORIES

Some years ago, I had the privilege of acting as a liaison between my local blues society and John Hammond (“Check This Action,” May ’26) for a performance at a local music hall.

Being a big admirer of his work, I was a bit nervous, but he and his wife, Marla, immediately had me at ease with their humble, calm demeanor. While shooting the breeze pre-show, I mentioned a mutual acquaintance, and the floodgates opened, with hilarious stories shared. They made me feel as though we were friends for years.

As for the show, I have never experienced a blues performance as deep and intense as watching John from five feet away. At points, I was paralyzed by the sheer emotion and deep conviction of his playing. Anyone who might have thought of John as a mere blues copycat would be sadly mistaken. He was a true master of his craft, and played the blues with a sincerity and reverence that I have rarely heard or seen.

His passing saddens me deeply. Even after such a one day encounter that will be etched on my mind and heart forever, I feel as though I lost a friend.

My deepest condolences go to Marla and John’s family. He was, and is, a true national treasure who gave all of his being to the blues. Rest well, Mr. Hammond, and thank you for the fantastic music and memories.

Geo Jacopec
Colonial Heights, Virginia

I was able to approach John Hammond after a show in Kirkwood, Missouri. He was tired but always a gentleman. John signed my Valco/Airline guitar and asked, “What kinda music do you play?” I responded, “Late-’50s/early-’60s rock and roll.” He asked “What’s your favorite tune?” and when I told him “Red Caddillac and Black Moustache,” his eyes went wide. “*Nobody* does that song. Here play it for me!” He handed me his guitar and I started. Ten words in, he says “That’s it! So cool.”

I was also saddened by his passing and want to extend my thanks to Dan Forte for writing about his career and legacy.

Peter J. Raymond
Cottageville, South Carolina

YESTERYEAR COMMEMORATED

I realize *Vintage Guitar* is not a recording techniques magazine, but the Marshall Crenshaw letter (April ’26) sparked my memory

about what a classic guitar song “Raindrops” by Dee Clark is. Its beautifully crafted rhythms and finely articulated lead lines woven together and masterfully recorded, its opening acoustic rhythm, credited to Phil Upchurch, sets the mood, then we hear the iconic electric-guitar riff exquisitely played by Earl Skarritt, another forgotten guitarist.

The song has it all, and I’m thankful to VG for commemorating awesome guitarists of yesteryear.

John R. Wiley
Beaumont, California

Congratulations on my favorite guitar magazine. I have been a loyal reader for over 15 years!

Being a British expat living in the U.S. for 30 years, I was very pleased to see features on the great Glenn Tilbrook of Squeeze (March ’26) as well as Captain Sensible of punk pioneers The Damned (May ’26). They were part of the soundtrack of my youth!

Please keep up the good work. I look forward to each new issue.

Richard Wilson
Memphis, Tennessee

G&L, FARE THEE WELL

Thank you for the fantastic “Farewell to G&L” (April ’26). It was a well-reported and written story about a fascinating chapter in the world of guitars.

G&L has been part of my musical journey; I have an ASAT Classic Custom and a Legacy. I also own a ’70s Gibson 335, ’73 Takamine flat-top, and a Gibson J-45 ’50s Original. I’m in my early 70s and like to play because music fills my soul.

Long ago, I thought there had to be a “magic” guitar out there that would make me a better player. Now wiser, I realize the guitar is a simple tool; to get better, I practice, use a metronome, work on how chords fit together, and subscribe to VG to learn from players much better than I will ever be.

Tom Hallman
Portland, Oregon

I always enjoy VG cover to cover, but took particular delight in Mike Meiers’ “Timeless Tones, Part II: The Gretsch Hollowbody Ring” (April ’26). Mike put into words the elusive something that has always drawn me to the 6120 and its little siblings. My only letdown was the omission of Stephen Stills and Neil Young, whose

double-teaming White Falcons were a highlight of Buffalo Springfield and CSN&Y.

Keith Osterberg
Herculaneum, Missouri

STRINGER STORIES

The April edition reminded me of two sad events. First, the closing of G&L, of which I have been a fan off for many years. Second, the passing of Jim Stringer (“Check This Action,” April ’26).

I met Jim in the mid ’80s, when I played bass in a Kansas City/Lawrence dance band with him. I quickly learned that his experience and musical talent far outweighed mine, but he was always kind and gracious, onstage and off. We even did a few duo jobs together. Plus, he was a G&L guy, with a nice stable of ASATs and other guitars.

We kept in touch after he moved to Austin, and I was able to visit him and Dana in 2022. We hit a few guitar shops, got to jam, and I was able to come home with his ’86 blond “ASAT #2,” as he called it. I treasure it. Thank you, Dan Forte, for a great remembrance.

Ron Snapp
Shawnee, Kansas

Thank you very much for Dan Forte’s beautiful Jim Stringer eulogy. I was one of Jim’s less-distinguished students while I was at KU.

When I first heard him play, it was as if the universe had changed direction. I was sure his guitar had more notes than mine. He was equally at home with the diverse music of Bob Wills, Johnny Winter, Nancy Sinatra, and Sonny Rollins. Jim and his band, Tide, were my gateway to Miles Davis, Jerry Hahn, Hank Garland, Larry Carlton, Freddie King, and many others, and my own playing contains several “Stringerisms.”

He was a preternaturally fabulous player, singer, songwriter, and inventor of electronic devices, plus he was very funny. Nothing was better than his paeon to bulldozer safety, “Shake Hands With Danger,” with its immortal line, “I used to laugh at safety, now they call me Three-Finger Joe.”

Tim Bradley
Centennial, Colorado

JOE B. ON B.B.

I’d like to thank you for Dan Forte’s interview with Joe Bonamassa (March ’26), discussing his tribute to B.B. King, which is 100 percent incredible. Thanks for a wonderful magazine.

Robert Littlejohn
Lone Oak, Kentucky

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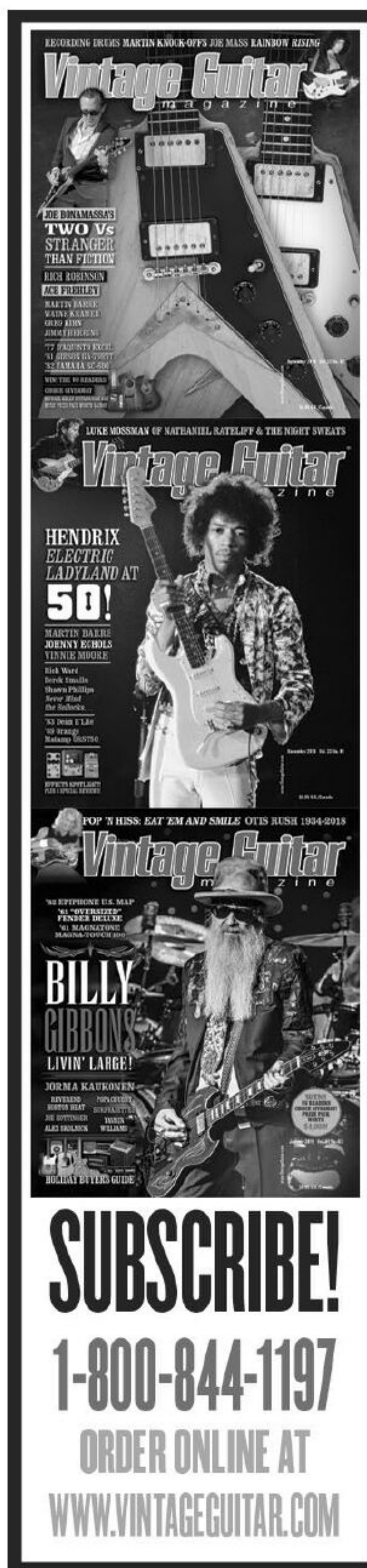
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MUSIC WILL, SWEETWATER ESTABLISH NATIONAL INSTRUMENT FUND

Music Will, a nonprofit music program that provides teacher training, curriculum, and instruments to more than 6,000 public schools across the U.S., has teamed with Sweetwater to launch the National Instrument Fund.

Each year, the Fund will accept applications from under-resourced schools to help establish music programs with instruments and gear ranging from electric and acoustic guitars to drums, keyboards, and sound systems. This year, applications were received from more than 300 schools, and 34 were recently chosen.

According to The National Association for Music Education, nearly four million students in the U.S. are without access to music education resources, while schools with music programs see a nearly 18 percent increase in graduation rates and an almost 10 percent increase in attendance rates.

A call for applications for the 2027 Fund will go live in February.

HONOR THY FATHER

VG will honor fathers in this year's July issue, distributed just prior to Father's Day (June 21). The feature relies on reader submissions, so if you would like to be included, send a photo of fathers and their families/children with favorite guitars (shot or scanned 4" x 6" at 300 dpi and saved as a .jpg) along with a caption by May 15 to ward@vintageguitar.com, with "Dad's Day" in the subject line.

OOPS DEPT!

Dan Forte's interview with Bill Frisell (May '26) misquoted him in a reference to pianist Jason Moran, who in the piece was referenced as Jason Mraz. VG apologizes for any confusion created by the error.



George Gruhn with a 1904 Martin 00-42.

AMIGOS HONOR GRUHN

Dealer Presented "Pioneer Award"

“Before there was the internet, there was George Gruhn,” Dave Crocker said with a chuckle at a ceremony honoring the trailblazing vintage-instrument dealer during this year's Nashville Guitar Show. “Before there was *The Vintage Guitar Price Guide*, there was George Gruhn's brochure.”

Crocker, along with fellow Amigos Guitar Show owners Ruth Brinkmann and Larry

Briggs, have staged shows nationwide over the last five decades. Brinkmann's late husband, John, co-founded the organization in 1984.

“John had been successful with other exhibitions, and he did three guitar shows by himself before the Amigos started,” Brinkmann recalled. “But, he contacted George early on, and without George getting into the



Heather Nokes, George Gruhn, Ruth Brinkman, and Dave Crocker at this year's Nashville Guitar Show.

guitar business, John probably would not have started guitar shows; he just wanted to meet up with guys who liked guitars as much as he did. In no way did he have in his mind that it was going to be what guitar shows are today."

During the ceremony, Gruhn was presented the Amigos' first Pioneer Award, which will honor people who've impacted the business of guitar dealing and collecting.

"George opened his store in 1970, and my father opened his the same year," said Briggs' daughter, Heather Nokes. "When he started attending our shows, that added legitimacy to them."

Crocker agreed, and cited Gruhn's efforts to increase knowledge about classic instruments.

"He has always brought a wealth of knowledge," he said. "He also inspired a lot of books about guitars; before then, all we had were Tom Wheeler's [*American Guitars*] and Mike Longworth's [*Martin Guitars: A History*]."

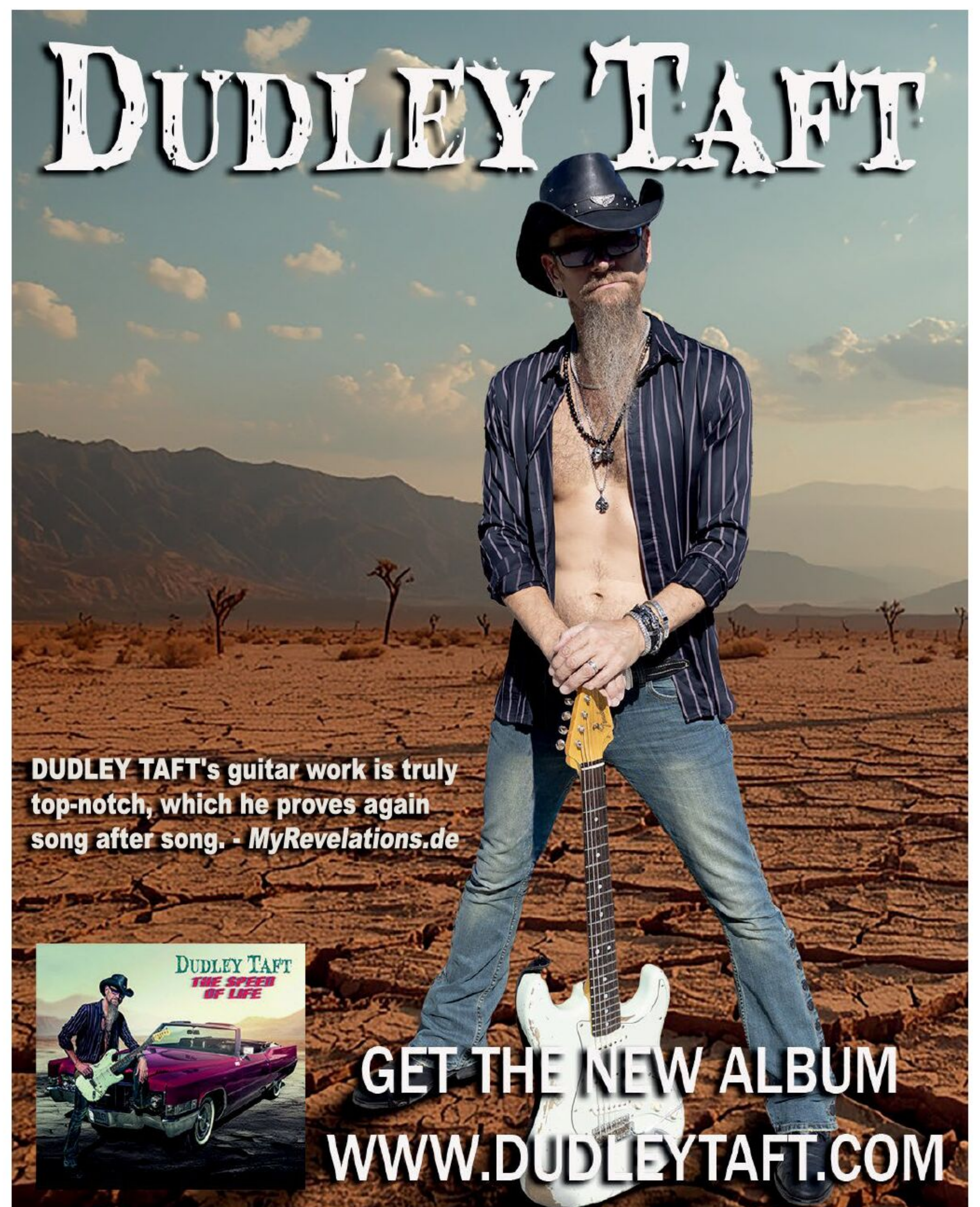
Gruhn was presented with a personalized jacket and hat featuring his hand-drawn "Freddie" cartoon from his early inventory mailers.

"I am very honored to have been selected as the first recipient of this award," he said. "Although I started collecting guitars in 1963 and opened my shop January, 1970, I don't claim to be the first to have ever collected or specialized in selling vintage American fretted instruments. I was however, one of the first to attempt to document these instruments and publish my findings for others to benefit.

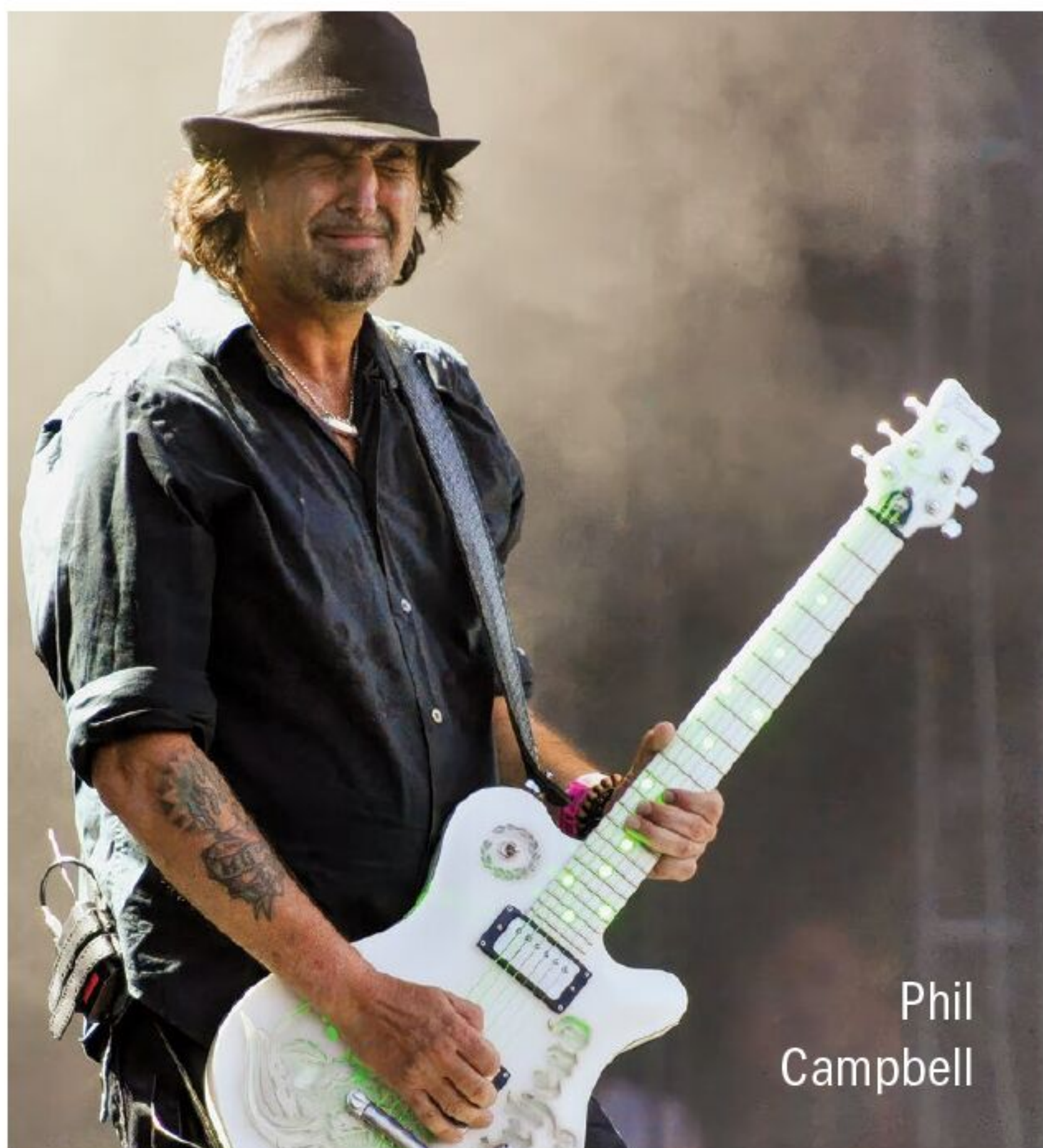
"When I started my business, my goal was to promote vintage American fretted instruments in much the same way that Hill & Sons had done for many years in London to not only sell violins, but to document their history and promote instruments that are so revered by musicians and collectors today. In the 56 years I've been in business, I have witnessed dramatic changes in the guitar market as well as technology and society, in general. It has sometimes felt much like a chaotic roller-coaster ride, but I am still thoroughly enjoying what I do, running what I view to be very much like an adoption agency to rescue, restore, and find loving homes for instruments.

"The Amigos deserve recognition for their foundational role in running guitar shows nationwide, which have greatly expanded worldwide appreciation for these instruments. We live in unstable times, but demand for vintage fretted instruments has remained remarkably stable recently, and over the past decades has greatly expanded." – **Willie G. Moseley**

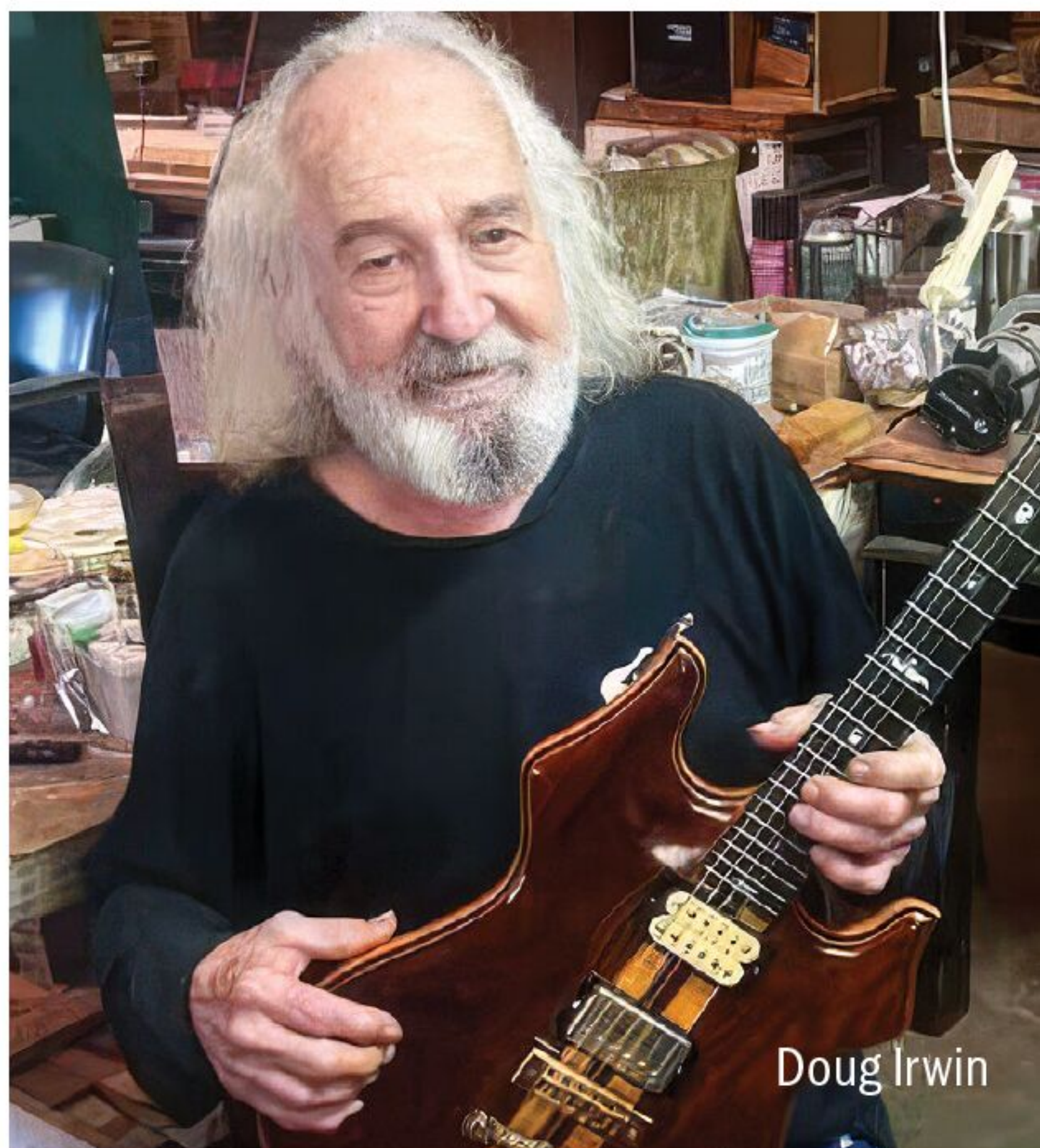
Nokes/Gruhn/Brinkman/Crocker: Willie G. Moseley.



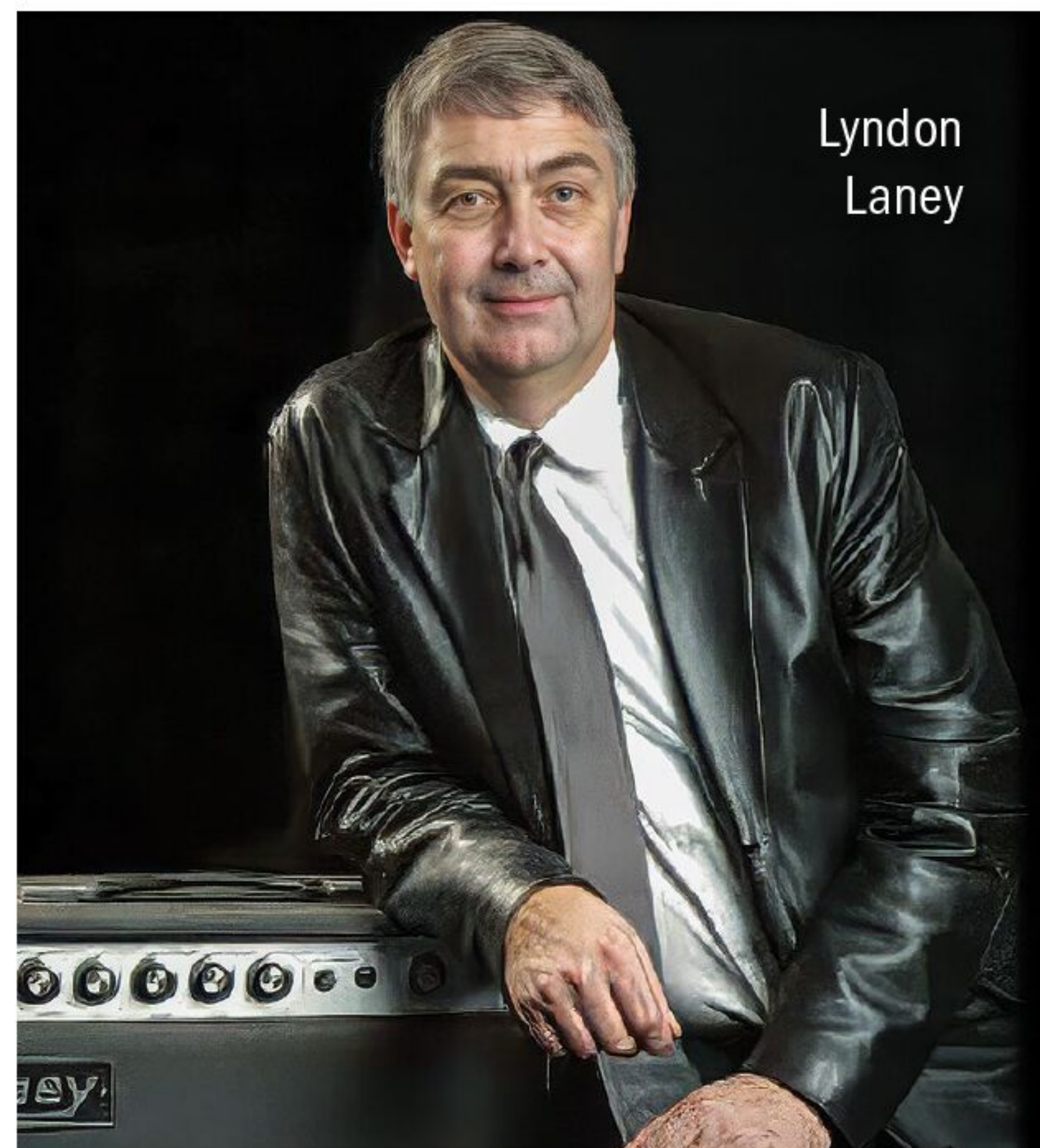
IN MEMORIAM



Phil Campbell



Doug Irwin



Lyndon Laney

PHIL CAMPBELL

Phil Campbell, longtime guitarist for the iconic heavy metal band Motörhead, died March 13. He was 64 and passed from complications following surgery.

Campbell was born in Wales and began playing guitar at age 10, influenced by British guitarists including Jimmy Page and Tony Iommi. As a youngster, he'd gotten an autograph from future Motörhead founder Lemmy Kilmister when Kilmister was a member of Hawkwind.

Campbell honed his craft in cabaret and pub bands, and in the late '70s formed the hard-rock group Persian Risk. In '84, he auditioned to replace guitarist Brian Robertson in Motörhead.

Unable to decide between Campbell and guitarist Michael Burston, Kilmister chose both; their first album was *Orgasmatron*.

When Burston departed in '95, Campbell suggested they return to a trio, which it remained until Kilmister's passing in 2015. Other than its founder, Campbell's 31-year tenure was the longest membership in the band.

In 2016, he formed Phil Campbell and the Bastard Sons, which included his three sons.

In his early Motorhead days, Campbell relied on two- and three-pickup Les Pauls. He later played other guitars including Framus and Caparison. His Lag signature model was based on Gibson's Explorer.

Campbell remained dedicated to Motörhead for more than three decades. "It's like a family," he told VG in the late '90s. — **Willie G. Moseley**

DOUG IRWIN

Doug Irwin, the guitar builder best known for making custom instruments played by Jerry Garcia during the heyday of the Grateful Dead, died March 27. He was 77 and in hospice after being treated for cancer.

Irwin worked at Alembic when he built the guitar Dead fans know as Eagle in 1971. At the time, Alembic was renowned for its multilaminate "hippy sandwich" guitar bodies and Garcia bought Eagle during a visit to the factory, paying \$850. It led to custom-ordering his second, Wolf, delivered in '73 at a cost of \$1,500. Upon receiving it, Garcia ordered another, telling Irwin to build "...the most extravagant instrument he was capable of... regardless of cost." Six years, 2,000 labor hours, and \$5,800 later,

Garcia was handed Tiger, which was his main guitar for the next 10 years. In 1990, Irwin created Rosebud, delivered for \$11,000. Irwin's final build for Garcia was the headless Wolf, Jr. During the Dead's final show on July 9, 1995, at Chicago's Soldier Field, Garcia played Rosebud until its electronics began to malfunction, after which he switched to Tiger and finished the concert; the latter guitar hadn't been used on tour for several years and was on-hand only as a backup.

Garcia's will bequeathed the Irwin-made guitars back to the builder, but the Dead's company, GD Productions, sued, claiming the band collectively owned all instruments purchased with Dead funds. In October of 2001, the sides agreed that Irwin would get two guitars — Tiger and Wolf — and GP Productions would keep two. Irwin, recovering from head injuries sustained in a hit-and-run accident, was at the time destitute and living with his mother. In '02, he auctioned both; Wolf brought \$789,500, while Tiger sold to Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay (d. 2025) for \$957,500. In 2016, it was loaned to Warren Haynes for the Jerry Garcia Symphonic Celebra-

tion tour and was also made available for Dead and Company shows. In '19, it was part of the "Play It Loud" exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

All told, Irwin made more than 50 other instruments including basses for Pete Sears and Phil Lesh. Tiger was part of the recent sale of guitars from the Irsay estate, where it brought \$11.56 million. — **Ward Meeker**

LYNDON LANEY

Lyndon Laney, a pioneer of British musical-equipment manufacturing and founder of Laney Amplification, died April 10. He was 77 and battled cancer.

Lyndon established what would become Laney Sound in 1967 while playing bass in a Birmingham-based group with John Bonham on drums and Robert Plant on vocals. Having an interest in electronics and no money to purchase a suitable amplifier, he built one for himself in his father's garden shed. In '68, he built a PA system for Plant's new band, Led Zepelin, which led to building amplifiers for several local musicians including Tony Iommi, who used a Laney to record Black Sabbath's first two albums; the produc-

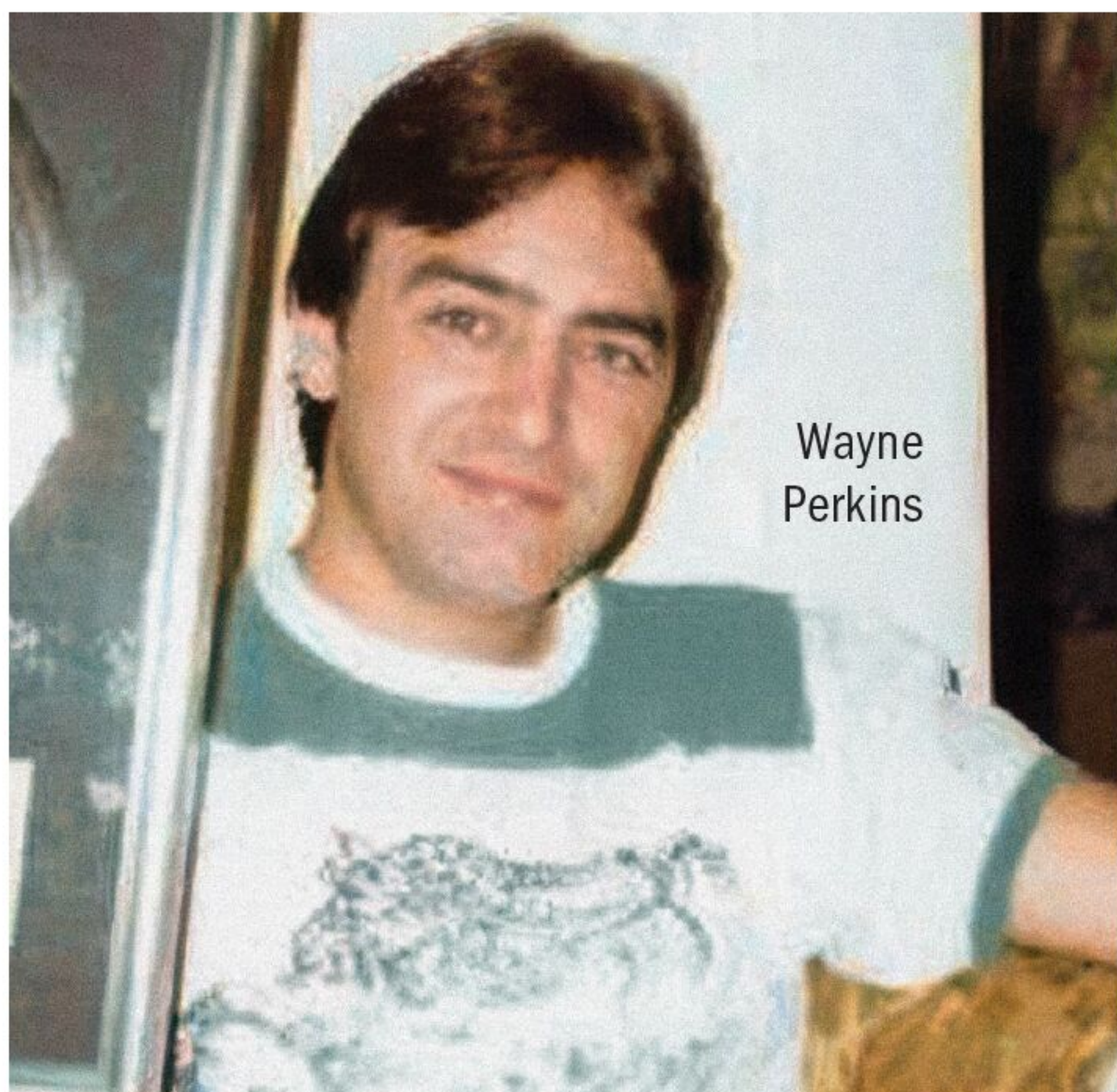
tion version was marketed as the Supergroup.

Laney became a key figure by continuing to innovate, with features such as built-in treble boost. In '78, his Advance Overdrive Response (AOR) amplifiers had an additional gain stage in the preamp and became popular with players in the rising heavy metal genre. Within a few years, some of the biggest names became endorsers, including Vinnie Moore, Warren DiMartini, and George Lynch.

Keeping with changes and the rising "boutique" market of the mid '90s, the company introduced the all-tube/Class A VC line, along with the VH and GH Class A/B tube amps, solid-state/tube hybrid Tube Fusion line, and LC 15-watt "bedroom" tube amp. At the time, Laney's were being used by Paul Gilbert, Nuno Bettencourt, Joe Satriani, and others alongside Iommi. In the early 2000s, Laney became the first company to market a class D bass amp, and in the years since has continued to market new amps and effects. In '97, the company established the Headstock Group, which operated the pro-sound company HH Audio and created a distributorship for Hoshino Gakki/Ibanez and Tama as well as Zildjian, Vic Firth, DiMarzio, and others.

On social media, friends and associates cited Lyon's warmth, integrity, humor, and determination.

"I am absolutely devastated," said Iommi. "He was a really lovely guy and his great passion was building valve amps. We'd sit talking about ideas and what to build into my amplifiers. I am so honored to have known him and his family." – **Ward Meeker**



Wayne Perkins

WAYNE PERKINS

Wayne Perkins, a session guitarist in the famed Muscle Shoals studios, died May 16 after suffering a stroke on March 1. He was 74.

Born to guitar-playing parents in Birmingham, Alabama, Perkins began playing guitar at age six, learning mostly on his own; by 10 he had an accomplished ear, and at 15 was in a band. He dropped out of school at 16 and was soon after hired to do session work at Prestige Recording Studio, in Birmingham, followed by Quinvy's studio in Sheffield, then Muscle Shoals. He spent the '70s and '80s backing artists (on guitar and bass) including Joe Cocker, Leon Russell, Percy Sledge, Steve Winwood, John Prine, Roger McGuinn, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Leon Russell, and many others. For Joni Mitchell's "Car On a Hill," Perkins laid down a slide part using James Burton's paisley Telecaster.

While touring with Russell in the early '70s, he was spotted by Eric Clapton, who suggested to Mick Jagger that Perkins should be given a chance at Mick Taylor's spot after he left the band in '74. Perkins, along with other potential replacements Harvey Mandel and Ron Wood, helped the band

record its 1976 album, *Black and Blue* ("Pop 'N Hiss," December '22); Perkins' playing is heard on "Hand of Fate," "Memory Motel," and "Fool to Cry," along with "Worried About You," which was held over and appeared on 1981's *Tattoo You*.

"I was playing my Les Paul, a black two-pickup '68 Custom, through a Morley Boost pedal and into a Twin Reverb," Perkins told VG in '22. "Keith was playing his Tele in open G through one of the many Ampeg combos they had, and we recorded 'Hand of Fate' live, all standing in the same room. I came up with this guitar line, and Keith said, 'Yeah, keep doing that,' and it worked out pretty cool. Keith told me he really liked my parts."

That same year, Ronnie Van Zant asked Perkins to replace Ed King in Skynyrd, but he declined, preferring to stay at Muscle Shoals.

In the late '70s, Perkins and his brother, Dale, led a band that signed with Capitol and recorded two albums at its studios in Hollywood. After being dropped in 1980, the band dissolved, but Perkins stayed to do sessions in Los Angeles, where his resume included soundtrack work along with albums by Oak Ridge Boys, Delbert Mc-



Yuichiro Yokouchi

Clinton, and Levon Helm. In 1995, he released his first solo album, *Mendo Hotel*. – **Ward Meeker**

YUICHIRO YOKOUCHI

Yuichiro Yokouchi, founder of guitar manufacturer Fujigen, died April 2 in Matsumoto City, Nagano. He was 98.

Yokouchi established Fujigen Gakki Seizo in 1960 after converting a 100-square-meter cow shed on his family's farm; seed money came from selling all of his cows, he said in an interview with NAMM. Its first instruments were classical guitars and violins, followed by electric guitars in '62.

At the peak of the '60s guitar boom, Fujigen Gakki was making 15,000 guitars per month. In the '70s, it built for Hoshino Gakki (Ibanez), U.K. importers Arbiter, Charles Summerfield, Kanda Shokai (Greco), and Yamaha.

In '81, Fuji stopped making acoustics to focus on making solidbody guitars and parts including its own pickups. The company became FujiGen in '89, by which time it was the world's largest electric-guitar manufacturer, building for Fender Japan, Ibanez, Orville by Gibson, and Greco. – **Ward Meeker**



Samantha Fish and drummer Jamie Douglass.

SAMANTHA FISH

Unapologetically Live

On her latest, *Live @ The Bijou*, Samantha Fish unleashes a set of ferocious tunes with power, passion, and sensuality. Drawing heavily from last year's *Paper Doll*, Fish offsets choice cuts with awesome cover songs and flammable cigar box slide work.

Does *Live @ The Bijou* mark the end of an era?

I feel like every record is. It's a snapshot of who you are and where you are in the moment. It's a couple of years more experience and influence. It's going in a direction and trying to create a piece of art that sounds timeless and feels authentic. My fans have been saying for years that they want a live record, so this is truly for them. We capture an energy and a spirit that you don't get on a studio record. There are a lot of things you focus on, but the live album is just raw; there are bumps and mistakes. It's got a lot

of rough edges, but that's what people want to hear when they turn up to a show.

I feel inspired to shake things up. Whether it's a bigger band or something that sounds sonically different. I have so many directions I want to go. I let the songs take me in the direction I'm supposed to go. That's the most authentic approach for me. I did a live record at the very start of my career, and I did it out of pure necessity. I'm in a whole different place now.

How did you choose the setlist for *Live @ The Bijou*?

Paper Doll came out within the last year, so that was what the set was focusing on. I recorded it with my touring band because I wanted to put together the best show and record it. This is one of the best bands I've ever had, and it seemed like the perfect time for it.

Your cover of "Kick Out the Jams" is intense. You can't go wrong with the MC5. During the

Faster tour, that was our walk-on music every night. That song kicks ass. When I got with Jesse Dayton to do *Death Wish Blues*, he said, "Why don't we just play the song (laughs)!" I started doing it with Jesse and held on to it. It really wakes people up when you come out with that song. It sets an intention for the night.

What's your main guitar?

I'd say it was my SG. When I really need to lay down something fiery and aggressive, I'll generally go for that. But I've also been loving my 335. You can really get some incredible tones out of it. It's so expressive. If you're not in control of it, it will take off in this wild way with feedback – but I love that.

The fan favorite is my cigar-box guitar, which is falling to pieces (laughs). I've been saying for years that it's done, but it's still holding on. It's duct-taped together, and we're still making it work. I've been gifted some incredible cigar-box guitars over the years, but that one in particular has something really aggressive about the tone. The juxtaposition of the small body and the tone is like a chainsaw. I've played other ones, but they don't have that gutsy tone.

How about amps?

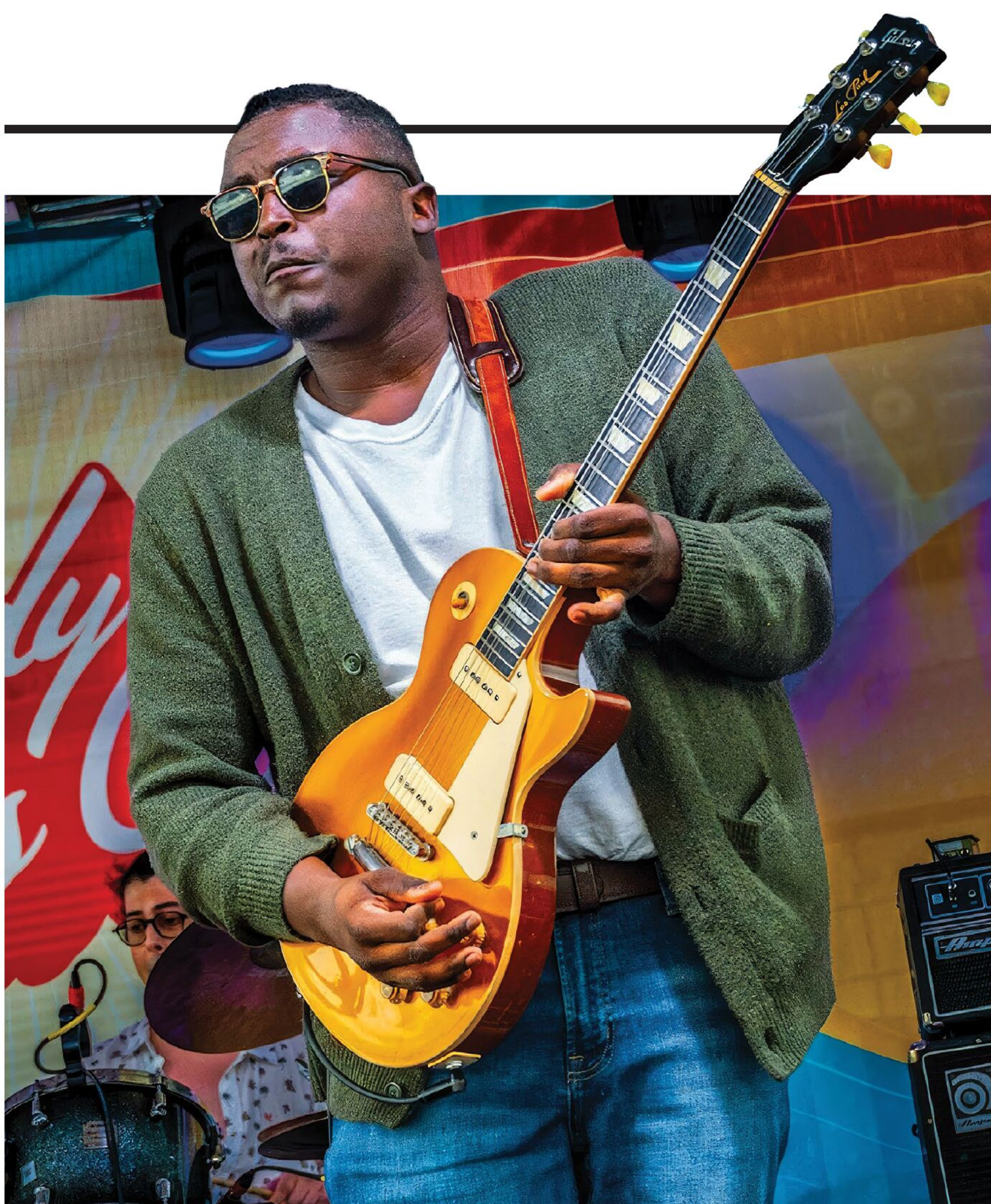
Category 5s. I use the 50-watt Andrew head and the 90-watt Camille head. I have a 4x12 cabinet, but it usually depends on the room, so I have to make a judgment call. They're very responsive, and when you get them cranked up just right, you don't have to work too hard. Even at 50 percent, I can get the tubes to where I need them.

Are you running pedals?

If I had a crutch, it's probably the Analog Man King of Tone. It's gainy, it cuts, doesn't compress, and it has a thickness to it. My tour manager gifted me with an MC5 pedal (MXR Jail Guitar Doors Overdrive). It's one button, one knob, you just turn it all the way up, and it sounds pretty f***ing nuts. I also have a JHS Mini Foot Fuzz, an Electro-Harmonix Micro POG, an MXR Carbon Copy, a Boss Super Shifter, and a Boss Tremolo.

Your songs have elements of blues, Americana, and rock and roll. How do you see yourself as a composer?

I hear the roots of how I learned to play from my influences and how I vocalize and write. It's rooted in blues music, but I also have some pop sensibilities, I love rock and roll, and Americana. I love to tell stories. I love North Mississippi blues. To me, it's those influences coming together, but there's this throughline that I think of as soul and blues. My main focus is to write songs with hooks. I want to write something that will stick with people. That's where the fun and the artistry are. – **Oscar Jordan**



SEAN MCDONALD

Jump Street

Only 24, singer/guitarist Sean McDonald has been dubbed “an old man in a young man’s body” for his soul-shaking blues. The opener on his latest, *Have Mercy!*, is a swingin’ tune called “My Soul” and it might as well have been recorded in 1956 instead of 2026, complete with hot, stinging solo. McDonald’s jump blues brings to mind the best of T-Bone Walker, B.B. King, and West Coast heroes like Pee Wee Crayton and Lowell Fulson. Let’s check in with the rising blues blaster.

Your blues has a serious swing to it, like West Coast, jump, or Memphis blues. How did you gravitate to that sound?

I was born a jazz lover. My dad played jazz for me in the womb, so that’s the music I liked as a baby. As I started getting into blues and finding out more about certain players, I developed a

love for the music that came out in the late ’40s to the early ’60s. I enjoy the swing, sophistication, and rawness of it all.

As far as a soloing approach, did you ever take any lessons from jazz players?

Yes, Jerry Kimbrough and Chip Henderson were both guitar professors at my alma mater, Middle Tennessee State. I took a semester with each of them, but a lot of that style also comes from listening to horn and piano players. I really dig saxophone players because they know how to navigate the changes – guys like Illinois Jacquet, Big Jay McNeely, Joe Houston, Lee Allen, and Willis Jackson. They had a lot of killer lines that I use from time to time in my solos.

Who are your guitar heroes? Lowell Fulson and Pee Wee Crayton must figure into the mix.

I love the three Kings – B.B., Albert, and Freddie – but a lot of my biggest heroes were

the sidemen. Guys like Robert Lockwood, Jr., Hubert Sumlin, Earl Hooker, Bill Jennings, Pete “Guitar” Lewis, Mickey Baker, Jimmy Nolen, Wayne Bennett, Clarence Holliman, and especially Howard Carroll of the Dixie Hummingbirds. Also, non-blues players like Spanky Alford, Jubu Smith, Jonathan DuBose Jr., Chet Atkins, Hank Garland, Grady Martin, and others. Of course, I love Lowell Fulson and Pee Wee Crayton! They don’t get enough shine in the blues world, and that’s criminal.

Your songs also have a gospel feel, like on “That’s All I Need” and “Don’t Let the Devil Ride.” How does church music influence your playing?

Like a lot of folks in my community, I grew up going to church. I sang in the children’s choir and I was a church musician starting at 11 or 12 years old. A good bit of my favorite singers are gospel singers from the ’50s and ’60s, like Ira Tucker, Claude Jeter, Julius Cheeks, Marion Williams, and Dorothy Love Coates. Because I listen to that a lot, I can’t help but throw that influence in there and it comes through my guitar in certain runs, certain phrases, screams, and squalls. No matter what I do, especially as far as singing is concerned, church is always going to be an underlying factor. “Devil” is actually a tribute to my great-great grandfather, who used to sing and play at his church all the time. I had to do my best gospel singing on that one.

Which guitars and amps did you use on *Have Mercy!*?

I mainly used my 2019 Les Paul Standard ’50s with P-90s. I also used some [that were] at the studio – a mid-’50s ES-350 on “Rocking In The Same Old Boat,” a ’60s Strat on “Fakin’ It,” and Slim Harpo’s ES-330 on “Shuffleboard Swing.”

As far as amps, I used a Harvard from the ’50s with a reverb tank that gave the amp a bit of a push that I really liked. The other amp was a ’60s DaVinci, made by Magnatone. That tremolo you hear on “Don’t Let the Devil Ride” is from the DaVinci, because I wanted to get a Pops Staples tone for that song. The only other effect is the amp’s reverb.

You play Stratocasters, an ES-5, and the Les Paul goldtop. Do you approach each guitar differently?

I try my best to get my sound on any guitar I play, but guitars influence you to play *them* to a certain degree. When I play my Strat, I lean more toward ’50s B.B. or Texas stuff. On my ES-5, I lean more toward T-Bone Walker. I prefer my Les Paul because I can play *anything* on it – blues, gospel, funk, R&B, jazz, rock and roll... There’s something about the combination of flatwound strings and P-90s that fits my style the best. To me, they’re the perfect middle ground between a Strat pickup and a humbucker. It feels like home. – **Pete Prown**



CHRIS POLAND

Six-String Messiah

Metal-fusion expert and Megadeth alumnus Chris Poland has joined forces with Cleopatra Records to form Nuclear Messiah and release the album *Black Flame*. It's an all-star metal project featuring heavy hitters Marty Friedman, Sebastian Bach, Vinnie Moore, William Shatner, and many others. Poland tells all.

You have Captain James Tiberius Kirk on *Black Flame*.

They asked me to do guitar sound effects underneath William Shatner's voice, but

Lopez, Bumblefoot...

Lance Lopez is so f***ing good! He has awesome tone and it's all in his Volume control. His vocal is the kind I like in a blues thing. He's got it all going on. I'm surprised he's not super famous.

Pat Travers!

Oh my God! What an awesome guy! Metal lovers should have this in their collection.

What's it like bouncing off these other players?

When I record stuff like this, it's usually my first or second pass. The song directs what I do.

when I heard him, he was speaking in perfect 6/8 time the whole time. So I started playing chords around his words. Me and the engineer were like, "That's perfect!"

How did this project come about?

I got a call from producer Brian Perera. He said, "I have this idea. How about if we get a bunch of people together and make a record called *Nuclear Messiah*?" When he started naming names, I was like, "You gotta be kidding me. These people are going to do this?" He said, "Yeah!" That's how it came about.

You got Vinnie Moore!

Every time I did a song, I would be like, "Oh, c'mon (laughs)!" Every song was different, and it made me react a little differently. All the guys were seasoned pros, so they probably do this all the time. I think that's why it came out so well. Everybody is so good.

You got Lance

I have my crutch stuff that I go back to all the time, and I try not to get too repetitious. I might do "Death Or Glory" this week, then I may not have another song for three weeks, then I forget that I did "Death Or Glory" (laughs).

Brian and the other producers, Derek Hughes and Jürgen Engler, collaborated on the composing, and I added my parts. They wrote the core of the original songs. The covers came prearranged. I mic everything; I tried using plug-ins, but I can't. I record in an isolated control room and a tracking room.

What was your amp of choice?

I have two Marshall DSL 100H heads and a friend put ClassicTone Plexi output transformers in each. Then an amp tech biased the tubes. I only use the power-amp section. I also have a modded Peavey Inverter.120, and I used a red-faced Egnator from 1993.

What is your fusion band, Ohm, up to?

We just recorded 11 songs in three days at Steve Lukather's Steakhouse Recording Studio. Our bass player, Rob Pagliari, found CDs of songs from live rehearsals we wrote with our late drummer, David Eagle, recorded back when I had really good gear. Twenty years later, Pag says, "You're not going to believe this," and starts playing these songs – they sounded really good. It's called *Requiem* and it's a tribute to David.

You have a new guitar.

I've been looking at this Agile 3200 for years. Every time, I was like, "That looks like it's perfect for me." But it was so inexpensive, I thought "That can't be a good guitar." Kurt Zentmaier at Agile built one to my specs – thin body with two Volume controls and a Tone knob, 24 frets, and I think the reason it sounds and plays so good is because it's a five-piece neck-through. It has three pieces with maple and two strips of walnut. It's the best guitar I've ever played. It's like a Maserati. You can hear it on the Ohm record.

Which guitars did you use on *Black Flame*?

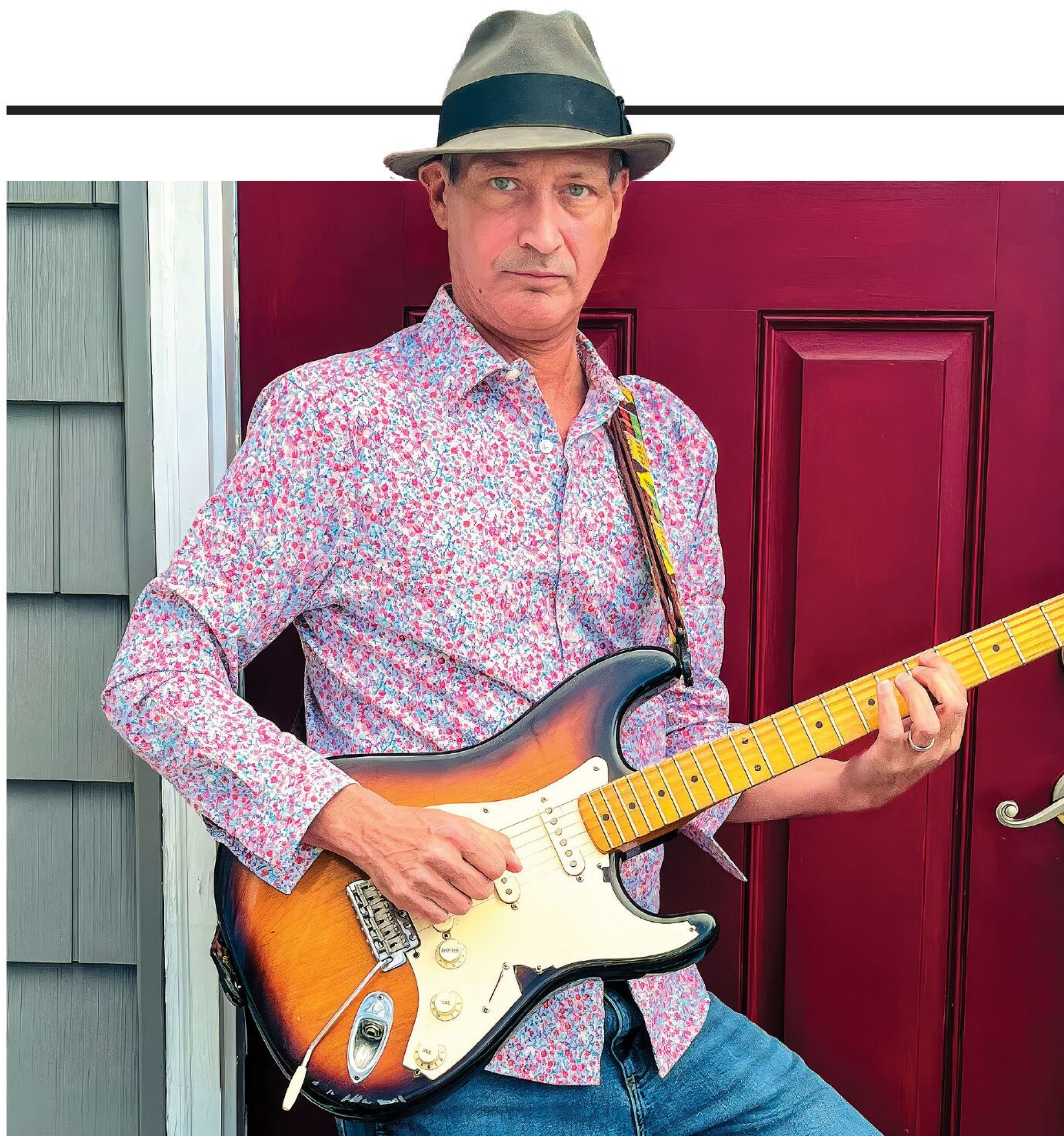
I used all Schecter Poltergeist guitars. I'd been playing their guitars for a long time, but I've moved on since I got the Agile.

Any new pedals?

I finally got another Roger Mayer Voodoo Vibe+. I sold my Klon, but I picked up a Centura by Ceriatone. It sounds just like my Klon.

I have a Bradshaw System and a Custom Audio Mixer with dedicated reverb, hang-over delay, and two or three effects that do everything else.

I also picked up the new Rockman pedal. I couldn't get the *Peace Sells... But Who's Buying?* tone, but it sounded better on my board in bypass mode than when it was on (laughs). – **Oscar Jordan**



MURALI CORYELL

To Express, Not Impress

It might seem that Murali Coryell was destined to play guitar – the son of fusion pioneer Larry Coryell and brother of multi-instrumentalist Julian – but he didn’t take up the instrument until age 15.

His twelfth solo album, *Soul Of A Nation*, demonstrates the niche he carved out, straddling blues and soul. It mixes Donny Hathaway and Teddy Pendergrass covers with politically charged originals, because, in his words, “It’s therapy. Sometimes there aren’t enough words to express your feelings, but you can do it in a song.”

The 56-year-old’s follow-up, *Deep Blues*, teams him with drummer Bernard Purdie, bassist Tony Garnier, and guitarist Junior Mack.

What music were you hearing at age 13 or so?

I listened to FM radio, and back then, popular music was played by real musicians – no pitch control and all that. I dug Stevie Wonder, Earth, Wind & Fire, the Stones, Beatles, ELO; then, of course, hearing the jazz that my dad was playing, and my mom playing classical music. My dad

gave me two albums on my 10th birthday – *Are You Experienced* by Jimi Hendrix and *Steely Dan/Greatest Hits*. There was so much variety of cool music, by Donny Hathaway, Chaka Kahn, Fleetwood Mac, Cream, the Yardbirds, James Brown, Sly & the Family Stone.

I wanted to know what Led Zeppelin and these guys were doing, and my dad said, “Well, they listened to the blues. If you want to hear what they were listening to, you need to hear B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson.” It was like finding the Dead Sea Scrolls. Howlin’ Wolf and Bobby “Blue” Bland were life-changing. Blues became my foundation, what I felt confident in, and it found me at the right time – or I found it. I also got into funk, was playing some jazz gigs, going to every guitar jam. You don’t realize that stuff makes a difference, but it does.

Were you fearful of being compared to such an important guitar figure as your father?

Yeah, that’s why it took me a while. Of course, you’re going to compare yourself to people, but you have to just compare yourself to yourself.

My dad said, “You’re not really good at jazz. You’re good at blues. Work on that.” Julian was very influential on me, because he was a child prodigy. He was playing bass with my dad when he was 10. But that was a motivator. I can’t do what he does, but it’s all valid.

In the nature versus nurture debate, genetics versus environment, where do you see yourself?

There’s a genetic component, no doubt. But being around it, that’s also part. My family didn’t think I had whatever it was. Bernard Purdie told me everybody has their own musical inflection that’s unique to them, like a musical instinct. There were people that told me to keep at it, and I’m a persistent, stubborn, independent person, which has worked against me but also for me.

Your playing has a big soul/R&B component.

Those types of guitarists often get overlooked.

That’s the fun of it, laying down those grooves; it’s not so much about soloing. I really dig Cornell Dupree and Eric Gale from Stuff, Curtis Mayfield, Jimmy Nolen from James Brown’s band, and the house guitar players from, say, Philadelphia International with Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff producing Teddy Pendergrass, or Leo Nocentelli with the Meters in New Orleans. Phil Upchurch in Chicago is another and Teenie Hodges on Hi Records in Memphis. Playing with other guitarists, like Motown’s three guitarists, it’s about blending, playing complementary parts. Music is about the space in between the notes, especially for that stuff.

What’s special about a Stratocaster for you?

It can take a beating; it stays in tune; you can play any kind of music on it; and it just feels good. The one I’m using is an Eric Johnson Strat from about 2000. On the album, I had permission to use Joe Louis Walker’s Les Paul for some solos. I used my Fender Deluxe Reverb, which gives me the tightness and cleanliness that I like, and I have a Wampler Faux Tape Echo delay and Electro-Harmonix Soul Food overdrive.

When did you feel like you’d developed your own musical identity?

I always had an *idea*. I tell people to have an idea of what you want to sound like, like a map. You have to hear it first, and then try to play it. That’s the challenge. It took years of playing and gigging and practicing. I love variety, but when I look at my recorded career, there’s a consistency. Playing with Joe Louis Walker really helped me. One of his things he said was it’s better to be a bad version of yourself than a good version of somebody else. When you’re covering a song, are you putting your own soul on it, playing to the spirit of it, and yet it’s you? If I can serve the music, I feel like I’m doing the right thing. Take my ego out of it – to express, not to impress. – **Dan Forte**



JOHN PIZZARELLI

Homage to Bennett

It was a given that John Pizzarelli would honor longtime friend Tony Bennett, as he has on *Dear Mr. Bennett*. After all, he had recorded tribute albums to Nat “King” Cole, Frank Sinatra, Duke Ellington, and Paul McCartney.

Long before Bennett’s death in 2023, Pizzarelli was assembling a song list.

“I started eight or nine years ago, and was hoping to do it before he passed, but it didn’t work out,” he said. “I wanted to give it a jazz treatment, pick the hits, and do what we do.”

He balanced personal favorites with expected hits.

“You can get obscure, but I knew that at the end of the night, somebody was going to say,

cornetist Ruby Braff and jazz-guitar pioneer George Barnes (and Wayne Wright playing rhythm). From the late ’90s until his final concert, Gray Sargent was part of Bennett’s quartet.

Pizzarelli’s trio features longtime bassist Mike Karn and Isaiah J. Thompson’s vibrant piano. Karn, locked in with Pizzarelli’s Freddie Green-style comping (a Bucky specialty), renders drums unnecessary.

“That rhythm guitar is built into me, and when you get a great bass player like Mike, it goes by itself!”

Pizzarelli’s stinging break on Irving Berlin’s “Shakin’ the Blues Away” is a shout-out to George Barnes’ bluesy style. “George is one of

why didn’t you do ‘Because of You,’ ‘Rags to Riches’ or ‘The Boulevard of Broken Dreams?’ You got to put on ‘(I Left my Heart in) San Francisco’ and ‘I Wanna be Around.’

“It was fun to put them into the voice of the trio and have room to pick (lesser-knowns) like ‘Firefly,’ ‘Waltz for Debby’ and some of the Duke Ellington things.”

A celebrated painter, Bennett sketched the album’s cover illustration on a napkin more than 20 years ago watching Pizzarelli and his wife, singer Jessica Molaskey, performing at Feinstein’s in Manhattan.

He also notes Bennett had “a good run of guitar players.” Bucky Pizzarelli played on some of his ’50s and ’60s sessions, and Chuck Wayne played in Bennett’s ’50s combo.

Bennett recorded two albums with a unit led by

my heroes... a genius on all fronts (including knowledge of the guitar.”

Pianist Bill Evans’ “Waltz for Debby” which Bennett sang with added lyrics, is Pizzarelli alone. It’s been a favorite on the Thursday night Facebook concerts he performs from his home. “That song was always in my wheelhouse,” he said. “I liked the idea of playing a couple on solo guitar.”

He adapted the swinging $\frac{4}{4}$ “Watch What Happens” from Bennett onstage.

“I heard him do that in Toronto – he opened with it. I was so happy I had that one ready to go.” An aggressive “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If it Ain’t Got That Swing)” also echoed Bennett live. “He did that one a lot. It was fun to find things to separate the ballads.”

Thompson’s inventive playing stands out on a pensive “Young and Foolish” and a bossa nova-driven “The Boulevard of Broken Dreams.”

The trio avoided extended workouts.

“I like the compactness. I don’t think there needs to be any six or seven-minute (performances). I like the idea of tellin’ your story and gettin’ out.”

Dear Mr. Bennett showcases Pizzarelli’s newest instrument – luthier Ryan Thorell’s John Pizzarelli JP-157, a non-cutaway seven-string adaptation of the Gibson ES-150. He’d previously played custom models by Bill Moll, who died in 2023.

The idea came in 2022.

“When I had Covid, I was looking to get a non-cutaway, sort of Charlie Christian guitar. It was the fever! I was so enamored.” His friend, Manhattan guitarist Matt Munisteri, played a 150 behind singer Catherine Russell.

“Matt said, ‘If you don’t get a seven-string, you’re never gonna play it.’”

Pizzarelli, who’d met Thorell in Salt Lake City, invited him to build an ES-150 copy “...with a Charlie Christian pickup. I am really pleased with it. I love that pickup – it’s amazing!”

During the sessions at the Jacob Burns Film Center and Teaneck Sound, Pizzarelli ran the Thorell “straight into the little Dr. Z combo I’ve been using for a couple years. It worked out very well.”

He continues using LaBella wound strings on his electrics and Aquila strings on his two seven-string classics – a Kremona and a Moll custom with an RNC pickup.

The trio will tour behind the album through ’26. When off the road, he’ll continue Facebook concerts and “Radio Deluxe,” the syndicated record and interview show he co-hosts with Molaskey.

“You never know where we’re gonna turn up next.” – **Rich Kienzle**



MATEUS ASATO

Next Level

Mateus Asato is a next-level guitarist capable of the tastiest chord melodies, supercharged funk vamps, and the hottest solos imaginable. Born in Campo Grande, Brazil, Asato began playing at age nine and developed a style that blends technical mastery with deep expression. After moving to Los Angeles to attend the Musicians Institute, he graduated with top honors and received the Outstanding Guitar Player of the Year award. Later, he scored gigs playing with top acts and putting him in demand as a sideman; even better, the Brazilian guitarist just released his first solo album, *ASATO*.

more smoothly. You can hopefully hear both approaches in “Cryin’.”

In “Rush,” your lead and chord playing is closely wrapped together, facilitated by a hybrid fingerstyle.

“Rush” is the song with the most *musician* mindset. I wanted to show more of my technical side instead of the songwriting. My hybrid picking isn’t something I pay much attention much to, but there was a time after I moved to the U.S. when I was listening to a lot of country music and found out who Brad Paisley was. After listening to Brad’s music and amazing playing, I got

You’re a modern-day Steve Lukather or Larry Carlton – your playing brings virtuosity, but you never lose the groove or a soulful feel.

Thank you for mentioning my heroes; they are musicians I look up to, plus, Lukather is one of the nicest people I’ve met in the guitar community. And yes, the melody is the first thing I try to seek when I pick up a guitar.

The single, “Cryin’,” encapsulates a lot of your style.

“Cryin’” was the song that made me realize it was time to make this album. I wrote the main riff in 2020 and finished it only a couple of days before I got married. The space between was also very important to add different nuances on the song. In 2020, I was in my Telecaster phase, playing aggressively, but by 2024 I was diving into Jeff Beck’s music, and playing a bit

influenced by his technique; this is when the hybrid picking started to be part of my style.

What gear is on the *ASATO* album?

This album was the proof that the purpose of all my accumulated gear over the years still remains. For electrics, I used a Masterbuilt Strat in Moss Green made by Todd Krause, various Suhr models, a 2009 Les Paul Supreme and Lzzy Hale Explorer, a white Tele copy by a Brazilian company called GRS, a Gretsch White Falcon, and a Mayones Legend Baritone. The acoustics were from Taylor, Gibson, and Prewar, and amps were Bogner Shiva 20th Anniversary, RedPlate Magica, and Bogner Helios.

Who are your influences?

I am very influenced by Jeff Beck, Guthrie Govan, Brad Paisley, Nuno Bettencourt, Joe Satriani, and the three Johns who changed my life – Frusciante, Petrucci, and Mayer. I also have some Brazilian heroes such as Juninho Afram, Edu Ardanuy, and Kiko Loureiro of Megadeth.

Is there anything from Brazilian culture in your playing that one doesn’t hear in players from elsewhere?

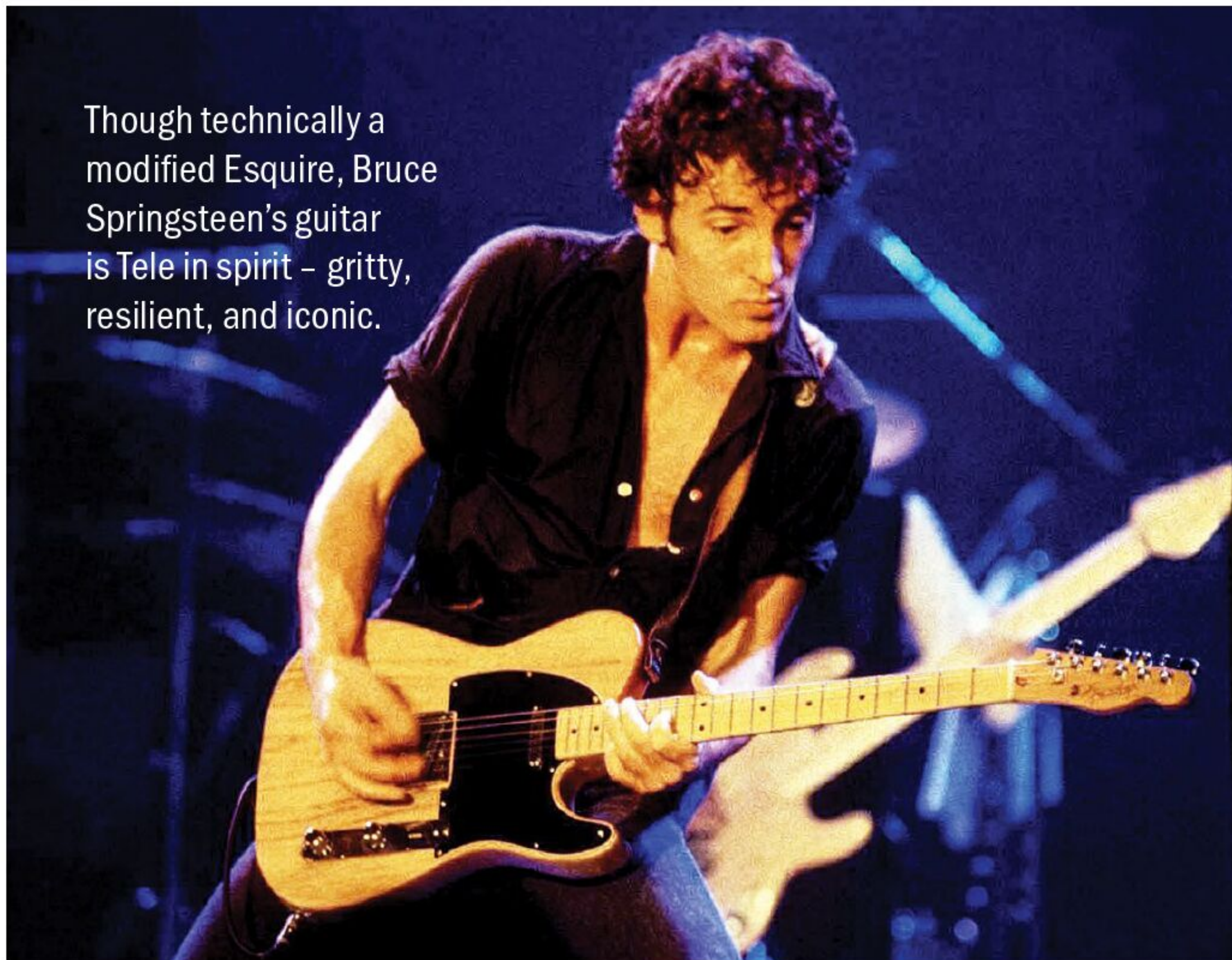
Again, Brazil has some amazing players; if the internet was a thing back in the old days, I am pretty sure there would’ve been many more Brazilian players famous worldwide. Regarding the Brazilian culture and my playing, there are some nuances in the rhythm that I can’t picture coming from anywhere else – it’s in my blood.

You’ve been busy as a sideman. What goes into that role? You have to be great player, but also fit into the band, personally.

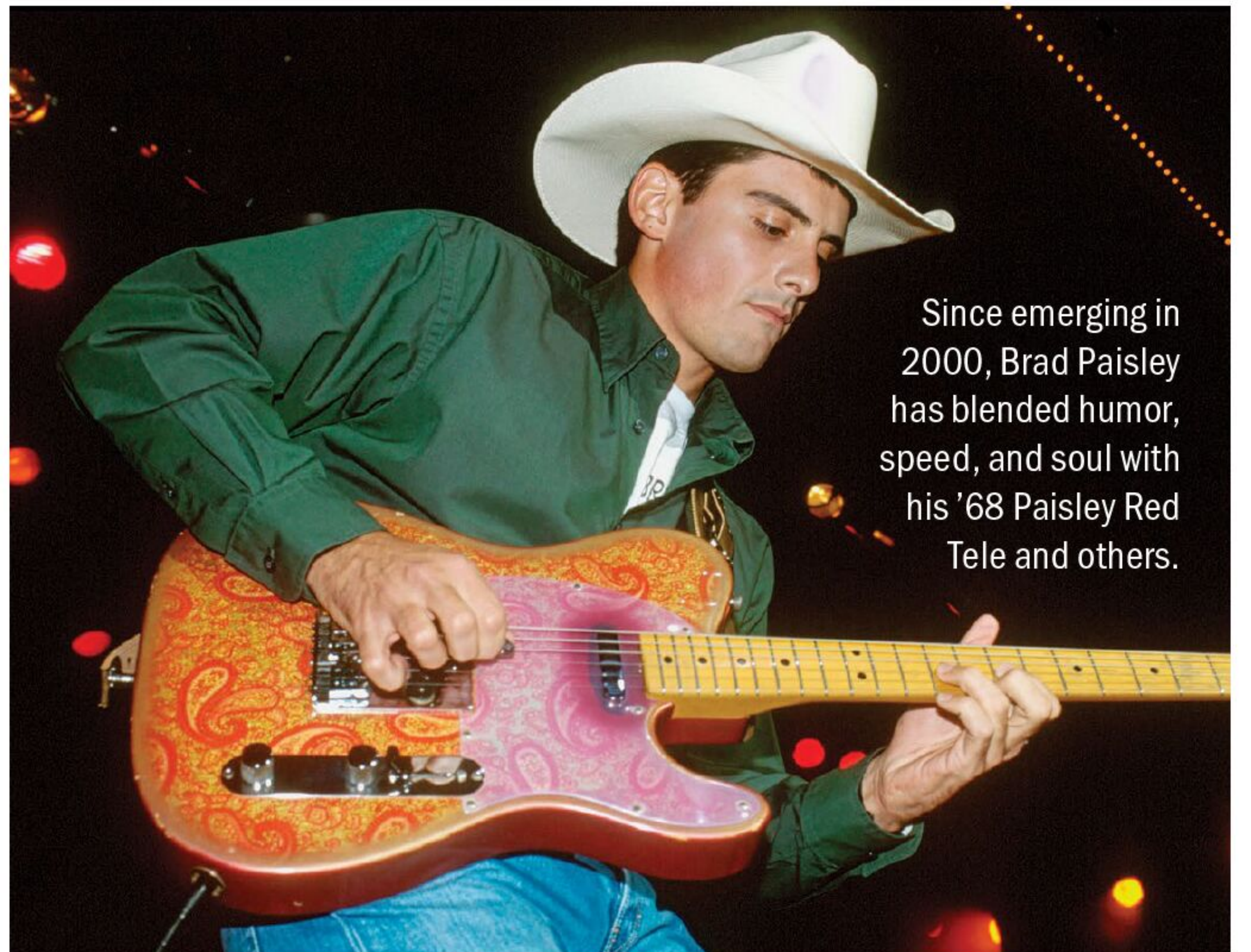
I worked almost 10 years being a sideman, playing with some of the greatest singers of this generation such as Tori Kelly, Jessie J, and Bruno Mars. I’ve had a great time, played at some of my bucket-list venues and touring various countries, plus I learned so much from them. The major thing I tell people regarding being a sideman is you gotta know how to “surf the wave.” Being a great musician is mandatory, but being a good person is what keeps you working.

It’s been said that playing music is actually a small percentage of time, relative to touring.

The concert environment is 10 percent of the mountain; the rest is dealing with people who might have different beliefs, education, and so on. It could be challenging at first, but once you get that, the chances of growing your career within that bubble only gets better. Learn the notes and the groove, but also learn how to shake hands. With *ASATO*, however, it’s time to move on to a new, solo chapter – my own chapter! – **Pete Prown VG**



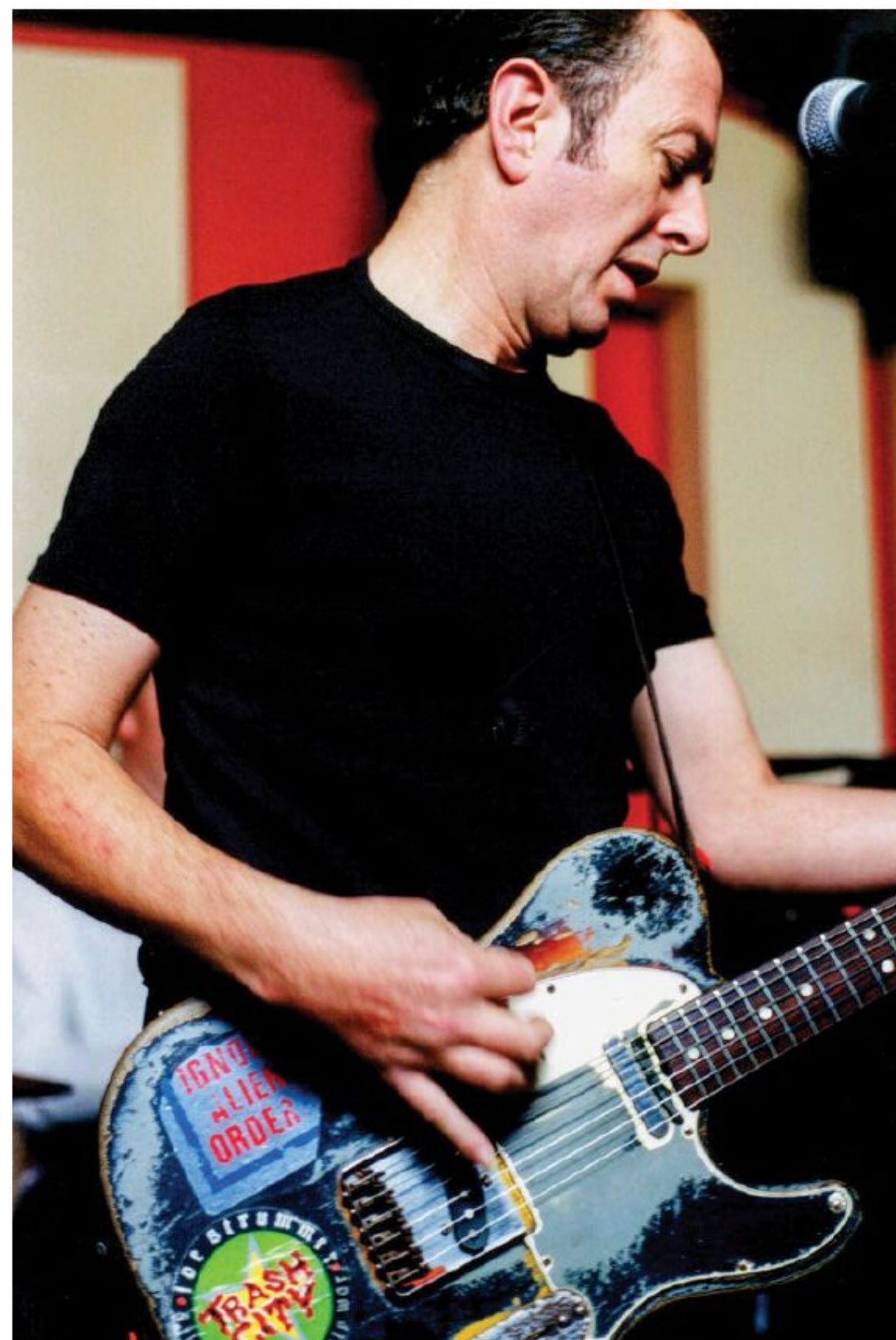
Though technically a modified Esquire, Bruce Springsteen's guitar is Tele in spirit – gritty, resilient, and iconic.



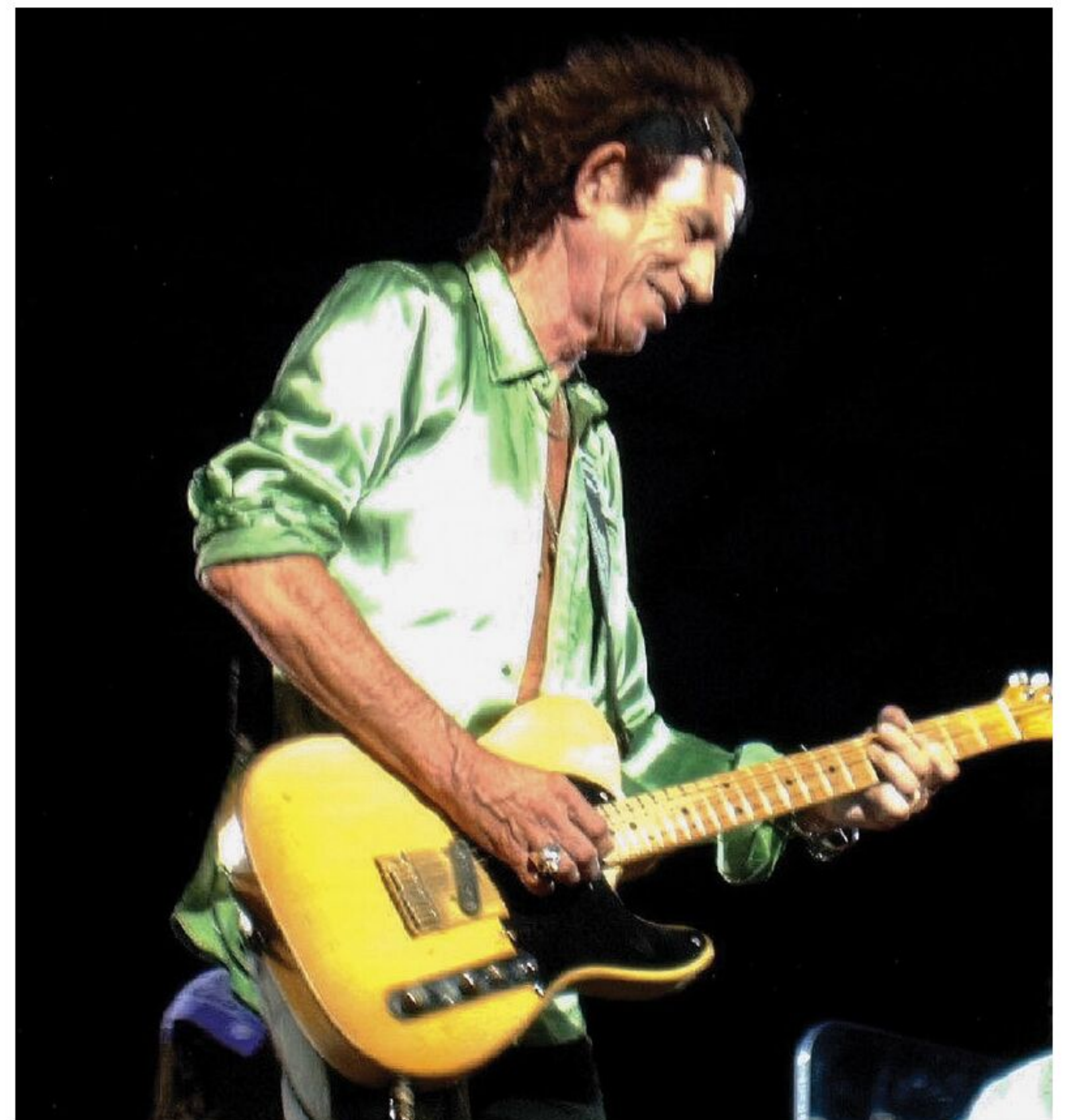
Since emerging in 2000, Brad Paisley has blended humor, speed, and soul with his '68 Paisley Red Tele and others.



Don Rich with his famed silver-sparkle Tele, and Buck Owens.



With his battered Tele, Joe Strummer proved its punk ethos – direct, loud, and unpolished.



Keith Richards in 2006 with the '53 Tele he calls "Micawber."

TIMELESS TONES, PART III

The Telecaster's Honest Bite

BY MIKE MEIERS

From Bakersfield honky-tonks to modern Americana stages, Leo Fender's first solidbody guitar has never stopped telling the truth.

Strike a chord on a Telecaster and there's no hiding; the sound is raw, bright, and biting, as if a spotlight were aimed squarely at your hands. If the Stratocaster is the sleek all-rounder – versatile, comfortable, and refined – the Telecaster strips everything down to the essentials. What you put in is exactly what you get out – direct, unadorned, and uncompromising.

From its introduction in 1950 (as the Broadcaster, then briefly as the Nocaster), it set the template for everything to come. With its ash or alder body, simple controls, and that famously cutting bridge pickup mounted on a steel plate, the Telecaster was a workhorse in the truest sense. Leo Fender

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built it for working musicians who needed reliability, volume, and tone that could hold up in a dance hall, roadhouse, or on the radio.

What emerged wasn't just a tool for musicians, it was a statement. The Telecaster quickly became an instrument that revealed everything from the precision in its player's hands to the honesty of the song and the raw energy of the band.

By the late 1940s, the guitar was becoming the centerpiece of American popular music. Big bands were shrinking into small combos, and amplification was no longer optional. Fender, a radio repairman turned instrument builder in Fullerton, California, had a vision – a solidbody guitar that could be mass-produced, repaired easily, and withstand the rigors of the road.

Other builders, like Les Paul and Paul Bigsby, were experimenting with solidbodies around the same time, but Fender's design was revolutionary in its simplicity. The bolt-on neck could be swapped quickly and with only basic skills. The uncontoured "slab" body could be cut and finished quickly. Most importantly, the bridge pickup mounted on a steel plate emphasized treble attack and produced a tone unlike anything else of the era.

Jazz players may have dismissed it as too bright or too plain, but country musi-

cians, honky-tonk bands, and early rockers found in the Tele a sound that cut through the mix with authority. It was a blue-collar instrument in every way, and that identity has never left it.

MOVEMENT OUT WEST

If the Telecaster has a birthplace in sound, it's Bakersfield, California. In the '60s, country music in Nashville was dominated by lush arrangements, strings, and vocal choirs – the "country politan" sound. But in Bakersfield, a group of artists led by Buck Owens and Merle Haggard was pushing in the opposite direction. They wanted grit. They wanted twang. They wanted music that reflected the working-class realities of the oil fields and honky-tonks where their fans lived.

Enter the Telecaster. James Burton, along with Don Rich and other pickers discovered that Leo's creation was perfect for their sound. Burton's chicken-pickin' style, with rapid-fire alternating notes and string bends, relied on a guitar that could deliver both snap and sustain.

On Owens' "Act Naturally," the Tele rides above the mix, sharp and unapologetic. On Haggard's "The Bottle Let Me Down," it delivers the sting of heartbreak with

a brightness that refuses to be smoothed over. The "Bakersfield sound" wasn't just music – it was a cultural rebellion. And at its heart, gleaming in chrome and blond, was the Telecaster.

FROM COUNTRY TO PUNK AND BEYOND

The Tele might have started in honky-tonks, but it didn't stay there. Its simplicity and honesty attracted players across genres. In the '70s, Keith Richards wielded his "Micawber" Tele with open-G swagger, laying down some of the Rolling Stones' most iconic riffs. Bruce Springsteen strapped one on for the cover of *Born to Run*, cementing it as the symbol of working-class rock-and-roll grit.

When punk broke in the late '70s, the Telecaster was once again the guitar of choice. In The Clash, Joe Strummer banged out three-chord manifestos on a battered black-and-white Tele, proving that sophistication wasn't the point – the message was. Plus, it could withstand the abuse of stage dives, sweat, and smashed amplifiers.

By the '90s and 2000s, the Telecaster had found its way into indie rock, alt-country, and even modern pop. Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood made the Tele part of the band's experimental soundscapes. Wilco's Jeff Tweedy coaxed

Telecasters from 1954 (left) and '57.

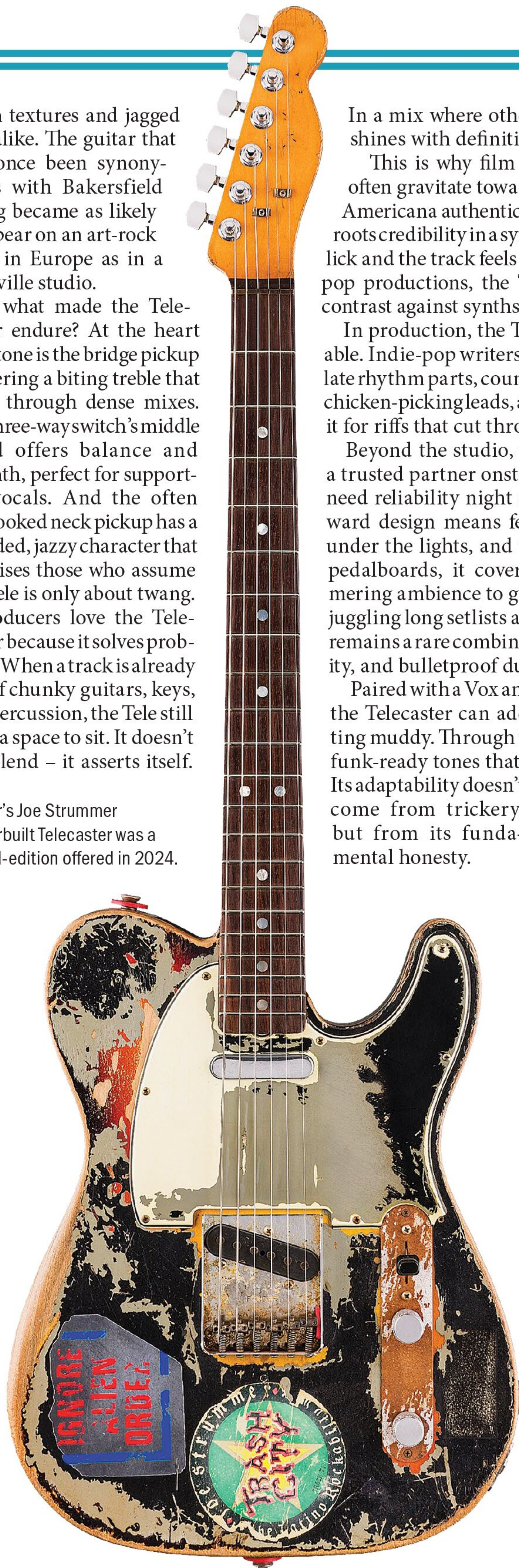


warm textures and jagged riffs alike. The guitar that had once been synonymous with Bakersfield twang became as likely to appear on an art-rock stage in Europe as in a Nashville studio.

So what made the Telecaster endure? At the heart of its tone is the bridge pickup delivering a biting treble that slices through dense mixes. The three-way switch's middle blend offers balance and warmth, perfect for supporting vocals. And the often overlooked neck pickup has a rounded, jazzy character that surprises those who assume the Tele is only about twang.

Producers love the Telecaster because it solves problems. When a track is already full of chunky guitars, keys, and percussion, the Tele still finds a space to sit. It doesn't just blend – it asserts itself.

Fender's Joe Strummer Masterbuilt Telecaster was a limited-edition offered in 2024.



In a mix where other guitars get lost, the Tele shines with definition.

This is why film and television supervisors often gravitate toward Tele-driven tracks. Need Americana authenticity? The Tele delivers. Want roots credibility in a sync placement? Drop in a Tele lick and the track feels grounded. Even in modern pop productions, the Tele's sharp edge provides contrast against synths and programmed beats.

In production, the Tele has become indispensable. Indie-pop writers lean on it for clean, articulate rhythm parts, country producers still use it for chicken-picking leads, and rock engineers count on it for riffs that cut through walls of sound.

Beyond the studio, the Telecaster has become a trusted partner onstage for touring artists who need reliability night after night. Its straightforward design means fewer things can go wrong under the lights, and when paired with modern pedalboards, it covers everything from shimmering ambience to gritty overdrive. For players juggling long setlists and diverse sounds, the Tele remains a rare combination of simplicity, versatility, and bulletproof durability.

Paired with a Vox amp and a shimmer of reverb, the Telecaster can add atmosphere without getting muddy. Through the right plug-in, it delivers funk-ready tones that sit perfectly in a pop mix. Its adaptability doesn't come from trickery, but from its fundamental honesty.

Even in darker cinematic contexts, the Telecaster surprises. Rolling off the Tone knob and adding delay can create brooding soundscapes perfect for television dramas. When a supervisor wants a track to feel "real," the Telecaster often provides the anchor.

At its core, the Telecaster is more than wood, metal, and electronics. It represents an ethic – simple, unpretentious, and unafraid to stand on its own. Where other guitars rely on ornate finishes, elaborate tone circuits, or complex switching systems, the Tele remains what it has always been – a straightforward tool for telling the truth.

In an age where music can be built on laptops with limitless tracks and production tricks can polish everything to perfection, the Tele endures as a reminder that honesty is powerful. One chord on a Tele says more than a dozen layered effects. One riff can cut through decades of trends.

That's why, more than 70 years after its debut, the Telecaster remains on stages, in studios, and on records across every genre. It doesn't need to evolve, because honesty never goes out of style. **VG**



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To apply the description of Little Nell's creator, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." This revolution, however, was the 1960s – a time when, as Koob Venemen said in reference to his Kapa brand, "You could sell any guitar made."

The story is well-known; the "Baby Boom" that followed World War II hit the '60s like a hurricane, reshaping American culture with a veritable tsunami of young consumers whose dotting parents had more ready cash than any in history.

A subset of these consumers – beginner guitarists – propelled several elements of the market, including a frenzy of corporate acquisition; guitar companies suddenly looked like good investments, which compelled Norlin and CBS to absorb upper-end makers Gibson and Fender, while Seeburg and Baldwin bought Kay and Burns (followed by Gretsch), etc. There was also a wave of start-ups that included Kapa and Micro-Frets, as well as "invasions" by European makers, followed by the Japanese.

According to *The Music Trades*, 1966 saw the import of 618,000 electric guitars from Japan, and all looked rosy. Valco purchased Kay from Seeburg, merging two of the three largest American mass-manufacturers.

The good times, though, were short-lived, and by '68, Japanese-import numbers fell to 385,000, Valco/Kay went out of business, and Jay Kraus, a primary shareholder in Harmony since taking over from Sears in 1940, placed the company in the hands of a trust controlled by several banks.

In '69, Japanese imports numbered just 150,000, and, as the decade drew to a close, many of those upstarts were gone or going quickly. In 1970, *The Music Trades* reported a number of bankruptcies among Japanese guitar makers.

Harmony – last of the American budget builders – lingered. Chuck Rubovitz, who'd been brought in as President in '68, left in '71 after a disagreement with the bankers. Manny Kaplan, who'd built the Little Debbie baking empire (among other things), was brought in as a consultant, then named President. In '72, the company attempted to remake its image by introducing a new logo and breaking from tradition in its construc-

THE HARMONY OPUS XX

BY MICHAEL WRIGHT
THE DIFFERENT STRUMMER

tion of acoustic guitars by offering rosewood dreadnoughts; its better models had previously been made with mahogany bodies. The move represented a new level of quality. Still, it wasn't enough...

In '74 or early '75, the company introduced the Opus Professional Line, consisting of four upscale acoustics – one dreadnought and three “jumbos.” All had solid/X-braced spruce tops with ring rosettes and mahogany necks with bound rosewood fingerboards and celluloid block inlays. One of Harmony's distinctive features was a “parallel” neck shape; where almost all other brands' necks that tapered outward/got wider as they approached the body, Harmony's maintained an equal width. This characteristic was employed on the Opus line, and while it takes some adjustment, it presents no difficulties in playing.

The dreadnought Opus V kept a solid mahogany body, perhaps because the tradition was too strong, or (more likely) they had plenty of mahogany on hand. The Opus X “jumbo” was basically a Harmony Sovereign on steroids, with a squarish “potato” shape and mahogany body. The Opus XX and XXV were true jumbos in a Gibson sense. Both had solid flamed-maple bodies and the quasi-Gibson mustache/pin bridges. The XX had a cherry sunburst finish while the XXV was natural. All shipped with a hardshell case and three saddles, so the player could adjust to taste.

With a fully resonant top sporting the sharp, focused clarity you get



OPUS V

The Opus V is Harmony's finest dreadnought size folk guitar, designed to meet the needs of the pro — or the aspiring professional player. The Opus V has an “X” braced, solid spruce top, mahogany back and sides, and a slim, adjustable, reinforced mahogany neck. Harmony's pride in craftsmanship is reflected in the handsomely bound and inlaid top, sides and back edges of the body, the sound hole with inlaid rings and inlaid marquetry on the back of the guitar — all details that contribute to the distinctive appearance of the Opus V. The multi-bound, rosewood fingerboard has seven large block inlaid position markers and nickel silver frets. The headpiece features Asuta machine heads, and the rosewood bridge comes with two additional saddles for adjustment of playing action.

Opus Professional Series

OPUS X

The Opus X is a jumbo flattop with a full-bodied sound that few guitars can compete with. Harmony's precise handcraftsmanship is one important difference; choice materials are another. The top is solid spruce; the back and sides are mahogany. The bound, rosewood fingerboard has inlaid position markers and nickel silver frets. The neck is reinforced and adjustable; the rosewood pin bridge comes with two extra saddles to adjust the action.

OPUS XX & OPUS XXV (Not Shown)

These extra-wide jumbo flattops are superb in sound and appearance. The Opus XX has a sunburst finish; the Opus XXV has a natural finish. Both models have

solid spruce tops with “X” bracing; maple backs and sides, and thin, adjustable reinforced maple necks. Multiple bound fingerboards are rosewood, with seven inlaid block position markers and nickel silver frets. Headpieces feature Asuta machine heads. The rosewood bridges are equipped with two additional saddles for action adjustment. Sound holes with inlaid rings, inlaid purfling on top, side and back edges and inlaid marquetry on the back make the Opus XX and XXV look as good as they sound — definitely instruments for the most discriminating musician.

with a maple body, the Opus XX does not sound like a Sovereign. Rather, it has a unique voice that can hold its own against a Gibson or other well-made jumbo.

The Opus, of course, didn't save Harmony's bacon. In 1976, the bankers' trust pulled the plug. The

1975 Harmony Opus XX

The Opus line in Harmony's 1975 catalog.

company was sold to Targ & Dinner employee Steve Winternitz, who sold its assets at auction in the spring of '77; machinery went to a number of furniture manufacturers, while Fred Gretsch and Global Trading fought over the brand name (Global ultimately claimed victory).

There's no way to tell how many Opus guitars were made, but they're not often seen. And there's a good bit of irony in the fact Harmony's upscale model was the final nail in the coffin of mass manufacture of American guitars.

This feature originally appeared in the July '15 issue. **VG**





BETTER OFF RED

The Marshall Capri

BY DAVE HUNTER

In addition to the amplifiers they made for pros to play in clubs and concert halls, major manufacturers created a plethora of “beginner” or “student” amps to sell to a growing secondary market. One of the cutest of the mid ’60s came from a British builder known for making some of the most powerful rock amps.

Jim Marshall founded his company in the early ’60s on the needs of some of London’s top professionals, and by mid

decade ramped up to building the standard for big-arena-rock amps. Once business was booming, though, Marshall also saw

1966 MARSHALL CAPRI

- Preamp tube: one ECC83 (a.k.a. 12AX7)
- Output tube: one EL84
- Rectifier: solid state
- Controls: Volume, Tone
- Speakers: two 8" Celestion Alnico
- Output: approximately 4 watts RMS

the need to diversify, and this cuddly little Capri combo represents the lower end of the lineup. Sold mostly via catalogs, it was Marshall’s answer to the small combos offered by Elpico, Dallas, and Domino (Vox manufacturer JMI’s budget brand), and many reports indicate no more than 100 or so were made.

With a single ECC83 (a.k.a. 12AX7) preamp tube feeding a single EL84 into a pair of 8" Celestion Alnico speakers (or a single 10"), it doesn’t produce a lot of volume (even less clean headroom) and many

Amp courtesy of T.R. Crandall, photos by Dan Nordquist.

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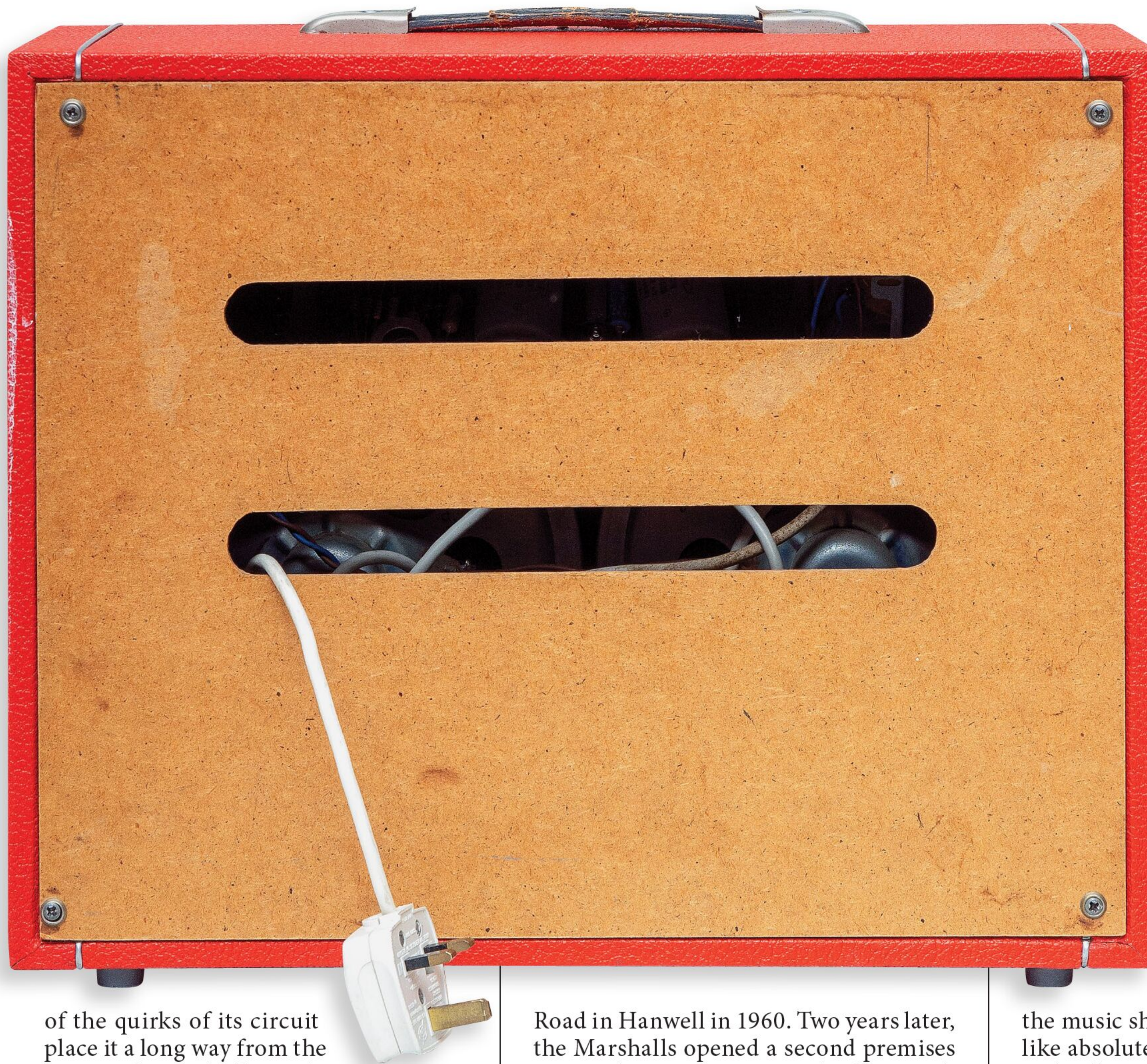
1953 ES-295, all stock except paint, distinctive
pickups, Orig brown HS case. \$8900

1954 CONVERSION, stunning flame
top, feather light, honest wear. \$52K A
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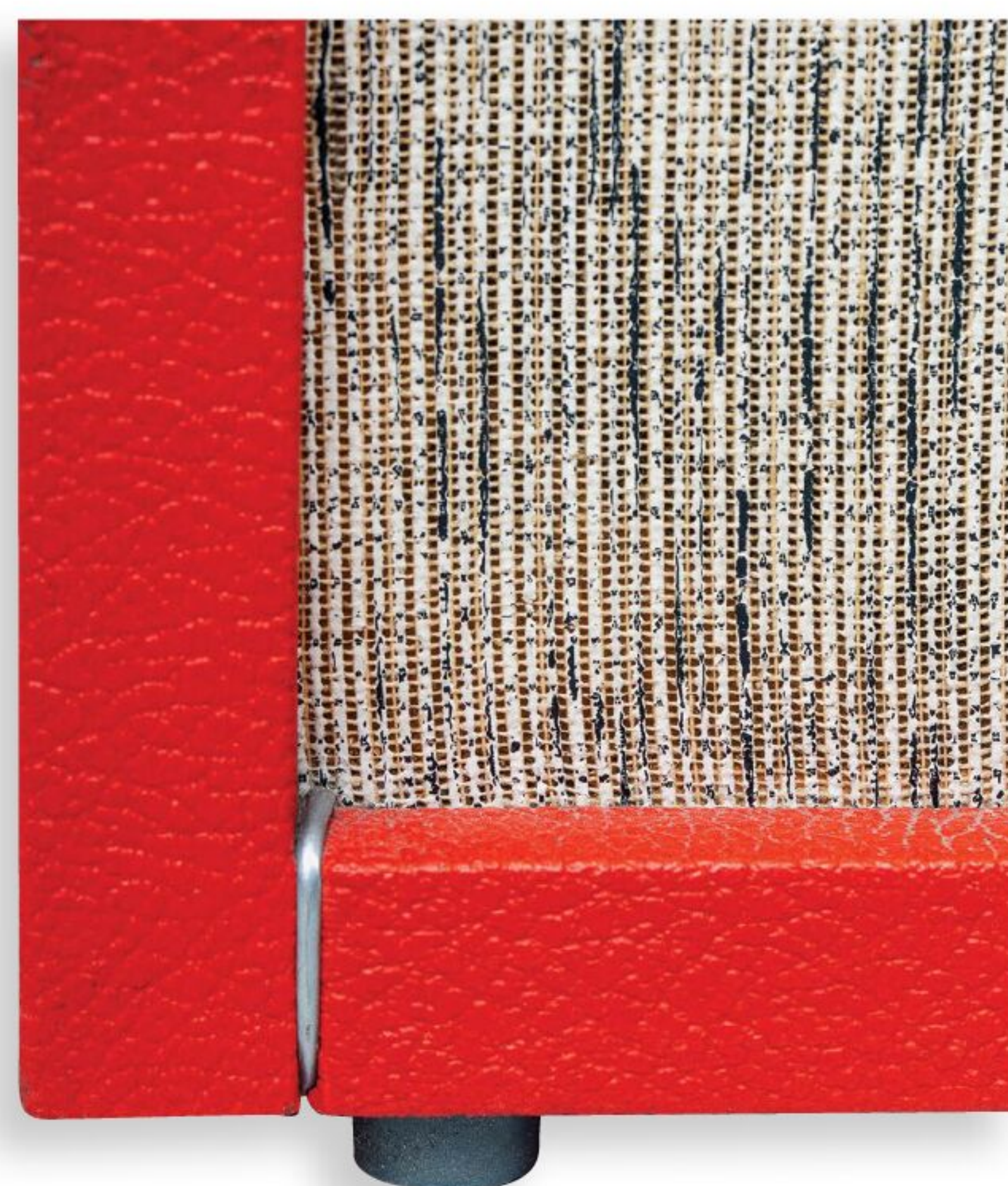
A pressboard back speaks to the Capri's budget-friendly design.

of the quirks of its circuit place it a long way from the best work Marshall was doing at the time. Yet, given the history and reputation of its maker – and the massive desirability of anything it produced in that era – the diminutive Capri is collectible in its own right.

Marshall himself was a jazz drummer, and his transition from music-store owner to guitar-amp manufacturer is not unlike those of Charlie Watkins and Tom Jennings before him. For that matter, it's not far off what got Leo Fender started – and Marshall's early work had a closer connection to Fender's than to his British rivals. Much like them, Marshall saw a need and decided to fulfill it; the difference is that he entered the market just as live music was becoming louder, and he went big right from the start.

Having become a drum teacher to help support his career as a drummer, Marshall opened a retail shop in London to expand his sideline of selling drum kits to his students. The first, called Jim & Terry Marshall (for his son and business partner), opened its doors at 76 Uxbridge

Road in Hanwell in 1960. Two years later, the Marshalls opened a second premises across the street at 90 Uxbridge Road, while abbreviating the name simply to J&T Marshall. As a practicing jazzer, Mar-



The grillecloth was used because it was an important ingredient of the original Bluesbreaker combo for its impact on tone.

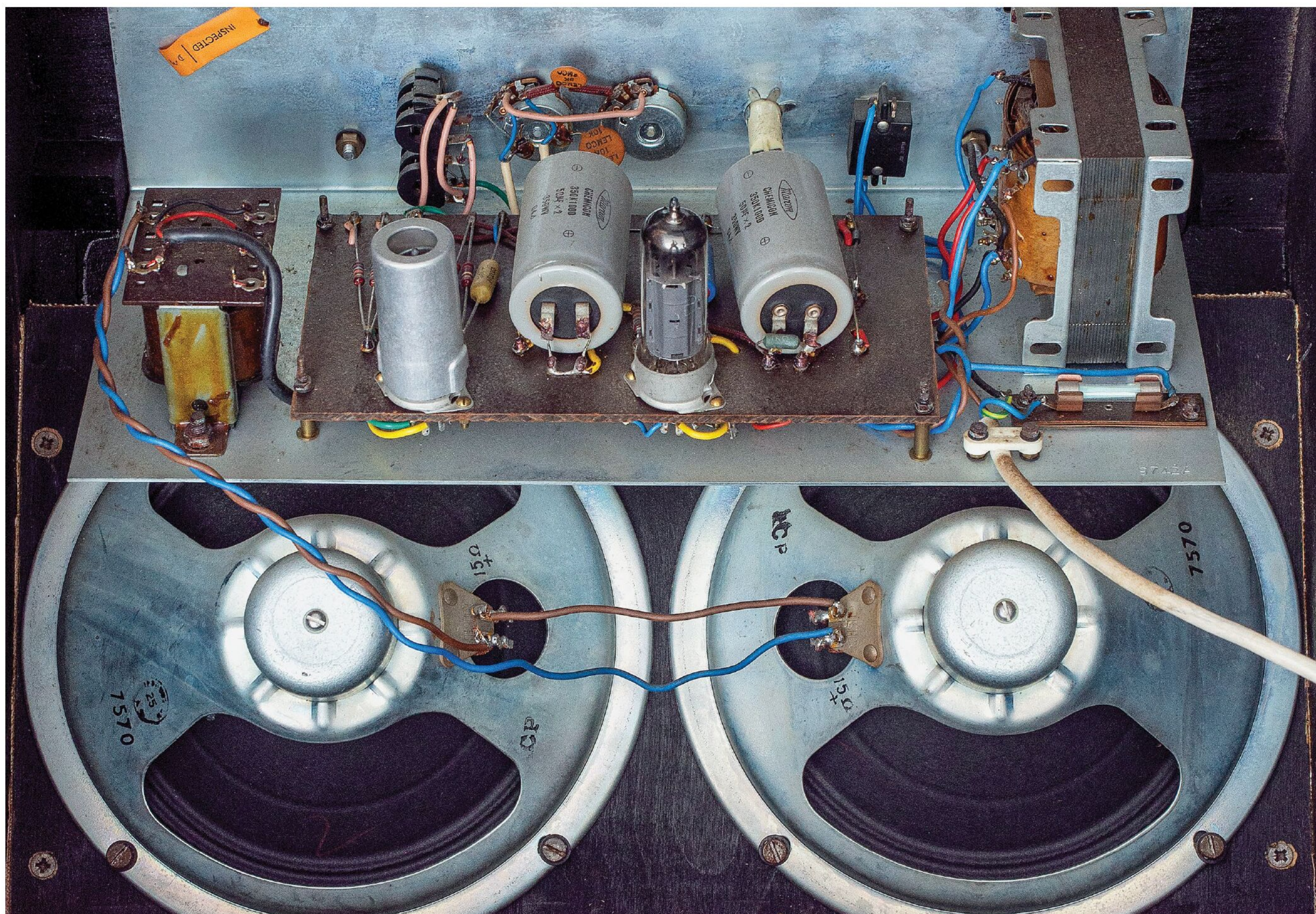
shall might have seemed an unlikely ambassador between young rock and rollers and the music-industry establishment. But he clearly had a rapport with the young players, and a keen appreciation of their needs.

"I was certainly the first to cater for rock and rollers in the London area," he told Alfred Hickling of *The Guardian* in an interview conducted shortly before his death in April of 2012. "I had so many top drummers as pupils that they started bringing their guitarists into the shop with them – chaps like Ritchie Blackmore, Jimmy Page, and Pete Townshend. Anyway, all the guitar players would say to me, 'Jim, if you sold guitars and amplifiers, we'd much prefer to buy them from you because all

the music shops in the West End treat us like absolute idiots because we play rock and roll. Because we don't play jazz, they just don't take us seriously.' So I did – and they kept their promise!"

Many of the amps Marshall sold before making his own were British, but those that most impressed him and many of his patrons, including a young Pete Townshend from nearby Acton, were the big Fenders imported from the U.S. These were difficult to get and extremely expensive, and thus hard for most to afford. The solution was to build their own rendition of one of the favorites, right in the back room of the J&T Marshall shop.

Marshall and his repairman, Ken Bran, chose the robust Fender 5F6A Bassman combo as the platform for the JTM45, despite the tweed amp being a couple of years behind the evolutionary curve by this time. To do it right, though, they needed a little more engineering help, so they enticed EMI engineering apprentice Dudley Craven to join them. The first effort followed the schematic for the 5F6A Bassman almost to the letter (including the polarity switch that was unnecessary with



properly grounded British AC outlets), other than a couple of minor component-value changes, although of course it used British-made transformers, capacitors, resistors, and other components that were available off-the-shelf.

The prototype that emerged late in 1962 might have looked like a DIY project cobbled together in Marshall's shed, precisely because it was, but it performed well enough to earn the team dozens of orders. More builds led to more orders, and soon, the snowball was rolling.

By the time the Capri rolled off the line in '66, Marshall was seeing itself as a maker needing to suit all corners of the market. Unsurprisingly, the small Capri combo isn't built anywhere close to the standards of larger Marshall amps, or even the 18-watt Model 1958 and its brethren introduced in '65. Even so, it presents classic vintage-Marshall touches such as a handful of Mullard "mustard cap" signal

capacitors in its simple circuit, the highly valued rubberized "Bluesbreaker-style" grillecloth, and the brushed gold-alumi-



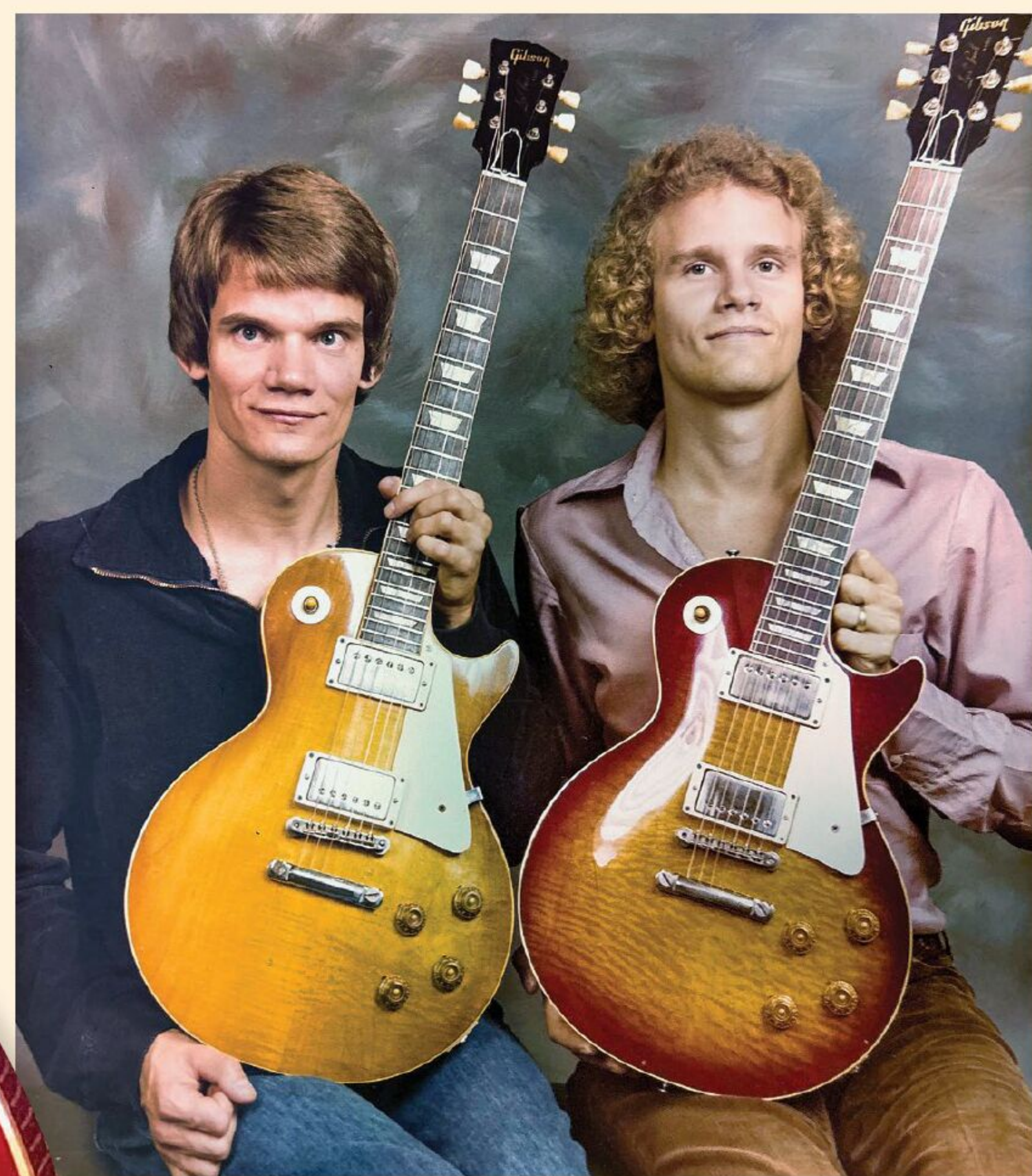
num control panel that the company's larger amps would switch to when the "plexi" era ended in another couple years.

Speaking of circuit, there's no surprise this one is a standard and even generic design for a single-ended practice amp. It

A pair of Celestion's lower-budget 8" speakers fill the cabinet beneath a simple folded-steel chassis.

has two drive stages from the dual-triode preamp tube and generates about four watts from its lone EL84. In addition, the Capri is unusual among small amps of the day for its use of solid-state rectification, but Marshall sussed early on that this would be more cost-effective than adding a small tube such as a 6X4 or EZ81. Many examples also appeared to save a few more shillings by dispensing with the "Marshall" name plate. Some sport the classic script logo, though it's difficult to say whether it was a modification made later or is a factory detail added before the model's demise in '68 to more prominently broadcast the brand. Either way, while these rare birds are far more costly today than they were during their pawnshop-find status in decades past, they make for a nifty way to grab hold of a bright little chunk of Marshall history. **VG**

Bob Tekippe's '58 Les Paul Standard. In the collector world, it's known as The Other Woman.



Greg (left) and Bob Tekippe with their '60 and '58 Les Paul Standards in 1979.

"I bought a Turtles LP and loved them until I was exposed to Steppenwolf, The Yardbirds, Mountain, and Black Sabbath," Bob recalled. "Greg loved Jimi Hendrix, Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels, and Albert King."

In his early teens, Bob earned money by mowing lawns, and used most of it to buy a drum kit. During sophomore year, he

The Other Woman's headstock bears replaced tuners and serial number 8 5388.

Classics

As kids growing up in Bismarck, North Dakota, brothers Greg and Bob Tekippe first heard music on AM radio – mostly the local KFYZ and (depending on weather) rock station KOMA beaming in from Oklahoma City. In the mid '60s, their parents bought a portable record player and a lot of country albums. Once old enough to buy their own records, the kids used it to blast rock music – through headphones, of course.



The Other Woman 'Burst: Tom Wittrock.

bonded with a classmate who had a Gibson Melody Maker and knew a few Hendrix licks. Bob started having thoughts...

"Watching him made me want to play guitar, too. Besides, I couldn't practice my drums at home because they annoyed everyone in the house (laughs)."

Soon, his daydream became reality when (after pestering his parents) he was given an electric guitar for Christmas – a shiny new Checkmate from a local electronics store. A couple months later, he found a cheap used tube amp; six strings at his beck and call, Bob took to learning Johnny Winter licks from the record player while Greg gravitated to Jimi Hendrix.

In '71, Bob and four friends formed a rock band they called Jurk and started jamming in his parents' basement. After a change of drummers and names (to Axis), they started gigging at school dances and the occasional club. Though he wasn't in the band, Greg, fresh of a three-year hitch in the Marines and with a deepening appreciation for guitars, let his little brother play his brand new '72 Strat and Twin Reverb for Axis' first few gigs. As the music progressed, so did Bob's rig, even-

tually adding a Cherry Red '61 SG Les Paul Junior and a Marshall half-stack.

"When we first started getting into guitars, I vividly remember a friend telling Greg and I about old Les Pauls with the bigger 'humbucker' pickups. At that time – the early '70s – the only Les Pauls Gibson was making were Deluxes with mini humbuckers. The more we learned, the more we both wanted an original 'Burst."

Within a few years, Greg had bought a '56 goldtop for \$800 and another goldtop that a dealer had converted to a 'Burst copy, which became a thing when real ones started going for \$3,500 and more. Bob also came down with guitar acquisition syndrome (G.A.S.), adding a '65 SG Special in Polaris White, '69 Les Paul Custom, a '71 Flying V Medallion, and several others.

One day, Greg met Kenny Rardin, guitarist in a regional band who had bought and sold a handful of 'Bursts. In '78, Rardin found a '58 that he bought for \$2,500 in Minneapolis and made his main guitar.

Even in the early '80s, The Other Woman bore the marks of a guitar that lived up to the legend of how a 'Burst should feel and sound. By the time it landed with Bob Tekippe, it had been re-fretted.

"When Kenny's band played their next gig in Bismarck, Greg and I went to see him, and the guitar was *beautiful*, with one of the most-gorgeous tops I've seen.

"Low and behold, one night a few months later, Kenny called and offered it to me for \$2,000 plus the '56 goldtop, which by then I got from Greg in trade for an L-5S. I had to get a loan from the bank, but was glad to do it."

At about the same time, Greg found an early-1960 'Burst in the Guitar Trader catalog, priced at \$3,500. Anxious to join the club, he coughed up the cash.

"It was very faded and its Bigsby had been replaced with a stop tailpiece that was installed slightly crooked, which bothered him so much that he eventually sold it," Bob said. "I only recently admitted to Greg that I thought his sounded better than mine (laughs)."

For the next several years, Bob's 'Burst was his #1 guitar, but then it got into his head... "I became afraid of using it because of what I'd spent for it and how values were escalating." So it became more trophy than instrument.





In the early '80s, Bob was leading a band that needed a PA – and it so happened he had a savings account in the shape of a '58 Les Paul. Much as he loved the guitar, after a few phone calls it was packed and on its way to dealer Gil Southworth in Maryland, who'd treated him well on a previous deal and made a fair offer – \$5,200.

The Other Woman with her companion Marshall 50-watt half-stack.

“Before sending it off, I put a note in the case pocket saying that I'd named it ‘The Other Woman,’ which I came up with because my wife knew how much love I had for that guitar, and sometimes suggested I loved it more than her (laughs).

“That was the only time I ever cried when selling a guitar, and I've sold a lot of them.”

Eventually, The Other Woman landed in Missouri, at Tom Wittrock's Third Eye Music, which sold it to another collector.

“When I saw Tom at the 1991 Arlington Guitar Show, he told me the note

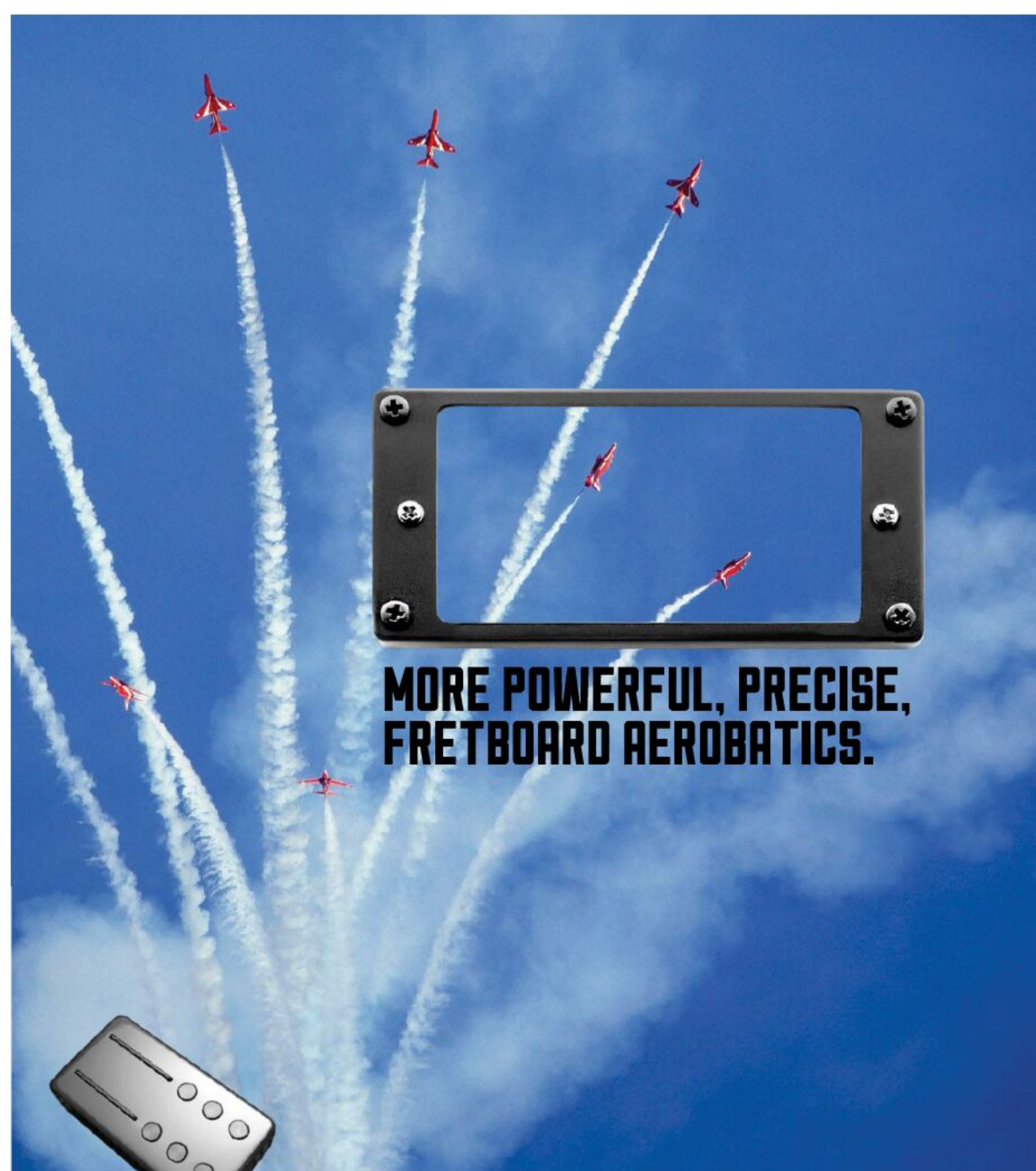
was still in the case,” said Bob.

The name stuck and the guitar has since been featured in Yasuhiko Iwanade's *Beauty of the Burst*, *Sunburst Alley* by Vic DaPra, and the first three editions of *Burst Believers* by DaPra and David Plues. It was also in an article titled “Sunburst Gallery” in the March '85 issue of *Guitar Player*.

Plenty of guitarists experience seller's remorse. For most, it's over an instrument that sounded amazing and felt like an extension of their soul but needed to move on for whatever reason. And that's true for Bob, but (as you can imagine), there's *much* more to it with his '58. Despite living with the realization that selling it to buy a now worthless P.A. system was “...probably the stupidest thing I've ever done,” he sees the sunny side.

“At least I had the privilege of owning a '58 Les Paul Standard, which so few can say.” – **Ward Meeker**

Bob Tekippe authored VG's first editorial column, “Guitars, Guitars, Guitars,” which appeared in issue #1/September, 1986.



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1973-1977 Blue sparkle, more made \$7,000 - \$9,500

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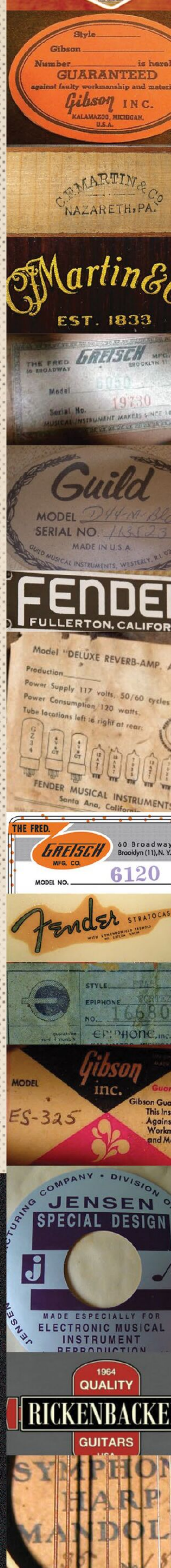
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Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Ram W. Tuli



1966 Fender
Telecaster
Custom

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
2010	Acoustic B200 (MKII)	200 watts, 1x15 combo	\$175	\$250
1940s	Audiovox Lap Steel		\$1,000	\$1,500
1965	Baldwin Jazz Split-Sound	Long-scale	\$1,125	\$1,500
1991	Chandler Austin Special		\$900	\$1,500
1967	Danelectro Dane C Series	4-string	\$1,125	\$1,375
1960	D'Angelico Special (Cutaway)	Sunburst	\$9,000	\$12,000
2000s	Death By Audio			
	Interstellar Overdriver		\$110	\$150
1970	Dobro Model 60 Series		\$800	\$1,200
1902	Dyer Harp Guitar Style 7	Fancy inlays	\$5,000	\$8,000
1961	EKO Model 700/4V	Standard finish	\$1,100	\$1,500
1997	Epiphone Thunderbird IV		\$500	\$650
2010	ESP Viper 300M		\$500	\$800
1966	Fender Bass VI	Common Color	\$10,000	\$15,000
1995	Fender Deluxe Jazz/Jazz V (Active)	IV or V	\$425	\$550
1998	Fender American Deluxe			
	Jazz/Jazz V	IV and V	\$1,125	\$1,500
1970	Fender Jazzmaster	Sunburst	\$4,000	\$5,500
2018	Fender American			
	Performer Mustang		\$1,000	\$1,500
1998	Fender Squier Telecaster (Affinity Series)		\$150	\$250
1966	Fender Stratocaster	Sunburst, dot markers	\$17,000	\$22,500
2013	Fender TB 1200 Bass Head	1200 watts, hybrid	\$550	\$750
1963	Fender Telecaster Custom	Sunburst	\$30,000	\$40,000
1966	Fender Telecaster Custom	Red	\$25,000	\$35,000
2012	Fender Modern Player			
	Telecaster Plus	Import, HSS	\$500	\$800
2001	Fender Two Tone (Custom Shop)	15 watts, 1x10 1x12	\$1,000	\$1,500
1960s	Framus Jumbo			
	12-String Model 5/297		\$800	\$1,200
1998	G&L Invader	2nd version	\$1,000	\$1,250
1993	Gibson '59 Les Paul Flametop			
	/Reissue/Standard	Historic decal, late '93	\$4,500	\$6,800
1980	Gibson B.B. King Standard		\$2,500	\$3,800
1969	Gibson Citation		\$20,000	\$35,000
1963	Gibson ES-335 TD	Cherry, factory stop tail	\$20,000	\$25,000
2011	Gibson Explorer	Sunburst	\$1,500	\$2,500
1965	Gibson Firebird VII	Custom colors, non-reverse	\$27,000	\$35,000
1999	Gibson GA-30 RVS			
	(Stereo) Goldtone		\$1,125	\$1,750
1950	Gibson L-48		\$2,000	\$2,500
1976	Gibson Les Paul Artisan	2 pickups, walnut, and Artisan/3	\$4,200	\$6,500
1999	Gibson Les Paul Deluxe 30th Anniversary	Wine red	\$2,200	\$3,500
2005	Gibson Les Paul Music			
	Rising Limited Edition	Signed by The Edge	\$4,500	\$7,000
1999	Gibson Les Paul Standard Premium Plus	Premium flame	\$3,000	\$5,000
1966	Gibson Melody Maker D	Various colors, SG body	\$2,200	\$3,000
2012	Gibson SG Dickey Betts	Aged, signed	\$8,000	\$10,000



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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
2003	Gibson SG Standard			
	VOS Historic		\$3,500	\$4,500
2010	Gretsch Blue Penguin (6134-CSRSBP)	Custom Shop	\$7,000	\$10,000
1973	Guild Aragon F-30 R	rosewood	\$2,000	\$3,000
2013	Guild Starfire III	Newark St., (Korea)	\$900	\$1,400
1967	Hagstrom H- 8		\$2,125	\$2,750
1960s	Harmony H-430	30 watts, 2x10	\$525	\$675
1981	Ibanez Analog Delay			
	202 (Rack Mount)		\$300	\$400
1998	Ibanez Joe Satriani JS 10th Anniversary		\$3,500	\$5,000
1990	Ibanez Mostortion MT10		\$450	\$650
1950s	Kay Small Tube	Various models	\$350	\$500
1978	Kramer DMZ-3000		\$1,500	\$1,875
1948	Magnatone Model 10 Varsity/Varsity Deluxe		\$525	\$700
1981	Marshall JCM 800			
	Model 2203 Head	Head only	\$2,250	\$2,875
1997	Martin 0000-38 (M-38)		\$3,000	\$4,500
2020	Martin 00-X2E		\$500	\$800
1939	Martin C-1P	F-hole	\$2,200	\$3,300
2001	Martin DCXE	Black	\$500	\$800
1976	Martin HD-28		\$3,500	\$5,000
1971	Morley Rotating Sound Power			
	Wah Model RWV		\$200	\$300
2003	Music Man Bongo 4		\$1,375	\$1,750
1952	National Clipper			
	Model 1026 Lap Steel		\$550	\$700
1935	National Style O	Round 14-fret (Knophler assoc.)	\$7,000	\$9,000
1983	Peavey Mystic		\$400	\$500
1950s	Premier Semi-Pro 16 Archtop	Electric	\$900	\$1,400
2008	PRS Mira Maple Top (MT)	Maple over mahogany	\$1,700	\$2,200
2002	Rickenbacker Model 325C64		\$2,500	\$3,500
1958	Rickenbacker Model 450	Cresting Wave	\$4,000	\$5,000
1985	Robin Raider III	3 pickups	\$1,500	\$3,500
1995	Santa Cruz OM			
	(Orchestra Model)	Koa	\$5,000	\$8,000
1955	Silvertone Meteor	1 pickup	\$475	\$600
1963	Supro Suprosonic 30		\$600	\$750
2016	Taylor 458e		\$1,500	\$1,875
2008	Taylor Custom	AA+ Indian,		
	Dreadnought/Custom DN	Adirondack+	\$2,625	\$3,250
1997	VooDoo Lab Analog Chorus		\$125	\$175
1964	Vox Phantom XII	English-made	\$3,500	\$5,500
2006	Xotic Effects X-Blender		\$110	\$150

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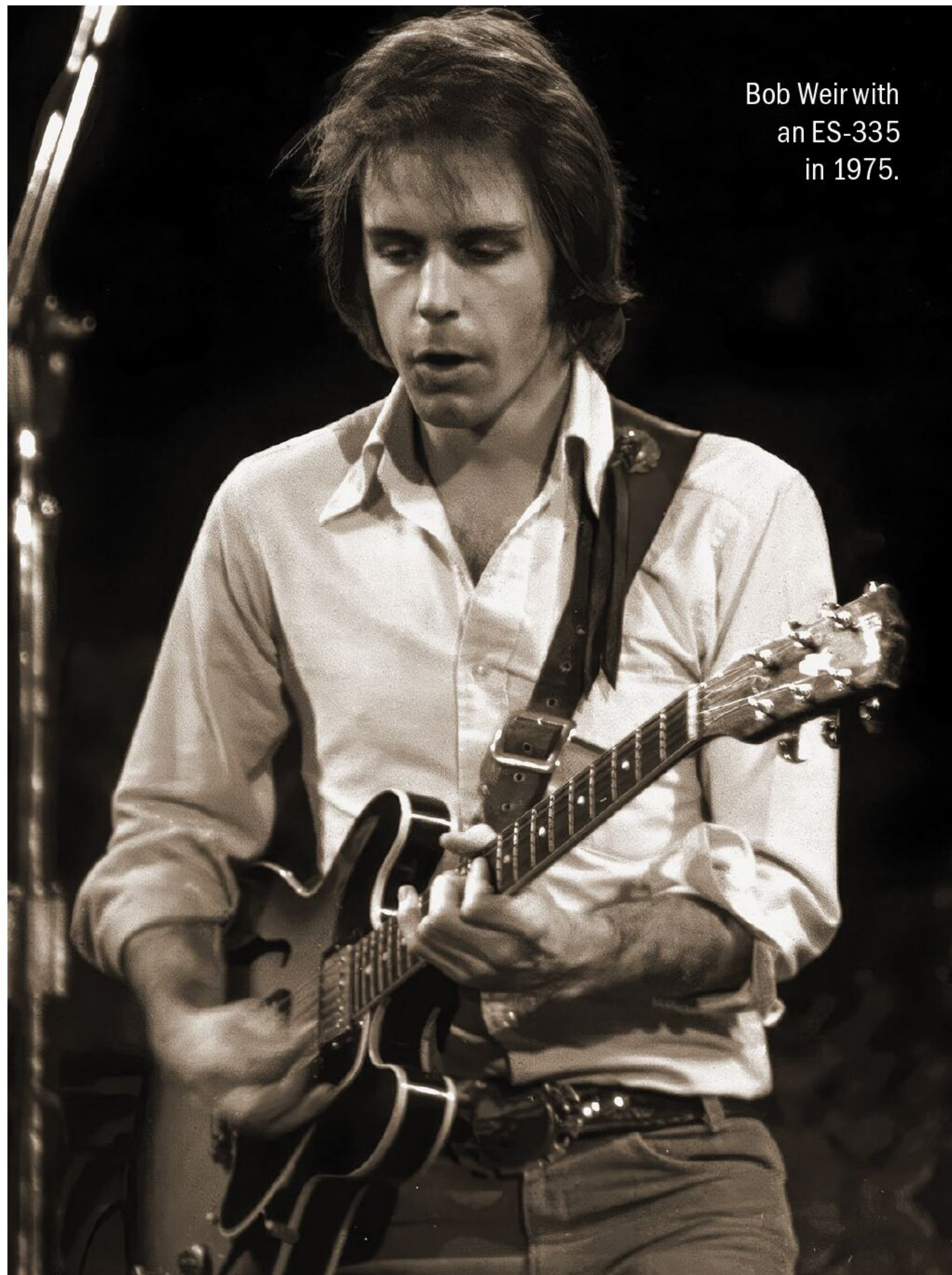
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Steve Cropper
in the '60s.



Bob Weir with
an ES-335
in 1975.

STEVE CROPPER AND BOB WEIR

Requiem for Two Rhythm Giants

By Wolf Marshall

The world recently lost two of its greatest underappreciated guitar heroes, Steve Cropper (December 3, 2025) and Bob Weir (January 10, 2026). The void left by either is enormous but was magnified by the titans passing barely a month apart.

Both personified the art and craft of rhythm guitar; giants separated by genre but joined by groove, at a glance they seem diametric opposites. Cropper was the quintessential utility man. Thinking like an arranger, he supplied the perfect part to enumerable radio hits, his playing transcending cultural and stylistic boundaries while influencing the

Beatles, Stones, Jimi Hendrix, and the pop-rock ecosphere. His hooks and licks became required listening for garage-band aspirants, rites of passage for playing high-school dances, and necessary for professionals required to dole out “Knock on Wood,” “Midnight Hour” and “Sittin’ On the Dock of a Bay” on every Top 40 gig.

By contrast, Weir provided the glue that bound Jerry Garcia’s forays in the Grateful Dead to their core rhythmic essence. His contributions were less obvious than Cropper’s, but no less profound or irreplaceable. The common denominator is rhythm – the kinetic

force that unites everything with forward motion. Every musician comes to the realization that it’s a matter of time, regardless of whether their timekeeping propels a funk tune or is the hidden metronome girding extended flights of psychedelic rock. Cropper and Weir came to that conclusion as children. Both personified the aesthetic and put the rhythm in rhythm guitar.

Cropper – guitarist, composer, producer, A&R man – was the archetypal R&B pocket player. Hooks were his calling card, whether a funky rhythm riff, succinct single-note fill, flowing chord partials like the tasty bits on “Soul Man” and “Sittin’ on the Dock of the Bay,” or tight chord-melody phrases. Cropper’s playing encapsulated what Motown’s “Funk Brothers” did, moving seamlessly through various textures to color a song. His inventive playing is prominent on numerous Stax releases, where he was house guitarist. The Memphis label was a hit-making machine that defined Southern soul with an amalgam of Delta blues, Nashville country, and Appalachian hillbilly married to pop and rock perspectives. Above all, Stax

N.C. (G) (F) (Bb) (C) (D)

A

3

7 7 7 7 10 10 12 12 14

5 7 (7) (7) 7 (7) 5 (5) 5 (5) 5 10 10 10 (10) 10 12 (12) 12 (12) 14

B G **C** G B

3 3 7 7 7 5 3 15 15 15 15 16

3 3 8 8 8 5 3 14 16 14 16 14 16

4 4 7 7 7 5 4

B C B Bb A A(sus4)

let ring-----

let ring-----

16 16 16 16 16 17 17 17 16 15 14 15 14 15 14 14

(16) 16 16 16 16 17 17 17 16 15 14 14 14 14

D G **E** C **E** C

P.M.-----

15 15 15 15 12 (12)

14 16 14 14 11 (11)

2 2 0 2 0 2 2 0 2 0 0 2 0 0

3 3 0 3 0 2 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

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Five essential Steve Cropper phrases from the Stax era. A is the opening passage in “Soul Man.” Note his iconic slurred sixth interval dyads (akin to a country flavor adapted to R&B) applied thematically to the G-F-B^b-C-D changes. They are recalled with slight variations and modulated to A^b for the final chorus. B is his funky rhythm figure in the verses. Made from triads in the G-major tonal center, it’s reminiscent (but not derivative) of Hubert Sumlin’s riff in Howlin’ Wolf’s “Killing Floor.” C and D are from “Sittin’ on the Dock of the Bay.” In C, Cropper applies simple dyads to the verse outlining basic chords G and B and the

chromatic move C-B-B^b-A. He decorates G with hammered-on ornaments a la Nashville pianist Floyd Cramer and adds tasty arpeggiations and fills to the B and A chords. In D he recalls and adapts the dyads in the chorus changes of G-E. E is the main riff in “Time is Tight” (also heard in the Blues Brothers), a metaphor for his groove-conscious approach. The figure is comprised of third-interval dyads harmonizing a bass-line figure, largely in steady eighths, and harnesses syncopation effectively. He adds judicious palm muting to further color the riff and provide a percussive effect.

but forged a style and sound all his own. As a teen, he paid dues in a high-school band called Royal Spades, which included future Stax bandmate bassist Donald “Duck” Dunn. By ’61, the group adopted the Mar-Keys moniker and were backing many of the acts signed to Stax. In that milieu, Cropper came to prominence with Booker T. & the MGs (one of the first racially integrated groups) on the ’62 instrumental-rock hit, “Green Onions,” which reached #3 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and #1 on R&B singles charts. The largely improvised 12-bar blues jam (assembled by the quartet in the studio) was driven by Booker T. Jones’ dynamic Hammond organ lines – an identifier of the Memphis soul sound – and featured Cropper’s concise accompaniment and soulful lead breaks in the outro.

The band functioned as key players on records by Otis Redding, Eddie Floyd, Sam & Dave, Wilson Pickett, Albert King, The Staple Singers, Delaney & Bonnie, and many others. Cropper and the Stax sound influenced the Beatles, Hendrix, and every guitarist coming of age in the '60s. He co-wrote "Knock on Wood" with Floyd, "In the Midnight Hour" with Pickett, and the Grammy-winning "Dock of the Bay" with Redding, showcasing his composition abilities. He was also integral to shaping many of Stax's cohesive arrangements.

Cropper left Stax in 1970 to pursue a solo career. His music continued to grace solo albums while his collaborative skill and arranging sensibilities led to a successful run as producer, epitomized on recordings by Robben Ford, Harry Nilsson, and Tower of Power. As session specialist and MVP contributor, he lent cachet to countless records from John Lennon, Jimmy Buffett, and Chicago to

prized groove, offering an ideal environment for Steve's proclivities.

Embracing diverse influences, he named

Chuck Berry, Jimmy Reed, Chet Atkins, and Tal Farlow as well as lesser-knowns Earl Cate, Lowman Pauling, and Billy Butler as favorites,

Ringo Starr, Rod Stewart, and the Blues Brothers. In a moment of harmonic convergence, he provided guitar parts to the 1984 album by

Weir's side project, Bobby & The Midnites, *Where the Beat Meets the Street*.

Cropper is a member of the Telecaster clan. He began his career with a '50s Byrdland, but found his voice with the '56 Esquire (refinished maroon) heard on his earliest Stax recordings. In the '60s, he switched to a blond Tele with a rosewood fretboard that became his mainstay. He sporadically used Teles with maple fretboards and went through 15 or so Teles before lending his name to the Peavey Cropper Classic, based on a modified Telecaster design with refinements such as a mahogany body with figured-maple top, custom-wound pickups (dual-blade single coil at neck, quad-blade humbucker in the bridge), master Tone and master Volume controls, three-way selector with a coil splitter for the bridge pickup, Peavey's Maxcess aluminum neck joint, and satin-finished maple neck with a 22-fret rosewood fretboard.

Cropper often paired his Tele with a tweed Harvard amp on Stax sessions. Made between 1955 and '61, the 10-watter was the smallest of Fender's professional series. It was fitted with a single 10" speaker and had only Tone and Volume controls. The Harvard proved an ideal recording amp for his lightly overdriven, semi-clean tone. For live performances in the '70s and '80s, he favored Super Reverbs with four 10" speakers and experimented with a high-powered Fender Quad Reverb with four 12s.

Weir was a founding member of the Grateful Dead, a proudly uncategorizable group boasting rock, country, blues, folk, jazz, reggae, gospel, psychedelic, fusion and world-music tangents. Six months after the release of "Green Onions," Weir and Jerry Garcia met in Palo Alto on New Year's Eve '63, when the 16-year-old

Moderate Rock

[A] A **D A**

A **D A**

[B] N.C. (E) **E5 E6 E5 E6**

[C] B5 **A5 A6**

These three excerpts from two Grateful Dead pieces demonstrate Bob Weir's colorful and sympathetic accompaniment style. A is the main figure in "Sugar Magnolia," which interlocks with (and generates counterpoint to) Garcia's upper-register blues licks. Check out the slurred triads, single-note fills marrying country, rock, and blues references, and chord partials in the first two measures alone. In measure 6, he plays typical expanded voicings of D-A for a thoughtful variation. B is from the intro of "Truckin'."

The tune is a happy collision of country, blues, Western swing, and rock and roll, reflected in Weir's Chicago-style blues riffing, Berry-based boogie comping, and the shuffling ¹²/₈ feel. Note his palm muting in the rhythm figures throughout the song. C presents part of the verse – the bluesy progression of B-A-E. Note Weir's comping patterns, decorated with connective fills on B-A. Over E, he varies textures, applying broken-chord strumming, again decorated with fills, and chugging/muted power-chord shapes.

heard the 21-year-old Garcia's mellifluous banjo music emanating from Dana Morgan's Music Store. The pair jammed together all night, jelled as a duo with a sense of purpose, and decided to form a band. The Beatles' notoriety and success influenced their shift from folky jug-band music to a rock-and-roll outfit called The Warlocks then renamed Grateful Dead in '65.

The Dead sprang from San Francisco's psychedelic scene of 1966/'67, quickly becoming its leading practitioners. Their experimental style was honed as house band at Ken Kesey's Acid Tests, which was crucial to their bonding as a free-form improvisatory group, where beatnik and proto-hippie mindsets converged in LSD-fueled freak-outs. Their fusion of Americana and British Invasion sounds and embrace of psychedelic rock led to the Dead as a musical institution. The legend grew as the band blossomed into a phenomenon, bolstered by legions of nomadic "Deadhead" followers, who taped concerts and swapped recordings. In this mix, Weir's supportive rhythm playing was colorful and far-reaching, incorporating influences from folk, country, blues and rock, to classical string quartets, Igor Stravinsky,

McCoy Tyner, and John Coltrane. His style, called "the magic object in the middle of the band" (by Garcia's second wife), evolved from conventional rock/folk chording to the application of novel textures, dissonances, and unorthodox modernistic sonorities described by Bob Dylan as "...strange, augmented chords and half chords at unpredictable intervals that somehow match up with Garcia." His work has affected countless musicians including Trey Anastasio's Phish ensemble, Warren Haynes, and John Mayer, as well as jazz guitarist Julian Lage. Less-categorizable, loosely structured, and tailored to the band, Weir's accompaniment fit in near-telepathic fashion with Garcia's leads, a real-time counterpoint to his imaginative and mercurial improvisations.

Reflecting his interest in jazz and post-bop, Weir led the jazz/rock fusion-influenced Bobby and the Midnites in the early '80s, with guitar wiz Bobby Cochran (Eddie's nephew). After Garcia's passing in '95, he formed RatDog (which performed Beatles, Dylan, Chuck Berry and blues covers in addition to Dead material), and participated in reconstituted lineups with Grateful Dead members such as the Other Ones, the Dead, Fare Thee Well,

Dead & Company, and Furthur (alluding to Kesey and his Merry Pranksters' '60s tour bus). Underscoring the band's lasting legacy, the Dead was acknowledged in 2024 as having the most Top 40 albums on the *Billboard* 200 (59), breaking records set by Sinatra and Elvis.

Weir played a variety of instruments; in the '60s he used a Gretsch Tennessean, Rickenbacker 365, Guild Starfire IV, Gibson ES-335, ES-345, Les Paul Custom, and SG Standards. He also played Strats and Teles, Modulus guitars and numerous custom builds, as well as models designed with him or for him that became the Ibanez 2681 Bob Weir Professional model and Ibanez BWM1 Weir Cowboy Fancy.

Weir favored various acoustics including Martins, Guilds, Ovations, and a signature model built by Alvarez-Yairi.

Wolf Marshall is the founder and original Editor-In-Chief of *GuitarOne* magazine. A respected author and columnist, he has been influential in contemporary music education since the early 1980s. His latest book is *Jazz Guitar Course: Mastering the Jazz Language*. Others include *101 Must-Know Rock Licks*, *B.B. King: the Definitive Collection*, and *Best of Jazz Guitar*. A list credits can be found at wolfmarshall.com.



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'59 Red/Slab Rose neck. Original custom color, 100% original.
'62 Sunburst/Slab Rose neck. 100% original. Nerar Mint condition.
'65 Candy Apple Red. 100% original, Excellent condition, Mint-Green pickguard
'65 Olympic White. 100% original, Excellent condition, Mint-Green pickguard
'65 Olympic White. 100% original

'65 Olympic White "Tortoise Shell Pickguard." Gold Hardware, 100% original
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'70 Black/Rose neck. 100% original
'71 Blac/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 nneck 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
'74 Sunburst/Maple & Rose neck. We have both in stock.
'74 Sunburst "Lefty" Maple neck, 100% original in Mint condition, Super rare!!
'79 25th Anniversary "Pearl White" Strat, 100% original, Perfect condition
'79 Sunburst "Prototype" 4-bolt Maple neck, 100% original, Perfect condition
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UNSAFE STORAGE

Case Closed

By Dan Erlewine

A local player brought in a '73 Les Paul Signature model that he inherited from an uncle. Kept in its case in storage with no climate control for 20 years, it didn't fare well; the pickups were dead, electronics corroded/unusable, hardware was riddled with oxidation, and the whole thing was covered in a powdery mildew.

The first thing I did was search for replace-

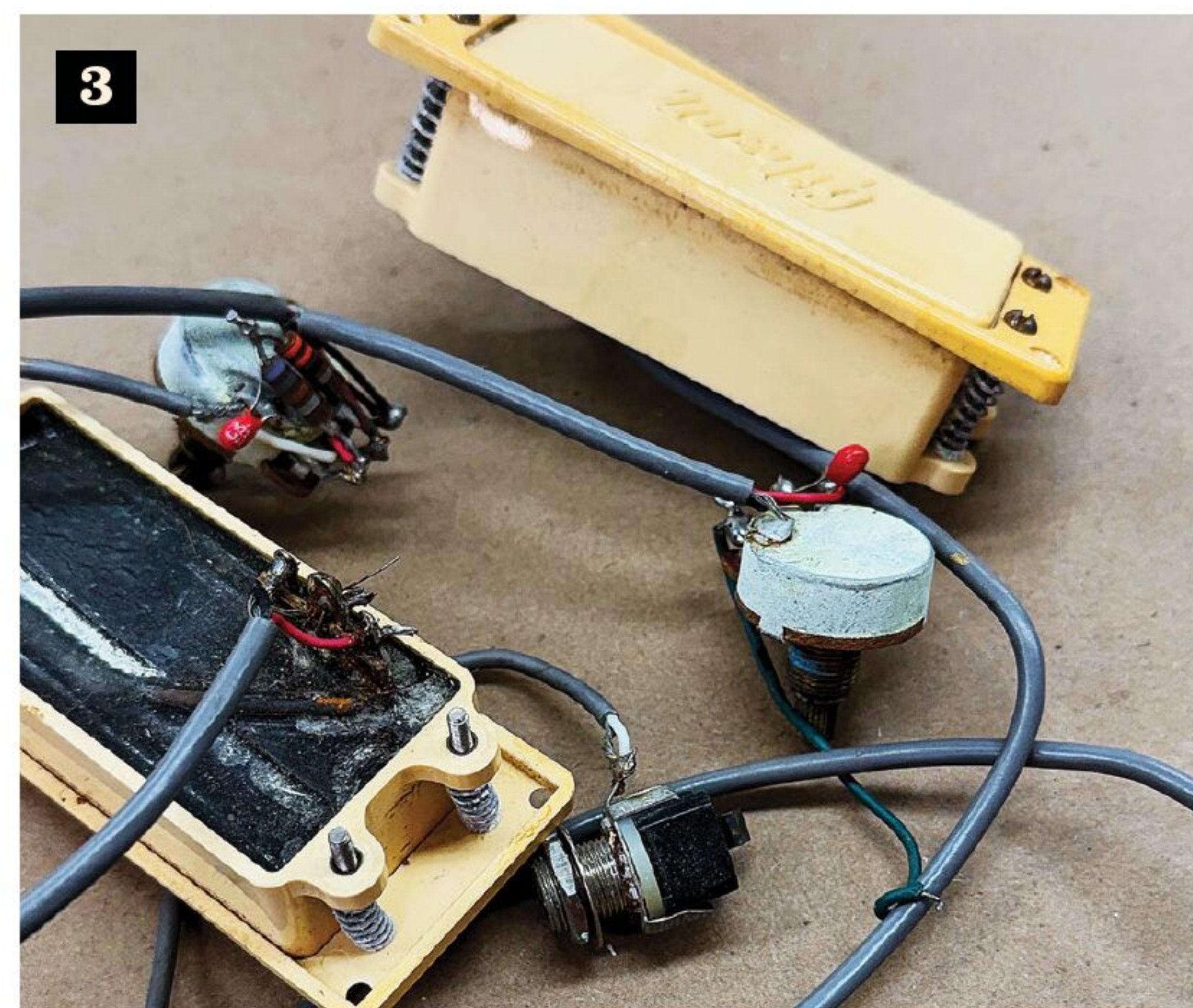
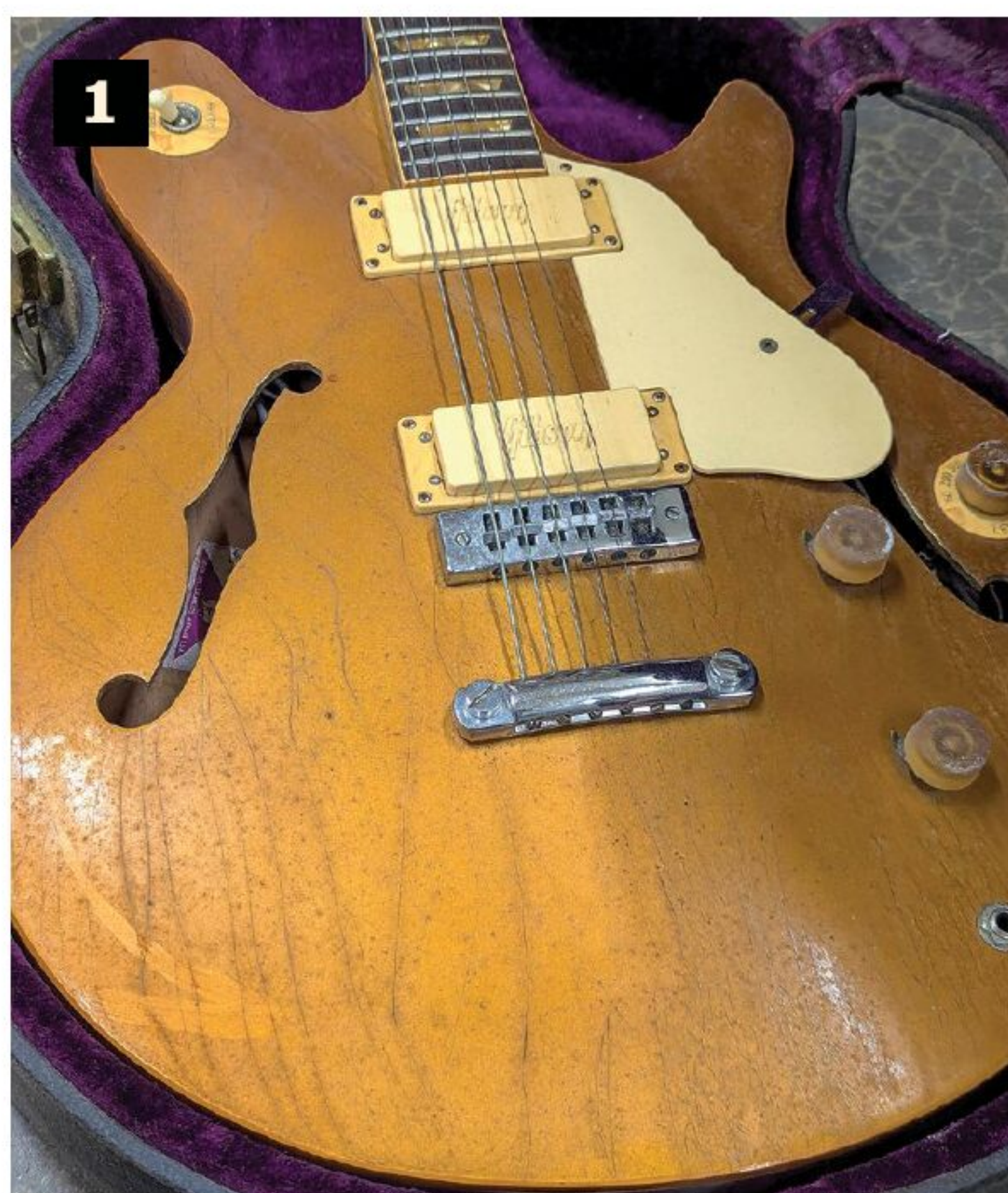
ment pickups and a wiring harness. I found a set that included three pickups – two that worked, one with a broken mounting tab, and one for parts. Asking price was \$1,600 – far beyond the owner's budget – so, I decided to install two P-90s with a simple four-control harness and make surrounds to hide the original screw holes. But first, we needed to clean it up.

1) The finish was covered in a dull, grey-speckled layer, the binding had yellowed, the bridge and tailpiece were oxidized, and the control knobs were coated with a hazy white mildew.

2) Even the headstock was greyed.

3) We didn't clean the electronics, but saved them for the owner.

4) I cleaned the finish with soft cotton



rags, sometimes dampened with warm water. Andre Hallenburg did some additional touch-up, occasionally using saliva (one of the greatest cleaners for things that nothing else can remove) then followed with StewMac's ColorTone Clean+Shine. After

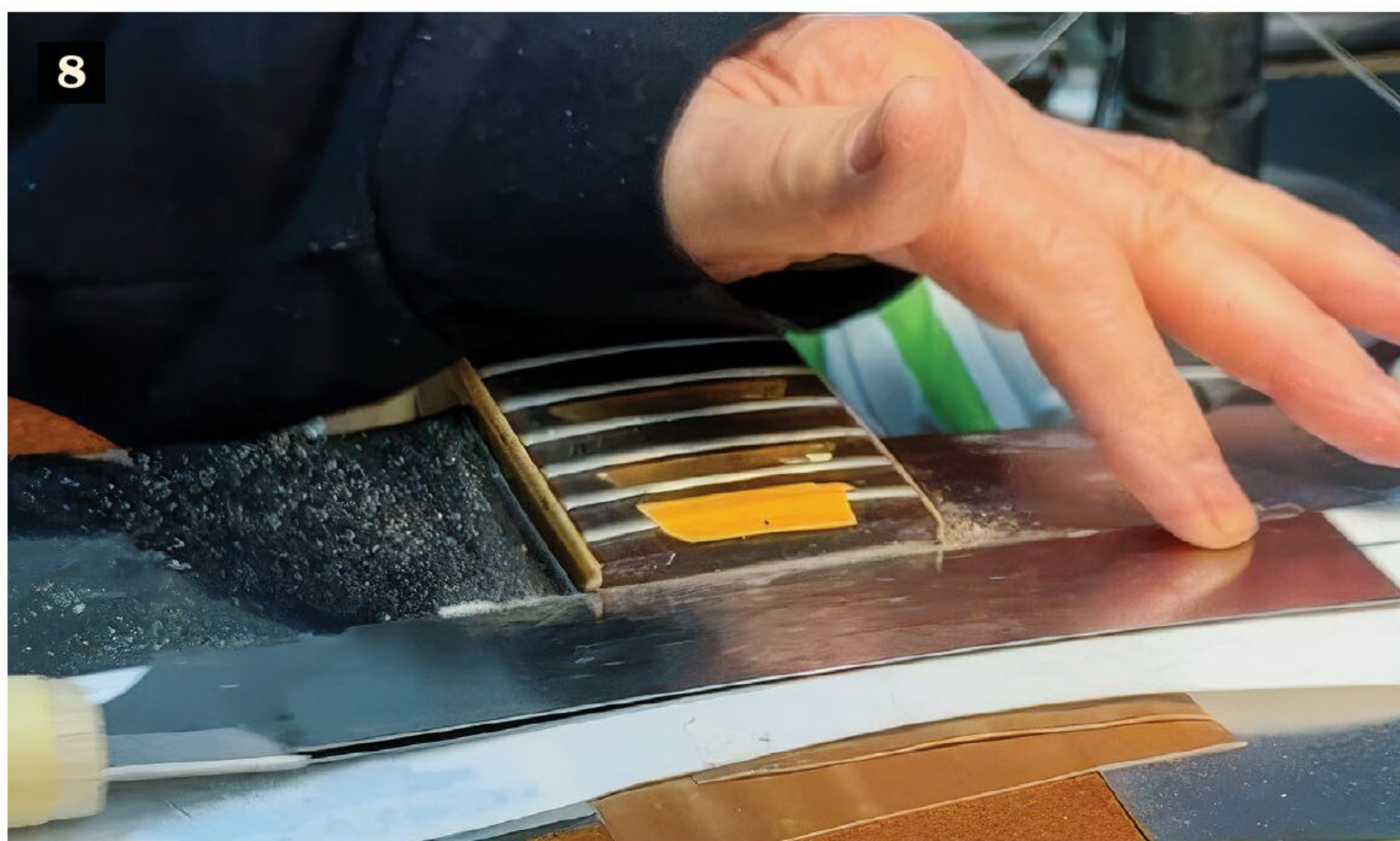
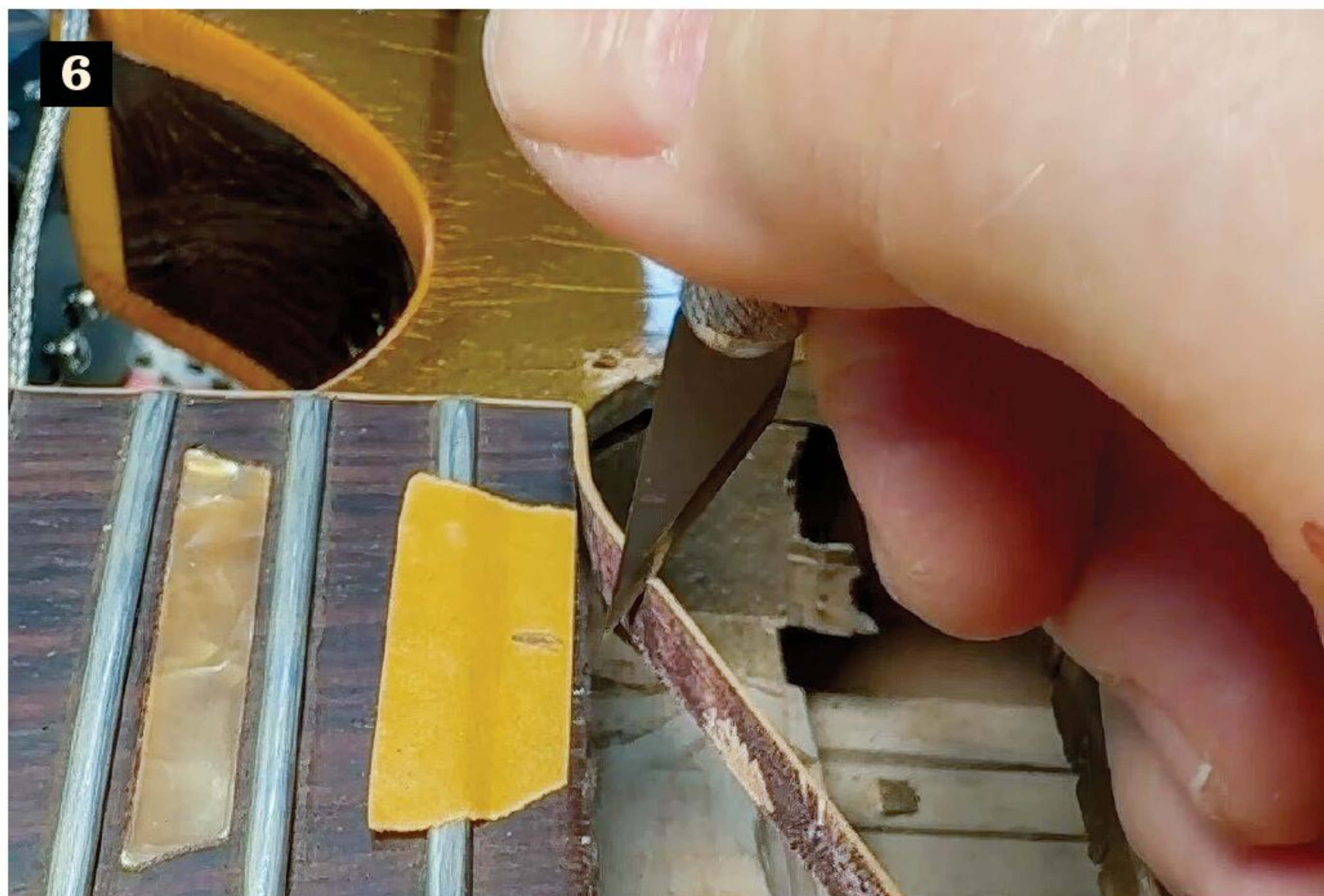
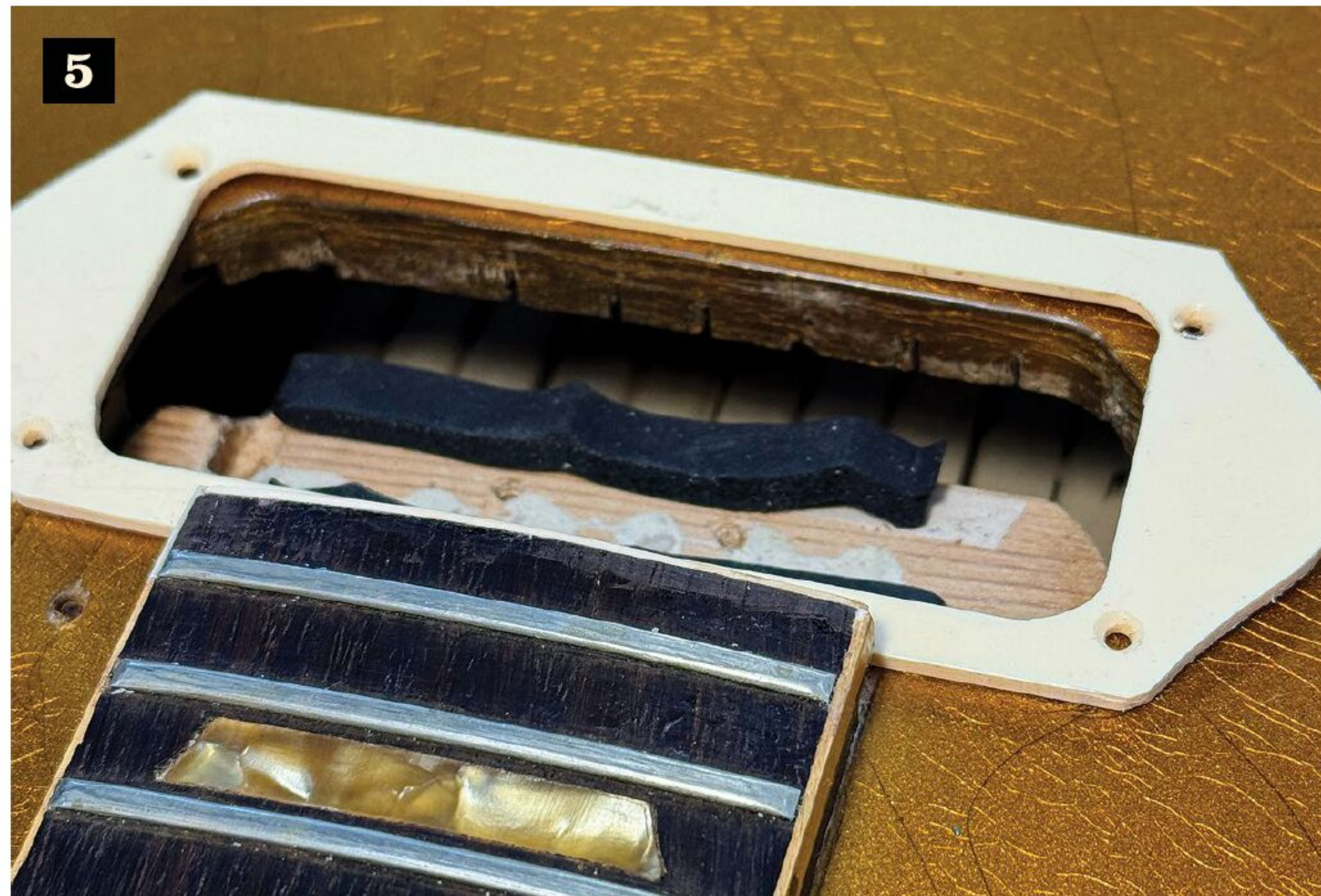
removing the dirt, he buffed with polish.

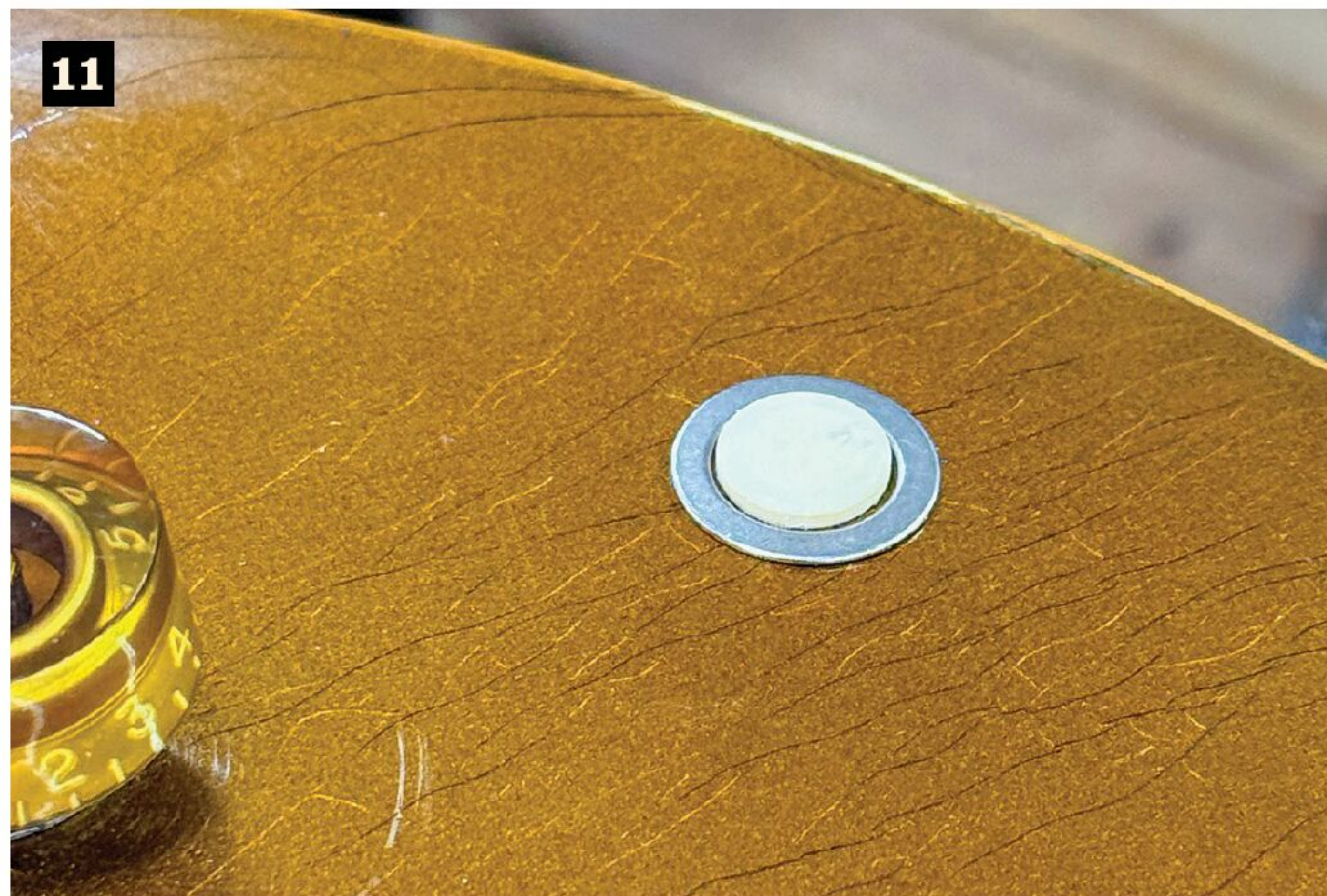
5) I made pickup surrounds from StewMac's cream pickguard material, which has a "bone" color like aged Gibson plastic, giving the surrounds a look close to original. However, the neck-pickup surround

bumped into the end of the fretboard, and the pickup couldn't drop in to the cavity.

6) My workaround was to remove the binding at the end of the fretboard...

7) ...then use a toothed file to shorten the end of the fretboard. I protected the body





by using low-tack tape securing thin sheets of Teflon

8) I followed that with saw blades of graduating thicknesses to undercut the fretboard overhang....

9) ...and the surround slid right under.

10) I made a pickguard that matched the new surrounds...

11) ...and a button to fill the original hole

for a second output jack.

12) I wired the guitar with fresh parts, after which it played and sounded great. Here's the owner, Keith, showing it off in the spring sunshine.

Dan Erlewine has been repairing guitars for more than 50 years. The author of three books, dozens of magazine articles, he has also produced instructional

videotapes and DVDs on guitar repair. From 1986 through his retirement in late 2019, Erlewine was part of the R&D team/company liaison for Stewart-MacDonald's Guitar Shop Supply. Today, he operates a repair shop in Athens, Ohio, as well as building replicas of the guitars he made for Albert King and Jerry Garcia in 1972. This column has appeared in VG since March, 2004. You can contact him at danerlewine@gmail.com.



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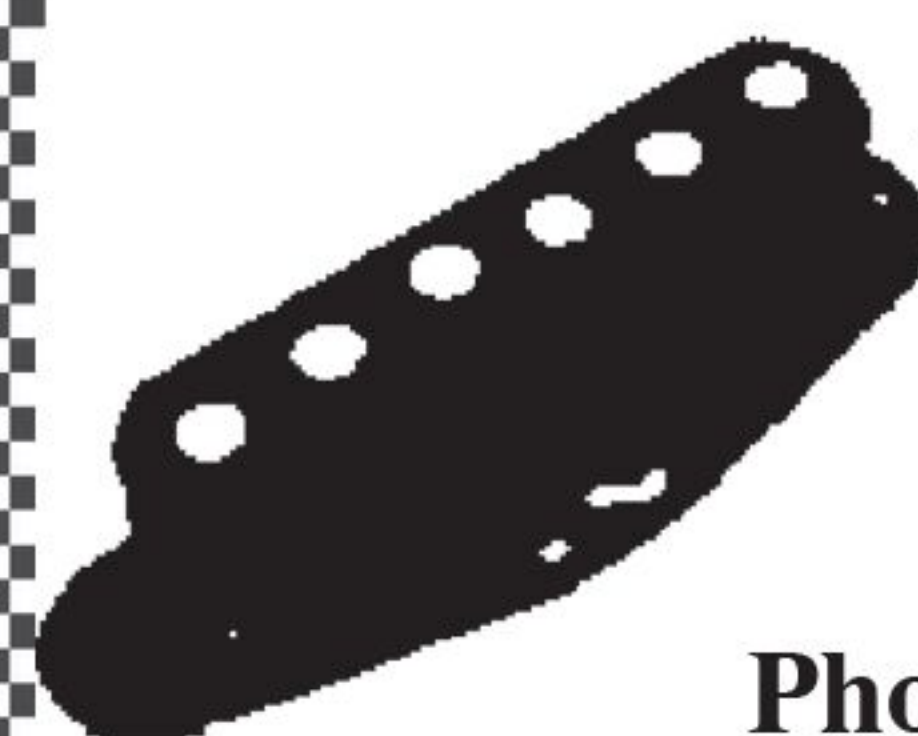
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RICK VITO

SLIDING HOME

If you owned a television between 1991 and 2004, you almost assuredly heard Rick Vito's slide guitar. His long, slow ascent up the neck of his '56 Les Paul TV is burned into a generation's memory, thanks to the Chevy truck commercials featuring Bob Seger's "Like A Rock."

Slide or fingered, Vito's tasteful playing has also graced projects by John Mayall, Bon-

nie Raitt, Roger McGuinn, Maria Muldaur, Boz Scaggs, Rosie Flores, John Prine, Roy Orbison, Peter Dinklage, and others. He stepped into Fleetwood Mac in 1987, merited special billing with the Mick Fleetwood Blues Band Featuring Rick Vito, and was also the main guitarist at the 2020 memorial concert for his hero (and Mac founder), Peter Green. He's no stranger to *VG*'s pages, be it as collector, gui-

tar designer for Reverend, or solo artist, most recently discussing his 12th album, *Cadillac Man*, in the June '25 issue. The title of his follow-up, an all-instrumental affair, says it all in one word: *Slidemaster*.

The first slide guitar you heard was Brian Jones on the Rolling Stones' version of "Little Red Rooster." He also played slide on "I Wanna Be Your Man."

That was one of their first recordings. I didn't know it was slide until later. It surprised me that Brian Jones used a Telecaster on "Little Red Rooster." Of course, I got myself a Maestro Fuzztone when I heard "Satisfaction," and I'd play gigs and a girl would come up and say, "How do you make your guitar sound like a saxophone?" That's what it sounded like to a lot of people's ear at that point.

Who was the first blues band you saw live?

On TV, I saw Freddie King on "The !!!!Beat." It used to be broadcast on Saturday afternoons in Philly. It resonated with me; I'll never forget it. A year later, probably '68, I opened for John Hammond, Jr. with Chuck Berry on the same night. The next night, I opened for Muddy Waters with the real cats – Otis Spann, Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, Paul Oscher, Luther "Georgia Boy, Snake" Johnson.

When you heard Jesse Ed Davis on Taj

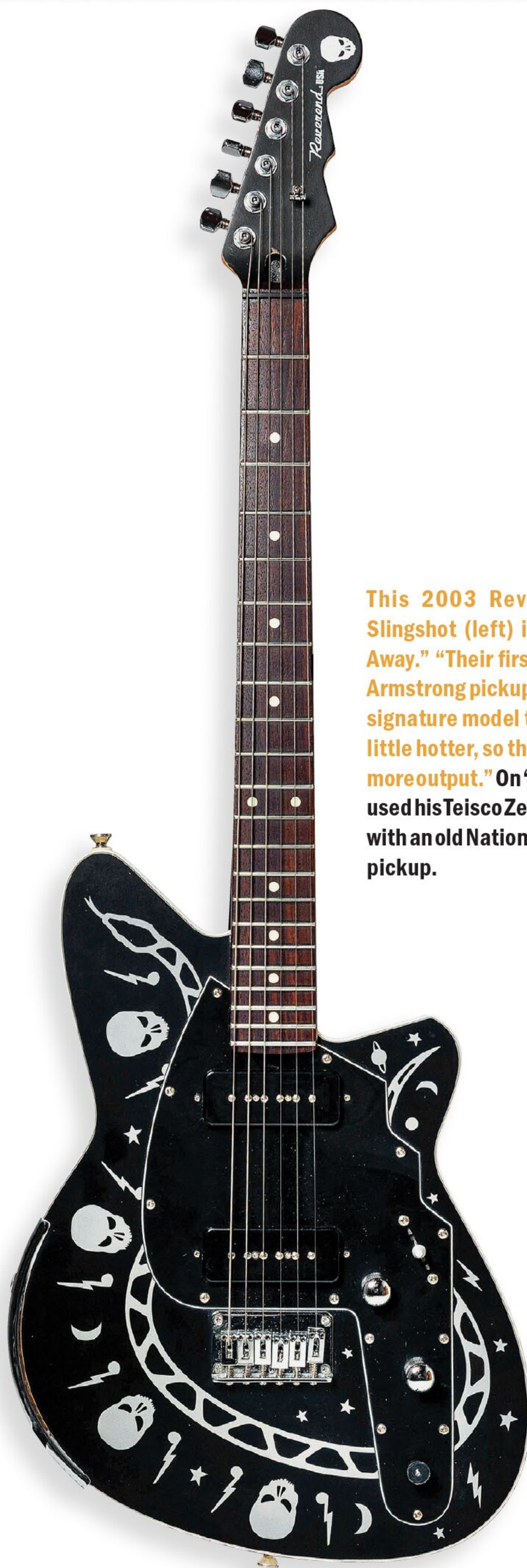
nie Raitt, Roger McGuinn, Maria Muldaur, Boz Scaggs, Rosie Flores, John Prine, Roy Orbison, Peter Dinklage, and others. He stepped into Fleetwood Mac in 1987, merited special billing

with the Mick Fleetwood Blues Band Featuring Rick Vito, and was also the main guitarist at the 2020 memorial concert for his hero (and Mac founder), Peter Green.

He's no stranger to *VG*'s pages, be it as collector, gui-

Vito with the '56 Les Paul TV he used to play the famous slide lick on "Like A Rock." For "Vegas Jump" on his new album, he gave it thinner strings and tuned it high for a trebly, piercing sound.

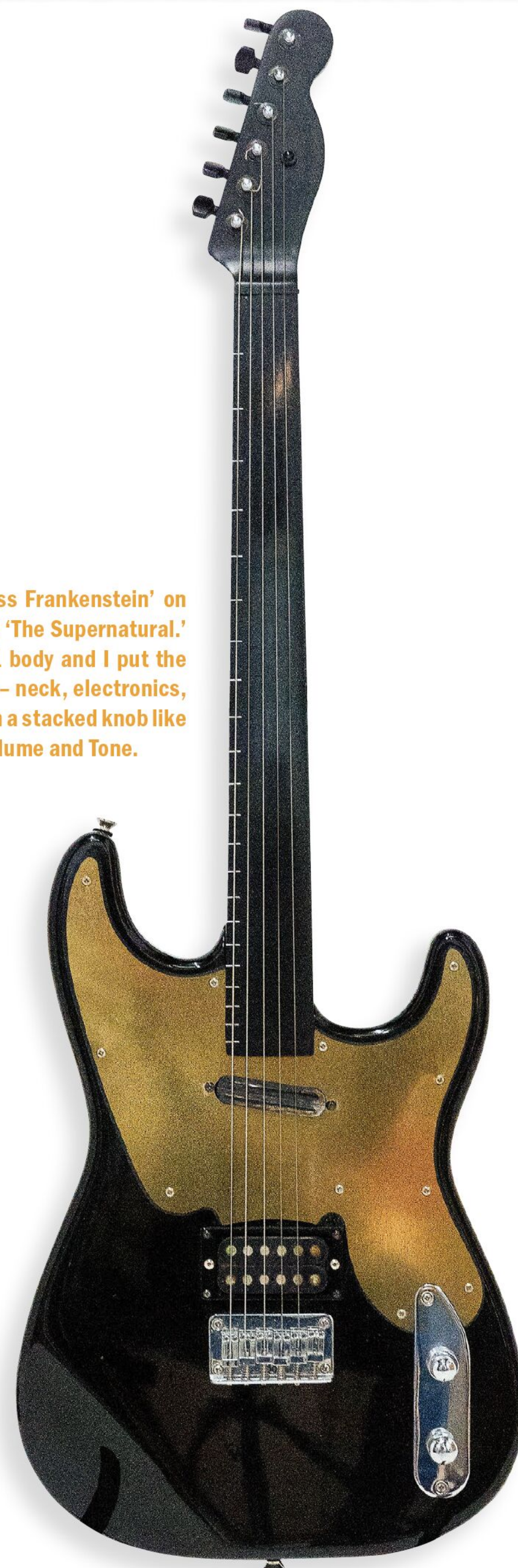
BY DAN FORTE



This 2003 Reverend Rick Vito Slingshot (left) is heard on “Steal Away.” “Their first guitars had Kent Armstrong pickups, but with my first signature model they wound them a little hotter, so they’re a little fatter, more output.” On “The Big Beat,” Vito used his Teisco Zenon “Slidemaster” with an old National/Supro lap-steel pickup.



“I use the ‘Fretless Frankenstein’ on ‘Danger Zone’ and ‘The Supernatural.’ It has a Squier 51 body and I put the rest of it together – neck, electronics, pickguard. I put on a stacked knob like a Jazz Bass, for Volume and Tone.



Mahal records, did you try to dig into his technique?

At first I tried and, of course, not knowing anything about it, it was complete fumbling in the dark. So I was as frustrated as anybody just picking up their regular guitar with slinky strings and low action. I sounded like crap. I didn’t know you’re supposed to tune to a chord or raise your action. I didn’t stay

with it long enough. But shortly after, a friend named Rick Valenti and I had a little blues duo – our version of Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. One day I heard Rick playing Son House’s version of “Walking Blues,” and a light bulb went off as I realized that’s how it’s done. From that moment on, I stayed with it. It was fascinating to me.

In that period all of a sudden there

was Ry Cooder, Mick Taylor, and it was starting to make its way into the rock-and-roll world.

Ry is so obsessive, researching things like what kind of pickup Elmore James had. Did you ever get into that?

To some extent. I’ve saved every picture I’ve ever seen posted of Elmore James. Through that, I found out that he played a Silvertone 1361 for a while – solidbody

with a pancake pickup. Then there's the pictures of him with the Kay with the Rhythm Chief 1100 pickup. The most recent photo I found of him had his amp, a Magnatone.

Robert Nighthawk played a Gretsch Corvette with a HiLo'Tron pickup near the bridge and got the greatest sound in the world out of that. I'm always on the lookout for any information. It pisses me off that the footage of him playing cuts to the people dancing when he takes his slide solo. It frustrates me that I can't see him play. There's no footage of Elmore. I'd love to know what amp made that sound.

"Vegas Jump" sounds a little like the boogie numbers Elmore James did.

I wasn't really thinking of that, although I've played along to a lot of his boogie things – which he doesn't necessarily play slide on. It's not a shuffle; it's more of a 2/4 beat. Church beat, something like that. But he's not far from anything I play. He was the man. I wish I could sing like he did.

Did you see Fleetwood Mac during the Peter Green era?

I saw Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac at the Electric Factory in Philadelphia on two consecutive nights, December 29 and 30, 1968, a few days before they went to Chicago to record *Blues Jam In Chicago*. The first night was one of the two best bands or shows I'd ever seen, and I was totally inspired, especially by Peter. The other was Jimi Hendrix about a year earlier. Those early shows of his were earth-shattering. I saw all the greats of the day – Beck, Alvin Lee, Clapton – but none impressed me as much as Peter and Jimi. I never saw Mike Bloomfield, one of my absolute early slide and standard favorites.

Jeremy Spencer was the band's slide player, but on "Albatross" Peter Green played slide, correct?

Yes. I heard Spencer on records, but I'd already heard Elmore

James. But when I saw them, and Jeremy came on with the Elmore stuff, it was powerful as hell.

When Lindsey Buckingham joined the band, he didn't seem thrilled about singing the older repertoire.

That was the very thing I think Mick liked about me. I could pull the Christine McVie and Stevie Nicks songs, but I also was an avid fan of that original music. We talked about that at length even before I joined the group, and I think it was one

On "A Change Is Gonna Come," Vito played this '57 Supro Dual Tone. "The pickups look like humbuckers, but they're single-coil," he says. "Gibson had to declare on their patent that they borrowed the look of the pickup from Supro. It's close to a P-90 in output, but it definitely has a low-fi sound, perfect for slide." Vito recorded "River Of Blues" on this 1929 National Triolian (right). "You bang on it, it sounds like a trash can," he says. "I used a weird tuning where I double the E string. I call it my 'magic G string.' It can be major or minor, doubled B or doubled E. You can create myriad tunings just by changing a note on your G string."

of the reasons he was comfortable having me come in. I did "If I Loved Another Woman," "Rattlesnake Shake," "Oh Well" at different times. It made for a very interesting part of the live set. We just went back to the old days, and from '87 through '90 there were still a lot of fans that remembered and loved that version of the band. It worked really well for me to have been so well-versed in it.

You play parts of "Albatross" fretted, and parts of the melody on slide.

That's right. I used my '58 Les Paul Standard and an old Reverend. In the past few years, I incorporated fingers along with the slide, as well as the fretless guitar. The funny thing is, the action has to be low on the fretless, but because there are no frets you can also slide with the metal slide and fingers.

"The Supernatural," of course, is famous for Peter Green's amazing sustain

The sustaining parts were not done on slide. I had to use my fingers for that, on my old Les Paul. I used it and the fretless Frankenstein on that song. You couldn't do that on slide.

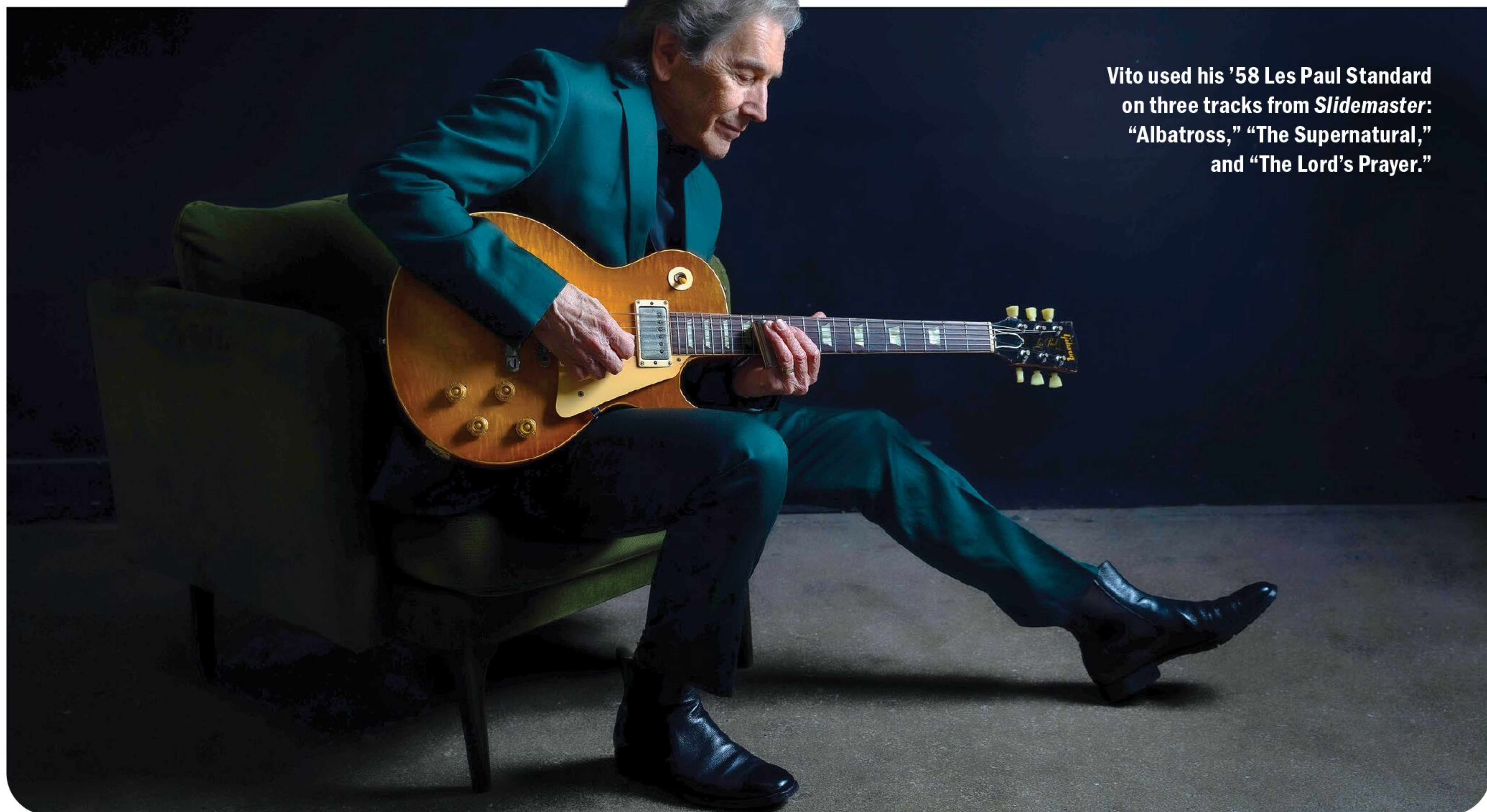
What do you use for a slide?

For most of my career I used a Sears Craftsman ^{11/16}" socket; I picked this idea up from John Hammond. I also use an AcoustaGlide slide made by the Latch Lake company – the one called a ChromeDome on my little finger. Then I push down on that with my ring and middle finger for more precision and to control sustain.

Did you use one main amp?

The amp I have the most luck with for recording is a Reverend Kingsnake, designed by Joe Naylor. They don't make them





Vito used his '58 Les Paul Standard on three tracks from *Slidemaster*: "Albatross," "The Supernatural," and "The Lord's Prayer."

anymore. It's got 20-watt and 60-watt settings; it's light as a feather and has one Jensen 12" Neo speaker. It's got what Joe called a "schizo switch." In the bottom position it sounds a lot like a Supro, low-fi. In the middle it sounds kind of close to a Fender, but not as bright. On the top setting it sounds sort of like an English amp, like a Marshall. It doesn't sound exactly like anything, but it's reminiscent of a few different amps. I also have a '59 Bassman and a '63 Deluxe Reverb.

Do you use any pedals?

No. Not for recording.

Do you sometimes play slide in standard tuning?

I like to use it for minor-key songs because the top three strings would be a minor chord, top four strings would be a minor 7th chord. "Like A Rock" was standard tuning. On this album, I'm just using E major or E minor. To get a good tone, like on "The Lord's Prayer," I raise the action at the bridge, higher on the Les Paul than I would keep it for fingerstyle. My criteria is to be able to slide up on the high E string to B and have that sustain without any fret buzz.

You really got inside Chuck Berry's nuances, not just generic like so many players. Were you also a fan of him on steel guitar?

Oh, man, I listened to that intently. He played blues on pedal-steel, like "Deep

Feeling," with maybe three pedals – simple setup. But I never heard anybody play it like that, on the instrumentals he put out as flipsides. Incredible feel.

Slide guitar has a real vocal quality, and when you're doing a song that has been sung, like "Steal Away," that quality really comes through.

I chose that song and "A Change Is Gonna Come" for that very reason. It allows me to kind of emulate that vocal thing, which is a very expressive thing when it works. I knew "Steal Away" from Ted Taylor, who sang it exactly like the Jimmy Hughes original. In the Muscle Shoals documentary, Rick Hall talks about that being their first hit, so I revisited the original versions and said, "That's it."

How much do the Reverend models weigh?

Pretty light. The original models were hollow with Masonite tops. They were *really* light, like six and a half or seven pounds. When they went to wood, they're more like seven and a half to eight pounds. I love light guitars. I think it's a load of bull to say that heavier guitars give you more sustain or better tone. I've got some real light guitars that are tone monsters and sustain well. I've never had a problem. I've got a '56 Tele, and it's lightweight, sustains great, and is a dream to play.

When you started designing guitars, who built them for you?

They started off as little drawings, like when you were in school and should have been paying attention. Finally, I got a large roll of paper and drew it out to scale. Then I gave that to then-repairman at Norman's Rare Guitars, Toru Nittono. He put it together for me, brought it to life. He built three guitars for me that I designed the same way. I have prototypes that he helped me with immensely.

Another cut that has a vocal quality is "Red Hot Baby." Was it always an instrumental?

Very observant (laughs). It was an outtake of a vocal song. There was a vocal on it, but I used the backing track and played slide over that.

"Soul Shadows" is reminiscent of George Harrison's slide sound.

I won't say I played along with his records, but I definitely love the lyrical approach he used very melodically. He wasn't trying to sound like a slide-guitar player; he didn't have any of those influences. He basically played his great melodies using mostly single-string notes, maybe throwing in a harmony above it here and there. That was impressive, and I took note of that for sure.

I've never seen you "shred," as they say. Thank you. I take that as a compliment. VG

Moseley Guitars

Mosrite By Any Other Name

The chronicle of Mosrite guitars and its sojourn has always held fascination among collectors, and Valentine's Day of 1969 stands out as the moment the company filed for bankruptcy. The closure blindsided most of the 100-plus workers who reported to work that day only to find padlocked doors.

An auction held on April Fool's Day offered machinery, electronic equipment, 116 guitars, and parts including bodies and necks. Local builders and players used much of it to create what became "Partsrite" guitars. One can imagine Mosrite founder Semie Moseley that day, watching the dissolution of his factory on P Street in Bakersfield; adding insult to injury, he also lost the rights to the Mosrite brand.

In short order, though, Moseley jumped back into the guitar business, designing, building, and repairing instruments in Pumpkin Center, a small community just south of Bakersfield.

Before reacquiring the Mosrite brand three years later, he used his unaltered surname on instruments, and today those interim guitars are interesting and rare.

When they emerged in 1969, Semie's new headstocks matched those on Mosrites, with an M-shaped notch along the top edge and "Moseley of California" in a block housing the upper-case M replacing the circular medallion. While comprised of lower-case letters like its Mosrite predecessor, it used a different typeface except for "of California" below the brand, which was in the same script.

Two early Moseley acoustics were pro-

totypes based on Mosrite's Serenader/Balladere I made for country star Buck Owens, who was reportedly looking for a builder to create a signature acoustic.

"None of the Buck Owens guitars that Semie made were branded with the Mosrite name,"

BY
WILLIE G.
MOSELEY



Joe Maphis' early doubleneck with "Moseley of California" logo on the headstock.

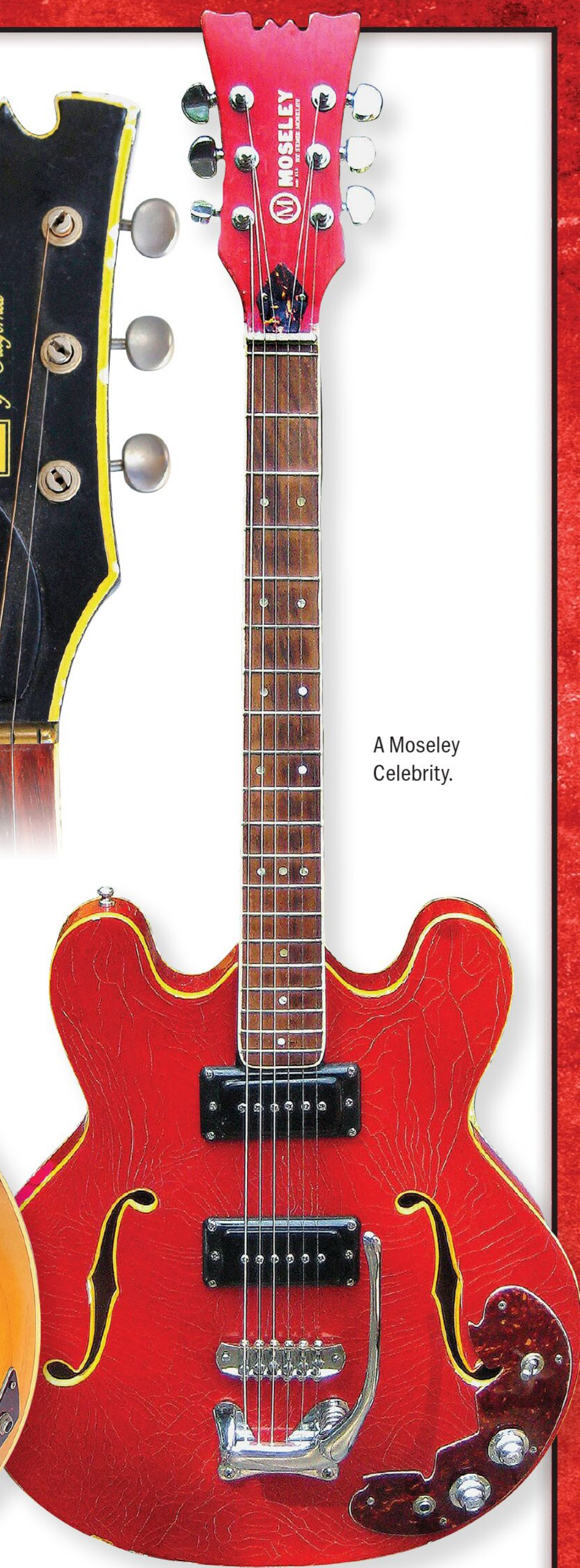
Joe Maphis doubleneck/headstock: Jack Clutter, Country Music Hall of Fame.



The Tele-adjacent Moseley prototype built for Don Rich.



The Moseley guitar built for Rose Maphis.



A Moseley Celebrity.

said Bob Shade, collector of Bakersfield instruments and owner of the Hallmark guitar company. "Buck wanted Semie to make his guitars and manage the operation, but Semie did not want to do just that. The deal was never consummated; Buck contacted Harmony, which made them for less money, and he distributed them on his own."

One of the Owens/Moseley acoustics

was painted red, white, and blue, while the other was a honey sunburst. Both had zero frets and tiny dot fret markers, a la Mosrite. Owens was seen with the tri-color on his syndicated television show, and both guitars were played during the debut episode of CBS television's "Hee Haw" on June 15, 1969 (which featured Loretta Lynn and Charlie Pride as guests).

Semie continued to woo Owens and

his associates, targeting Buckaroos lead guitarist Don Rich with a prototype red hollowbody that resembled a Telecaster dressed with a German carve, as popularized by Mosrite. Its 22-fret bolt-on neck sported small position markers laid out in the same pattern as its Mosrite progenitors – two on each of the first octave positions, three on the 12th fret, and one each on the higher frets. The headstock was an



Buck Owens and Roy Clark on the June '69 debut of "Hee Haw"; Owens played both Moseley acoustics on the episode.



Buck Owens and Don Rich with their Moseleys on "Hee Haw."

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Ad for the 1969 bankruptcy auction at the Mosrite factory.

obvious departure from the M-notch (even if it still had three tuners per side) and the large, triangular truss cover was also unique. Semie gave the guitar a standard Mosrite bridge and short trapeze tailpiece. Electronics consisted of two pickups housed in chrome brackets, as seen on the Dobro D-100 electric resonator (Mosrite purchased the Dobro company in the mid '60s) with simple master Volume, master Tone, and a three-way toggle. Rich played the guitar on TV, but Semie's pursuit of a business relationship with Buck Owens proved futile.

During the Moseley years, Semie also worked on guitars owned by his longtime friends Joe and Rose Maphis. Joe's iconic doubleneck, made in the early '50s, had neck and/or headstock work done during the Moseley era, when the slimmer headstocks appeared. The six-string head sported the new "Moseley of California"

logo, but the top edge still had an M notch, along with a medallion-style "M" image. The octave-guitar's headstock had "The Original" in capital letters, along with a similar top edge decoration and identical logo.

Semie built a guitar for Rose during the Moseley era, and the two-pickup/hollowbody had interesting innovations. Semie reportedly made the neck, but acquired an archtop body to go with it. The headstock and neck were bound, but the fretboard inlay had standard dots in a standard layout. Other than "Moseley of California," the only wording on the headstock was Rose's nickname on the truss cover.

Mosrite had begun developing humbucking pickups prior to the '69 shutdown, and two were installed on Rose's archtop – one in the tortoiseshell pickguard, the other near the bridge. They were con-

trolled by master Volume and Tone knobs and a three-way toggle. The jack was on the side rim, dressed with a tortoiseshell plate.

In early '72, a collaboration was announced with the Kustom amplifier company, but flamed out quickly. By that time, Semie had reacquired the Mosrite brand and produced a flyer showing himself with an early doubleneck, saying, "The creator and inventor of the world famous Mosrite guitar: For 15 years, until 1969, the Mosrite guitars were manufactured in the factory owned by Semie Moseley. After 3 years, Semie Moseley is once again building the original Mosrite guitar. He now introduces you to his new creations from Mosrite of California, Inc."

The first new instruments made by the revitalized company were the 350 and 300 models, which were Telecaster-like with "worm"-shaped pickguards and mono/stereo capabilities. They didn't set the world



The Moseley Sooner, built in Oklahoma.

on fire, and don't garner much interest in the vintage market. There was also a short-lived series of Sooner guitars, built in the mid '70s for a chain of music stores in Oklahoma (where Semie was temporarily located). A sticker on the headstock read,

"The Sooner By Moseley U.S.A." atop a small M medallion.

For decades, Moseley monikers appeared on fancier guitars, but some were questionable and authentication should happen on a case-by-case basis, especially since various Mosrite parts sold at the bankruptcy auction figure into the story.

"It seems [Semie] used the Moseley name on special instruments from time to time," Shade said. "For example, only four Bicentennial guitars were known to have been produced, and most went to Japan."

One of the four is based on a Mosrite Celebrity, with Mosrite hardware, multi-ply binding, stars-and-stripes fret markers, and a figured-maple top. Its headstock shape was similar to the Sooner; the truss cover is inscribed "Moseley," and the only other writing is "Made in U.S.A." and a matching stars-and-stripes M in a black medallion.

"To me, that makes it a bona fide Moseley," said Shade. "I looked all over the interior with a mirror and found nothing like 'Made in USA by Mosrite Guitars' or a sticker like you'd find on an acoustic or hollowbody."

Through the ensuing decades, Moseley lived in several states. He died August 7, 1992, in Booneville, Arkansas, where his company had



The Moseley Bicentennial guitar

just opened a new factory.

The saga of Moseley guitars is convoluted and sometimes controversial. Their time in the guitar market was fleeting, but carries an intriguing connection to Mosrite and its namesake. **VG**



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2026

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Colorado Guitar Show & Custom Luthier Expo, May 9, 10 am - 4 pm, AT Legacy Campus, 10035 S. Peoria St., Lone Tree, CO 80134. For more info contact Duane M Evarts (303) 518-2926 ColoradoGuitarShowandCustom-LuthierExpo www.Facebook.com/groups/guitarshow

17th Annual Midwest Music Gear Swap, May 17, 10 am - 4 pm, at Emidios Event Center, 48 E. Bath Rd., Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223. For more info contact Corey (330) 760-2170 <http://www.midwestmusicgearswap.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

Show, June 11, 11 am - 5 pm, at The Aladdin Shrine Center, Grove City, Ohio 43123. For more info contact www.ohioguitarshow.com

Amigo SoCal, June 13-14, at OC Fair & Event Center, 88 Fair Dr, Costa Mesa, CA 92626. Phone: - For more info contact Larry Briggs (714) 708-1500 show@stringswest.com www.amigoguitarshows.com/socal

AUGUST

LVGS Summer Showcase Guitar Show, Aug 1, at Leesport Exhibition & Banquet Hall, 312 Gernants Church Road, Leesport, PA 19533. For more info contact Lehigh Valley Guitar Show 484-877-7065 www.lvgitarshow.com lvgs@lvgitarshow.com

Kona Guitar & Ukulele Swap Meet, August 8th, 10 am - 3 pm, at the Keauhou Shopping Center, 78-6831 Alii Dr #232, Kailua-Kona, HI 96740. For more info contact Ed Barry www.guitarsandukes.com

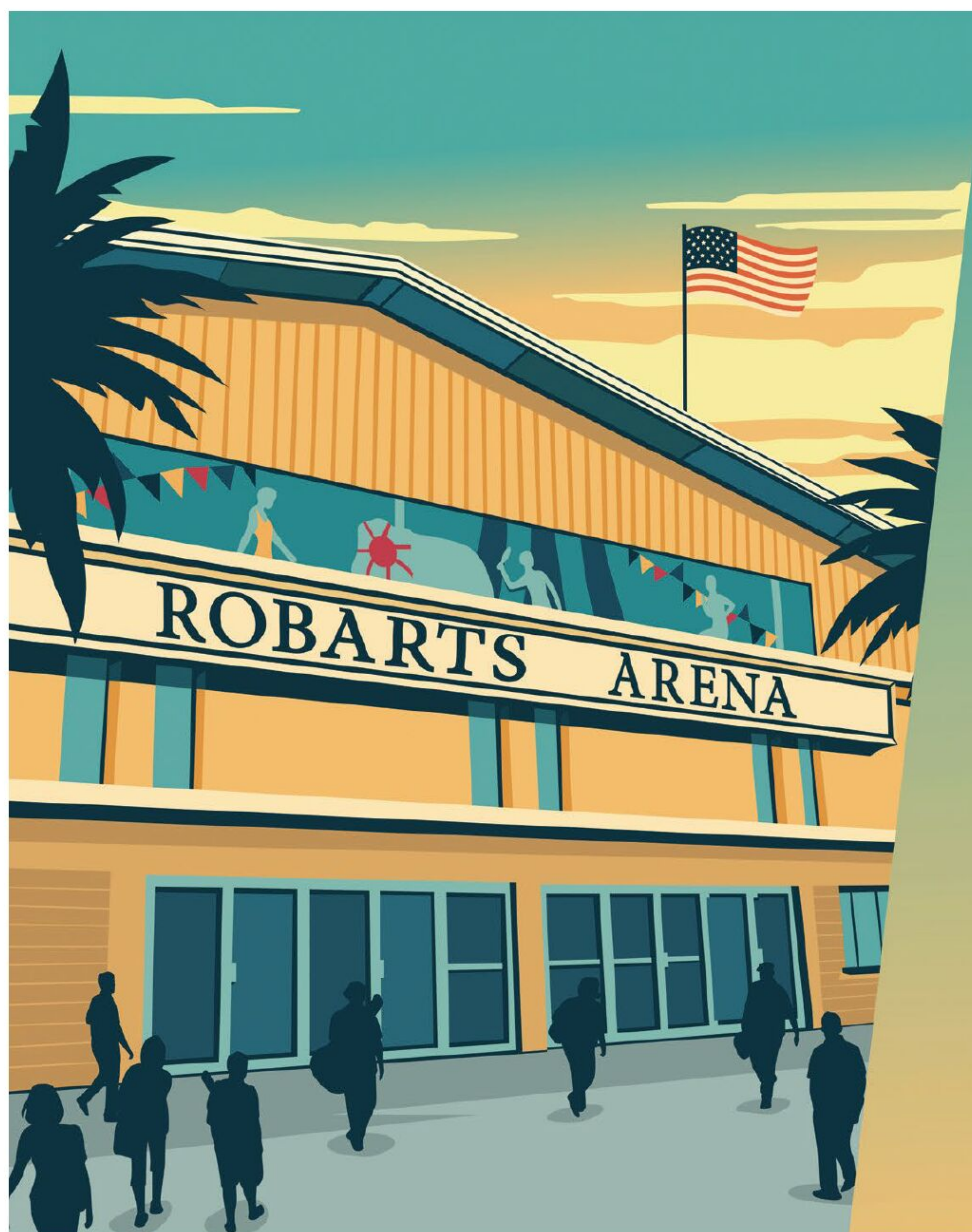
Atlanta Vintage Guitar Show, August 22-23, at the Acworth Community Center, 4361 Cherokee St, Acworth, GA 30101. For more info contact Greg (770) 433-1891 or Eddie

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 Robarts Arena, 3000 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota, FL 34237. For more info contact Kevin Wood (941) 993-3098 ktw@clevaone.com www.sarasotagitarshow.com

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Upcoming Events

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SEPTEMBER

Seattle-Tacoma Guitar Show, September 27, 9:30 am - 3:30 pm, at Kent Commons Building, 525 Fourth Avenue North, Kent, WA 98302. For more info contact bruceadolph@mac.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

NOVEMBER

Great American Guitar Show (Fall Philly), November 7 & 8, at Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, Rt. 422, Exits at Oaks, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA 19456. For more info contact Bee 3 Vintage at (828) 298-2197 www.bee3vintage.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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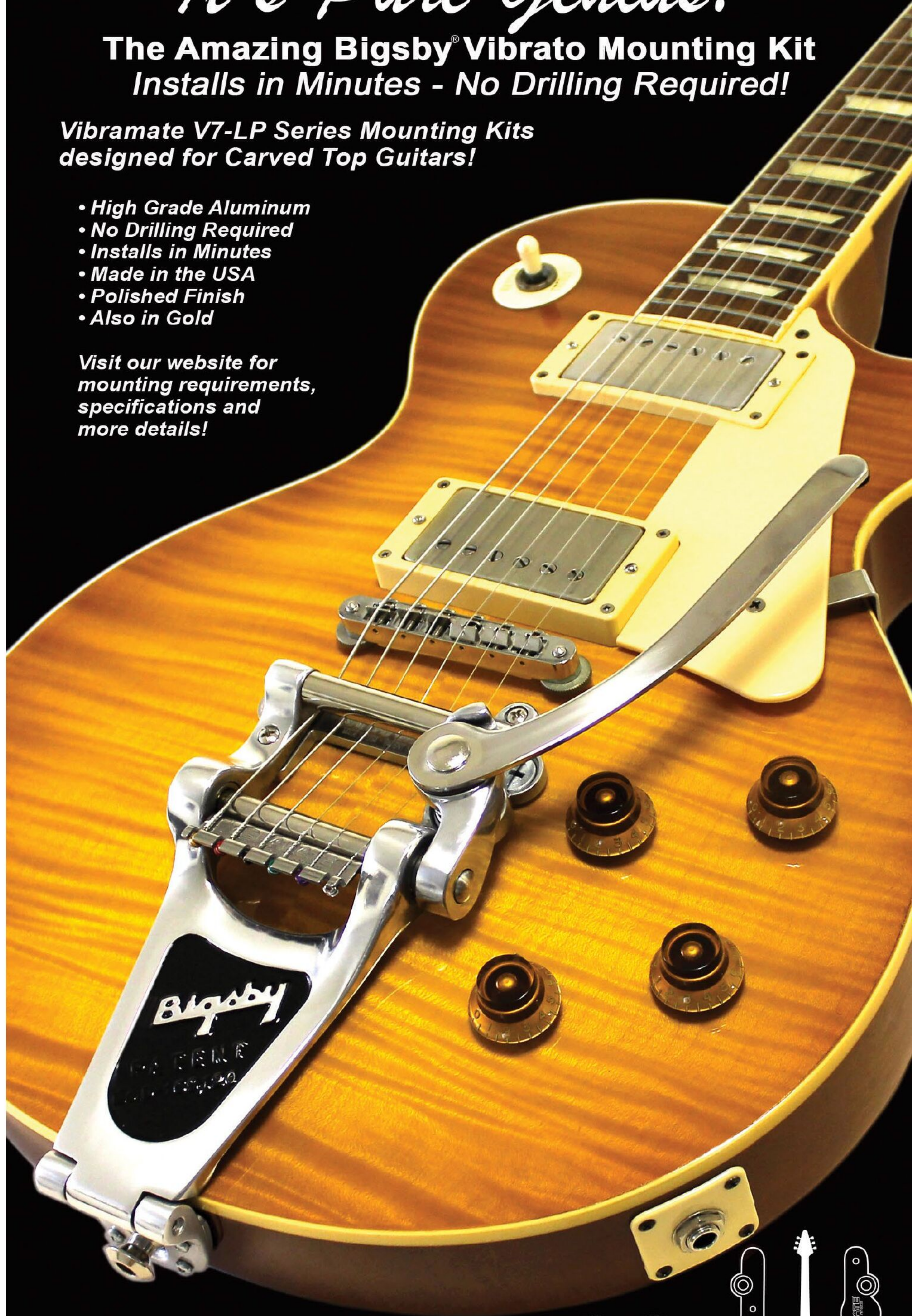
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Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi

JAM-BAND SOUL

A new TTB album is always promising news, as it brings together the earthquake vocals and guitar of Susan Tedeschi with Derek Trucks' raging slide and their crack 12-piece band. *Future Soul* builds on past successes by focusing on solid songwriting and, as its title implies, the sounds of soul, gospel, funk, and R&B themes prevail. The opener, "Crazy Cryin'," harkens to '60s Memphis sounds and Derek delivers a mighty single-note solo like a preacher at the pulpit.

Conversely, "Hero" is more akin to '90s Foo Fighters or Soundgarden than Southern soul. The tune segues from $\frac{4}{4}$ into $\frac{6}{8}$, as Trucks explores backward-guitar textures in the distance. The single, "Future Soul," has a psych-soul fuzzbox riff that's way outside TTB's normal vibe, along with a maniac, pitch-dosed solo. "I Got You" reverts to the Dickey



Tedeschi Trucks Band
Future Soul

Betts playbook with country-rock and acoustic strumming; for the finale, Trucks channels Dickey for a two-chord jam in the style of the Allman's "Blue Sky."

You have to admire the way Tedeschi and Trucks are pushing the envelope on *Future Soul*, yet retaining their fundamental jam-band soul. There are ample guitar workouts, but again, the stars of the show are the songs themselves. — **Pete Prown**



Murali Coryell *Soul Of A Nation*

On his 12th solo album, Murali Coryell's blues-based guitar and vocals are drenched with soul, and both are particularly strong. The blues shuffle "Take It Off" is familiar territory, but the 56-year-old also shines melodically and dives into current events and social commentary. The title track is a plea for unity, while "Pardon Me" refers to the presidential type.

There's palpable desperation in "Ukraine War Cries," written the day Russia invaded the country. He sings, "I can't turn my back or avert my eyes," as his guitar wails à la Jimi Hendrix's "Machine Gun."

His soulful reading of "Love TKO," the 1980 hit for Teddy Pendergrass, features tone-dialed-back fills before soaring solos by Coryell and saxophonist Joe Morales.

The guitarist's rhythm/lead on "Eyes Wide Open," reprised from his 1995 solo debut, is like a more-animated Curtis Mayfield.

Donny Hathaway's "Someday We'll All Be Free" is a tall order, but Coryell (son of fusion pioneer Larry and brother of guitarist/producer Julian) is up for the challenge. His economical guitar finds muted, staccato bursts punctuating ascending bends. As with all eight cuts, its both tasteful and passionate. — **Dan Forte**



John Pizzarelli *Dear Mr. Bennett*

Before John Pizzarelli was born, his dad, Bucky, played on numerous Tony Bennett recording sessions. John's friendship with Bennett lasted until his passing in 2023, which led to this warm tribute to those friendships, as Pizzarelli and his first-rate trio (pianist

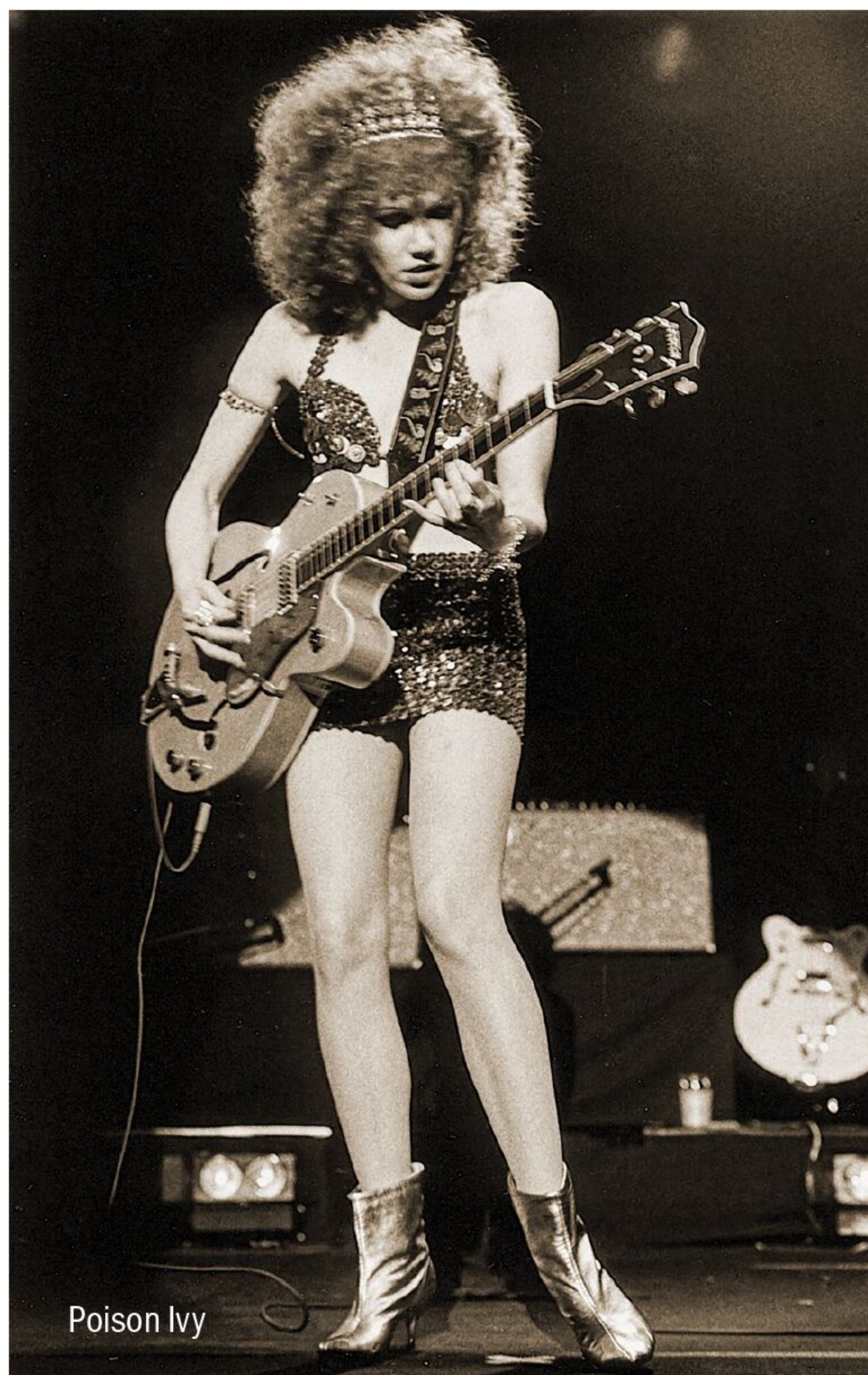
Isaiah J. Thompson and bassist Mike Karn) interpret a dozen standards spanning Bennett's career.

Pizzarelli's affinity for the material is obvious in his passionate vocals and guitar. Thompson is a vibrant pianist with a distinctive, swinging style and Karn's solid bass, blended with Pizzarelli's Freddie Green-style rhythm (a skill he inherited from Bucky) is solid. Rhythmic chord riffs open "The Best Is Yet To Come," with Pizzarelli comping afterward. His solo on the upbeat "Watch What Happens" is brief but concise, clearing the way for breaks by Thompson and Karn.

On a vigorous "Shakin' the Blues Away," Pizzarelli uncorks a solo filled with stinging George Barnes-style licks. The bossa nova-driven "The Boulevard of Broken Dreams" showcases Pizzarelli's and Thompson's melancholic sides, as does a stately "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." He adds a solo and his trademark scat-singing/picking to "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got that

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Poison Ivy

GET PUNKED

By Dan Forte

When punk hit the rock scene, I was working at the bastion of guitar snobbery, *Guitar Player* magazine. I'm not proud to admit that promo albums were laughed at or, worse, flung off the balcony like Frisbees. I remember Richard Hell & the Voidoids' 1977 album *Blank Generation* sailing to the pavement without a listen – meaning we were oblivious to Robert Quine's eclectic guitar talents until his '80s stint with Lou Reed.

I saw punk and new-wave bands around San Francisco, including No Sisters, Romeo Void, and the Humans, featuring former surf guitarist John Anderson, but was 3,000 miles from New York City clubs like CBGB, Max's Kansas City, and the Mudd Club. *CBGB – A New York City Soundtrack, 1975-1986* revives the form on four discs containing 101 tracks, each by a different act.

The letters stood for “Country, Bluegrass and Blues” – styles that owner Hilly Kristal

intended to book at 315 Bowery in the East Village – with OMFUG added to allow for “Other Music For Uplifting Gourmandizers.” The 350-capacity venue fared better with rock bands, which at the time were (consciously or not) spearheading the liner-notes description by Rob Tannenbaum, who produced and compiled the set: “As the story is usually told, the CB's milieu was a rejection of rock bands who played elongated suites in $17/8$ time, or recorded with orchestras, or played guitar solos that lasted longer than the flu. That was true for plenty of musicians, but not all of them.”

Between March '74 and May '75, Television, the Ramones, Blondie, Patti Smith, and Talking Heads played their first gigs, along with lesser-knowns to which *Soundtrack* gives equal time.

There's more melodic content than you might expect, as well as good guitar playing, and it's not all punk. It's ironic that the movement rebelling, in part, against guitar heroics relied on the same pentatonic blues licks as Clapton and Page, albeit simplified; check the Brats' Rick Rivets on “Be A Man.” There are also nods to '60s garage rockers like the Sonics and British invaders like the Kinks. The Dictators' opener, “(I Live For) Cars

and Girls,” is a Beach Boys parody, while Binky Philips (whose '59 Les Paul Standard was profiled in the August '25 issue) quotes Gene Cornish's lead on the Planets' great cover of the Rascals' “Come On Up.”

Personnel credits are skimpy, so I had to do some research. City Lights' John Berenzy gets Hendrixy, Sonny Vincent & the Testors play faster and fuzzier than the Ramones, and the guitar behind Genya Raven is Ritchie Fliegler, familiar to guitar enthusiasts as “the amp guy.”

Amid a maelstrom of distortion, the Dead Boys' Cheetah Chrome (VG, February '18) plays every bendy *hiddluh* cliché ever known, while the Revelons' Jimmy Wynbrandt plants his flag with a perfectly basic solo, then Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd up the guitar ante with Television and solo efforts. The Rattlers were led by Mickey Leigh, who delivers a nice fuzzed lead while older brother Joey Ramone handles the vocal. Tot Rocket and

the Twins showcase lead guitar by a pre-Band Of Susans Robert Poss, and Vatican Commandos' Richard Hall later became Moby.

Sorrows owe an obvious debt to the Beatles. Peter Holsapple and Chris Stamey formed the dB's, whose jangly hooks fall under the umbrella of power pop. The same goes for Laughing Dogs, with guitarist Jimmi Accardi, who signed to Columbia and were produced by Bruce Botnik (the Doors, Love). Columbia also signed John Lurie's Lounge Lizards, featuring guitarist Arto Lindsay, and hooked them up with Miles Davis' producer, Teo Macero. Material co-leaders Bill Laswell (bass) and Michael Beinhorn (keys) stopped their revolving door long enough to feature guitarist Cliff Cultreri.

James Chance & the Contortions' unrecognizable rendition of “Jailhouse Rock” features guitarist Jody Harris, who formed the Raybeats. While surf-instrumental revival bands like Jon & the Nightriders relied on the Dick Dale model, the Raybeats staked out wholly original territory. Coming from NYC's “no wave” mindset, they incorporated funk and edgy jazz. “Tight Turn” features saxophonist Pat Irwin, who later worked with The B-52s and ambient instrumentalists SUSS. Speaking of intro surf, the psychobilly Cramps moved from NorCal to Akron and eventually New York. Their “Garbage Man” is heavily based on the Rumlbers' 1962 instrumental classic “Boss,” right down to Poison Ivy's solo on her trademark Gretsch 6120.

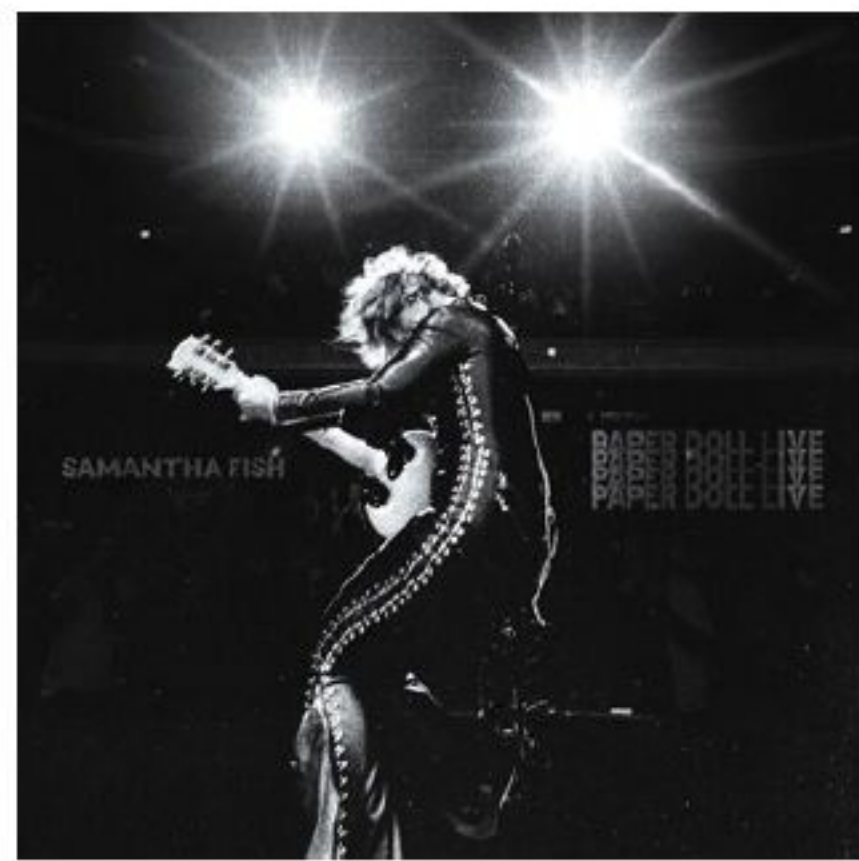
Ex-Voidoid Ivan Julian's hypnotic, angular lines propel the Outsets. Wharton Tiers of Glorious Strangers is one of the few guitarists here to get a clean tone. “Drastic Classicism” consists of Rhys Chatham flogging four guitars in dissonant tunings. It's an acquired taste. The most out of place act is the decidedly *not* punk Paley Brothers, produced by Phil Spector with a sax solo by Steve Douglas and Tommy Tedesco strumming rhythm. Douglas also co-produced the band Mink DeVille, whose leader, Willy DeVille, was possibly the best singer of this whole shebang.

When I returned to *Guitar Player* in '83, they'd never covered a single punk or new-wave artist. I did my small part by interviewing the Ramones, and Billy Zoom of X. At the end of my talk with a skeptical, sullen Johnny Ramone, he paid me the ultimate compliment: “That wasn't as bad as I thought it'd be.”

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HIT LIST REVIEWS

Swing”). Bill Evans’ “Waltz for Debby” is Pizzarelli alone, his seven-string rhythm and bass being flawless. – **Rich Kienzle**



Samantha Fish Paper Doll Live

Samantha Fish’s latest album marks the beginning of a new chapter in her career. Drawing from choice cuts from last year’s *Paper Doll*, Fish delivers an excellent show with both originals and classic covers like Screamin’ Jay Hawkins’ “I Put A Spell On You” and MC5’s “Kick Out The Jams.” Unfettered production, a lively audience, killer band, and an unpretentious stage presence are what this offering is about. She whips out the cigar box on “Lose You” and “Bullet Proof” and delivers ferocious slide work. “Sweet Southern Sounds” is unadulterated blues-rock intensity, while “Miles To Go” is pure rock and roll with raw bottleneck.

On “Fortune Teller,” Fish visits the dark, psychedelic underworld, and on “You Better Be Lonely” she wishes she liked you better, but simply doesn’t. Other tunes include the title track from *Black Wind Howlin’* and “Poor Black Mattie” from *Belle of the West*.

Fish is a triple-threat performer; between the songs, vocals, and her passionate guitar work, you’d be hard-pressed to find a better blues-based rock-and-roll show. For more proof, dig her high-intensity solo on “Dream Girl” – and with the audience’s feverish reaction. – **Oscar Jordan**



Nuclear Messiah Black Flame

Got metal? Okay, got *enough* metal? You will with this all-star collaboration featuring former Megadeth guitarist Chris Poland leading 34 guitarists, bassists, drummers, keyboardists, and vocalists from the last 50-plus years of heavy music. Six former Megadeth members and session players are among the contributors.

The album opens with “The Prophet of Fallout,” a spoken introduction by *Star Trek*’s William Shatner, supported by Poland’s dreamy acoustic and electric lines. “Devil Won’t Let Go” is melodic hard rock with a punk-ish beat and featuring vocalist Ronnie Romero and squealing guitars from Poland



Samantha Fish

and Vinnie Moore. Vocalist Thor, guitarist Glen Drover, and bassist Bob Daisley deliver pummeling sounds on “Death or Glory.” The ominous “Ride the Sky” features vocalist Arthur Brown.

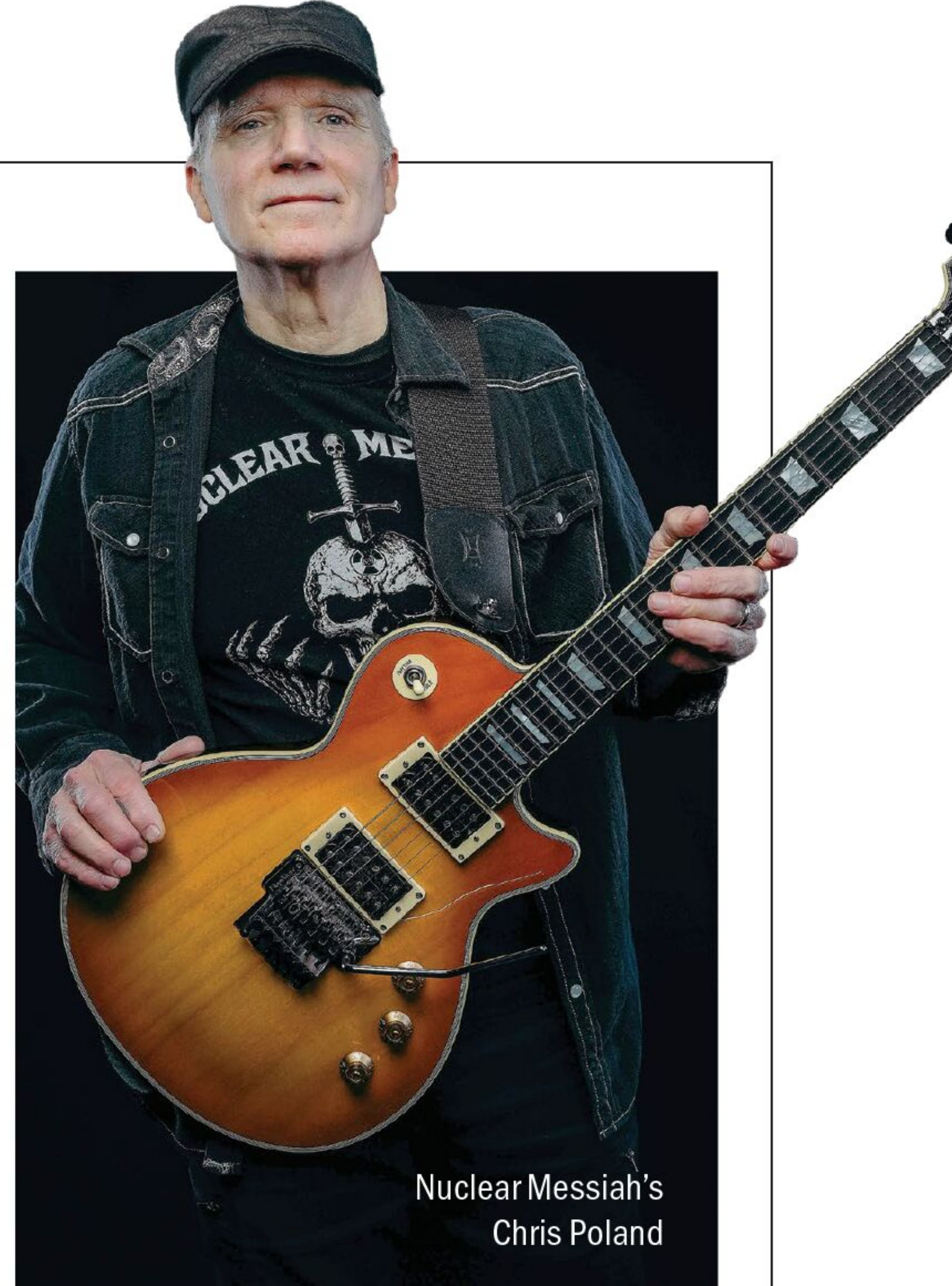
Poland and Pat Travers let the licks fly on “For Mad Men Only,” and Joe Lynn Turner’s voice is surprisingly tougher-sounding than his ’80s Rainbow work. The molten thud of “Nuclear Messiah” features vocalist Tim “Ripper” Owens (Judas Priest) and the rhythm/lead work of Poland and Lance Lopez. A major highlight is the Uriah Heep cover “Look at Yourself” with Heep’s own Mick Box providing two extended solos. *Black Flame* is a real headbanger’s ball. – **Bret Adams**



Mateus Asato ASATO

A top sideman, Mateus Asato launches his solo career with this platter of guitar treats that blend rock, funk, pop, and blues bends with unerring precision, as on “Wasted Hit.” It’s wall-to-wall guitar, with clever ideas in abundance.

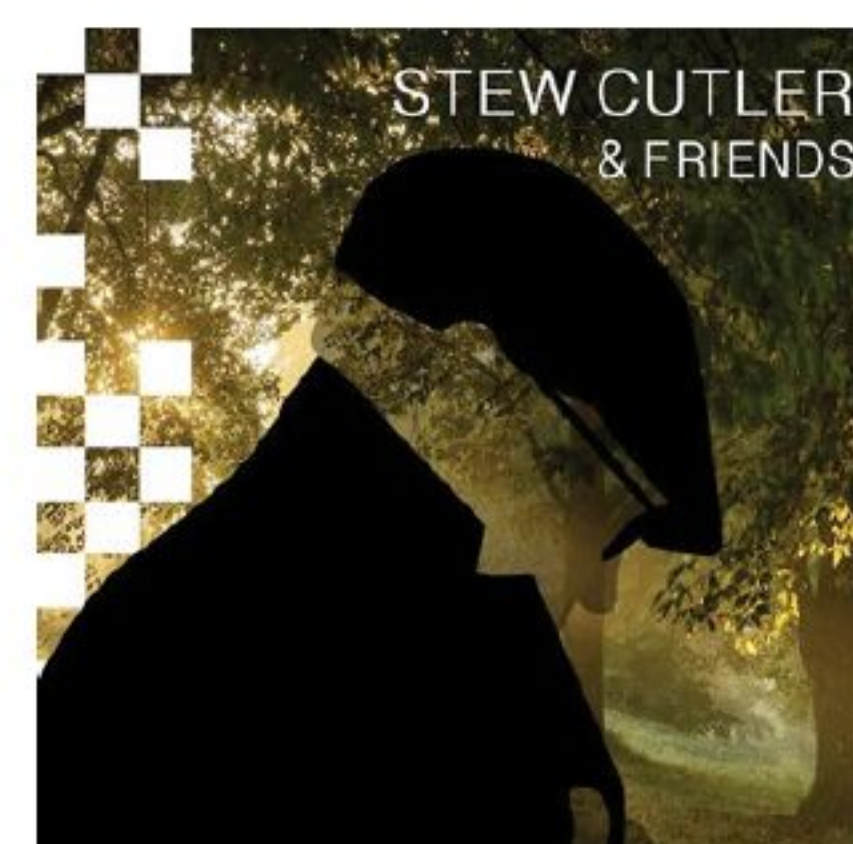
“Rush” is an uptempo jam that matches beats and melodies with perfectly shred-tacular solos. “Mellow” is L.A. funk pop with ambient guitar flavors and chord vamps; his virtuoso rhythm playing sets Mateus apart from the guitar-hero masses. The single



Nuclear Messiah’s
Chris Poland

“Cryin’” is a ballad with super-fat tones, harmonies, and modulations that sneak up on you. Be sure to watch the video online.

“The Breakup Song” and “Time” further illustrate Asato’s predilection for slower, melodic material, with just the right notes in the right place – he’s becoming a modern-day Larry Carlton or Steve Lukather, our veritable Mr. Tasty. Sure, it takes gumption to title a track “Hendrix,” but Mateus avoids the obvious trap by simply playing a good song and not attempting to ape the master. “Too Nerdy for Pop, Too Pop for Nerds” is another sly gem, with fretboard licks guaranteed to knock you over. There’s a reason why Asato commands 1.6 million followers on Instagram. – **PP**



Stew Cutler & Friends Undercover (Mostly)

Cutler’s 2022 album was titled *The Blues From Another Angle*, and the blues angle he’s coming from is akin to Larry Carlton or Robben Ford. Here, he applies his uptown licks and sensibility to covers ranging from the Carpenters to the Stylistics and Wayne Shorter.

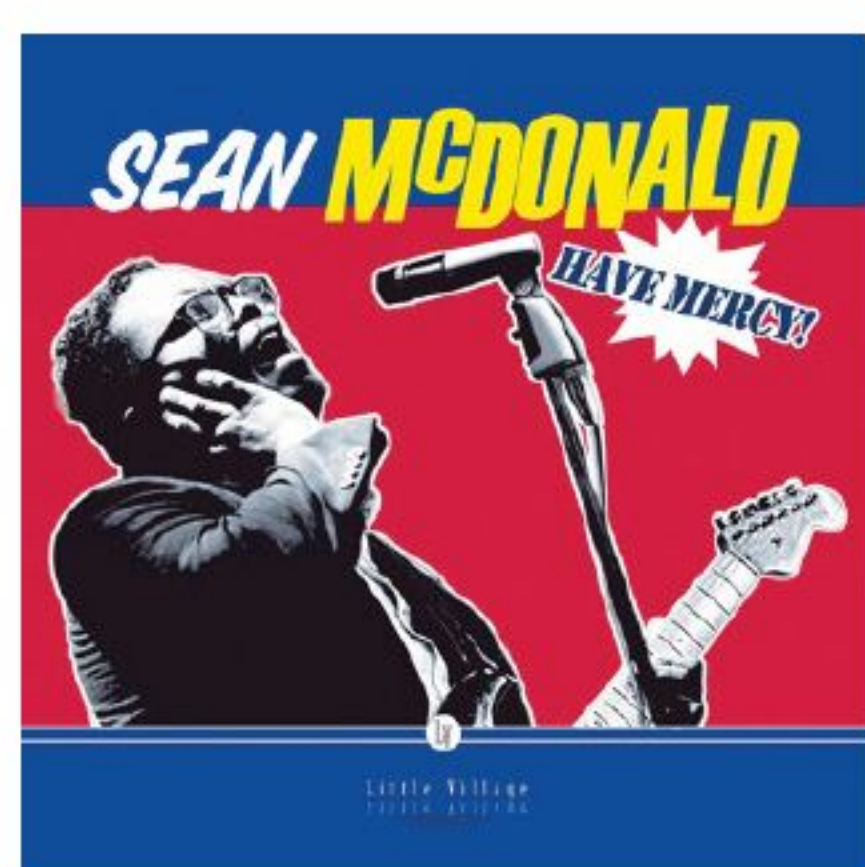
The covers of vocal songs are treated instrumentally, with the exception of Nick Gravenites’ “Buried Alive In The Blues” – one of two vocals by Bobby Harden. It’s also the only tune where Cutler plays slide. The



Sean McDonald

parenthetical “mostly” in the title refers to two originals – the other vocal and an instrumental, “Long Time Joe.” The mix comes at the cost of cohesiveness, but when Cutler gets down to playing, his facility and arranging skills impress.

“Close To You” begins with a robotic 20-second intro before the familiar Carpenters hit, penned by Burt Bacharach and Hal David, is sweetly embellished with crystalline tones. Similarly, Cutler applies his stamp to a pumping version of Michael Jackson’s “The Way You Make Me Feel” and the Seals & Crofts hit “Summer Breeze,” which begins with a Chulo Gatewood bass solo. The best showcase is Cutler alone, deftly deconstructing the Stylistics’ “Betcha By Golly.” – **DF**



Sean McDonald Have Mercy!

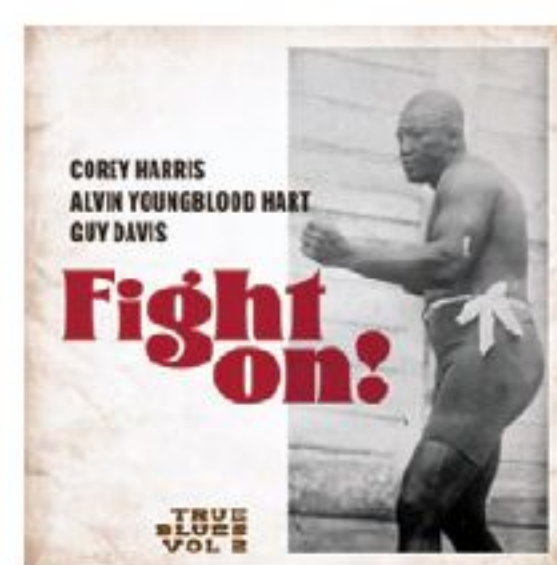
Sean McDonald can evoke the sounds of vintage jump blues with startling authenticity and delivers here, mostly. Stylistically, he jumps from California to Memphis to Chicago – the opener “My

Soul” is a portal to West Coast blues, with a swinging groove and extra-feisty solo. Same with “Shuffleboard Swing,” imbued with the kind of jazzy single-note lines we rarely hear anymore, as well as staccato picking that harkens to the post-war years.

“Don’t Let the Devil Ride” is Southern gospel with R&B rhythm licks and sweet backing vocals from the choir. “Let’s Call It a Day” is slow and sultry with a solo that hits all the right notes; McDonald’s guitar tone is to die for, likely his Les Paul goldtop. “Angel Baby” is an uptempo boogie-woogie that answers the question, “What if B.B. King played rock and roll instead of blues?” Conversely, “Faking It” is a bit of cornball blues, using too many clichés for its own good, though Sean saves things with a rollicking Strat break.

With his melismatic voice, Hollywood good looks, and real-deal guitar talent, McDonald is a blues ace to keep your eye on. – **PPVG**

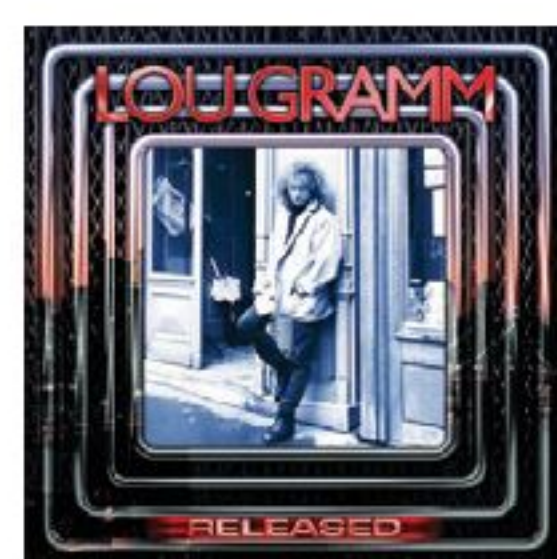
extra. EXTRA



COREY HARRIS, ALVIN YOUNGBLOOD HART, GUY DAVIS

True Blues, Volume 2

On this intense sequel to the 2013 collaboration, Hart and his ’50s Kay flat-top revive Charley Patton’s “Screamin’ and Hollerin’ the Blues” and Fred McDowell’s “Highway 61.” “Fight On” and the ornery “What’s That I Smell” feature Harris picking a newer parlor guitar, while Davis and his ’60s Harmony Sovereign tackle “See Me When You Can,” and “Deep Sea Diver.” – **RK**



LOU GRAMM

Released

Here are previously unreleased, newly completed songs the Foreigner vocalist was working on for his late-’80s solo albums. “Young Love” is a booming rocker with Vivian Campbell’s scalding lead guitar and Bruce Turgon’s bass and keyboards (remember their ’91 project Shadow King?). Gems spotlighting guitarist Alex Garcia and veteran bassist Tony Franklin include “Long Gone” and “Long Hard Look.” AOR manna. – **BA**



THE MONTVALES

Path of Totality

Sally Buice and Molly Rochelson comprise folk-country duo The Montvales. It’s difficult to distinguish one’s self in the catch-all genre of Americana music, but the pair succeeds. Realized originals and skin-tight harmonies are supported by producer Mike Eli LoPinto’s guitar and banjo and Mary Meyer’s fiddle, mandolin, guitar, and banjo. – **DF**



JOEL HOEKSTRA'S 13

From The Fade

On his fourth album, Joel Hoekstra returns to his hard-rock roots, incinerating the fretboard with epic bombast and guitar solos aplenty. Hoekstra (VG, June ’23) combines his mutant powers with veterans such as drummer Vinny Appice, keyboardist Derek Sherinian, bassist Tony Franklin, and vocalist Jeff Scott Soto for melodic metal stompers like “The Fall,” “Start to Fight,” and “You Can Give.” – **OJ**



GABOR SZABO

Spellbinder

Szabo’s 1966 sophomore album (reissued on vinyl) broadened his appeal by merging his distinctive acoustic-guitar technique with moody interpretations of originals like the driving “Cheetah.” Among the mainstream pop covers are a bossa nova-powered “Witchcraft,” a powerful “My Foolish Heart,” “It Was a Very Good Year,” and an effective take on Sonny Bono’s “Bang Bang (She Shot Me Down)” complete with vocal. – **RK**



SOFT MACHINE

Thirteen

Since the ’60s, Soft Machine has been mixing psychedelic, progressive, and fusion sounds for its global cult of fans. Joining the group 50 years ago (at Allan Holdsworth’s suggestion), monster guitarist John Etheridge delivers spellbinding legato on “Lemon Poem Song” and “Open Road,” while a recording of late founder Daevid Allen’s bottleneck adds to “Daevid’s Special Cuppa.” *Long live the Softs.* – **PP**

MIDAS TOUCH

Fender's 75th Anniversary American Ultra II Telecaster

Fender is commemorating the Telecaster's 75th anniversary with five new models, and (to its credit) has dedicated one to the Tele's evolution rather than its past. This version from the Ultra II line is unbound by tradition and incorporates updates that players appreciate on modern T-style guitars.

In fact, tradition is dashed the moment you open the sturdy case and behold the Ultra's Liquid Gold finish – a deep, metallic flake that catches bands of aqua, amber, and rust. Black-chrome hardware, brass saddles, and a black aluminum pickguard bring in other hues, and it all comes together handsomely. Comfort contours at the heel, belly, and upper arm slenderize the alder body and make it inviting to hold.

The Ultra's "Modern D"-shaped neck, made of quartersawn maple, is a dream to play, upending the notion that Teles are just too much work. Its ebony fretboard has a compound radius (10"-14"), meaning it is rounded near the nut and progressively flatter up the fretboard, and it's super comfortable whether you're plucking through country changes, ripping a lead, or working on a chord melody. Rectangular fret markers, borrowed from the style of Fender's lap steels, are another unexpected choice. Other smart advances not foreseen in 1951: Luminlay side dots, angled selector, Tusq nut, and short-post locking tuners.

Tone is shaped by the full and airy Ultra Noiseless neck pickup (it really is quiet!) and the all-new, attitude-filled Fastlane humbucker in the bridge position. Blending them well and using Fender's S-1 switching are the keys to unlocking Tele tones of the past or future. A button at the top of the Volume pot activates series mode, engaging both pickups for a higher output and a more muscular tone. The button on the Tone pot switches the humbucker's coils from series to parallel, the latter being a sweeter, lower-output alternative to the full Fastlane; and though a 'bucker in the bridge may be blasphemous to some Televangelists, this one is voiced to have all the upper-mid growl and bite you or Roy Buchanan could ask for. – **Rich Maloof**

Price: \$2,999.99
www.fender.com



Price: \$299
www.gizmoaudio.com

TUBE-TACULAR

The Gizmoaudio Sweet Breakup

With any good overdrive pedal, one of the primary goals is to deliver dynamics. That means signal becomes cleaner or dirtier depending on how hard a player attacks the strings – the holy grail of fine tube amps and analog gear. With its Sweet Breakup pedal, Gizmoaudio attempts to deliver the tubular goods.

Fed by 12-/18-volt signal delivering higher "headroom" with less noise, the Sweet Breakup delivers clarity from its balanced design, like the output stage of a power amp. Its controls (via Marshall-style knobs) include Drive and Volume, like an amp channel, along with Treble and Bass boost/cut. Bite allows for more edge without changing output level, while a pre-distortion Fat switch thickens things up. Internal DIP switches and a trim pot let you fine-tune to taste.

The rubber hits the road when you start jamming. Right away, you get warm, tube-like textures; dial in that just-breaking-up flavor ala the Rolling Stones' "Shattered," or pile on the dirt like a crunchy Foghat or Aerosmith jam. The Boost switch makes it louder for solos. You'll be surprised how responsive and lively the Sweet Breakup is; sure, it's a stompbox, but it sounds much like a fiery tube amp. Very impressive all around. – **Pete Prown**

GET YOUR KICKS

Kiesel's Mark 66

One of the perks at a family-owned instrument company is having your dad hand over the guitar he just built. Such was the case for the sons of Lowell Kiesel, who in the mid '60s loaded his original pickup design into one of his earliest solidbodies and called it the SGB. Now, in a nostalgic nod to the model he and his brother played in a mid-'60s surf band, Mark Kiesel has updated his father's vintage design with modern features and 60 years of guitar-carving know-how.

Price: \$1,649 (base)
www.kieselguitars.com

With its subtle offset shape and P-90-style pickups, the Mark 66 is an outlier in Kiesel's lineup. The silhouette is a little wider than a Fender Mustang and not as asymmetrical as a Jaguar or Jazzmaster, which lands it in a sweet spot aesthetically and ergonomically. Adding to the comfort factor are a belly cut, an upper arm contour, and a unique slice across the block at the neck joint to ease access to the high frets.

The bolt-on maple neck on our test model was a beautiful piece of wood, with grain down the back straight as staff lines. It was topped with a pretty, 22-fret birdseye fretboard fitted with medium-jumbos. The neck plays a role in the Mark 66's tone, which finds its comfy place in the upper midrange. Across a variety of clean and driven settings, you can identify the guitar's tone as a blend of the neck's bright-and-tight maple, a breathier alder body, and the soft warmth of the new AP90 pickups voiced to honor Lowell's originals.

As always with Kiesel Guitars, orders are placed directly, and customizations abound. Our tester had a surf-friendly Tropic green finish with matching headstock and a pearl-

loid pickguard nicely complemented by the dot inlays and pearloid locking tuners. You can delete the pickguard, choose stop-tail or vibrato, or even swap out the soapbars for humbuckers. That's tip of the iceberg, but beneath the options is a guitar that tastefully modernizes a good idea from six decades past. — **Rich Maloof**



STRINGJOY FLATWOUND FLYERS

Stringjoy's Flatwound Flyer flatwound electric-guitar strings use a stainless steel ribbon wrap on hex cores. Made in Nashville with domestically sourced material, they are offered in four sets designed for balanced tension, ranging from a .012-.052 to a .009-.042.



RIO GRANDE MAT MITCHELL EL COYOTE PICKUPS

Rio Grande Pickups' Mat Mitchell El Coyote pickup set is based on its True Splitting humbucker, but with a hybrid bridge pickup that has a magnet-slug coil and an indirectly magnetized coil with Alnico V and ceramic magnets.



GIBSON LES PAUL STUDIO SESSION

Gibson's Les Paul Studio Session has a set mahogany neck with a Slim Taper profile, contoured heel, and bound ebony fretboard with 12" radius. Its pickups offer coil tapping via their Volume controls while the Tone controls add phase switching. Other features include Grover Rotomatic tuners, aluminum Tune-O-Matic bridge, aluminum stop tail, and a Graph Tech nut.

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



RETRO-GREAT

Bad Cat's Mod Shop Hot Cat 50

California maker Bad Cat has been reworking its lineup over the past year, and the new Hot Cat 50 presents a dramatic renovation of the company's long-standing high-gain model. One of a handful of designs from the newly established Mod Shop (launched in '25 with the late Mark Sampson's redesign of the Black Cat 30), it constitutes

what might first appear to be a conventional take on a 50-watt head with footswitchable clean and OD channels than seen in its predecessors, albeit one that packs a ton of Bad Cat DNA.

Relatively simple compared to some of Bad Cat's more-complex arrays over the years, the front panel carries controls for Gain 1, Gain

Price: \$2,499
www.badcatamps.com

2, Bass, Mid, Treble, Volume 1, Volume 2, Master, Presence, and Reverb. The inclusion of what's essentially a channel master in the "Volume 1/2" knobs exponentially increases the ability to dial in each channel's degree of breakup while still governing the overall output at the shared Master. A Lo/Hi switch (also footswitchable) adds thickness and gain to either channel, delivering four easily accessible drive modes.

Alongside Power and Standby switches, the rear panel carries the footswitch jack, effects loop Send and Return, a Line Out, and speaker outs for 4-, 8-, and 16-ohm loads. Inside, it's constructed on a sturdy printed circuit board (PCB) with digital reverb, and hefty custom transformers populate the other side of the chassis. Two EL34 tubes and four 12AX7 preamp tubes provide the firepower.

Tested with a Les Paul and a Telecaster through a range of speaker cabinets, the Hot Cat 50 proved one of the more enjoyable and versatile channel-switchers we've played in a long time. While the cleans can be "pristine," they're never cold or characterless and can be easily dialed to very dynamic edge-of-breakup levels, even in "Lo" mode. The overdrive tones are utterly toothsome and delectable, and run from classic-rock chunk to searing contemporary high-gain, with useful gradients all along the way. Tap all of this at anything from club to big-hall volumes, with lush reverb and a usable effects loop, and it's impressive stuff through and through. – **Dave Hunter**

TAMING THE PIEZO

Trace Elliot's Acoustic Clarity

Piezo pickups have their pros and cons. On one hand, they make amplifying an acoustic guitar as easy as a solidbody – just plug in and go. Conversely, they can sound unconvincing compared to a miked flat-top. That's where an EQ pedal like the Trace Elliot Acoustic Clarity can save the day.

Using Peavey's proprietary Kosmos technology, the Acoustic Clarity has just two knobs, but they're *powerful*. Having them labeled Low and High keeps things simple (onstage and off), but each has surprisingly rich personas – they are *not* merely bass and treble boost/cut controls. Rather, they deliver potent EQ sweeps that define precise frequencies, helping you not only tame your piezos, but also adjust tone for the room you're in. Running between an Epiphone jumbo

and the acoustic channel of a Boss Katana amp with EQ set flat, it offered a noticeable improvement. Plus, it was easy to *quickly* dial in a better tone, making it a potential lifesaver at a gig.

The Acoustic Clarity won't make piezos sound like a great miked-up dreadnought, but it definitely helps cure that thin, buzzy tone that often comes with an internal pickup. If you need pinpoint control, add a graphic or parametric EQ, but if you prefer to keep things simple, the Acoustic Clarity can make your guitar sound better in a jiffy – and you may well find yourself leaving it on all the time. – **Pete Prown VG**

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01 Jay Rice is fond of Les Paul copies made in Japan. In front are his Electra MPC (left), Ibanez Custom Agent, Univox Gimme, and Crestwood Custom Agent. In back are an Ivy (made in Vietnam), Epiphone Florentine, and a heavily modded Epi Les Paul.

02 To keep company with his beloved Jaguars and Mustangs, Mark Wickham scored a DiPinto Safari Mach VI (middle front) and an Eastwood Sidejack DLX LTD (hanging in middle). At far left is a modded 2012 Jaguar Thinline and (far right) a Parkwood Hybrid PWH4. The amps are a Groove Tubes Soul-O 45 and a modern Deluxe Reverb Tone Master.

03 Clifford Lueck bought this slothead for \$3 at a rummage sale years ago and recently finished restoring it. He says it was made in Russia

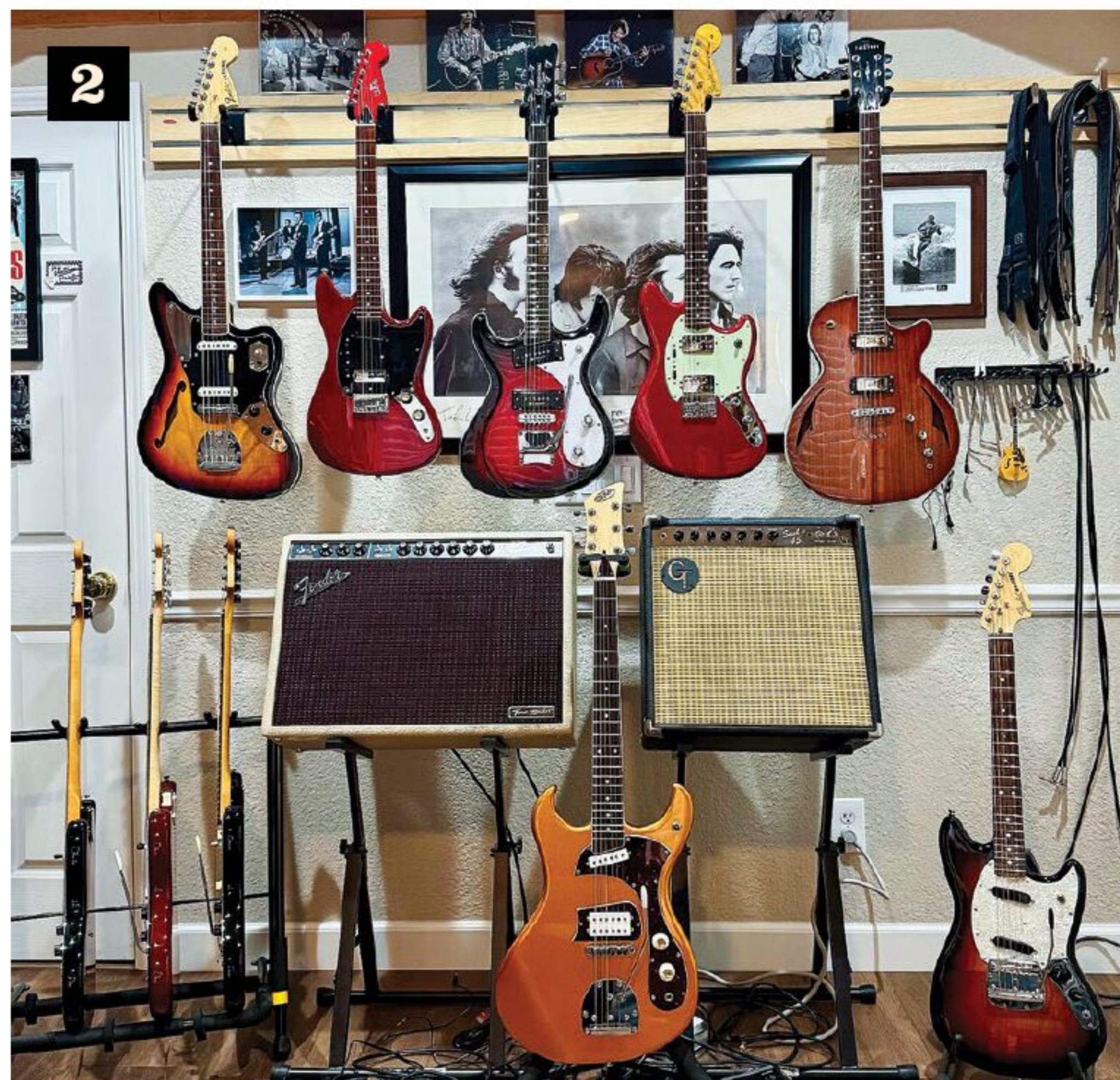


during the Cold War using Carpathian spruce for the top, maple for the sides and back.

04 A few of Richard Wilson's favorite guitars are this '66 ES-330, '97 Howard Roberts Fusion, and a '21 Tele Thinline Custom.

05 In homage to the Beatles, Ron Cascisa gathered his '59 J-160E, '63 Höfner 500/1, '58 Rickenbacker 325, and '87 Rick 360/12V64.

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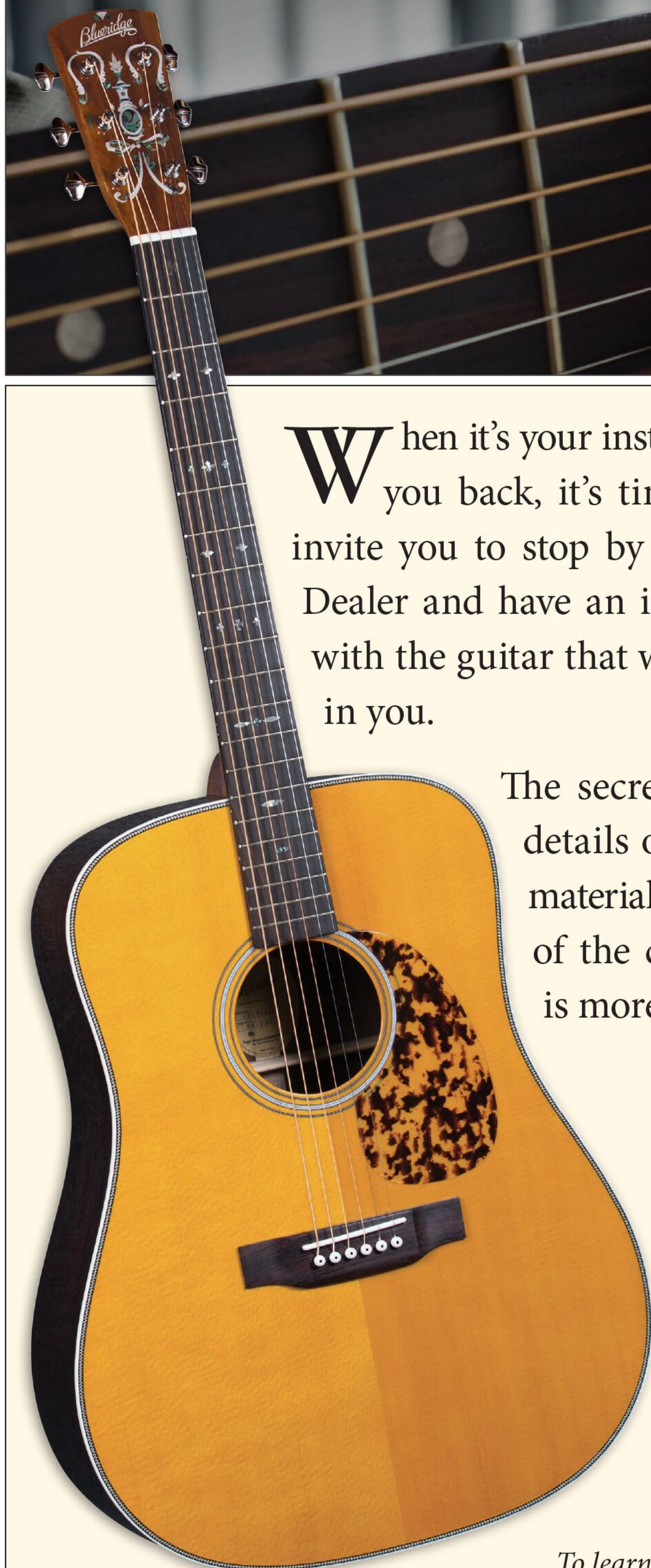
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