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August 2026 Vol. 40 No. 11

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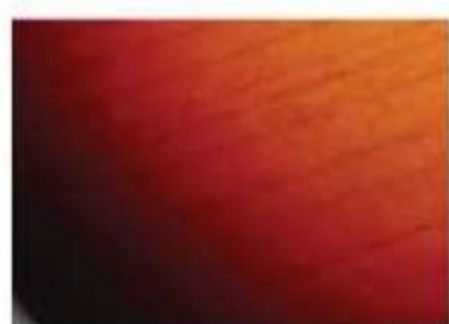
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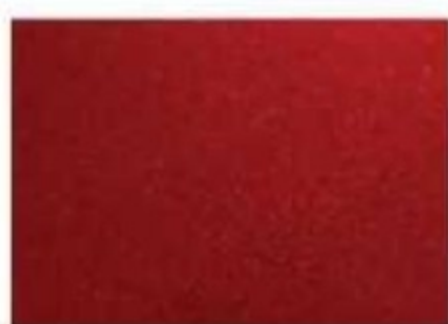
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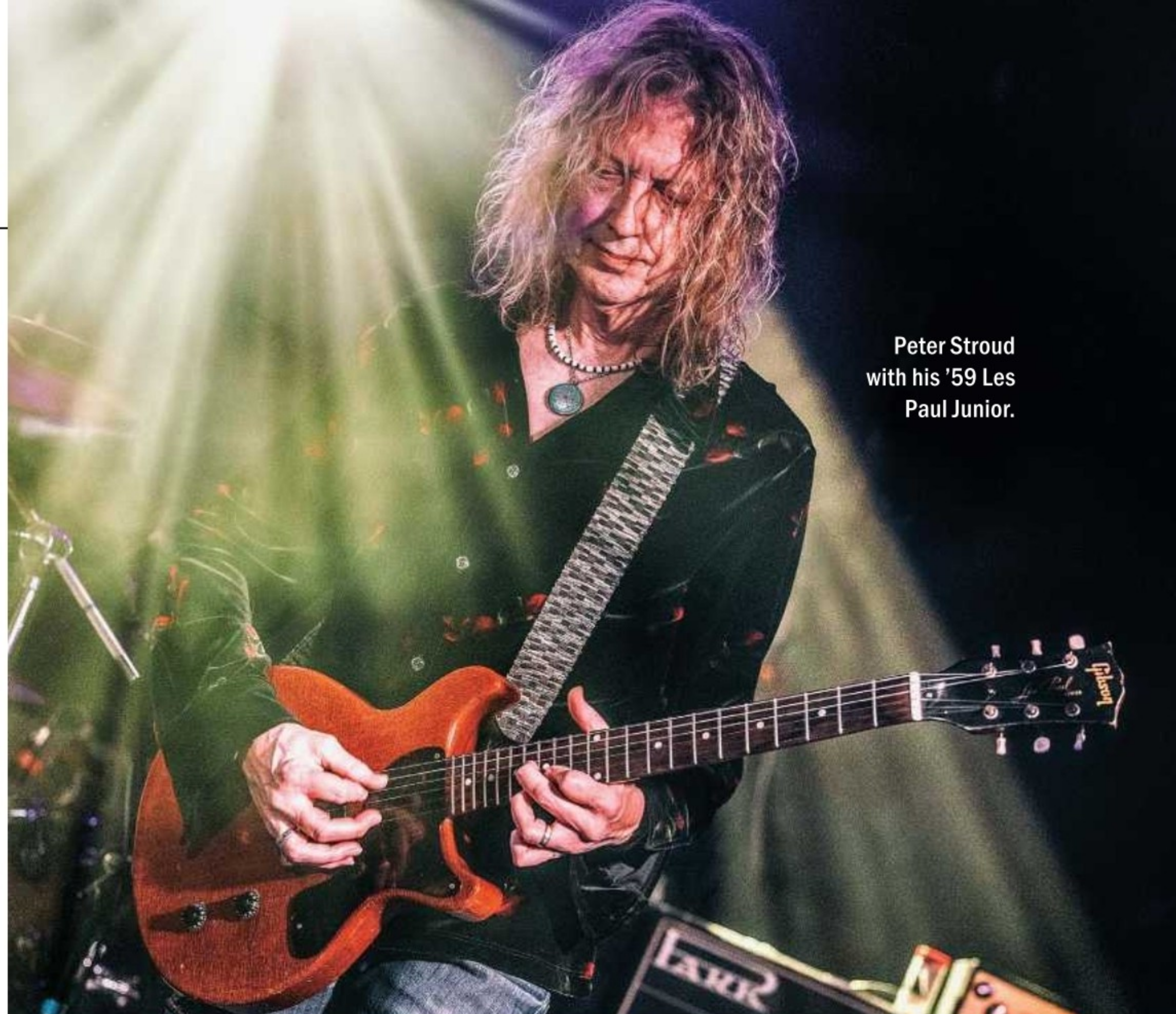
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Receptive to the whimsy of players, Gibson built many one-off instruments that have surfaced through the decades. This 1936 L-10 doubleneck made for teacher/music-shop owner Art Pruneau is yet another enigmatic example.

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An all-star gathering led by bassist Tom Hamilton and guitarist Peter Stroud, rarely does a rock group emerge with a pedigree like this.

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THIS PAGE: Peter Stroud: Emily Butler.

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READER MAIL

VITO BRAVO!

I look forward to every issue of VG, but June '26 showcased two of my favorite players.

I met Rick Vito several years ago at The Great American Guitar Show; he's a great player and just a really nice fellow. Murali Coryell is a local Hudson Valley chap that I have heard several times, and again, a really nice guy. My main line of work was a high-school history teacher and he always called me "The Teacher."

Thank you very much for both articles and a wonderful magazine. I'll be a subscriber until I die!

Ken Masten
Newburgh, New York

JUNE SALUTE

Thanks for the great article in the June issue on Mosrite/Moseley guitars. It brought back a memory of when I ran across a Mosrite acoustic guitar at a local flea market in Monroe, Ohio. I had not even heard of Mosrite making acoustics, but I questioned the vendor and he presented an offer I could not refuse – \$40. The guitar has an autograph on the front that I was never able to decipher, but once I cleaned it up and put new strings on it, it played and sounded great – far beyond the \$40 investment.

I read every issue of VG cover-to-cover. Keep up the great work!

Bill Beals
Lebanon, Ohio

Thanks for the terrific interview with Murali Coryell (June '26). The man is as soulful a blues player as you could ever hear as well as an outstanding musician and really nice, thoughtful guy.

Several years ago, when I was president of an upstate New York community college, we hosted a popular blues series. Murali played a show for us and brought his dad, Larry, so I had the good fortune to meet the Coryells. Both had a surprised laugh when I showed them a record I bought in 1968 – The Free Spirits *Out of Sight and Sound*. That father-and-son autographed album was a feature in my office for many years and is now a valued part of the vinyl of my youth.

Jim Campion
Livingston, New York

I'm compelled to say how much I've enjoyed your series on "Timeless Tones," but in Part III on the Telecaster (June), author Mike Meiers nails it without having to go into minute details

about bridge saddles or pole heights, etc. The versatility, the simplicity, the tones... that's all one needs to know about this magnificent machine. Leo Fender's first electric Spanish instrument is a timeless classic. The fact that one can go down to their local music store today and buy one nearly identical to the piece that debuted 76 years ago tells it all.

As a Tele player for more than 50 years, it remains my instrument of choice for so many different events (yes, I *do* play other pieces).

Meiers shares so many great thoughts, but his final comment says it best: "One chord on a Tele says more than a dozen layered effects. One riff can cut through decades of trends." That's because it's honest, raw, and pure. And like timeless music, it'll always be great. Thanks for a great series on the instruments that changed it all.

David Boze
Grand Blanc, Michigan

ERA'S END

I was sad to hear of G&L's closing ("Farewell to G&L," April '26). My first contact with G&L guitars was thanks to my buddy, George Donovan, who owned Geroge's Music Shop. He was heavily into Fenders until CBS and their bean counters nearly destroyed the brand's reputation. He convinced me that Leo Fender was creating improved versions of his original Telecaster and Stratocaster by making the MFD pickups and stronger vibrato bridges.

I thought the S-500 was an enhanced version the Legacy, and I bought two of them – a late-'90s maple sunburst and a

Mary Kaye-cream color with gold hardware. Later, I bought a metallic-green bass and a sunburst Doheny as a new version of my '61 Jazzmaster.

I greatly enjoy playing these "Guitars by Leo." G&L's closing is the end of an era. I also enjoy the magazine, so please keep up the good work!

Tom Serra
Greenville, Tennessee

AJA ADORATION

I enjoyed Wolf Marshall's "Fretprints" on Steely Dan's *Aja* (April '26). I've played shows at the Iridium with Denny Dias & Friends for many years, and listened to a lot of stories about "the Dan." In the '70s, I worked for Steely Dan's live-sound guy, Dinky Dawson, and through him I became the rep for Syndrum electric drums. It was great to see Denny get the recognition.

Andy Bergsten
Scituate, Massachusetts

L-PLATE RUN-IN

I loved "Legendary Connection?" on the L series Olympic White Hendrix Strat (March '26). I did lots of session work with recording engineer Skip Juried in the late '80s, and that guitar sat in his studio; Skip never mentioned where he got it. I would play it every time I was there, teasing him to leave it to me in his will. After his death, his wife gave the guitar to me. Neither of us knew its provenance, but I loved it because it was an L series, but there was an extra-cool vibe about it.

Four months later, a relative offered her a decent amount of money for it and she asked for it back, still with no clue who it originally belonged to. It was over 20 years until we learned the truth of its original owner.

Ray Matuza
Wantagh, New York



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Michael Hedges' 1971 Martin D-28, "Barbara."

MIM OPENS HEDGES EXHIBIT

The Musical Instrument Museum (MIM), Phoenix, recently opened an exhibit honoring the composer and guitar virtuoso Michael Hedges, which includes a display with his worn and modified '71 Martin D-28 "Barbara." Other guitars are also displayed along with notable artifacts from his career, from his posthumously awarded Grammy to a copper bowl that he fashioned into a vocal-mic setup for stage performances.

The exhibit will appear in a forthcoming documentary about Hedges' life.

"Hedges' work really affected peoples' lives, and those who loved his music were deeply moved by it," says Rich Walter, MIM's senior curator. "A dedicated exhibit representing his career will be meaningful to his fans and thought-provoking for all of our guests. It's a very special thing to have at MIM."

NYC STREET BECOMES "JIMI HENDRIX WAY"

During a ceremony held June 10, New York City officially co-named West 8th Street as Jimi Hendrix Way in honor of the guitarist. It was held at the southeast corner of Sixth Avenue and West 8th Street in Greenwich Village, one block from the historic Electric Lady Studios.

The co-naming was led by District 2 Council Member Harvey Epstein and spearheaded by Experience Hendrix, the family-owned company led by Janie Hendrix, alongside musician and writer Jeff Slate.

The event also served as the launch of an educational partnership with Stevie Van Zandt's TeachRock, expanding its library of more than 500 free, standards-aligned lessons that use music and pop culture to teach history, social studies, language arts, and other core subjects. The collaboration includes a new multimedia Hendrix curriculum designed for middle- and high-school students.

FIRST FRET



MIKE CAMPBELL

Mission Statement

Mike Campbell just keeps growing. The lead guitarist/songwriter built his legend as a bedrock of Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers and with countless notable session appearances. For the last six years, he's been creating his own legacy as the lead vocalist and frontman of The Dirty Knobs with guitarist/keyboardist Chris Holt, bassist Lance Morrison, and longtime Heartbreakers drummer Steve Ferrone.

Mission of Mercy is their fourth release; a collection of rock tunes with dashes of country ("More Than Gold" with Morgane Stapleton) and even jazz ("Vagrant"), and lots of wry humorous lyrics ("Vicious Hangover"). Campbell spoke with VG about making *Mission of Mercy*.

You're a prolific songwriter. Are most of these fresh or did you go back and pull some out?



It tends to be half and half the last couple of albums. I have demos piled up in a closet that my studio tech is going through. Occasionally, he'll say, "Hey, check this one out." I might barely remember it. If it's good, I'll pull it out and try to fit it in with the album we're working on. There's a handful of those here and there. A lot of the songs were written during the sessions or *at* the sessions.

Each album is a piece of its own. I try to find a flow, an arc to it. If older songs help the story line, they'll get put in. If not, they get dumped back into the closet.

Do a lot of your demos end up being master takes?

I like to make my demos sound finished, so most of them are record-quality. If the demo is kind of untouchable, we'll overdub to it. I'll replace my drums with Ferrone or let the guys come up with new parts to build on the demo. If it sounds promising but the demo is dodgy, we'll learn it and cut it live.

What's the benefit of working with your co-producers, George Drakoulis and Martin Pradler?

Well, you get away from disappearing up your own ass. I'm pretty good at recording stuff, but I don't always have perspective. I might hate something and think, "That's not really good." But if somebody you trust says, "What do you think of this?" it's invaluable. Also, it's the energy and sense of humor and humanity of having other people to bounce off of. You're not just in your own little cave. Sometimes that can work against you, creatively.

Four albums in now with The Dirty Knobs, are you more comfortable as a lead vocalist and frontman?

I had to grow into it. I was basically too shy to sing a lot of the time. And Tom, of course, was very intimidating. I started singing on my demos at home because I had so many that Tom couldn't ever deal with them all, so I wanted to hear what they might sound like. I started working with my voice and it took a long time. I love it now. I know I'm not a great singer, but I'm good enough to get the idea across and I can portray the character and the song. I've got where I can sing on pitch a lot better than I used to. And I've got confidence. A lot of people, including myself, don't like the sound of their own voice. It makes you insecure or paranoid. Slowly, over time, I got over it. Just put the mic up, I'll sing it. The microphone doesn't scare me. It's my friend now. **Which guitars and amps did you use on Mission of Mercy?**

There are so many guitars laying around. I would just grab one. "Well, how about this one today?" It's mostly just Fenders – Strats, Broadcasters, and Teles. A Les Paul here and there. A Rickenbacker. The usual plethora. For acoustics, there are Martins – a D-45, a 12-string that David Crosby gave me, and a 00-18. A Gibson Dove and J-45.

I used an Ampeg Rocket that I've had since the Heartbreakers days that I pulled out of the closet a few years ago and turned it on. That's my amp on everything. – **Bret Adams**

Mike Campbell: Corey Kelly.

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IN MEMORIAM

RON ESCHETÉ

Renowned seven-string jazzier Ron Escheté died suddenly on May 20 at age 77.

A consummate West Coast guitarist, Escheté (pronounced ESH-tay) worked with Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Diana Krall, Dizzy Gillespie, Milt Jackson, Ray Brown, and appeared on “The Tonight Show,” “The Merv Griffin Show,” and “The Mike Douglas Show.”

Many know him as an instructor at GIT and the Musician’s Institute in Hollywood (along with luminaries like Tommy Tedesco, Howard Roberts, Scott Henderson, and Joe Diorio), as well as from articles in guitar magazines, instructional books, and teaching players at universities nationwide.

Dave Hill, a current MI instructor and former student, reflected on his mentor, “I feel privileged to have studied at a time when all these amazing musicians were in one building. Ron was one of them – a master of chords and arranging for solo guitar. I still use the lessons he taught me to this day.”

Fellow professor and jazz musician Bill Cunliffe, of Cal State Fullerton, called Escheté, “A strong soloist and magnificent accompanist. Ron specialized on the seven-string guitar, which allowed him to create deeper, more-complex voicings than most players. But he managed that with clarity and rhythmic precision, so it was always distinctive.”

Tele-jazz ace Tim Lerch added, “So long, Ronnie. My teacher and my friend. Thank you for everything you gave us,” while Fareed Haque said simply, “RIP Ron Escheté, truly one the greats.”

Bruce Forman (VG, September ’25), got right to the point.

“Ron was a badass. From the most sophisticated



Ron Escheté

harmonies to the funkier down-home blues, he had it going! He’s left a rich legacy of friends, fans, and students. Rest well, Ron.” – **Pete Prown**

GEORG “JOJJE” WADENIUS

His name isn’t highly recognizable even among music fans, but Georg Wadenius was a monster guitarist whose career credits included tours with Steely Dan and a long stint in the “Saturday Night Live” band. His studio credits included Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross, James Brown, Marianne Faithfull, Paul Simon, Dionne Warwick, Roberta Flack, Donald Fagen, Luther Vandross, and David Sanborn. The Swedish master died April 30 at the age of 80.

Wadenius was born in 1945 and became known for playing in two Swedish bands of the ’70s, Made In Sweden and Solar Plexus. His big break in the U.S. came via Blood, Sweat & Tears, holding down the guitar chair from 1972 to ’75 and playing on four studio albums. His fiery jazz-rock solos and hard-funk rhythms remain testaments to Wadenius’ range, helping him land so many gigs over the decades. In particular, listen to him burn on Steely Dan’s live version of “Kid Charlemagne” from the *Alive in America* live album. Like George Benson, Wadenius was renowned for his ability to scat sing in uni-



Georg Wadenius

son with improvisations, and he was also known for recording and performing children’s music in his native country.

Fellow Swedish axeman Roine Stolt of the Flower Kings, told VG, “Georg was my first big guitar hero and first player I ever saw live in concert. I was 13 years old and managed to get in the front row at a Made In Sweden gig in August, 1969. I sat about 15 feet in front of their huge Vox amps and big 2x15 Altec cabinets. That concert changed my life and convinced me to be a musician; even my mother loved their albums.

“Later, I got my own Gibson ES-335 because that’s what Wadenius played. We were all proud of a Swedish musician who managed to go to the USA and get all the cool gigs with big stars. His passing has hit me harder than I imagined.” – **Pete Prown**

IKE WILLIS

Ike Willis, guitarist, vocalist, and Frank Zappa alumnus, passed away in North Las Vegas, Nevada on May 16, 2026. He was 70 and battled prostate cancer.

A key figure in Zappa’s band, Willis contributed humor, soul-drenched vocals, and guitar to some of his most-iconic compositions. Born November 12, 1955, in St. Louis, he was a student at Washington University when he met Zappa during the *Sheik Yerbouti* tour in 1977.



Ike Willis

An impromptu audition so impressed Zappa that he was invited to join the band, then sang the lead character on *Joe’s Garage Act I* (the uninitiated should check out “Lucille Has Messed My Mind Up”) and *Joe’s Garage Acts II & III*. He also performed on *Tinseltown Rebellion*, the *Shut Up ’n Play Yer Guitar* series, *You Are What You Is*, *Ship Arriving Too Late to Save a Drowning Witch*, the *You Can’t Do That on Stage Anymore* series, and many other recordings.

After Zappa’s passing, Willis continued performing Zappa repertoire with Project/Object, Zappa Plays Zappa, and other tribute bands. He also released two albums of original music and taught at the School of Rock.

In the May ’17 issue of VG, Willis said, “[Zappa’s influence] jacks you up by a factor of 10. You learn every day. He was the best teacher on the planet, so you can’t help but learn. At that accelerated rate, you don’t have time to think. You learn, you play, you perform.”

“Ike was not only a great father, but a musician whose unmistakable voice, humor, and artistry left a lasting imprint on the music world,” said Willis’ daughter, Leah Danyelle Yasharal. “[Zappa] fans embraced him not only for his talent but for his generosity, wit, and the joy he brought to every stage.” – **Oscar Jordan**

Then This Shows Up!

Last month we showed you a '56 LP Special with hang tag, optional hard case. Then: ring. ring. "Hey I have an old Banner Head in same color"! (no way!) So we had to share. '42 Banner LG 3 in custom color top Ivory. Is it rare? Yea. The Banner \$25K The Special \$22K Plus go check out our other toys.



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PHILIP SAYCE

Alive and Unfettered

On *Scorched Earth Vol. 2*, Stratmaster Philip Sayce unleashes the sonic whoopass of Hendrix, Trower, and SRV through the lens of a passionate singer/songwriter. Recorded live on two continents, its tones are timeless. But for Sayce, the crux of the biscuit is introspective songwriting; his unique take on the world puts butts in the seats.

How do you achieve such multidimensional Univibe superiority?

We're all doing this together (laughs). We're all inspired by the book of Hendrix and others. We love the music, so we all play it and we can share in that. Nobody is doing it on their own. It's a community feel.

Why *Scorched Earth Vol. 2*?

We'd done the first one when I was putting

music out with Warner. We'd recorded stuff last year while we were in Los Angeles. We put something out on social media asking, "Do you want to hear live tracks or studio tracks?" There was a resounding, "Let's hear a live album." Since we did *Scorched Earth Vol. 1*, I thought, let's do *Vol. 2*.

"Morning Star" is an excellent track.

One of the reasons we wanted to put that on is because online, a lot of players will share their versions of that song. I'm overwhelmed with joy when I see somebody play it, it's a huge honor.

My best friend, Casius, and I wrote that song on my parents' back patio when we were in high school. I said, "Hey, I have this riff!" He said, "That's cool! Let's do this." It's dear to my heart and I'm so grateful that people enjoy the song. It's such an honor.

We tracked a few versions of it last year at The Baked Potato. They were all cool, but that just felt like the closest to being in tune (laughs) and the most-usable. It's pretty raw, and we wanted to keep it that way.

Can you hear pitchiness in the moment, onstage?

I think so. I'll think, "Oh man, my B string is out of tune..." in the middle of the song, but I can't stop the song and start tuning. There's cool out of tune and not-so-cool out of tune (laughs).

Sometimes it's more exciting than if I were perfectly in tune.

But sometimes I'm like, "I guess I won't be playing any chords on this song (laughs)."

Did you use the same rig in London that you used at The Baked Potato?

In London, it was just one amplifier, built by Tommy Cougar. I've been working with him for many years and he's one of the best. He's a one-man show and only builds a few amps a year, but boy, is he brilliant. That was the Tommy Cougar head through a 2x12 that my friends at Pedal Klon loaned me for the tour. They're super sweet. Usually, I use a couple amps together.

At The Baked Potato, I ran my Super Reverb, which César Díaz worked on years ago. The second amp was a Tommy Cougar.

Your wah work sounds effortless.

I've been a wah nut for a long time. A dear friend named Cory told me to check out his very early Vox Clyde McCoy picture wah – one of the first couple hundred made. That sound became imprinted in my brain. No other wah sounds like that. I've had a lot of wahs over the years, but that one is definitely a '60s Clyde original. You have to keep it from getting scratchy, but when they work, that's the way to go.

What else is on your pedalboard?

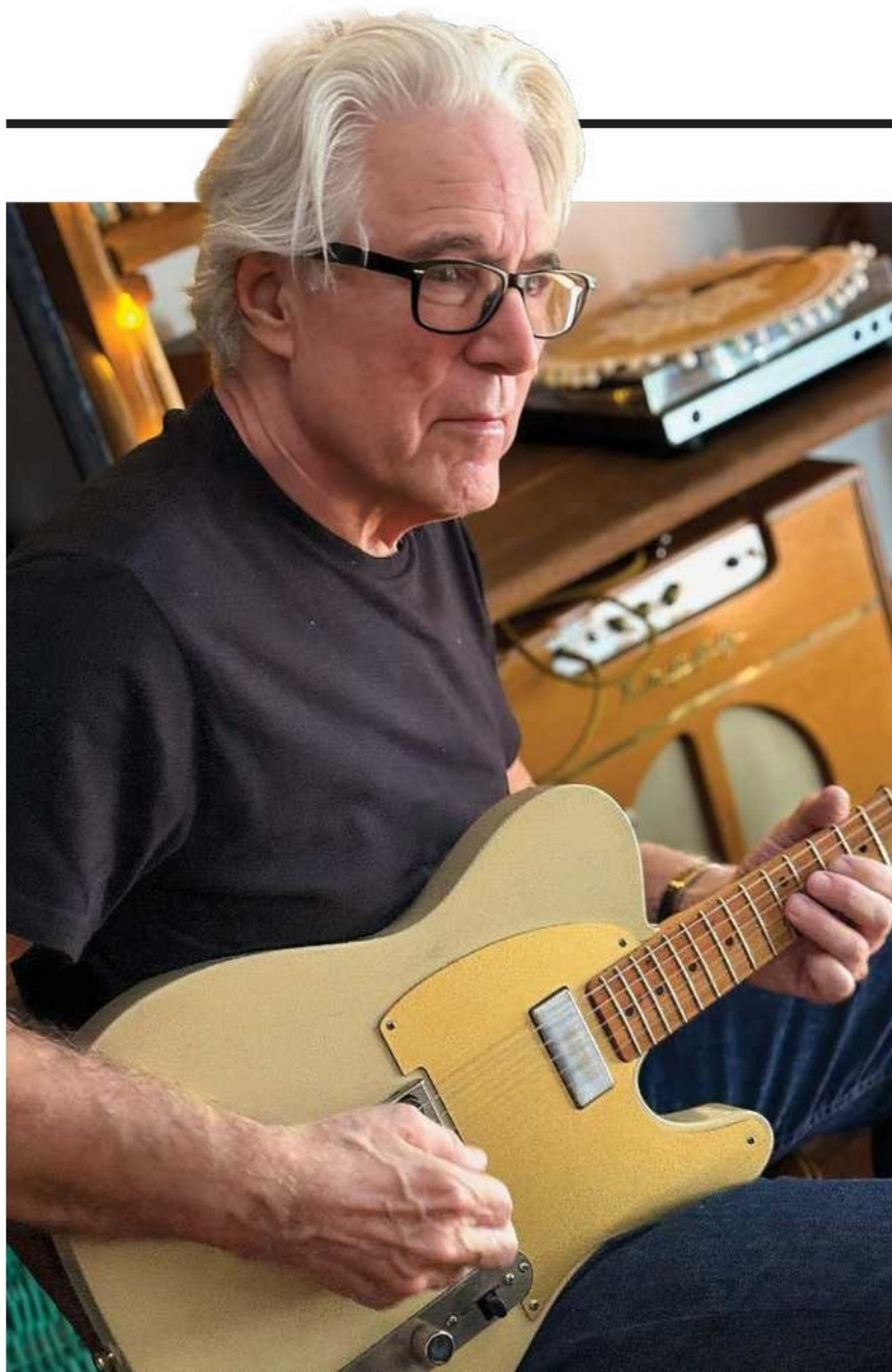
I've been using the KR Mega Vibe, or I'll switch off to a Sweet Sound Ultra Vibe from the '90s. For a drive sound, I'll use an Ibanez TS808 Tube Screamer from the '80s or a TS9 from the same era and some square-faced Texas Ranger overdrives César Díaz built right in front of me. He was a wizard of the highest order.

I also use the Dunlop Jimi Hendrix Octavio Octave Fuzz. Other times, I'll use a Chicago Iron Octavian. The guys at Pedal Klon make a great Octavia, too. For delay, I use an old Line 6 DL4 on the Echoplex setting.

What's next?

The band and I will be touring the U.K., then back in the studio to record, then we're off to Germany and Holland. The new studio album should be out at the top of next year.

– Oscar Jordan



JIM CAMPILONGO

Total Chemistry

Jim Campilongo's *Man in a Ball, in a Ball* is a collection of moody instrumentals that reflects a creative process with notable departures.

"I wrote some music and thought it could be a good, balanced record," he says. "And for me, it had to be made fast and it had to be done live."

The veteran California country-jazz master, former leader of the Ten Gallon Cats and guitarist for the Little Willies, achieved all he hoped for, though not in the usual locale.

It began with an e-mail from Argentina, where he didn't realize he had a fan base. Rafa Morreale, of Buenos Aires-based Lumiere Guitars, proposed a Tele-style Campilongo signa-

ture instrument, unaware of the Fender Custom Shop and Hahn Campilongos.

"I told him I had two signature guitars already, and he said, 'We ought to put a humbucker in the neck position.'"

Noting Redd Volkaert's identical configuration, Campilongo agreed, adding, "If we do a signature guitar, I want it to look like a Duo-Sonic – Desert Sand finish with a gold-anodized pickguard. So he did it."

Lumiere's Jim Campilongo T-Model boasts a body with the specified finish and pickguard, Argentine-made humbucker and Tele-style bridge pickup.

Aware Campilongo was preparing to record, Morreale connected him with bassist Mariano Otero, who owned a small studio in Buenos Aires, and

drummer Sergio Verdinelli. When he arrived, he sensed the potential at the first run-through in the middle of the first song.

"It was total chemistry," he says.

Guitarist Nana Arguen joined, playing her Lumiere Thinline-T.

"I probably spent the most time on the title track because we edited it. Verdinelli added percussion; (his) cowbell thing, I really like that, being a 'Honky Tonk Women' fan."

Of "Black Cat," he says, "If I had two extra days, I would have played nylon-string on it. 'Mate Time' I wanted to re-do." Instead, he borrowed Arguen's Lumiere. "She had a heavier-gauge string set. It was a different sound, and I did it in real time."

He cut two tracks unaccompanied – a solo "Over the Rainbow" and an original, "More or Less."

"I did those in seven minutes – no cutting, not a second take. I'm happy with them."

He has a specific approach when covering an established standard like "Rainbow."

"When I do a standard, I want it to be internationally known. If I go to Finland and play it, it'll be known, and what I do to it will be more obvious. Sometimes I feel like an actor, saying 'What's my motivation?' What I want is (to convey) loss, anguish, heartache, hope, happiness."

The instrumental soundtracks of spaghetti westerns inspired "Villa Crespo," named for the place Campilongo stayed in Buenos Aires.

"To me, it sounded like an Ennio Morricone type of bridge. That was the first thing we recorded and in one take."

"Oblivion" came from revered Argentinian jazz composer Astor Piazzolla. While he used local steel-guitarist Juan Pablo de Mendonca, he later had Boston steel player Rich Hinman overdub in places. "It was my tribute to (Buenos Aires) and their composer."

A few pedal steel-type licks came from Campilongo, notably on "Until We Meet Again." Hearing the track, de Mendonca was surprised.

"He said, 'Who's the steel player?' I said 'That's me!'"

He used the Lumiere signature model and a kit-built Princeton Reverb on the Argentina sessions, reflecting his longtime preference for Princetons. He favors Celestion's G-10 speakers.

"I use Vintage 60s, and I really like Celestions in a Princeton. The main thing is sound, but they're also affordable. They get a good sound low (volume) and break up nicely."

One recent change involved his string choices. After trying the new D'Addario XS, he switched to them.

"I used D'Addario nickel-wound .009 to .042 for years, but I change my set every time I play. If I have a gig – new set. A session – new set. If I'm recording, *many* sets."

While his gear includes a few stompboxes, they seldom get any use. "It's known that I don't use any stompboxes. My heroes didn't use stompboxes."

A forthcoming album teams Campilongo with the California band Spaghetti. He's also recording in L.A. with his friend, Bonnie Raitt side man Adam Levy, "...a former student of mine and a really good guitarist."

Recording *Man in a Ball*, he says, was a satisfying experience. "It's my 17th record," he says. "I can't believe it myself." – **Rich Kienzie**



LUCA BENEDETTI

New York Groove

Based in Brooklyn, Luca Benedetti traveled the world as a child, living in far-flung places like Thailand, Ghana, and Brazil. Combined with studies at Berklee, today, the guitar man has a perspective that melds global culture with funk, jazz, blues, jam-rock, and Americana. On his latest album, *Slow Down for Turtles*, Luca's trio bobs and weaves amidst funky grooves and surprising ideas, never bashing listeners over the head with too many notes. As the New Yorker says, space and silence are a critical part of his guitar experience.

Less-is-more is a core part of your music. How do you keep from overplaying?

I just find a lot of excitement in the tension one can create by not playing anything for a few beats. My song "Mongaup," named after a campground, is basically a one-chord groove. For that song, I tell the audience that the music

is akin to camping. You can sit there staring at a lake thinking nothing is happening, but when you start tuning in to your surroundings, there's a whole lot more going on.

Do you demo songs beforehand, or does the trio jam in the studio?

Mostly, I'm recording and developing short ideas and loops in Ableton Live, on my phone or using a loop pedal. A song usually evolves out of a short rhythmic figure/riff or chord progression that excites me. Then I improvise over it until I have something that resembles a melody. I have hundreds of audio clips and will sometimes revisit them years later to see if there's something that still speaks to me. If it does, I'll turn it into a song.

When the trio records, are you all seeing each other?

Definitely. Many sections are open and require some visual cueing to move on to the

next one. So even though there's usually some isolation on the amps – especially the bass amp – and drums, I prefer everyone in the same room. Live, we also set up very close to each other and never request playback through monitors. That way, we can play dynamically off of each other's stage volume.

Which guitars did you use on the album?

My main guitar is a partscaster I ordered circa 2012 via Mark Jenny at MJT Guitars, who provided the body and did the nitro finish. I used a Musikraft Blackguard '53-style neck, and Mark did the nitro finish on that, as well. The bridge and saddles are Glendale hardware, and the pickups – which I love – are by Jerry Amalfitano.

For this album, I also used my '57 Duo-Sonic quite a bit; mine has one of those magical V-necks. Many Duo-Sonics from the first two years of production, 1956-'57, had big necks – almost 1" at the first fret – with the 1⁵/₈" nut. Later, the necks became more student-friendly, with a thinner profile and narrower nut. It's a 22.5" scale, but it's incredibly comfortable to play. I use a set of .013 strings to give a little neck relief, but they feel perfect for that guitar.

How about pedals and amps? Your tone has just a hair of grit.

My main amp is a brown '62 Deluxe. Slap on a touch of 'verb via any number of pedals and I'm a happy camper for almost any situation. For this latest album, however, I almost entirely recorded it dry through my tweed '62 Champ miked with a BeyerDynamic M160 and the Volume on about 4 or so. That's the magic spot on mine, where you dig in for the edge of breakup or lighten the touch to go clean. That amp is so pure and needs nothing – just one knob! I brought in a touch of delay on a couple of songs, such as the title track, with an EHX Memory Man. I also used some tremolo from a Strymon Flint and also a 1960 Fender Pro with the harmonic trem. Otherwise, all the other effects were added in post-production. The engineer, Hector Castillo, has one of those Gamechanger optical spring reverb pedals and you can hear it feeding back at the beginning of "Okapi" and several other songs.

What's the role of tone in the studio or at a gig?

Good tone is a crucial part of my less-is-more comfort zone. Maybe I'm more sensitive about it than most folks, but if I'm on a gig and my tone isn't happening – perhaps because of a bad backline situation – I definitely tend to compensate by overplaying. So I try to bring my own amps as much as possible. I'm from the school of thought that says I'd rather play a crappy guitar through a great amp than the other way around. – **Pete Prown**



JOHN MITCHELL

Asia Adventure

The last thing anyone expected in 2026 would be talking about the latest lineup of Asia, and yet – here we are. Founding keyboardist Geoff Downes remains at the helm, but joining him are monster players like guitarist John Mitchell, drummer Virgil Donati, and singer/bassist Harry Whitley.

Mitchell is a hardened veteran of prog bands like Frost, It Bites, and Kino, and delivers all the guitar goods on the latest Asia platter, *Live in England*. John gave VG the lowdown on his style and rig, along with a teaser.

You were born in 1973, at progressive rock's peak. How did you discover that music, years after its heyday?

Entirely by accident. When I was a teen, my guitar teacher, Pete Lincoln, gave me a tape of all those Shrapnel Records guitarists popular in the late '80s. They mostly bored me to death – I'm more of a David Gilmour fan – but the one who caught my ear was Greg

Howe. About a week later, I was perusing my local record store and saw an album called *Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman & Howe*. So I thought, "Cool, here's Greg Howe, only in a band context," and as naive as I was at the time, duly bought the album. In the first few minutes of playing it, it was glaringly obvious that it wasn't Greg playing the guitar, but rather Steve Howe and that their playing styles were about as different as kippers and custard. After repeated playing, the music started to grow on me, and from that moment, I started delving into the back catalog of Yes... and the rest is history (laughs).

How do you create Steve Howe-style lines in your Asia work? One might guess there are more scalar runs and sustain, and much less wrist vibrato.

That's a very good point; Howe doesn't really do wrist vibrato does he? He tends toward the more-classical circular style and pulling out chords by playing passages derived from

relative arpeggios and repeating phrases in different octaves. All I can tell you is that I lean toward big melodic phrases, as well as lots of 7th and 9th notes, since they always sound very *chime-y* to my ear.

Huge power chords are a critical part of Asia's signature. Talk about your amp rig and effects.

I don't use an actual amp and haven't for about eight years. Instead, I use a Boss GT-1000 and designed my sounds based around the startup patch called Premium Drive, which sounds incredible. As for effects, I always chuck a compressor before any simulated amp sound and make sure I keep the gain on the amp low; this makes the compressor do all the heavy lifting. Apart from that, it's just a simulation of the Boss VB-2 vibrato for clean sounds, to give the tone some modulation on a very slow setting. That's followed by a quarter-note delay going into a large stereo hall reverb, with nothing below 300 hertz on the return. Also, delays and reverbs need to be filtered so as to not clutter the top and bottom of the dry tone. I come from an audio-engineering background, so I'm very mindful of separation.

You use Cort guitars, which is better known in the U.S. for building instruments for other companies. What do you like about them?

You don't get that job unless you have a very high standard of build quality, which is the main reason I play them. While it's nice to wear a Rolex watch from time to time, a Timex is cheaper and more about paying for something to do a job, not to look cool, which makes it more desirable to me. The only guitars on this live album are my two faithful Cort G-Series, which have my setup of choice – EMG bridge humbucker, and single coils at neck and middle.

Do you own any vintage gear?

Yep, I own a '69 Gibson 335, a cherry-red PRS that my mum bought me for my 18th birthday, and a raft of Marshall JMP-1 preamps, Valvestate 80/80 amps, and Korg A3 multi-effects. I love all of them to death, but the amps and pedals probably belong in a museum. The years of lugging heavy amps are long over!

Since this latest Asia lineup is getting such a strong reaction, do you have plans going forward? Word has it there's a studio album in the works.

Yes, it's already done and dusted, and we handed it over to the record company about a month ago. I think we all did a really good job pulling it together. Sessions took longer than planned, but it's got some great songs and I'm pretty chuffed with the overall sound and mix. – **Pete Prown**

David Fishof with Fantasy Camp musical director Britt Lightning and an autographed Camp Strat that was auctioned for charity.



DAVID FISHOF

Rockin' Camp Counselor

The Rock 'n Roll Fantasy Camp is celebrating 30 years of making dreams come true. It's a labor of love for founder David Fishof, who bridges the gap between students and music icons who want to give back. It's also a mutual admiration society, but the bottom line is forging great musicianship.

Congratulations on providing 30 years of rock-and-roll fantasies.

I'm blown away. I haven't done *anything* for 30 years – never even attempted marriage for 30 years (laughs). But I'm as enthusiastic as I was 30 years ago. That's what makes it fun for me.

The smiles from students are priceless.

I get an e-mail every day about how much the camp has changed their lives. I think what's really kept the camp going is how much the rock stars enjoy it. Once you get Roger Daltrey coming back for the seventh and eighth time, and Stewart Copeland doing it three times in one year, then you realize it's as much fun for them as it is for the students.

You have Tommy Lee of Mötley Crüe onboard.

He did it in the Bahamas years ago with Ace Frehley and a few others, and it was incredible.

It reminds them of when they first started. Gene Simmons said, "I wish I had this 50 years ago when I started." Jeff Beck told me, "The business has been so good to me, I figured this would be a great way to give back." He wanted to do a Rockin' Rods. He told me to have students bring their cars (laughs).

Most people meet rock stars as they run out the back door. In my years touring with Ringo Starr, we were always in the van and traveling at three in the morning. They have to get to the venue early and run out right afterward, so they're not accessible. The Rock 'n Roll Fantasy Camp is an opportunity to hang. Rock star gets to meet fellow musicians. When Jerry Cantrell of Alice in Chains came to the camp, he sat at a table and I said, "I have food for you in the green room." Jerry said, "No, this is what rock-and-roll camp is all about. It's about hanging out with my fellow musicians."

Everyone gets to focus on musicianship instead of rock stardom and show business.

Joe Perry asked one of the students, "What do you do for a living?" The guy says, "I'm a lawyer, and on the weekends I play guitar in my band." Joe says, "You're full of s**t. You're a guitarist

first! You do the legal bulls**t to pay for your guitars!" A musician is a musician.

What was it like putting together that first camp?

It was a nightmare (laughs). It's in the documentary *Rock Camp: The Movie* on Amazon Prime. I was nervous. I mortgaged my house in Manhattan to put up the money. I'm a promoter, so I took a chance. Everybody looks forward to seeing each other at camp. We get Tony Franklin, Joel Hoekstra, and Derek St. Holmes. When Bruce Kulick comes to camp, Roger Daltrey loves to come and sing. He says, "Let me rehearse the counselors so I can do some songs with them." He put them through a four-hour rehearsal. Bruce Kulick came out of there and said, "I just went through Rock 'n Roll Fantasy Camp with Roger Daltrey!" It's fun, there's no pressure, we do what works,

and everyone gets to jam as a band. These people come in and take it very seriously.

The camp has great gear available, too.

People bring their guitars and plug into Marshall, Orange, and Fender amps. We have the best gear in the rehearsal studios. We have DW Drums, but the most fun thing is the crew. We have the same crew that Kiss, Def Leppard, and Bon Jovi use. Your guitar is being tuned by the same guy who tunes Paul Stanley's guitar.

How do you determine skill levels and which groups to put students in?

Britt Lightning is the musical director and the lead guitarist in Vixen. She has a meeting with the students in advance. The students will play over Zoom or send a video. She's been putting these bands together, and it really works. Sometimes they move people in and out because of personalities (laughs), but by the end of the four days, everybody is best friends.

We have master classes and clinics. Steve Stevens, John 5, or Jeff "Skunk" Baxter might have a master class. When you play with people who are better than you, it will help you get better. There's no greater bass player than Leland Sklar. When you spend four days together, you end up becoming best friends. That goes for the rock stars, too. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and you learn from the best. – **Oscar Jordan VG**

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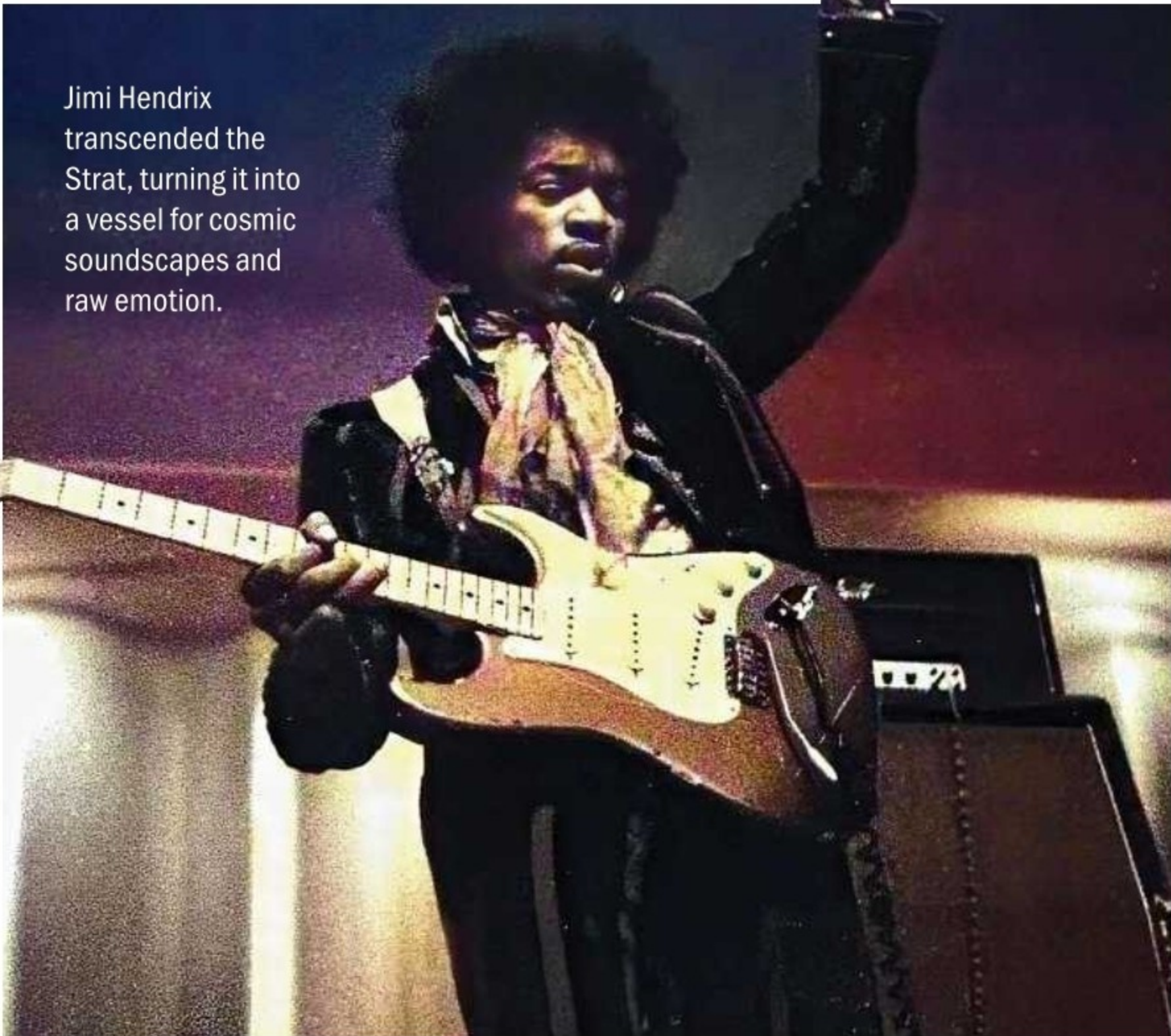
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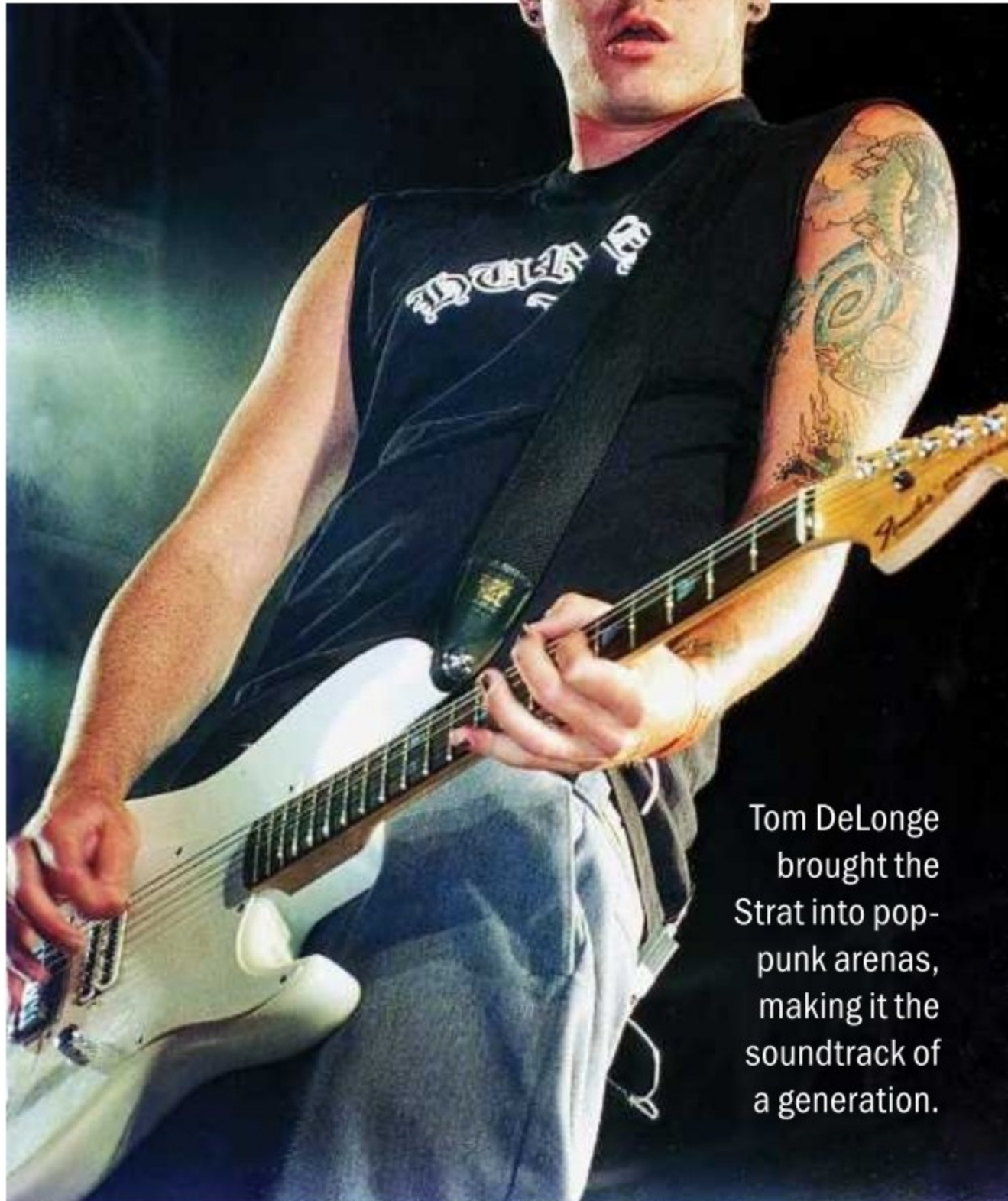
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A photograph of Jimi Hendrix playing a Fender Stratocaster. He is wearing a dark jacket over a patterned shirt and has his right arm raised in the air. The background is a warm, reddish-brown color.

Jimi Hendrix transcended the Strat, turning it into a vessel for cosmic soundscapes and raw emotion.

A photograph of Tom DeLonge playing a white Fender Stratocaster. He is wearing a black baseball cap with a white 'S' logo, a black sleeveless shirt, and blue jeans. He has a tattoo on his left arm.

Tom DeLonge brought the Strat into pop-punk arenas, making it the soundtrack of a generation.

TIMELESS TONES, PART IV

The Shape-Shifting Stratocaster

BY MIKE MEIERS

From funk to pop-punk to modern pop, Leo Fender's double-cutaway marvel, the Stratocaster, remains music's most-versatile chameleon.

If the Telecaster is the truth-teller – bright, biting, and uncompromising – the Stratocaster is the shape-shifter. Introduced in 1954, Fender's second solidbody brought sleek contours, a three-pickup setup that offered unimaginable tonal variety, and a vibrato bridge that allowed players to bend chords, dip notes, and push the guitar into new sonic territory.

Where the Tele spoke in declarations, the Strat could use many voices. Blues, funk, pop, punk, psychedelic rock, even electronic and modern R&B, the Strat doesn't just adapt to styles, it thrives within them. Through seven decades, it has become one of the most recorded, imitated, and beloved guitars in history.

INNOVATION BY DESIGN

Leo Fender was not a guitarist, which in some ways made him the perfect designer. He approached instruments with the pragmatism of an engineer. When musicians began asking for a guitar that was more comfortable, more versatile, and more expressive, he listened.

The Stratocaster was his answer. Its double-cut body made the upper frets accessible. The contours – rounded edges on the front and back, hugged the player's torso and forearm. The single-coil pickups, combined with a five-way selector (introduced later), gave players a palette of tones. And the "synchronized tremolo" bridge (a.k.a. "whammy bar") introduced a world of expressive possibilities.

Futuristic in looks and function, for players in the '50s it was like stepping into a new era.

A happy accident became one of its defining features – the "in-between" settings. By placing the selector switch between two pickups (bridge+middle or middle+neck), players discovered a glassy, slightly nasal tone that sounded percussive and vocal-like. This became known as the "quack," and it was not planned, but discovered organically, then embraced and immortalized as part of the Strat's identity, powering some of the most iconic recordings in popular music. Mark Knopfler used it to make "Sultans of Swing" conversational, his tone answering his lyrics like a second voice. Nile Rodgers built entire disco grooves on it, his clean Strat rhythms defining hits for Chic, Diana Ross, and David Bowie. Stevie Ray Vaughan pushed it into the blues, letting the quack add bite and grit to his Texas shuffle.



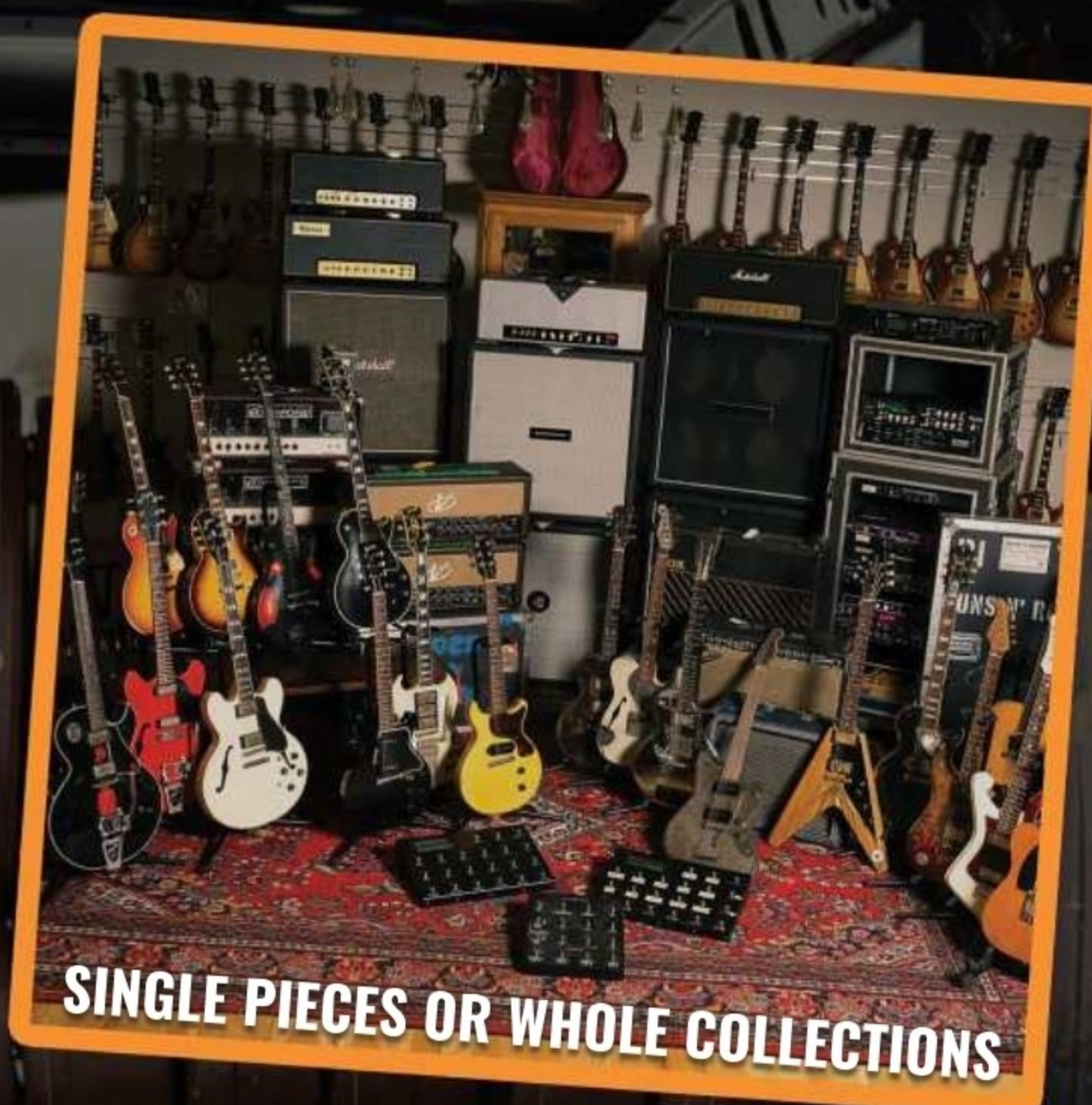
The Stratocaster's story is a journey through the last 70 years of popular music. Each decade found new heroes who redefined what the guitar could be.

1960s: HENDRIX AND THE BLUES BOOM

No player is more synonymous with the Strat than Jimi Hendrix. His incendiary performances at Monterey and Wood-



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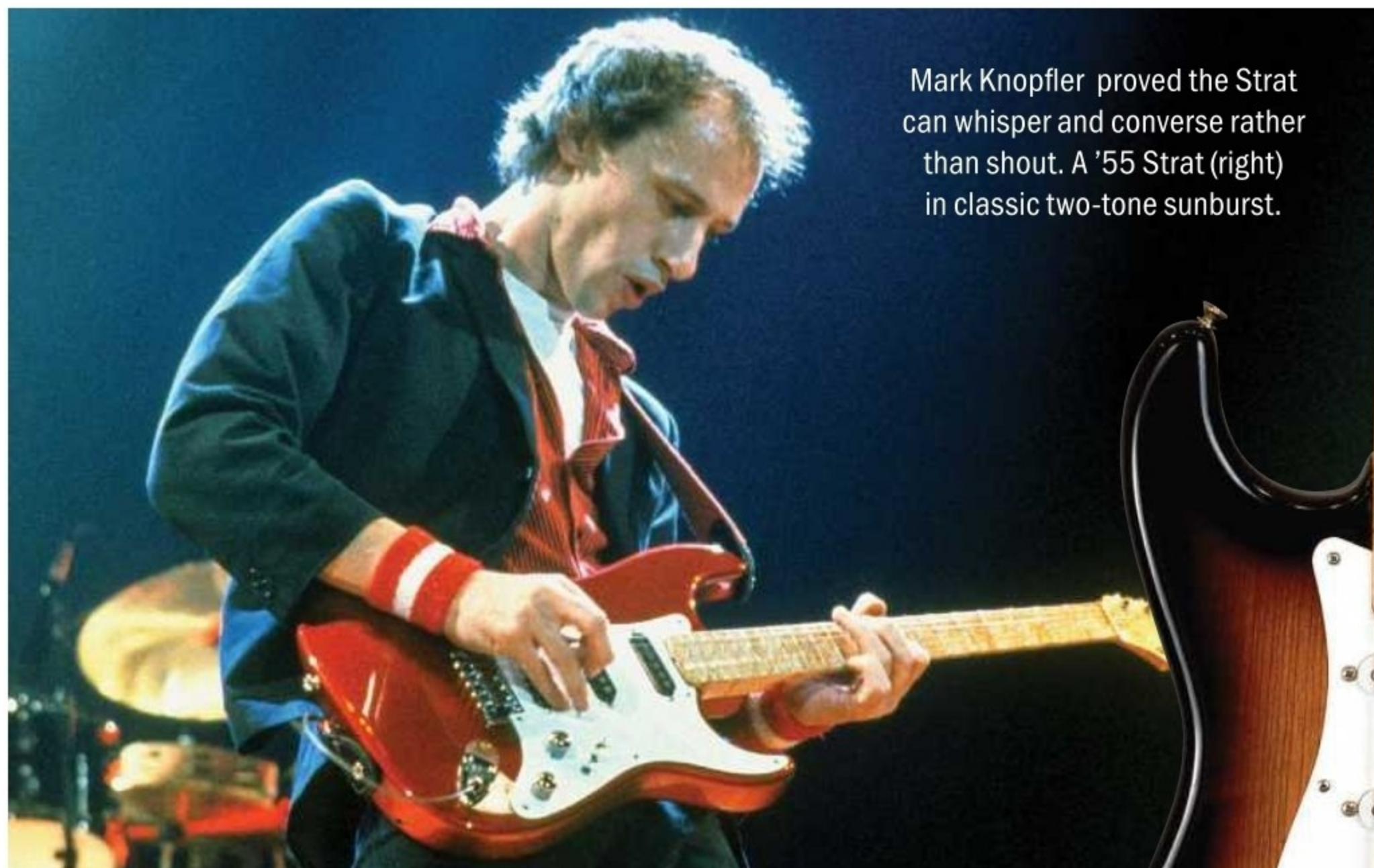
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John Mayer modernized the Stratocaster's blues legacy, carrying its voice into a new century.



Mark Knopfler proved the Strat can whisper and converse rather than shout. A '55 Strat (right) in classic two-tone sunburst.



pop-punk, his anthemic riffs filling arenas and shaping teenage soundtracks. John Frusciante of the Red Hot Chili Peppers used one to craft some of the most memorable guitar parts of the decade, blending funk, rock, and pop into one seamless voice.

2000s-'20s: THE MODERN ERA

John Mayer brought the Strat into the 21st century as a vehicle for modern blues-pop. His trio performances showcased its dynamic range, from whisper-quiet cleans to searing leads. Indie bands and R&B artists alike embraced the Strat for its versatility, folding its tones into everything from bedroom pop to stadium-filling anthems. Today, the Stratocaster is just as likely to appear in a Billie Eilish production as on a festival stage.

THE MAGIC

What makes the Stratocaster so enduring is *balance*. Some guitars cut too sharply, others get lost in mud. The Strat sits in the middle – clear without being harsh, warm without being dull. Its neck pickup is smooth, round, and soulful; think Hendrix's "Little Wing" or Gilmour's solos. Perfect for blues, ballads, and atmospheric textures. The middle pickup is buttery and balanced – a sweet spot for rhythm parts that need presence without dominance. The bridge pickup is bright and biting, ready to generate rock authority when pushed through distortion, but also funk-ready when kept clean. And in-between sits the legendary quack – funky and vocal, equally at home in disco, indie pop, or sync placements.

This versatility makes the Strat a natural studio companion. A producer can grab one guitar and cover nearly every tonal need in a session. For songwriters, it's a tool that adapts to the song instead of forcing the song to adapt to the guitar.

In the world of film, television, and advertising, the Stratocaster has become shorthand for certain moods. Ask a supervisor for "groovy, feel-good rhythm guitar,"

stock, feedback-drenched improvisations, and psychedelic textures turned the Stratocaster into a symbol of rebellion and cosmic exploration. At the same time, players like Eric Clapton and Buddy Guy were using Strats to shape the blues-rock movement, finding both fire and subtlety in its tones.

1970s: FUNK, DISCO, AND ARENA ROCK

The '70s belonged to rhythm as much as lead. Rodgers made the Strat the backbone of disco and funk, his tight, clean chords giving Chic's "Le Freak" and Sister Sledge's "We Are Family" their groove. Meanwhile, Pink Floyd's David Gilmour used his black Strat to build atmospheric soundscapes, from *Dark Side of the Moon* to *The Wall*. In arenas, players like Ritchie Blackmore (Deep Purple) and Jeff Beck pushed the Strat into heavier, more-virtuosic turf.

1980s: POP SOPHISTICATION

Mark Knopfler's fingerstyle Strat tone became instantly recognizable thanks to "Sultans of Swing," but his work on Dire Straits' *Brothers in Arms* showed how expressive and conversational the Strat could be without distortion. Meanwhile, players like Eric Johnson, Yngwie Malmsteen, and The Edge brought the Strat into the era of virtuosity and effects-driven innovation.

1990s: POP-PUNK AND ALTERNATIVE

For a new generation raised on MTV, the Strat was once again the guitar of choice. Tom DeLonge of Blink-182 made the Strat iconic for



1960 Strat in
Firemist Gold.

'61 in Shell Pink.

'65 in Fiesta Red.

'66 in Lake
Placid Blue.

and chances are they're picturing a Strat quack. Need a soundtrack that feels authentic, soulful, and modern? The neck pickup delivers. Want something that conveys energy without overwhelming the mix? The middle pickup sits perfectly.

Beyond sync, the Stratocaster has also become a catalyst in modern songwriting and production rooms. Writers and producers often describe it as a "problem solver," a single guitar that can cover nearly every role in a track. Its

clean tones sit naturally under vocals, its quack creates instant rhythmic identity, and its bridge pickup can drive a chorus with authority. That flexibility makes it a favorite in co-writing sessions, where speed and inspiration matter as much as tone. A Strat on a stand means fewer interruptions searching for the "right guitar." From bedroom demos to Grammy-winning productions, its voice shows up everywhere, ready to spark the next idea.

Adaptability makes it invaluable for sync licensing; the Strat can evoke nostalgia or feel cutting-edge. Few instruments translate so effortlessly across eras and emotions.

More than wood, metal, and electronics, the Strat adapts and responds. And rather than being tied to one genre, it is music's ultimate chameleon. That's why, 70 years after its birth, it remains one of the most enduring voices in music. **VG**



CREAM MACHINE

The Marshall Model 1987T Tremolo 50

BY DAVE HUNTER

A look into any genuine Marshall plexi will fascinate most vintage-amp fans. Etch the names of two certified guitar heroes into its back story, though, and the interest in this old box of archaic electronics soars right off the charts.

There is no more-revered amp in the history of rock than the Marshall “plexi” models of 1966-’69. The term “countless” is often over-applied, but it’s entirely apt for tallying up the number of legendary guitar tones made with these amps from the classic-and blues-rock eras of the late ’60s and early ’70s through today.

The plexi chase is a pursuit not limited to collectors, but one

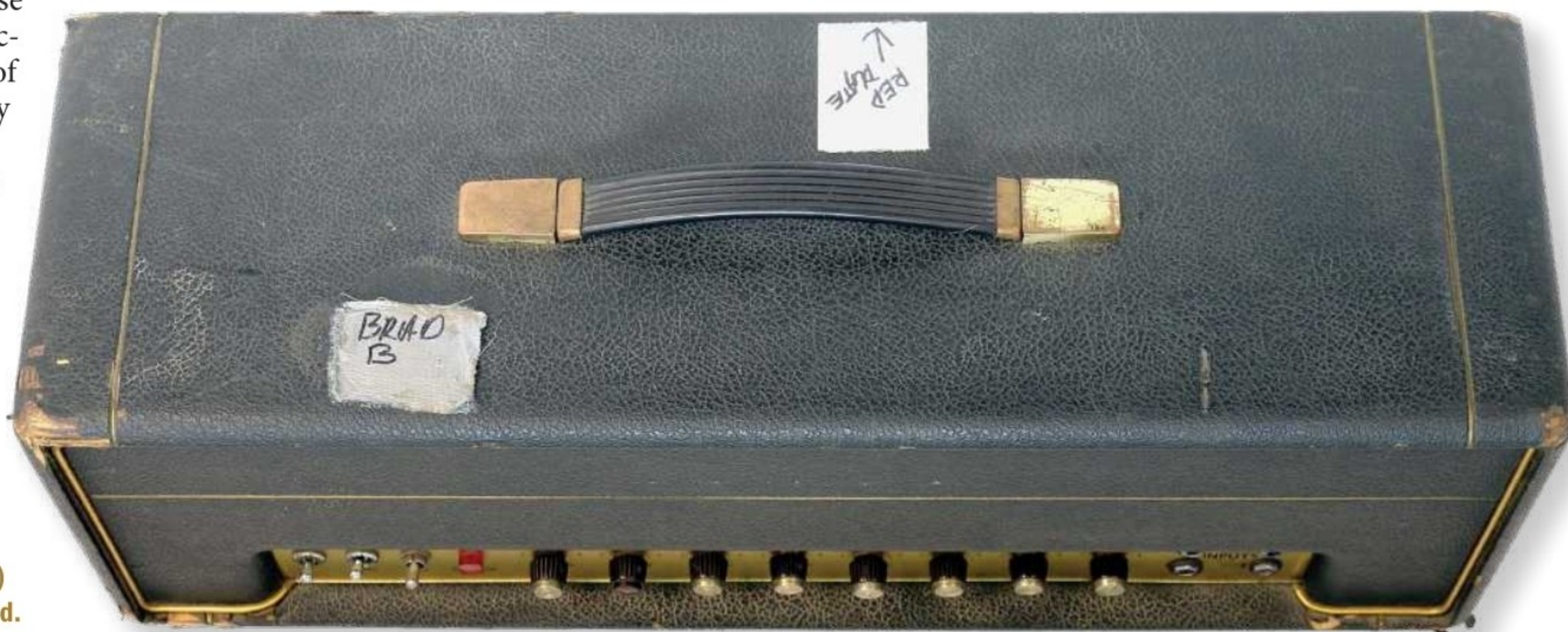
that fires up plenty of notable professional musicians, as well. First-call side man and acclaimed solo artist Peter Stroud certainly got excited about getting his hands on this 1968 Model 1987T head, which he used

1968 MARSHALL MODEL 1987T TREMOLO 50

- Preamp tubes: four ECC83
- Output tubes: two EL34
- Rectifier: solid-state
- Controls: Volume I, Volume II, Treble, Middle, Bass, Presence, tremolo Speed and Intensity
- Output: approximately 50 watts RMS

extensively tracking the debut self-titled album for his new band, Close Enemies (see interview in this issue). And before him, it tickled the fancy of Aerosmith guitarist Brad Whitford, who owned the head and toured with it for several years. In addition to his work with Close Enemies and his previous band, Big Hat (with Audley Freed), Stroud made a name for himself playing with Sheryl Crow, Don Henley, Sarah McLachlan, Shawn Mullins, and others. But his status as co-founder of boutique maker 65amps – and the deep inside knowledge he took to that venture – makes him particularly

An impromptu duct-tape label indicates this was one of Whitford’s “B” (backup) amps, while another serves as a reminder of the red-plating (overheating) output tube, now rectified.



Amp courtesy of Peter Stroud, photos by Larry Hicks.

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well-placed to take us on a tour through his latest vintage acquisition.

"I do not know Brad's history with this amp, but based on the old duct tape on top, it appears to have served at a given time as a backup amp," Stroud tells us. "When I bought it, it was red-plating a power tube and was almost impossible to properly bias. Lo and behold, I discovered it had the wrong bias-feed resistors – from the factory! Where those resistors' value would usually be 220k, 68k resistors were installed. The only other possibility is that maybe it had originally been fitted with KT66s, but that seems unlikely."

While any of Marshall's amps produced in the approximately three-year period in the late '60s when back-painted gold Plexiglas control panels were affixed to the fronts of the chassis and EL34s took over

from KT66s can be called "plexis," not all plexis were created equal. That being said, virtually all plexis – when in good operating condition – can be fantastic tone machines onstage or in the studio. Players tend to be familiar with the 50-watt Model 1987 and 100-watt Model 1959 (remember, Marshall model names did not indicate year of manufacture, as they often appear to). A great many guitarists, however, have made excellent use of Bass, Tremolo, and even PA models of the era, and logged a myriad of iconic tones in the process.

"The model number – 1987T – is a bit deceiving because it leads one to believe the circuit is the same as a Lead 50 Model

An unhoused view of the chassis shows the fourth preamp tube added to make the tremolo circuit work, in addition to the highly desirable original transformers.

A rear view of the '68 Tremolo 50. Note the sticker (top left) declaring "Property of Aerosmith," and Brad Whitford's initials in red Sharpie, bottom right.

1987, with added tremolo," Stroud says of this one. "But that's not the case, and to the contrary, the circuit is very similar to that of a 'Bluesbreaker' JTM series, but with EL34s and a solid-state rectifier – at least, for the late-'60s plexi era and a couple of early-'70s examples I've found photos of online. The Tremolo models were produced until 1975, so maybe they had switched to the Lead circuit at some point, which definitely was the case with the Super Tremolo 100."

Indeed, it's difficult to find an accurate schematic for the '68 1987T; thorough searches through the archives failed to turn up anything between the diagram for the GZ34 tube-rectifier version used in the





“Bluesbreaker” combo (Model 1961/1962) and the redesigned 1987T of July ’70, by which time several aspects of the Lead Model proper had been adopted.

“The key differences from the lead circuit are a shared cathode on [the first preamp tube that feeds both channels], a 100pF bright cap on channel one, a 56k/250pF tone stack, and .1uF caps in the phase inverter circuit,” Stroud said. By comparison, the standard 1987 Lead circuit and the 1987T from mid 1970 onward had a split-cathode arrangement so each side of the ECC83 (a.k.a. 12AX7) that formed the first gain stages for channel one and channel two could be further differentiated, sonically. Some of this included a .68uF cathode-bypass cap on its half of the ECC83 and a 5000pF bright cap around that channel’s Volume control – which make it brighter while also increasing gain – and .022uF coupling caps heading into the phase inverter, which let less low-end pass through to the output stage.

“Furthermore, the chassis of the Tremolo 50 throughout the late ’60s/early ’70s was that of a Bluesbreaker-style combo that allowed for back panel mounting,” Stroud adds. “As well as having the outer end ‘dog ear’ mounts, the chassis has an inner lip on the front knob panel side.”

In fact, some aspects of the plexi-era 1987T schematic found the circuit closer to the Model 1986 Bass amp, though it was not entirely the same, and the non-Lead channel of the post-’70 Tremolo 50 retained those similarities. As we’ve already discussed, though, the slightly tamer, bassier, more-midrangey response and later breakup of the Bass circuit served plenty of legendary lead guitarists very well over the years, and were occasionally favored by Jimi Hendrix, Gary Moore, Jimmy Page, Duane Allman,

and Paul Kossoff. Similarly, the happy new owner of this amp points out that Marshall Tremolo heads were used by “Peter Frampton, Robin Trower, and Eric Clapton in his Cream days, primarily plugged into a Super Tremolo. And of course, Brad Whitford of Aerosmith, from whom I bought this amp.”

As you might expect, Stroud finds a lot to love in the ’68 Tremolo 50.

“This circuit makes for an incredibly versatile amp, from jangly clean to beefy fat overdrive when dimed. It has very creamy lead tones – definitely not super bright like a Model 1987 Lead 50. Instead, the controls offer a wide range and variation in tone in conjunction with the Volume controls. It’s super pedal friendly, and cranked tones benefit from pushing the front end with a clean boost or overdrive. Because of its tonal versatility, I used this amp quite a bit on Close

A look inside the chassis reveals the replacement of a large filter capacitor and some power resistors, but the circuit remains impressively original otherwise. Note, too, the inner “lip” on the front edge enabling combo-style chassis mounting.

Enemies’ debut album, which is loaded with vintage amp and guitar tones.” **VG**



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THE EPIPHONE SPIRIT

BY MICHAEL WRIGHT
THE DIFFERENT STRUMMER

Guitar history is replete with corporate takeovers and consolidations, and one could probably write an interesting book just laying out those genealogical trees. Most of these transactions fall within a category we might call of “academic interest,” not inconsequential to vintage guitar enthusiasts, but also not earthshaking. However, a few rise to the titanic stature of the Trojan War’s Achilles and Paris, and one of the best is the story of Epiphone and Gibson.

Of these two adversaries, Epiphone is the elder. It began in Smyrna, Turkey, in around 1873 by Anastasios Stathopoulos, who made fiddles, lutes and Greek lioutos, and probably descended from a long line of instrument makers. In 1903, the Stathopoulos family – and company – emigrated to the United States and somehow the final “s” dropped from its last name. In 1915 the son Epaminondas (“Epi”) replaced his deceased father and in 1917 the company became the House of Stathopoulo. Banjos were big. The family incorporated in 1923, and in 1928 changed the name to Epiphone Banjo Company, also introducing its first Epiphone Recording archtops, made in Long Island City, Queens.

Epiphone Masterbilt archtops debuted in 1931 and these rapidly became the guitars of choice for professionals who were replacing banjoists in the big dance band orchestras of the day. In 1935 Epiphone Electraphone electrics and then Electars appeared. Herb Sunshine came up with adjustable pole pickups for Epiphone in 1939. In 1943, upon Epi’s death, Orphie and Frixo Stathopoulo took over. Following World War II, the company began to have labor – and financial – problems. In 1951 there was a devastating labor strike. Production shut down for four months. In 1952, the New York plant was closed and Epiphone relocated to the Manayunk neighborhood of Philadelphia. The workers left behind in New York were to form the core of the new “Guild” guitar company, but that’s another story! Philly “production” was possibly limited to little more than assembling already made parts. That same year an exclusive distribution and management deal was announced between Epiphone and C.G. Conn of Elkhart, Indiana, and its distribution subsidiary Continental Music, to little avail.

Almost from the beginning, Epiphone’s chief competitor was Gibson. In 1894, Orville Gibson began making his carved-top instruments in Kalamazoo, Michigan, forming a company in 1902. There’s no need to recite the well-known march of Gibson, but its track paralleled Epiphone’s, and the Kalamazoo guitars nipped at the heels of Epiphone among professionals all along the way. Frixo Stathopoulo died in 1957, and Gibson had acquired its mortal opponent, moving the brand to Michigan. As revenge, Gibson transformed its arguably superior competitor to the status of budget brand. As it turned out, this was not exactly the end of the world, and one could have had a worse master.

For both brands, the spectacular acoustic

Photo: Michael Wright.

archtops of the '30s by this time were passé. Gibson Epiphones were acoustic flat-tops, thinline electrics, and solidbody guitars and basses. Anyhow, many classic guitars followed, most with pickups and hardware that differed from Gibsons, but made by the same people in Kalamazoo – and almost all better than other “budget” guitars of the times (would you choose Epi or Kay?).

Times change, of course, and by the late '60s the writing was on the wall for the idea of “budget.”

In '67, Gibson was purchased by the Ecuadorian conglomerate Norlin, and in 1970, Epiphone became a Japanese product – not necessarily inferior (many were made by Matsumoku), but that, again, is another story.

Other economic changes were also afoot. Unionized labor in Midwestern and Northeastern states was under attack, and the expedient move was to Southern “right to work” states. In '76, Gibson set up a second – non-union – factory in Nashville.

In '82, Gibson made great ballyhoo about resurrecting the

Epiphone line with the U.S.-made American Series; its ads even offered prizes for test-driving one at a dealer. The Grand Prize? A trip to visit Kalamazoo, “...an All-American city,” for one day, then three days in Nashville. Hmm...

Actually, this last gasp was probably a public-relations ploy to cover the abandonment of Kalamazoo. Gibson was by then in Nashville, and these final guitars were built by workers who had been recalled from layoff. Two models were produced – the Spirit (a take on the Les Paul Junior) and the Special (a simplified version of the SG), both with one or two pickups. Gibson, by the way, offered its own, slightly different version of the Spirit.

The Epiphone Spirit had Gibson pickups, with two control knobs for Volume and one for Tone. The fine-tune bridge was by Schaller. The corresponding Gibson version had a carved maple cap over mahogany. Catalog finish options for the Epiphone were Ebony and Wineburst, but there were Cherry and Antique Sunburst options, the latter of which this seems to be (kind of “ugly brown” by any other name). Some had a logo that said “Epiphone U.S.A. KZ.”

1982 Epiphone Spirit

Epiphone U.S.A. Spirits were pretty basic-but-good guitars. The pickups have a great, even response, workmanship excellent, they play like a dream with great access, and won't break your back after a night of gigging. Rumor always was that they were so good some dealers applied Gibson decals over the Epiphone logo, but this is apocryphal.

The Epiphone Spirit and Special were made until September of '82. How many were built is unknown, but the number is low. In '83, Gibson produced a few of the legendary Epiphone U.S. Map guitars, which quickly became Gibsons, and apparently operated some custom-shop activities until '84, when the plant finally closed for good – except for the part that became Heritage guitars.

Epiphone continued on as Gibson's budget brand, made in Japan, then Korea, and even, on rare occasion, in the Nashville plant. Except for the odd outlier, the appropriately named Epiphone Spirit marked the end of the line for one of Gibson's fiercest American-built competitors.

This feature was first published in the January '12 issue. **VG**





Fitting the bridge and tailpieces to the curves of the archtop was particularly challenging. The guitar's current owner installed a pickguard (left) from a Vega Duo-Tron under the standard neck.



An ad for 15-year-old Art Pruneau's teaching studio.

Classics

Receptive to the whimsy of players famous or otherwise, Gibson built many one-off instruments that have surfaced through the decades. Built for teacher/music-shop owner Art Pruneau, this 1936 L-10 doubleneck is an enigmatic example.

Pruneau was born in 1910 and learned to play ukulele at age 12. By 15 he was practicing eight hours virtually every day, and had become so accomplished he opened a teaching studio with money he earned playing guitar and banjo at clubs and music halls around Worcester, Massachusetts. At 17, he opened Pruneau Music on Maple Street, giving lessons in an 1823 brick

building downtown. Though banjo (including tenor and plectrum) was his instrument of choice, he was also accomplished on piano and accordion. A Vega endorser, the company's catalog called him "Mr. Banjo Man."

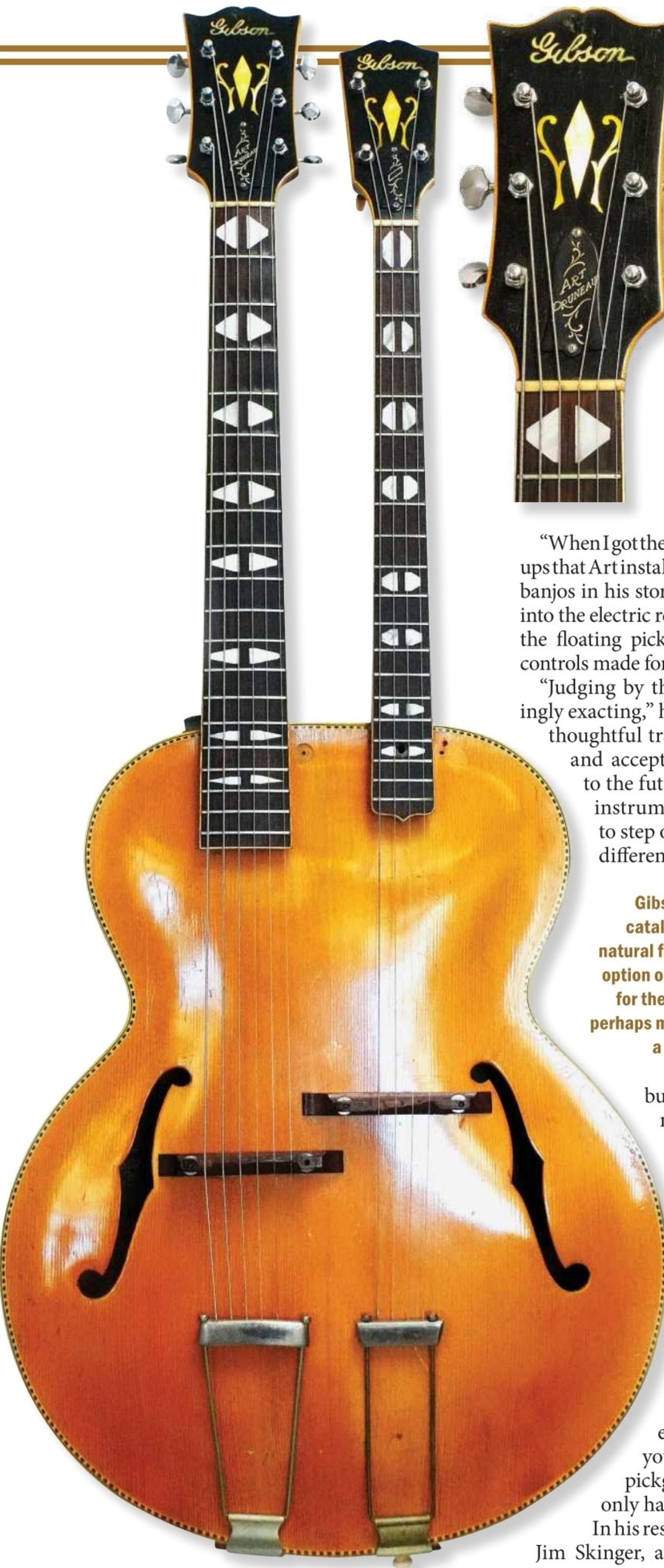
Also an experimenter/tinkerer in step with the burgeoning electric instruments, he likely ordered the L-10 with a plectrum-banjo second

neck from Gibson dealer Walberg & Auge Band Instrument Company, in Worcester. Delivered to the store on May 7, 1936, it set Pruneau back \$600—nearly \$15,000 in 2026 money. He quickly adapted it to suit playing in a duet with his wife, Polly (they were the house act at The Birches restaurant/club in nearby Rutland), adding Vega pickups and tailpieces, along with a microphone mount on the upper bout, near the neck.

Though it has been shown in several books, none have offered deeper details on its background. At some point it became part the collection of Scott Chinery (profiled in the 1996 book *The Chinery Collection: 150 Years of American Guitars*), who made a fortune selling steroid-alternative nutritional supplements to bodybuilders in the '80s and '90s. He passed away in 2002, and his instruments were consigned to a few guitar dealers; its current owner (who wishes to remain anonymous) bought it at that time for just under \$6,000, adding it to a collection that includes several other '30s Gibsons including two L-50s, three ES-150s, and an L-7.

"When I started playing as a teenager in the '60s, my teacher was a jazz guy who played big-box Gibsons, so I came to like them," he says. "When everybody else was learning rock and roll on solidbodies, he was teaching me how to read and play standards (laughs), so I was a little out of sorts. But I've always loved the V shape of Gibson necks from that era, and the way they played."

Instrument photos by Vanessa Valencia.



"When I got the doubleneck, it had Vega pickups that Art installed," he added. "He sold Vega banjos in his store and when the brand went into the electric realm, my guess is he ordered the floating pickups and tailpiece-mounted controls made for Vega's Duo-Tron guitars."

"Judging by the work, Art was painstakingly exacting," he adds. "He was a practical, thoughtful traditionalist – open-minded and accepting of change with an eye to the future. The fact he ordered the instrument tells me he was willing to step out and reach for something different."

Gibson's 1936 catalog showed natural finish as an option on archtops for the first time, perhaps making this a prototype.

But how much did he actually play it? "Oh, Art played the *hell* out of both necks. The plectrum frets are very worn, but because he played the *whole* neck, it still plays smooth all the way up and down."

Gibson's first double-neck was a lap steel made for Jack Penewell with painted-on frets, which means this L-10 is likely the first *fretted* double-neck.

"I believe the Vega pickup became available in 1947, and I presume that Art was able to get them early," the owner says. "And you can see that he put one pickguard on each neck, but it only had one when I got it."

In his research, the owner spoke with Jim Skinger, a classical guitarist in New

The doubleneck has ornate truss-rod covers – one with Art Pruneau's name – but standard backs, with banjo tuners on the plectrum neck.

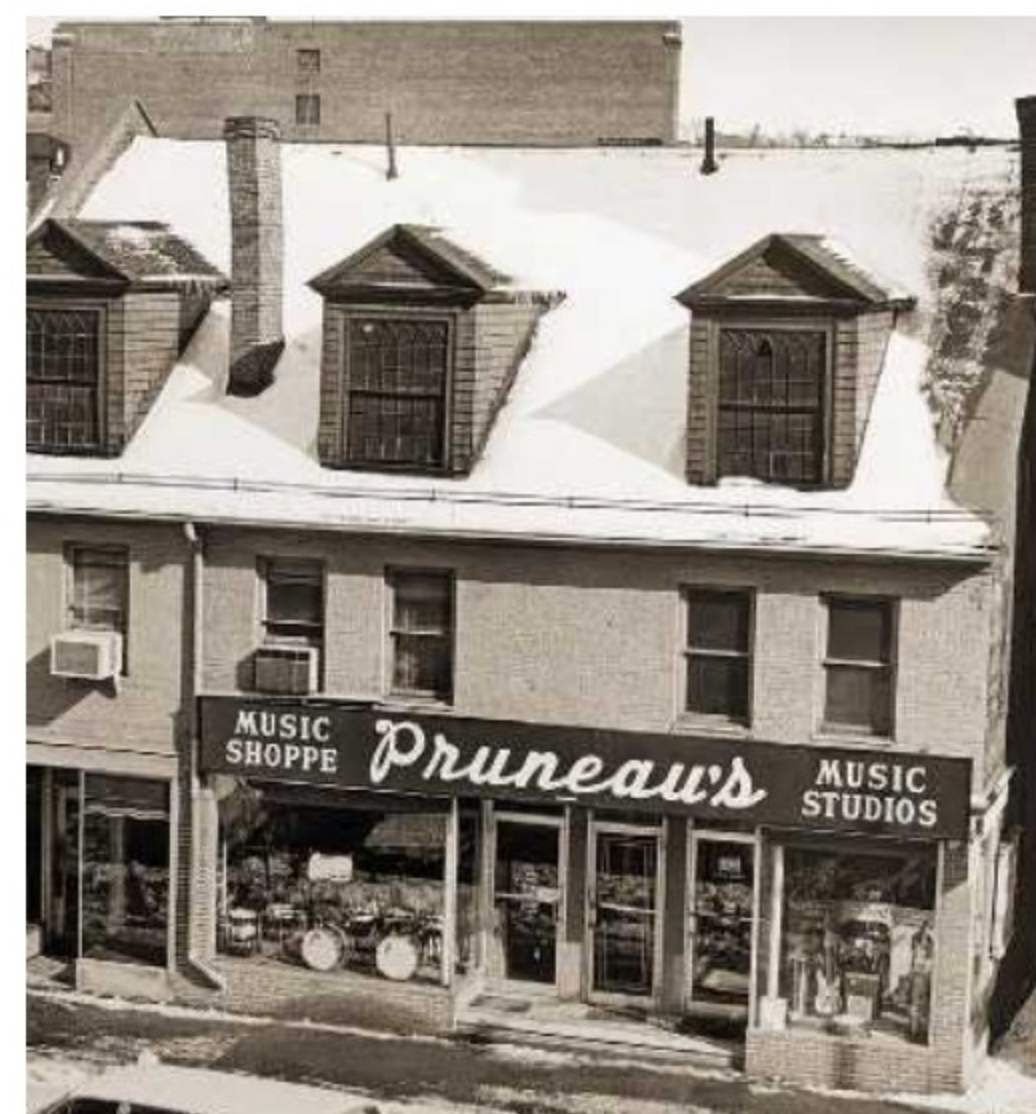
England who studied under Pruneau and, after returning from the service, worked in his shop, giving lessons and staffing the sales floor.

"He recalled Art having several custom Vega banjos and seeing a photo of him playing the L-10," he said.

Pruneau closed his shop in 1977.

Today, the L-10's owner focuses on giving the guitar proper care, which includes the occasional strum. **VG**

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



Pruneau's Music Shoppe and Music Studios was housed in an 1823 brick building on Maple Street in Worcester, Massachusetts.

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Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Ram W. Tuli



1954 Gretsch
Country Club

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1958	Airline Tube Amp (Higher-End)		\$700	\$875
1961	Ampeg Echo Satellite ES-1		\$775	\$1,000
2022	Analog Man Astro Tone		\$160	\$350
1989	B.C. Rich Ironbird	Class Axe era	\$1,000	\$2,000
1977	BC Rich Mockingbird	Painted	\$4,000	\$5,000
1982	Boss Graphic Equalizer GE-7		\$90	\$150
2000	Burns Marquee		\$400	\$600
2004	Charvel San Dimas Reissue (FMIC)	Custom Shop	\$2,000	\$2,500
2007	Collings SoCo Deluxe		\$3,500	\$5,000
1950s	Custom Kraft Electric Solidbody	Import	\$300	\$500
1959	Danelectro Model 3412			
	Standard (Shorthorn)	Kidney 'guard, 6-string	\$1,375	\$1,875
2005	Dean Dime O Flame (ML)		\$600	\$900
1986	DigiTech Programmable			
	Distortion PDS 1550	Yellow case	\$75	\$175
1996	DOD IceBox FX64		\$65	\$100
2009	EarthQuaker Devices			
	Sound Shank		\$65	\$110
1975	Electro-Harmonix Attack Equalizer		\$150	\$200
2001	Emmons Lashley	25th Anniver.,		
	LeGrande III Steel	double neck	\$3,500	\$4,500
1954	Epiphone De Luxe Electric (Archtop)	Sunburst	\$5,800	\$8,800
1959	Epiphone FT 30 Caballero		\$1,200	\$1,800
1962	Epiphone Professional	With matching amp	\$2,500	\$3,500
1953	Epiphone Zephyr	1x15	\$850	\$1,250
2000	Fender '50s Relic/'51 NoCaster Custom Shop	Closet Classic	\$3,000	\$4,500
1994	Fender '63 Tube Reverb	Black	\$800	\$1,125
2012	Fender Bassman 115 NEO Cabinet		\$400	\$500
1963	Fender Concert	Blackface	\$2,250	\$3,500
1964	Fender Duo-Sonic	Blue, red, sunburst, white	\$2,800	\$3,800
1994	Fender Foto Flame Precision		\$725	\$950
1962	Fender Jazz	Sunburst, 3 knob, slab	\$20,000	\$25,000
1997	Fender Noel Redding Signature Jazz		\$1,125	\$1,500
1964	Fender Princeton	Black, AA964, no grille logo	\$2,250	\$2,750
1965	Fender Shenandoah 12-String	Antiqua	\$1,200	\$1,800
2017	Fender Standard Stratocaster Plus Top	Mexico, Flamed maple	\$600	\$900
2012	Fender Stratocaster Pro NOS (Custom Shop)		\$3,000	\$4,500
1986	Fender '62 Stratocaster (USA)	Common color	\$1,800	\$3,000
2021	Fender American Ultra Luxe Stratocaster	Floyd Rose HHS	\$1,200	\$1,800
2020	Fender Kenny Wayne Shepherd Stratocaster	US-made	\$1,800	\$2,800
1967	Fender Telecaster	Blond, smuggler	\$13,500	\$20,000
1973	Fender Telecaster Thinline	Natural ash	\$4,500	\$6,000
2008	Fender Voodoo Lounge			



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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
	Supreme Telecaster		\$4,000	\$6,000
1988	G&L ASAT	Leo sig. on body	\$1,250	\$1,750
2001	G&L S-500 Deluxe		\$900	\$1,125
1946	Gibson BR-6	Vertical cab	\$750	\$1,000
1970	Gibson EB		\$3,500	\$4,500
1966	Gibson ES-125 T		\$1,600	\$2,100
2005	Gibson ES-335 Eric Clapton			
	Crossroads '64 Reissue		\$7,500	\$11,500
1960	Gibson ES-350 T or ES-350N T	Natural, PAFs	\$13,500	\$17,000
1965	Gibson Firebird I	Sunburst,		
		non-reverse, 2 P-90s	\$5,000	\$7,000
1981	Gibson Flying V Heritage	Natural	\$6,000	\$9,000
1964	Gibson GA-77 RETL Vanguard	1x15 Lansing reverb, trem	\$850	\$1,125
2001	Gibson J-190 EC Super Fusion		\$3,000	\$4,500
1928	Gibson L-0	Mahogany	\$5,500	\$7,000
1996	Gibson L-5 Studio		\$3,500	\$5,500
1975	Gibson Les Paul Custom	Volute, 2 pickups	\$4,800	\$6,200
1995	Gibson Les Paul			
	Jimmy Page Signature	1st year, moderate figure	\$5,000	\$7,500
2008	Gibson Les Paul Special Robot		\$1,500	\$2,500
2008	Gibson Les Paul			
	Traditional / Plus	Plain sunburst	\$2,000	\$3,000
2021	Gibson 1958 Les Paul			
	Standard Ultra Light Aged	Murphy Lab	\$4,500	\$7,000
1985	Gibson Q3000 Custom Shop	3 pickups, singles	\$2,500	\$3,500
1966	Gibson SG Special	Cherry, large 'guard	\$4,300	\$5,500
2015	Gibson SJ-200 Bob Dylan			
	Player's Edition	Unsigned	\$5,000	\$6,500
1927	Gibson TG-0		\$3,000	\$4,500
1990	Godin SD22, SD24		\$450	\$700
1971	Gretsch Chet Atkins			
	Tennessean (7655)		\$3,000	\$4,000
1954	Gretsch Country Club	Cadillac Green	\$5,500	\$7,500
1957	Gretsch Jet Firebird (6131)	Single cut	\$8,500	\$10,000
1973	Gretsch Sun Valley (7514)		\$900	\$1,125
1956	Guild Capri CE-100D	2 pickups	\$2,500	\$3,800
1958	Guild Freshman M-65		\$2,000	\$3,000
1999	Guild Peregrine	Flamed Maple	\$1,100	\$1,600
1965	Guild ThunderBass	100bwatts, 2x15,		
		piggyback	\$650	\$1,125
1982	Hamer Cruise 5		\$1,250	\$1,625
1970	Harmony H54 Rocket II	2 pickups,		
		single-cut, trapez	\$450	\$600
1980s	HiWatt Bulldog SA112	50 watts, 1x12 combo	\$1,750	\$2,250
1963	Hofner President		\$2,500	\$3,250
1999	Ibanez Delay Echo DE7 (Tone-Lok)		\$100	\$125

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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1974	Ibanez Model 2352CT	Tele copy w sin + hum	\$700	\$1,000
2000	Ibanez Smash Box SM7 (Tone-Lok)		\$70	\$85
2017	JAM Pedals Black Muck		\$200	\$250
1952	Kay K161 Thin Twin/Jimmy Reed		\$1,000	\$1,500
1930s	Kleartone Small Flat-Top		\$500	\$800
1982	Kramer Stagemaster Custom (Import)	Special	\$950	\$1,250
1994	Lakland 4-94/44-94 Standard		\$2,500	\$3,500
1970	Ludwig Phase II Guitar Synth		\$1,500	\$2,000
1964	Magnatone Model M9	1x15, t	\$675	\$850
1968	Marshall JTM 50 Model 1961 MK IV 4x10 Combo	50 watts, post Bluesbreaker	\$7,000	\$9,500
1983	Marshall Model 1982/1982A/1982B Cabinet		\$850	\$1,250
1928	Martin 1-28P		\$3,500	\$5,300
2006	Martin 000-18 Norman Blake Signature		\$3,000	\$4,500
1999	Martin 000C-15E		\$1,000	\$1,500
1965	Martin 00-21NY	Brazilian, 12-fret	\$6,500	\$8,500
1950	Martin 0-18T		\$2,000	\$2,800
1970	Martin D12-20		\$2,200	\$3,300
1942	Martin D-28	Scalloped	\$115,000	\$150,000
2017	Martin D-420	Illustrated top	\$2,500	\$4,000
2000	Martin DX1AE		\$450	\$700
1989	Martin HOM-35	Brazilian Wedge, GOM	\$7,000	\$12,000
1931	Martin OM-28	Early '31, banjo tuners, small 'guard, belly bridge	\$100,000	\$125,000
1999	Martin SPOM-16		\$1,800	\$2,800
1996	Mesa-Boogie DC-10	Head only 60/100 watts	\$800	\$1,000
1967	Messenger Electric Hollowbody Archtop		\$2,500	\$3,500
1965	Mosrite Ventures	2 pickups	\$2,125	\$2,750
1970s	MXR Blue Box	Later block logo	\$225	\$325
1954	National Model 1212	12 watts, 1x12	\$800	\$1,000
1969	Norma Solid State	Various models	\$80	\$125
1982	Ovation Elite 1718		\$800	\$1,800
1987	Peavey Bandit 75		\$125	\$200
1988	Peavey TNT Series Bass		\$250	\$350
1990	PRS Custom (Custom 24/PRS Custom)	Wood Library adds \$1000	\$3,200	\$4,500
1988	PRS Studio		\$2,000	\$3,000
1970	Rick Model 4005-6		\$7,000	\$9,500
1987	Rickenbacker Model 360 Tuxedo	Tuxedo option	\$5,000	\$7,500
1935	Rickenbacker Model B Steel	6-string or 8-string	\$2,500	\$3,500
2000s	Roland Human Rhythm Composer R-8 MK II		\$450	\$1,000
1933	Selmer Harp Guitar	gut strings	\$12,500	\$20,000
1966	Silvertone Model 1466 Bass	ss, 6x10, bass	\$700	\$900
1948	Stromberg Deluxe	1 brace	\$12,000	\$20,000
1960	Supro Coronado 1690T	Narrow panel	\$1,125	\$1,500
2004	Taylor 710ce-L30		\$1,500	\$1,875
2020	Taylor 714ce	V-class	\$2,125	\$2,750
2020	Taylor GTK21e	All koa	\$3,125	\$4,000
1961	Tonemaster Model 381 Custom	2x12, 1x5	\$1,750	\$2,250
1950s	Vega DG-DB Steel	Double neck	\$950	\$1,250
2004	Vox AD120VT		\$400	\$550
2014	Waterloo WL-14 Scissortail	Spruce/maple	\$1,500	\$2,500
1983	Yamaha SBG Series	Higher-end	\$1,500	\$3,500

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Peter Green,
circa 1967.

ARRIVAL OF THE GREEN GOD

John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers *A Hard Road*

By Wolf Marshall

In the '60s, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers was a training ground of reimagined blues fueled by Les Paul-into-Marshall sounds. It merged blues tradition with innovation, producing a new expression that resounds to the present. From it, Eric Clapton and Mick Taylor made innovations in Cream and the Rolling Stones. The "middle child," Peter Green, replaced his virtuoso predecessor, Clapton ("God" in London music circles), and rose to the occasion on *A Hard Road*.

Green first worked with Mayall in October '65, after Clapton departed for an indefinite holiday. The leader sensed Green's potential when he substituted for four performances, the last of a half-dozen replacements. Mayall

reinstated Slowhand when he unexpectedly returned, but the experience prompted Green to pursue music for a living. After Clapton left to form Cream in July '66, Green was heir apparent, and the second chapter of the Bluesbreakers saga commenced.

A Hard Road was recorded at Decca's West Hampstead studios in five session days during October and November of '66, then released February 17. Like its forerunners, the record documented a working blues band plying wares honed in countless live gigs. It differed from the groundbreaking *Blues Breakers* ("Beano") with double the number of original compositions, more-varied instrumentation and key centers, and bolder experimentation.

Personnel consisted of Mayall (vocals, organ, piano, harmonica and guitars), John McVie (bass) and new members Green (guitar, vocals) and Aynsley Dunbar (drums), augmented by saxophonists John Almond, Alan Skidmore and Ray Warleigh. Mike Vernon and Gus Dudgeon returned as producer and engineer, and were surprised to see the new guitarist. At first, they were skeptical of his abilities despite Mayall's assurances.

"Once he'd set up his guitar and amp, within minutes we realized, to our amazement, John was right," Vernon recalled in Martin Celmins' 1995 biography, *Peter Green: Founder of Fleetwood Mac*. "His style was different but he had the same touch and conviction."

Following Clapton's lead, Green played his '59 Les Paul Standard on the album. In the early '70s, he sold it to Gary Moore, who brandished it throughout his career, it's currently owned by Kirk Hammett (VG, March '18). Green once removed the neck pickup to emulate Clapton's brighter tone, and it may have been reinstalled later – backward – unintentionally reversing the magnet and activating a magnetically-generated phase

Moderately Fast Shuffle

[illegible]

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Green's transformation of the Freddie King instrumental "The Stumble" rivals Clapton's flight on "Hideaway" and presaged Taylor's "Driving Sideways." Mixing tradition and innovation, Green provided his own impression with references to the original and new permutations of his own. This excerpt (0:42) demonstrates his variations in action. He plays

personal refinements during stop-time sections, measures 1-5: energized pentatonic/blues lines on E7, a rhythmic riff on A7 and a chromatic phrase on Bb, implying a turnaround. In 6-9, he paraphrases King's sixth-interval double-stops with similar hybrid picking and concludes with idiomatic first-position blues-cadence melodies utilizing open strings.

shift called the “magic tone,” which responds to pitch changes giving high notes what Celmins called a “pronounced hollow cry.”

Green plugged into a '65 Marshall block-logo JTM45 head and one of Marshall's earliest cabinets with four 20-watt Celestion 12" speakers. His idol, B.B. King, famously said Green "...has the sweetest tone I ever heard; he's the only one who gave me the cold sweats." High praise from the man who had a similar effect on preceding generations, including Clapton.

The opener, "A Hard Road," is an evocative D-minor blues, harnessing Mayall's Otis Spann-inspired piano chording and plaintive vocals alongside Green's background counter

lines. Bluesbreakers set an appropriately brooding dirge-like mood. For most, this was their first sample of Green's lead-guitar playing. Soulful and concise, his one-chorus solo (1:04) boasts a sweet semi-clean tone, well-intonated bends and economical Albert King-like rhythmic placement with a delivery all his own, marking a sufficient departure from Clapton's shadow.

"It's Over," Mayall's catchy C blues, is propelled by nine-string guitar, organ comping, harmonica fills, a bouncy shuffle groove with stop-time breaks, and Green's double-stop rhythm riffing. The straightforward arrangement is dominated by Mayall's harp, the only lead instrument in the tune.

Green makes his vocal debut on “You Don’t Love Me,” Willie Cobbs’ standard attributed to Bo Diddley, subsequently covered by the Allman Brothers, Gary Moore, Steve Stills, Booker T., and others. The Bluesbreakers’ version is a swinging, medium-tempo altered blues in B^b (originally A) and contains rewritten lyrics. The Green-Mayall chemistry is ubiquitous, with guitar/harmonica rendering the main riff in octaves (alluding to the original) and harmony vocals in verse-ending phrases. McVie’s doubling bass part adds thickness to the riffs, lending a power-trio timbre to the proceedings. Mayall’s harmonica is the only lead instrument – a deviation from the original, which had a guitar solo – and Green borrows chording from Cobbs’ version to enhance his lead/rhythm parts. The arrangement exploits a clever closing vamp decrescendo section, exploded by Dunbar’s rousing drum fill and final B^b7^{#9} chord jab.

Mayall admittedly changed Bluesbreakers' repertoire to suit Green's style. Freddie King's altered-blues instrumental, "The Stumble," responded to Clapton's showcase, "Hideaway," and proved his guitar prowess, advanced blues sensibilities and that he was a more-than-worthy successor. His reading of King's theme, though much in the

Clapton mold emphasizing the Les Paul/Marshall timbre, bears pronounced differences. Mayall opted for piano versus organ for accompaniment while Green paraphrased King's mannerisms such as the shape-shifting pentatonic melody and slippery 6th-intervals in E but asserted his personality in stop-time sections. His improvisations transform what could be a routine three-chorus solo into an epic statement; developing a perfect balance of taut blues motifs, call/response phrases and longer passages in swinging eighth notes. A truly elevated rendition of the blues standard, it was a model for Moore's interpretation in the '90s, which contained direct references to Green's performance.

“Another Kinda Love,” Mayall’s simmering Gm altered blues, introduces dramatic horn-section colors. The moody medium-slow tempo inspires a solid arrangement orchestrated with organ and simple guitar counter-melody riffs that play off the horn parts. The minor modality brings out Green’s strongest melodic proclivities (heard later in “Black Magic Woman,” “Green Manalishi” and “Oh Well”) and his soulful tendencies. However, he alludes to several high-energy blues licks in the manner of Clapton (“Steppin’ Out”) played as double-time phrases over the slow groove during his solo improvisations. This innovation is profound and underscores his ability to think outside the Clapton box.

“Hit the Highway” brings a rootsy, barrelhouse blues feel, with no drums or bass, only Mayall’s piano chording and Green’s light boogie comping and chord punctuation engendering a simpler expression of the blues, expanding on the sparse texture of “Ramblin’ on My Mind” (Beano). The D-blues features a looser doubled-vocal verse and spirited duetting interplay between the two instruments with Green taking a space-conscious two-chorus solo (0:57) highlighted by the winding triplet phrasing of T-Bone Walker and early B.B. King.

“Leaping Christine” is an updated look at the chitlin’ circuit’s roadhouse music of the late ’40s and early ’50s. The R&B feel that led to jitterbugging rock and roll is transformed by Green’s rhythm/lead work and swinging rhythm-section groove in F, then heightened by horns along with Mayall’s harmonica and organ solos. Stop-time intro and outro sections reminiscent of R&B club-band clichés further distinguish the arrangement.

“Dust My Blues” recalls Robert Johnson’s “Dust My Broom” (circa 1936), modernized on electric guitar and renamed by Elmore James in ’55. Mayall offers his interpretation, transposed to E from D, assuming

lead-guitar duties on his five-string electric, and quoting the most-famous slide riff in history. With heavier backing, especially Green’s overdriven comping and aggressive solo (1:33), the performance provides a definitive link connecting classic blues with British blues-rock.

“There’s Always Work” travels back even further, to field hollers. Such is Mayall’s intent; to venture beyond “Parchman Farm” and channel the work-gang angst of the pre-Civil War era subjected to a new interpretation. Mayall, Vernon, and Dudgeon sang

that belies the perception he was the most reserved of the three famed Bluesbreaker guitarists. His ability to tastefully employ common blues melodic material against unusual chord progressions was forté heard often in his improvisations.

Dm C Bb Dm

[illegible]

“The Super-Natural” was just that – a piece that transcended boundaries while retaining the essence of blues feeling. Setting precedents for Latin rock, fusion, blues-rock, and world music, it’s a happy collision of melody and feedback. In the first five bars, he holds a sustaining feedback note through Dm modal changes, comparable to a violin or wind

instrument, then states the tune's attractive theme in measures 6-16. The melody is simple and sparse but otherworldly, with massive reverb and a touch of delay enhancing the classic LesPaul/Marshall sound. Note the entirely pentatonic material strategically manipulated to fit Dm, A, Gm and Am chords, which displays another side of his blues acumen.

(1:04) mixes standard minor-pentatonic blues sounds with a hint of the exotic in the use of F[#] and B notes in key phrases and a surprising A-major move to the IV chord. These tendencies blossomed in later Green compositions.

An instrumental “The Super-Natural” was Green’s second original. One of his earliest compositions, it’s one of the earliest recordings to explicitly feature feedback, produced by guitar-amp proximity and processed with echo. Mayall maintained it was “one of the most meaningful instrumentals I’ve heard” and “a high spot on the record.” Afterward, musicians began referring to Peter as “The Green God,” and in the November ’13 issue of *Blues*, Santana said, “That track... was the first

instrumental blues that showed me that guitar could really be the lead voice.” In his touching obituary for Green in *Guitar Interactive*, Santana insisted “The Super-Natural” was “just sacred.” The piece is not a typical blues; instead it reshuffles chords in Dm and has an otherworldly modal character that reflects his modernizing of Hank Marvin instrumentals brought into the blues-rock setting. Green’s improvisations are restrained and song-like, largely devoted to tasteful variations on the theme. The Latin beat, massive sustain, organ pads and world-music influences set obvious precedents, while the opulent studio plate-reverb sound anticipated “Albatross.”

"Top of the Hill," Mayall's traditional Chicago-based 12-bar B^b shuffle-blues, finds

him on five-string guitar with light backing and Green's single-note accompaniment riffs, interlocking lead lines, and turnaround fills in verses. Chicago-style piano parts provide additional texture and mojo in the arrangement and Green supplies a straightforward solo (1:21) with an appropriately sparse attitude.

In “Someday, After a While (You’ll Be Sorry),” Freddie King’s mournful altered-blues classic, Green conjures the melodic blues spirit Clapton tapped into on “Have You Heard.” The slow-blues in F begins authoritatively with Green’s soulful intro lines over the F-D7-G-C7 changes and turnaround. In the verse, he continues the magic with responsorial chord fills and dialoging lead licks around Mayall’s vocals and horn-section pads. His solo (0:57) is a masterpiece. An exemplary outing exploiting impassioned bends and vibrato, vocal blues lines, soulful rhythmic phrasing, and climactic double-time flurries (1:29).

"Living Alone" revolves around Mayall's nine-string rhythm guitar parts and conveys an atypical offshoot of the blues with its boogaloo feel and Hendrix-inspired 7#9 chord figures. Green is imperceptible; Mayall takes the only solo on harmonica and adds distant piano and hints

of slide guitar. This type of experimentation exemplified Mayall's enlargement of blues into jazz, rock, and funk areas and presaged future explorations.

Disenchanted with this departure from blues, Green left Bluesbreakers in June of '67 to form Fleetwood Mac with McVie and Mick Fleetwood.

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

THE UGLY, THE BAD, AND THE GOOD

A '59 P-Bass Disaster, Part II

By Dan Erlewine

It's been a minute since I started refurbishing this '59 Precision Bass with a '64 neck that arrived at my shop in bad shape. In the December '25 issue, I described rebuilding its deformed body before handing it off to my friend Keith McGrath, a top-notch finisher. While Keith was refinishing it, I started working on the neck, which had numerous issues.

Back from the brink, looking right – the once-mangled '59 P-Bass.

1) I started by repairing the nut slot. A piece of the fretboard was missing, so I fit and glued a piece of Indian rosewood in the gap and shaped it to match. The rosewood

was similar in grain and color.

2) I touched-up the area with LED-cured oil finish colored with StewMac's ColorTone Liquid Stain; the finish cures in 30 seconds under LED light and has a sheen that blends well with the old finish. I also scraped away a cigarette burn.

3) The split pickup was in rough shape; the hot lead connecting the two halves had broken loose and the rubber foam between the brass ground plates and underside of the pickups had decomposed; I carefully chiseled it away.

4) The pickup cover's mounting screw tab was rotted and broken off (lower arrow), exposing the copper windings of the coil. The top arrow shows the solder lug, onto which I'll re-solder the loose hot wire.

5) I was relieved to find that the pickup was still working.

6) The tuners were dirty and stiff enough that I dismantled and cleaned them.

7) After testing the electronics, I decided



Photos: Kate Erlewine.

to save them for posterity and re-wire the harness. Here are the new pots and jack plug.

8) Keith did great work on the finish.

9) I almost forgot to install the ground

wire through the body, running from under the bridge (making contacting to the bridge body) then connecting to ground at the wiring harness. I had to drill from the top,

which was okay because the bridge covers the hole.

10) I decided the bass was too nice to leave with worn frets, so we removed them and

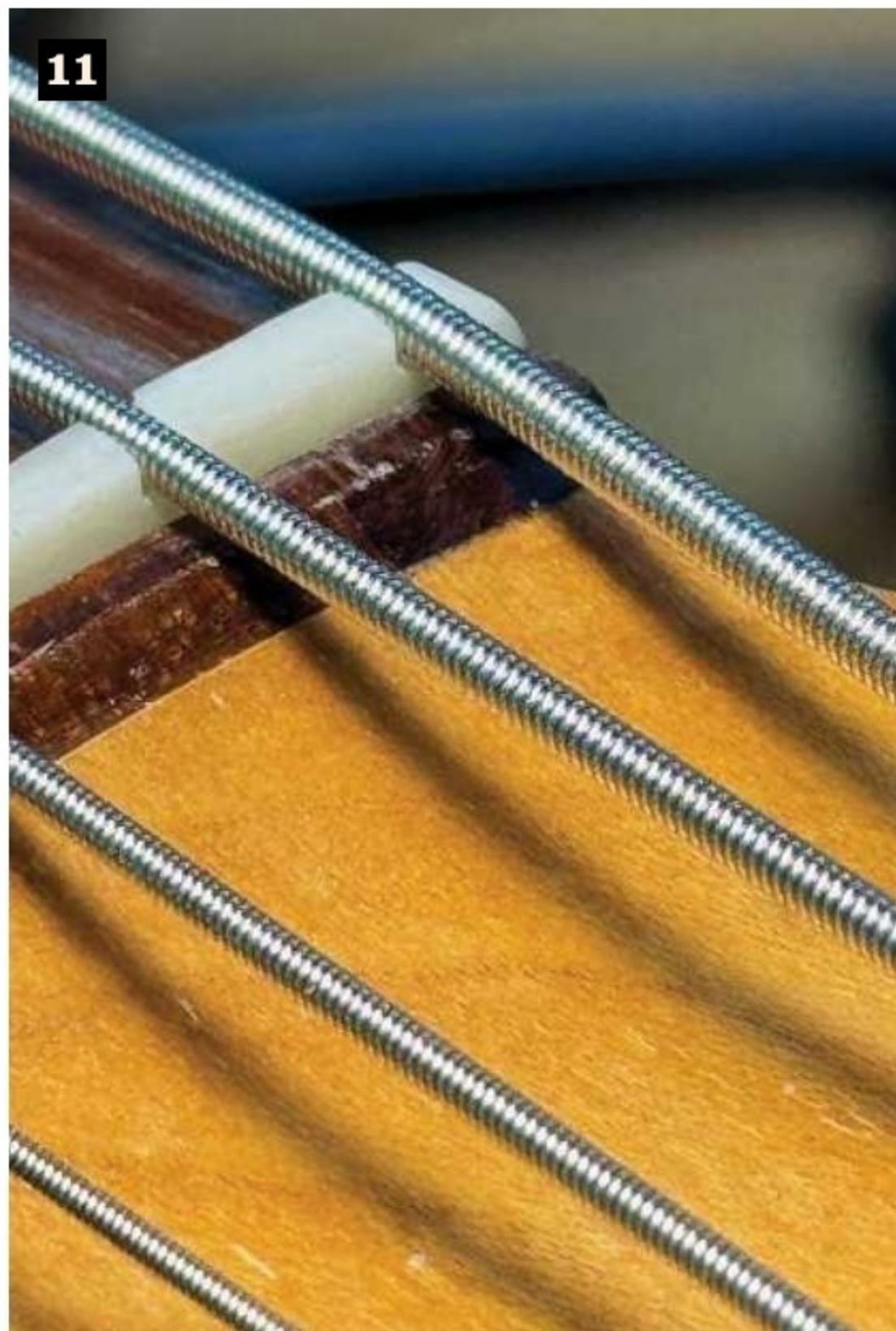


trued the board as much as possible. The neck was up-bowed (from not being adjusted over the years) that no amount of tightening would fix it, but new frets made it more playable.

11) New frets meant a new nut, as well. The oil/LED finish looks pretty good.

12) I installed a new pickup cover and sawed off one end, then carefully bonded it to the end of the broken cover with black superglue.

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



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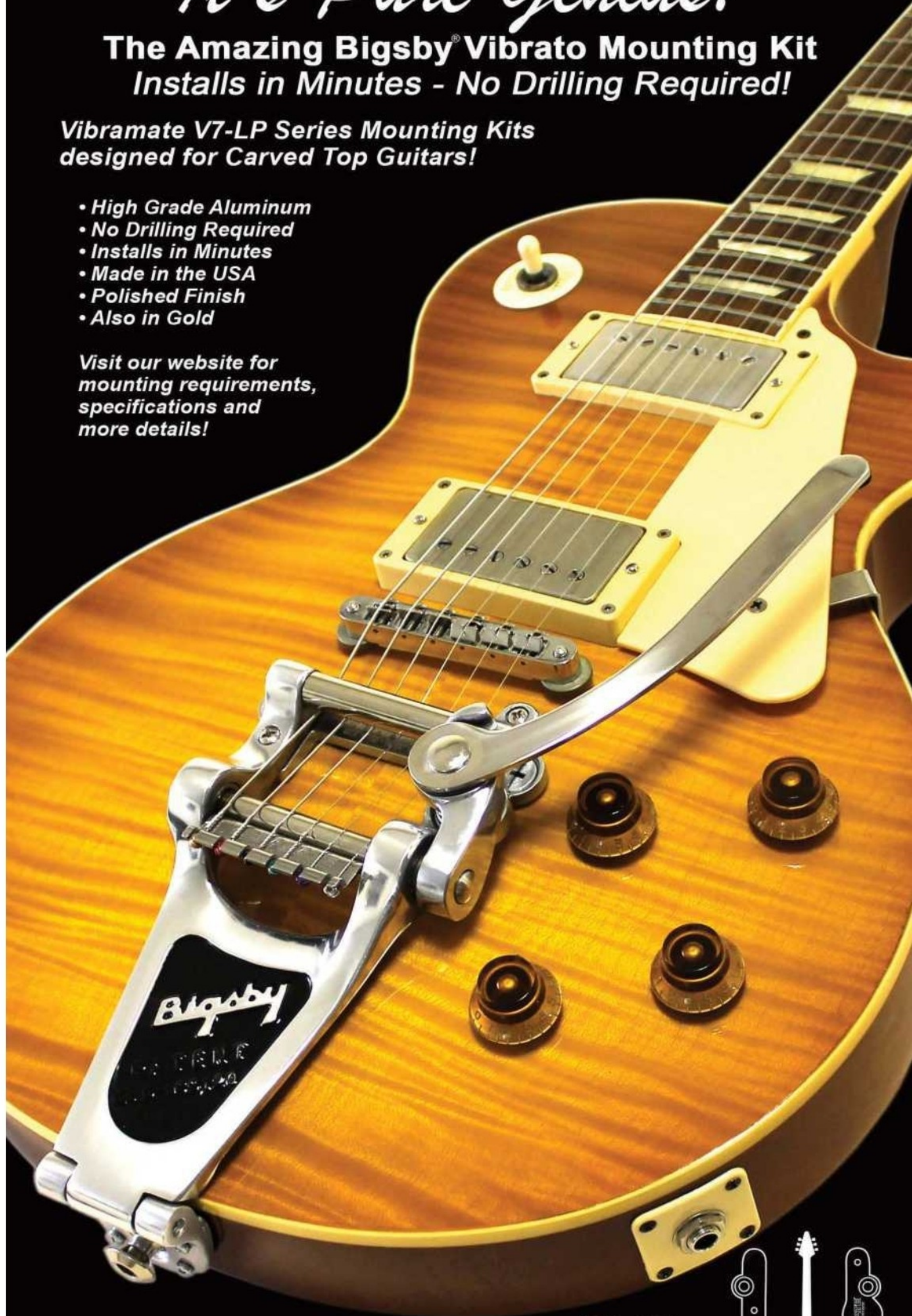
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Giveaway rules: One entry per customer. No purchase is necessary. Void where prohibited. The deadline for entries is September 14, 2026. Winners will be drawn at random. *Vintage Guitar* reserves the right to identify winners in all VG media.

A full-page photograph of Peter Stroud, a man with long, wavy blonde hair and sunglasses perched on his head. He is wearing a black leather jacket over a plaid shirt and dark jeans. He is sitting on a red surface, holding a brown and white electric guitar. The background is a dark, textured wall. The entire image is framed by a thick orange border.

Musical Exploration

TOM HAMILTON, PETER STROUD GUIDE CLOSE ENEMIES

BY BRET ADAMS

Rarely does a rock group emerge with a pedigree like Close Enemies. The all-star gathering – bassist Tom Hamilton, guitarists Peter Stroud and Trace Foster, drummer Tony Brock, and vocalist Chasen Hampton – has just issued a genuine rock debut that reflects the stylistic diversity of its members.

Aerosmith co-founder Hamilton needs no introduction, while Stroud (VG, September '13) has been in Sheryl Crow's touring band for 28 years, the last 21 as musical director, and has also backed Don Henley, Sarah McLachlan, and others. Foster is a respected guitar/bass tech whose list of clients includes Angus Young, Ron Wood, and Mick Jagger, while Brock has backed The Babys, Rod Stewart, Roy Orbison, Eddie Money, and Jimmy Barnes. Hampton has worked with The Party, Little Richard, and Edwin McCain.

Vintage Guitar spoke with Hamilton and Stroud about the band, its music, and their instruments of choice on *Close Enemies*.

How long have you guys known each other?

Tom Hamilton: I've known Trace for a long time. He was my tech, and before that was Joe Perry's. So we go back years, but until three years ago I didn't know what a great guitar player he is. The day after Aerosmith finished our residency in Las Vegas [in December of 2022], he called and said he wanted to come to Boston with a couple of friends and help me work on some songs.

He, Tony, and Peter flew up and we hung out and jammed on my stuff for a few days.

Peter Stroud with
a '65 Firebird I.

Peter Stroud: Terry Allen.

Tony is an excellent drummer and Peter is an awesome guitar player. On top of that, they're great people, and I was amazed – and grateful – that they took the time to visit.

Peter Stroud: Trace and I go back a ways. We first met when I was recording with Ed Roland of Collective Soul; Ed invited me to a session just to get together with his guys. At the time, he was working on a solo record and had hired Trace as a tech. Months later, Trace asked me to record with him and a band he was playing in and producing, then later approached me about putting a different band together. We tried, but couldn't find the right singer. In the midst of that, he was with Aerosmith in Vegas. They kept having to cancel shows, and at one point Tom told him, "Well, we canceled out. I want to do something."

He mentioned having songs to work on, and the light went on in Trace's head. He said, "Well, I know Peter Stroud. The two of us could come up and work with you." Trace told me about it and I went, "Oh, hell yeah. That sounds like a lot of fun! And I know a drummer who might fit really well – Tony Brock."

Tony is a good friend from over the years. He and I have been trying to figure out ways to play together, and I thought there could definitely be a rapport between Tom and Tony. We ended up spending a week in Boston, working on Tom's songs, then later, Trace and I were trying to put something else together. I was like, "We've got to decide one or the other. I can't do both." So, we melded the two and said, "This would be a lot of fun with Tom and Tony and a singer." Tom was all about it.

Tom, how did everything fall into place, from your perspective?

TH: It was time to plan Aerosmith's Peace Out tour. We went to a place in Pennsylvania where they have rehearsal rooms including one that's so big you can set up your entire production. We worked our asses off for a month then headed to Philadelphia for our first show. It went great. The band was in awesome shape and the tour was basically sold out. We got to the third song of the third show when Steven [Tyler] fell and hit his throat on a railing. Somehow, he finished the show. I didn't even know it happened until my manager called a couple of days later. We hoped to be back on the road soon, but scans showed he wouldn't be able to sing for an indefinite length of time. End of tour.

I found myself trying to figure out what to do next. The phone rang and it was Trace. He invited me to Peter's house in Atlanta to see what he and the guys had been up to. They'd been writing with Gary Stier; I listened to the songs and was knocked out. Peter's basement is set up as a great writing room/studio, and that first day, we worked up what became "Wink and a Feather"; it was easy and fun, and definitely gave me an appetite for more. The next day, I played a demo I'd been working on, and I was

knocked out by the way each guy came up with ideas. By the end of the day, we had "More Than I Could Ever Need," which was something I wanted to do for my wife, who I've been with for over 50 years. The demo was pretty simple; I had a guitar part that was just me strumming the chords on my beloved Esquire, the same one I used when I wrote the guitar ideas on "Sick as a Dog." In fact, I think I used it when we recorded the song for *Rocks*. I also had a Hammond B3 track, bass track, and some drums. I'm not a singer, so I used a voice sound from one of the synthesizers in Logic to flesh out a melody.

I played it once or twice for everybody, and right away, Peter picked up his SG and came up with a really lush guitar sound and wrote an awesome guitar part. Trace jumped in and played a nice arpeggiated guitar idea, then Tony joined in with a tasty drum part. Gary supplied the bulk of the lyrics, and when Chasen was doing the vocal, we finalized them.

The process was one of the most-rewarding experiences I've ever had, and by the time I flew back to Boston, we had "Rain." I knew then that I wanted to join these guys.

The next order of business was finding a singer, which can make or break the whole thing. We tried a few, but none worked out until a good friend suggested Chasen. We sent him a couple songs, and he did demos that blew us away. The vocal on "Rain" is one he thought would be replaced, but it was great, so it's on the record. The guy is gifted, and we lucked out!

Are there certain songs you think are the best examples of the band's work?

TH: I'd say, "Rain," "Sound of a Train," "Sweet Baby Jesus," and "More Than I Could Ever Need."

How about you, Peter?

Tom Hamilton with his G&L ASAT bass and vintage GTO.





Peter Stroud's '65 Firebird I with P-90s can be heard on the *Close Enemies* track "Battlefield."

Stroud's '57 Les Paul Special (left) and the '59 Junior he used for the slide part on "Sweet Baby Jesus."

You'll hear this '65 SG Special on "Rain."

PS: We're all very proud of "Rain" because it encapsulates the "all-in" spirit we're going for. Trace and Gary came in that day with the verse and chorus, I threw in the middle section, then Tom and Tony finished it off – Tom with his tremendous bass part and Tony with his mega-climactic tag to the bridge and the piano hook and Mellotron, both of which he played.

Everyone contributed to its final shape and arrangement, then we immediately

recorded passes. It all came together that day. We didn't have a singer at that point, so Chasen later wrote the lyrics and melody, then recorded his parts at home.

Which guitars and amps were used on it?

PS: Trace used a Rick 660/12 and I used my '65 SG Special. The basic tracks were cut in my studio as we were writing together. Trace and I were plugged into new Marshall Studio 20s – the Plexi ST20 JTM and SV20 Plexi, Tom used the WEM

Dominator bass amp. For my overdubs, I used a '70 Marshall 50-watt through old Pulsonic cone Celestion G12Ms.

Which other songs would you direct listeners to, and why?

PS: "Sound Of A Train" was the first song we finished, and it's very meaningful to Chasen, since he recorded it as his "audition" for the band and while his father was under hospice care. His vocal remained exactly as he sent it to us. Again,

Trace and Gary had the verses and choruses, then I came up with the middle section, which I recorded with a Gibson EDS-1275. The other guitar parts came mostly from the rehearsal tapes, where I was using an old SG Junior into a '68 Marshall Tremolo 50 head that I bought from Brad Whitford (*Ed. Note: See Dave Hunter's profile in this issue*). I was running through a 2x12 with old greenback G12H-30s. Trace was using one of his Fender Custom Shop Teles into a Harry Joyce 50 and 2x12 cab. For the solo I used my '59 double-cut Junior through a '72 Park 75.

I often hit the front end of the amp with an early-'70s Colorsound Overdriver. I was late discovering that jewel of a pedal, which guys like Jeff Beck, David Gilmour, and Joe Perry used back in the day and really brings out the best of a Marshall, especially the Tremolo and bass-circuit heads that have a lower-gain front end. Another key pedal is a Catalinbread Belle Epoch, primarily for its preamp circuit modeled after the EP-3 Echoplex. That goes hand in hand with Marshalls for smoothing out the top end and adding a nice sponginess to the feel.

"Sweet Baby Jesus" was born in the basement; Trace had the riff while Gary had lyrics and the melody almost complete. Trace and I recorded guitar parts to a drum loop, later replaced by Tony. I ran both through the small-box '70 Marshall 50, which I've tinkered with over the years. Trace's Tele sounds pretty intense through that amp when cranked, but it'll also clean up beautifully. I used my '59 Junior for the slide.

I brought "Battlefield" and finished it with the band; Gary helped complete the lyrics. Trace and I trade solos and his cleaner Tele tone is distinct – his was a one-takesolo through the '70 small-box. My main guitar was a '65 Firebird I with P-90s run through an Ampeg V-2 and early matching 4x12 with Altec 417s. I definitely was going for

that early-'70s Mick Taylor Stones-era tone, and those Alnico-magnet Altecs have a very crunchy, narrow midrange that really cuts through a mix. My part in the breakdown during Trace's solo was the EDS-1275 with a lot of echo running through the WEM amp, which delivers the classic '60s Brit clean tone – EL84s through a 15" Celestion.

For great straight-up guitar tones, I really like "Inside Out." Trace ran his Tele through the Harry Joyce, I'm using the SG Special through the Tremolo 50 head and Overdriver pedal dialed as a clean boost.

Tom brought "More Than I Could Ever Need" and we all helped with fine-tuning, then cut it together. Trace was back on the Rick 12-string and I'm using the SG Special with the Belle Epoch Echo pedal and Colorsound Overdriver; we both went through the Marshall Studio 20s, but my overdubs were through the '70 Marshall 50 dialed for clean.

Were you together in a studio, or did you swap files?

TH: Most of the songs just needed bass and final vocals. With Tony

Tom Hamilton's G&L ASAT (left) and Duesenberg Starplayer.

on electronic drums, we could play at a volume that made it possible to shout out ideas and play all day without ear fatigue. (*Ed. Note: acoustic drum tracks were added later.*)

Peter sent me the Logic sessions so I could do bass parts. Nothing beats being in the studio with everybody, but I really enjoyed doing bass tracks at home. It was really out of necessity since we didn't have a recording contract and the budget that would go with it. I liked having the time and space for ideas to bubble up and then practice them.

Which basses and amps did you use?

TH: I used my signature G&L ASAT and a Duesenberg Starplayer. It's a shame that G&L went out of business. They made great guitars. The only amp I used was Peter's WEM Dominator, but most of my tracks were done in my little studio. I went direct through a UAD Apollo Twin into my Mac. It's a simple setup, and I don't have the best Logic skills, but knew enough to get things done with advice from Peter. I really enjoyed doing it that way. I've done plenty of recording in a control room surrounded by producers, engineers, and band members, but this was the first time I had the process to myself. Doing it at my own pace was nice for the creative process. Having said that, I still look forward to doing things in the studio with the whole band.

Peter, Close Enemies is heavier than what you're known for playing with Sheryl Crow.

PS: Absolutely, but it goes back to my roots and reflects where I am, musically, for sure. I grew up on The Who, Led Zeppelin. I'm a product of the '70s as far as guitar goes – ZZ Top, Freddie King, The Rolling Stones. You name it, I was taking it all in – Allman Brothers, Marshall Tucker Band, Elvin Bishop. I grew up in the Southeast, so I was exposed to all of that. In the mid '90s, I



played with a band out of Athens (Georgia), called Dreams So Real. We were in the middle of that scene after R.E.M. had their rise. Then I got with Pete Droge in '95, which was a stylistic shift for me even though it was Marshalls and all my vintage guitars; I felt right at home. He was the first real singer/songwriter who made me think, "Wow, this guy embodies everything I like." I met Sheryl through Pete. We toured with Sheryl, and she was this whole other person I admired. You know how you remember what you were doing the first time you heard certain songs on the radio? Well, the first time I heard "All I Wanna Do," I was on lunch break at the music store where I worked. I loved her music, and we hit it off on tour. Then she invited me to be a part of her band right as Pete Droge's time was wrapping up.

Did you face any challenges in regard to the change in musical styles?

PS: Growing up, I studied classical guitar, and even majored in it. I was exposed to jazz, though I didn't relate to it much. Playing Americana versus rock versus heavy rock is much the same thing; to me, it's all just music exploration. Sheryl is amazing, and that band is amazing.

Tom, do you think your playing style changed for Close Enemies compared to Aerosmith?

TH: Close Enemies has given me a chance to spread out and step forward a bit. In a lot of ways, bass is a percussion instrument, so my first focus is on Tony's drum parts. On one hand, I'm supposed to work with the drummer and make you want to move. On the other, I'm supposed to provide a floor for the guitars to stand on. I'm lucky enough to also make some melodic statements.



To record *Close Enemies*, Tom Hamilton plugged his basses into Peter Stroud's WEM Dominator Bass Mk I.

There are different flavors and textures to the songs, but it's grounded in the sound of a two-guitar rock band. Is that in danger of becoming a lost art?

TH: As far as I'm concerned, the two guitars/singer/drummer format is the way to go. A lot of guitar players would say



there's no need for two, but it makes a lot of things possible. I keep hearing about a "rock comeback," and I hope there will be a lot of new bands with the two-guitar format.

PS: In my early days, most of the time I would be the only guitarist, which was fun and I loved the challenge. Then in the early days with Sheryl, we'd switch off, but most of the time I'd be the only guitarist or the only one playing electric; she'd play acoustic or occasional electric rhythm. Another member, Tim Smith, switched between guitar and bass.

Later with Sheryl, and then in Big Hat, I had Audley Freed on guitar. I love playing with Audley because

our styles complement each other – two different sounds and styles that cover a lot of bases. With Trace, it's the very same way. His style is different and we complement each other; I'm the slide guy. His solo on "Sound of a Train" has that really clean, cutting Tele sound. Mine's more of a P-90/Marshall, slow-bend heavy thing. You can tell us apart.

Speaking of, is it strictly broken down as to who plays lead or rhythm?

PS: Trace wants to get out and rail some leads, just like I do (laughs)! When we play live, we have this banter where we razz each other in healthy competition. Part of what inspired him to get this whole thing going is, like Tom, he's a cancer survivor. He told me, "I've done really well as a guitar tech, but I'm a player first and foremost. I have this new lease on life and I want to play again." I said, "Hell yeah, man! I'm in your corner. We'll make this happen." We're at that age where you're looking left and right and it makes you value life even more.

VG Editor in Chief Ward Meeker contributed to this feature.

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

Guitarfest, August 15, 10 am - 4 pm, at The Summit County Fairgrounds, 229 E. Howe Tallmadge Rd, OH. For more info contact Jamie Hoch at 330-631-2053 www.guitarfest-guitarshow.com

Atlanta Vintage Guitar Show, August 22-23, at the Acworth Community Center, 4361 Cherokee St, Acworth, GA 30101. For more info contact Greg at (770) 433-1891 or Eddie (317) 430-2222 www.theatlantavintageguitarshow.com theatlantavintageguitarshow@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER

The Greater Baltimore Washington Guitar Show, September 12, 11:00 am - 6:00 pm, September 13, 11:00 am - 4:00 pm, at Marley Station Mall (Center Court), 7900 Ritchie Hwy, Glen Burnie, MD. For more info contact Doug Lewis at 410-

760-3353. Or visit our facebook page at Greater Baltimore Washington Guitar Expo.

The Indiana Guitar Show, September 26, 10 am - 5 pm - September 27, 10 am - 3 pm - Located at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E. Main St. Danville, IN 46122 (Directly Behind the Danville Walmart on Old US 36.) For more info contact <https://theindianaguitarshow.com/>

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

Northeast Guitar Expo, September 27, 11 am - 6 pm, at 1360 Worcester St, Natick, MA 01760. For more info contact Peter Occhineri at (860) 983-6774 Paocchineri@comcast.net <https://www.facebook.com/NortheastGuitarExpo>

OCTOBER

Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, October 4, 11:30 am - 4 pm, at the CFS Bank Event Center, 111 Gallitin Rd, Belle Vernon, PA 15012. For more info contact Scott Talarico at (412) 716-8411 GuitarShowUSA.com

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

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, October 11, 9 am - 3 pm, at the Marriott Hotel, 50 N Martingale, Schaumburg, IL. For more info contact (847) 931-0707 Bakesguitar@aol.com www.Chicagovintageguitarexpo.com

2026 Tampa Guitar Show, October 23-25, 10 am - 5 pm, at the Florida State Fairgrounds, 4800 U.S. 301, Tampa, Florida 33610. For more info contact Marty Beeson at (813) 400-0803 info@mvgguitarshows.co/m <https://mvgguitarshows.com/>

NOVEMBER

***The Chicagoland Guitar Show**, November 1, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm, at Atlantis Banquet Facility, Prospect Crossing Plaza, 1273 N. Rand Road. For more info contact Wayne at 773-545-2020 mwbuynsell@sbcglobal.net

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

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Upcoming Events

January 30-31, (dealer day Jan 29). Public hours Sat. 10 am - 5 pm, Sun 10 am - 4 pm, at the Central Florida Fairgrounds. 4603 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL. For more info contact Britt Keen at (850) 294-5537 orlandoguitarexpo@outlook.com. or Morty Beckman www.guitarexpo.net

MARCH

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday March 7th, 2027. Marriott Hotel, 50 N. Martingale, Schaumburg, Il. 9am-3pm. For more info contact Beverly Bakes (847) 931-0707 Bakesguitar@aol.com www.Chicagovintageguitarexpo.com

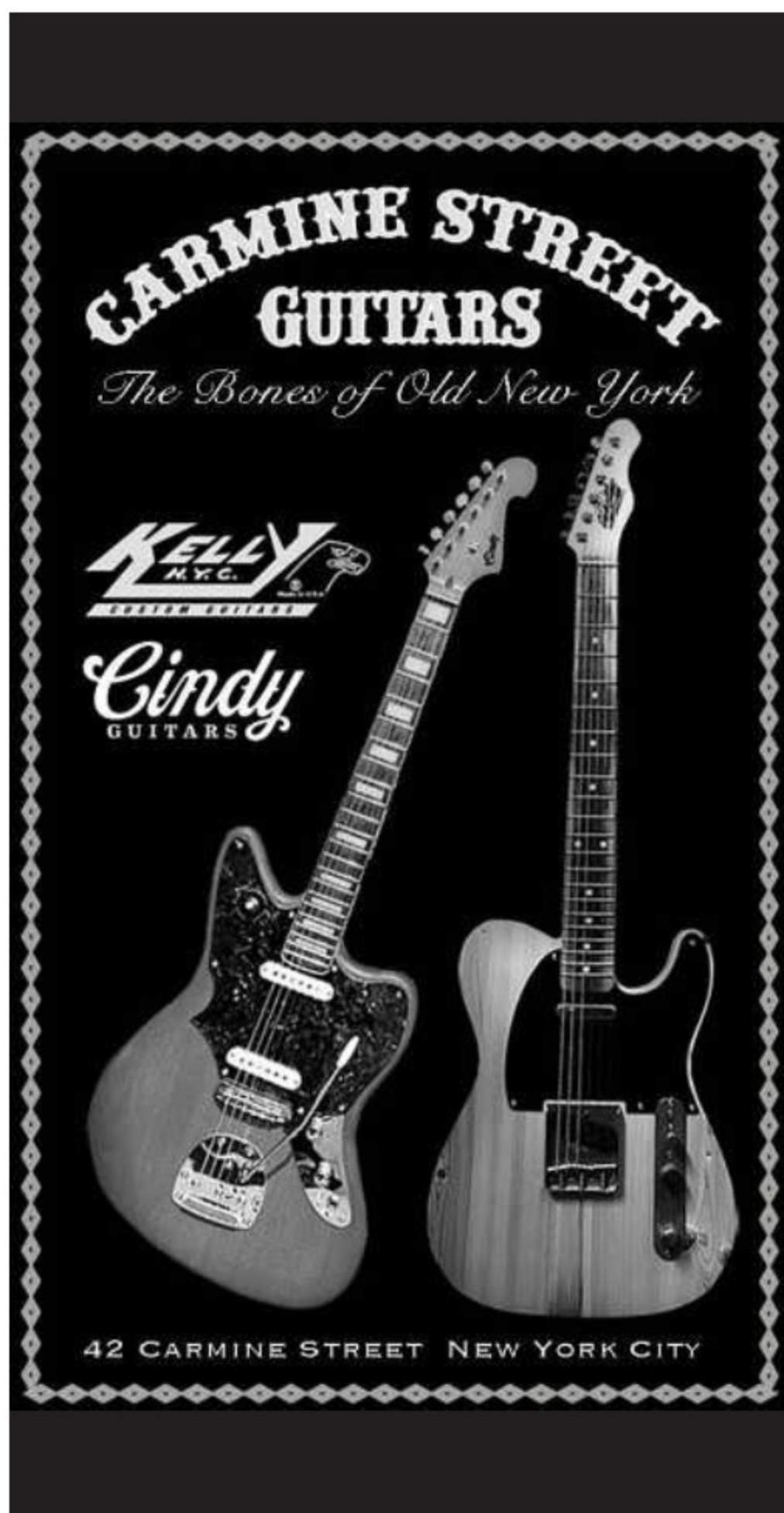
Carolina Guitar Show, March 13 & 14, at the WNC Ag Center, Davis Expo Bld,

I-26, Exit 40, 1301 Fanning Bridge Rd, Fletcher/Asheville, NC 28732. For more info contact Bee 3 Vintage at (828) 298-2197 www.bee3vintage.com

APRIL

4th Annual Mid Atlantic Guitar & Music Show, April 9-11, at Delaware State Fairgrounds, 18500 S. Dupont Hwy, Harrington, DE. For more info contact Mary Knight at (302) 402-3055

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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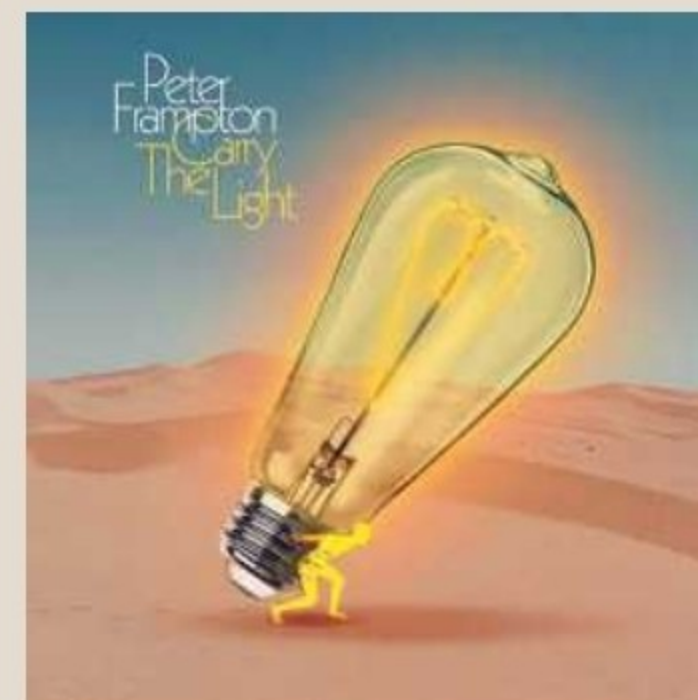
Peter Frampton hasn't let inclusion body myositis, a progressive muscle

disorder, slow him down. After 2019's health announcement, the guitarist said he had a lot of music

hook throughout and a liquid, resonant solo. Rage Against the Machine's Tom Morello brings

to record while he could. *Carry the Light* delivers his first all-new material in 16 years, and Peter co-wrote and produced it with his musician son, Julian.

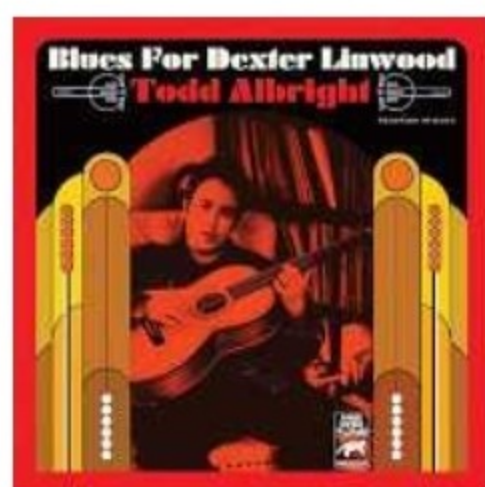
The loose rocker "Buried Treasure" is a Tom Petty tribute, and Heartbreakers keyboardist Benmont Tench sits in; the lyrics are based on Petty's song titles. "I'm Sorry Elle" is a sweet ballad with guest Graham Nash, and Frampton adds a supple acoustic solo and electric fills. The Sheryl Crow duet, "Breaking the Mold," features Frampton's six-string



Peter Frampton
Carry the Light

his aggressive, squealing axe to "Lions at the Gate." The instrumental "Islamorada" features H.E.R. trading guitar lines with Frampton over a light Latin vibe. "Can You Take Me There," with saxophonist Bill Evans' airy playing blending with Frampton's clean runs, is more like smooth-jazz. "Tinderbox," with tough riffing and Evans' sax jabs, seesaws between rock and jazz.

In all, you can't tell if Frampton's medical condition hinders his playing, but his melodic gifts and guitar skills still glow. – **Bret Adams**



Todd Albright
Blues for Dexter Linwood

Pre-war country blues is Albright's specialty, and his fourth album affirms his mastery of the idiom and formidable 12-string fingerpicking, with and without slide. All but one of the 11 tunes come from the masters, most notably 12-stringers Blind Willie McTell and Lead Belly, plus masters like Mississippi John Hurt, Blind Lemon Jefferson, and Pink Anderson. Producer Charlie Parr took the retro feel even deeper by recording Todd in mono, with one mic.

Albright retains the intimacy of the originals without slavish re-creation. Fluid, effortless picking leads into an amiable interpretation of McTell's ragtime "Real Kind Mama." That vibe continues on Lead Belly's "Death of Ella Speed," with Dave Hundrieser's harmonica. With Parr on second guitar, they

blaze through Blind Boy Fuller's "Step It Up and Go" with sharp interplay. Albright, Parr, and Hundrieser offer a powerful interpretation of Bumble Bee Slim's "Meet Me in the Bottom."

On "Frankie," Albright references John Hurt's rich, syncopated picking style, but again, takes it in his own direction. Todd's take on "If That Woman's Love was Whiskey" by Paul Geremia – the '60s folk-blues revivalist who died this past March – melds a relaxed vocal with aggressive picking that seamlessly blends with the older material.

– **Rich Kienzie**



Luca Benedetti
Slow Down for Turtles

The slow-jam revolution continues with this fine effort. Working in the vein of Scofield, Lage, and Molly Miller, et al,

Benedetti uses his Telecaster as a coloring tool, mixing tasty single-note licks and chords and never losing sight of the all-important groove. "Tick Bomb" is a gruff, funky venture, but not in the traditional sense; it's a one-note vamp all about the musical communication between Luca and his rhythm section. "Okapi" mixes jazz, Americana, blues, and funk into something refreshing; it's spartan simplicity is breathtaking.

"Lady Manatee" continues the thread by asking how few notes are required to build a groove as Benedetti's Tele flavors dip their toes in the country-jazz pool with understated perfection. "Slow Down for Turtles" delivers quiet drama, offering a sense of tension in every note and laid over a gated snare drum. Some might call this "crime jazz" or noir guitar, but in the hands of Luca and his trio, it's a movie soundtrack unto itself.

With half the notes of a standard six-string album – or perhaps even less – this gem is a contender for guitar-jam album of the year. – **Pete Prown**

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Hear all the artists in this issue on our FREE playlist on Spotify. Scan >>>



Author Dan Forte with B.B.

REGAL INDEED: STILL REFLECTING ON B.B. KING

By Dan Forte

(Ed. Note: This column first appeared in the February '17 issue.)

As I write this, it's been almost a year and a half since B.B. King passed away. He graced *Vintage Guitar's* August 2015 cover, but I didn't chime in. I needed more time to reflect on the man as much as his music, and to collect my thoughts.

My older brothers and I began vacuuming up blues records in early '67, after the Paul Butterfield Blues Band's first two albums entered the Forte household the preceding Christmas; Pete Welding's liner notes for the self-titled debut were like a textbook. Weekly trips to Berkeley record shops yielded albums by Muddy Waters, James Cotton, Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson, Howlin' Wolf, Junior Wells – which, of course, led us to other blues artists. We ate it up – all of it.

Not long after, ironically, at the mall record store in our Oakland suburb of Hayward, the owner directed me to the B.B. King rack. I'd heard the name, mainly on posters for Fillmore concerts I'd been too young to attend, and in the pages of a new magazine

called *Guitar Player*. So I picked up *Live At The Regal*.

I wasn't ready for it. The slick, horn-driven band, the call-and-response with the all-black audience, the blistering tempo of the opener, "Every Day I Have The Blues" reminded me more of James Brown's *Live At The Apollo* than the Chicago blues I'd been digging. But I kept listening, went back a few weeks later to see what other B.B. albums were in that rack, and picked up *The Jungle*.

Needless to say, I was soon hooked. I honestly have no idea how many B.B. LPs and CDs I own today. I saw him perform a couple dozen times – first with my parents at 1967's Monterey Jazz Festival (including a jam with T-Bone Walker), but soon at Fillmore West (with a famous battle with Albert King that I recounted in my *GP* tribute to Albert), concert halls, nightclubs, the Paul Masson Mountain Winery, his traveling B.B. King Blues Festival, and Eric Clapton's 2004 Crossroads Guitar Festival in Dallas.

His Blues Festival hit Austin in 2001, and after a satisfying but long day that included Tommy Castro and John Hiatt, B.B. was

preceded by a Buddy Guy set that was, frankly, more jive than substance. I couldn't blame my wife for wanting to split, but I pleaded, "Be patient. You've never seen B.B. King. I guarantee you'll be glad you stayed." She did, and she was. The King charmed her, as much with his personality as with his music.

When I joined the staff of *GP* at 22, getting press passes for B.B. shows was no problem, so I went to see him virtually every time he was in town. It puzzled me that the other editors rarely went. I felt I was representing the mag, and it was a sign of respect. This was, after all, B.B. King!

The procedure was always the same. After the show, his valet, "Rebop," would man the dressing room door. "B.B.'s changing. You can see him in a few minutes," he'd tell fans. I'd wait in the back, watching him sign autographs for every person who wanted one, without fail, always a gentleman. Then I'd reintroduce myself, shake hands, and thank him for a great show. Somehow, he always seemed to remember me.

As for his "essential" recordings, absolutely get *Regal*, and with his early Modern catalog retitled and jumbled up, I highly recommend the Enlightenment collection *Complete Recordings, 1949-1962*. If six CDs spanning eight hours seems excessive, it's one-stop shopping for the cost of a single CD. Pay particular attention to the version of "You Done Lost Your Good Thing Now" with the unaccompanied intro; also "Just Like A Woman" (retitled "Rockin' Twist") reveals T-Bone's influence.

Don't overlook *Blues Is King*, in front of a smaller club audience, but with perhaps his more searing tone on any album. *Completely Well*, with "Thrill Is Gone," still floors me, as do the big-band *Blues On Top Of Blues* and *Indianola Mississippi Seeds*.

Also get *Blues All Around Me*, his excellent autobiography co-written by David Ritz, and *The Life Of Riley* biographical DVD.

If this sounds like a heap of stuff, it is. It should be. B.B. King was a humble, gracious man, but no less a giant – not just of blues, not just of guitar playing, but of American culture. He should have his own wing in the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture. College courses should be devoted to his music and the life of this sharecropper turned icon.

In the words of "Worry, Worry" from *Live At The Regal*, "Someday, baby."

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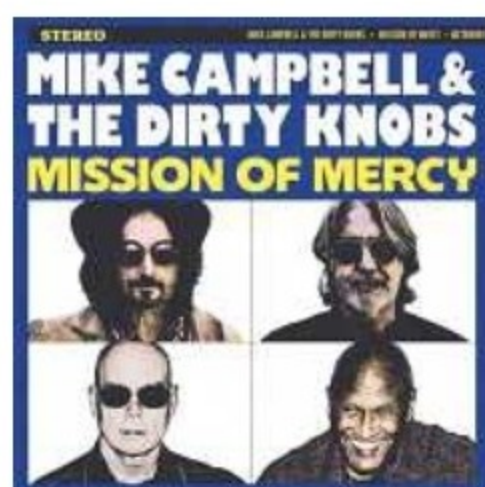


Pride Of Lions Unbridled

“Eye of the Tiger” co-writer Jim Peterik returns with vocalist Toby Hitchcock and co-axeman Mike

Aquino for 12 powerful tracks of melodichard rockboastingseriousguitar. Shamelessly leaning into the instrumentation, production, and lyricism of movie anthems from the early ’80s, the band’s conviction is rock-solid without an iota of irony. *Unbridled* is the group’s eighth studio album. Drummer Ed Breckenfeld and bassist Bob Lizik offer granite-like rhythmic foundations for tightly arranged compositions that champion the human spirit and the quest to overcome adversity.

The opening title track firmly establishes that Aquino ain’t no wedding band guitarist – he smells blood and he was born to cut heads. Peterik supports on second guitar and keyboards. Heavy but accessible tunes like “Edge of Forever,” “Don’t Waste a Wish On Me,” and “1000 Long Goodbyes” reflect the current state of the world, loss of love, and the price of ambition. Aquino wails on “I Can’t Let Go”; every solo is an unabashed “more is more” étude. The combined vocal performances of Peterik and Hitchcock soar expressively on the mid-tempo ballad “Hell Or High Water,” as Aquino takes the Neal Schon approach with melody, harmony, and space. – **Oscar Jordan**



Mike Campbell & The Dirty Knobs Mission of Mercy

Mike Campbell eased from being one of the greatest side men in rock to likable frontman, and *Mission of Mercy* is his fourth album with The Dirty Knobs.

Campbell clicks with guitarist/keyboardist Chris Holt, bassist Lance Morrison, and longtime Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers drummer Steve Ferrone on straight-up rock songs. Several tunes offer witty lyrics sharpened by Campbell’s sly Florida drawl, while others boast intricate arrangements.

“Let Me Back in My Dream” is a rumbling rocker, while the pop-blues “My Mama Told Me” includes woozy and droning slide. “More Than Gold” is a lush country duet with Morgane Stapleton. “Bongo Mania,” with The B-52s’ Kate Pierson, is frantic fun with its guitar attack and Ferrone’s wild



Jim Peterik

bongos – obviously! The vivid “Armageddon” includes ominous guitar, dark lyrics, and Campbell’s cynical vocals, the downright funny “Vicious Hangover” should become a bar-room jukebox standard, and “Vagrant” is a genuine surprise – a jazz-inflected song with mostly spoken, Beat-inspired vocals.

No question, *Mission of Mercy* is further proof Campbell has earned his time in the spotlight. – **BA**



Tony Rice Tony Rice

Bluegrass icon Tony Rice (1951-2020) left an enduring influence on generations of guitarists. His flatpicking brilliance, some of it played on the D-28 owned by his late hero, Clarence White, affirmed and transcended his bluegrass roots as he expanded into eclectic variations of the style. Now reissued on vinyl and digital, Rice’s third solo album was released in 1977, the year he revealed his wider virtuosity as a member of the David Grisman Quintet on its groundbreaking debut.

Mandolins are handled by Grisman and Rice’s brother, Larry, while Richard Greene and Darol Anger bring fiddle, J.D. Crowe plays banjo, Jerry Douglas contributes resonator and Todd Phillips plays upright bass. Rice, who also handled occasional vocals, tears through favorites like “Way

Downtown,” (with a cleanly picked intro and a second break), “Banks of the Ohio,” “Eighth of January” and “Temperance Reel.”

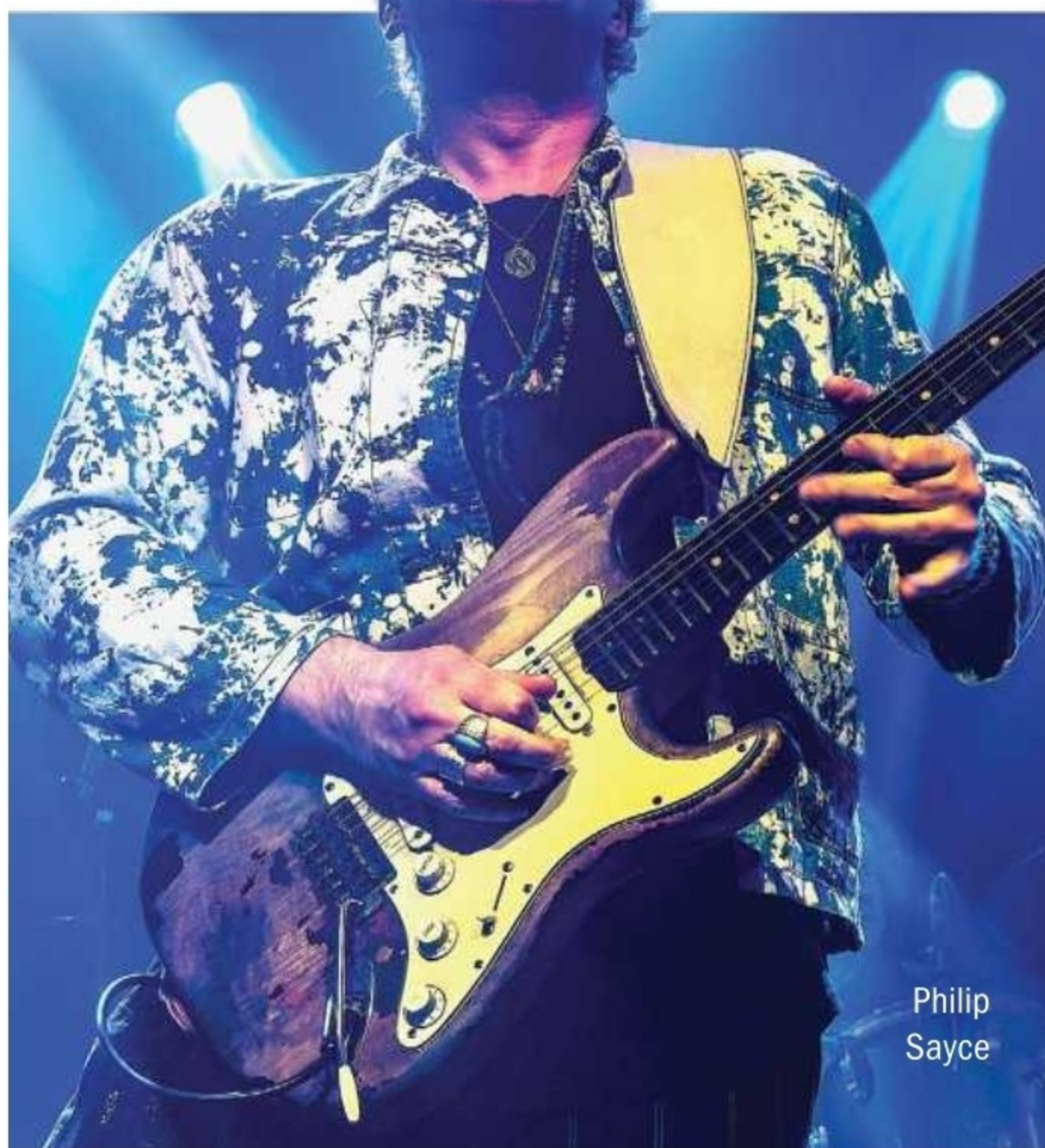
On “Farewell Blues,” the Dixieland tune that became a bluegrass standard, Rice unleashes a furious statement amid the other soloists. It’s no surprise that he shines on Jesse McReynolds’ instrumental “Stoney Creek” and Bill Monroe’s “Big Mon.” Rice’s progressive future can be heard on both “Plastic Banana” and Grisman’s jazz-influenced “Rattlesnake.” In many ways, his monumental legacy began here. – **RK**



Asia Live in England

Don’t laugh: The new Asia lineup is a powerhouse. Featuring leader Geoff Downes on keys, veteran guitarist John Mitchell, megadrummer Virgil Donati, and bassist/vocalist Harry Whitley – who sings scarily like John Wetton – this album includes their entire 4x-platinum debut from 1982. While previous Asiaguitarists were often moonlighting shredders, Mitchell’s chops are reverent to the Yes/Genesis/Pink Floyd playbook, which imbues the live material an authenticity long missing.

The platter launches with the uber-compressed power chords of “Heat of the Moment,” where the guitarist honors Steve Howe’s riffage, but adds his own runs with grace and fire. Cue



Philip Sayce

up “Only Time Will Tell” and especially “Sole Survivor” for more crunchy guitar, all backed by Donati’s mad pummeling, Downes’ synths, and the miraculous voice of Whitley.

Sure, you have to endure inane ditties like “One Step Closer” and “Here Comes the Feeling,” but power up “Time Again” for prog-and-roll fury where Mitchell reminds us that the original Asia revealed a side of Steve Howe’s guitarmanhood fully apart from Yes, and Mitchell nails it. Better yet, there’s a studio album coming from this fierce, revitalized lineup. – **PP**



Philip Sayce
Scorched Earth, Vol. 2: Live In LA/London

Strat lord Philip Sayce’s fans wanted another live album, and they got it. Performed live at the Baked Potato in L.A. and The Garage in London, Sayce puts on a hell of a show mixing blues, psychedelic rock, mind-altering Uni-Vibe tones, a pinch of Texas, and passion. Busting out crowd favorites such as “One Foot In the Grave,” “Once,” and the foot-stomping “Bitter Monday,” Sayce plays guitar like his hair is on fire.

With a full-court press from bassist Sam Bolle and drummer Bryan Head, the Sayce trio mercilessly lays siege upon the adoring masses with high-intensity, post-SRV/Hendrix machinations and textural wizardry. Philip is the master of his universe as he effortlessly manipulates time and space. On the solo to “Peace Machine,” he holds a note forever, then unleashes hyperdriven pentatonic fury and show-stopping volume swells.

Sayce knows every axe trick in the book and he sings the blues like his wife just left him. On “Lady Love Divine,” he quotes Miles Davis’ “Jean Pierre” with conviction. Faces continue melting as Sayce summons to-die-for overdrive with zeal and virtuosity. Other highlights include “Morning Star” and “Spanish Castle Magic.” – **OJVG**

extra. EXTRA



MICK GOODRICK & FRED HERSCH

Feebles, Fables and Ferns

Jazz doesn’t get much more sophisticated than this archival 1988 recording between late guitarist Goodrick and pianist Hersch. There is no wanton blowing here; the duo deftly weaves around each, never overplaying. The title cut floats with gorgeous guitar improv, while “Falling Grace” sounds like jazz floating down from the heavens. This album captures the sound of two virtuosos at work – and play – **PP**



NETTIE BAKER

Cream Chronicled

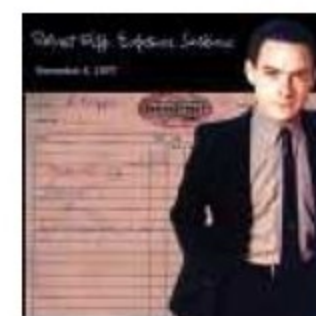
From 1966 through ’68, Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce, and Ginger Baker revolutionized rock as Cream. It’s the stuff of legend, myth – and misinformation. Baker’s daughter sorts it out here, including correcting errors made in earlier publications. Concerts (including the time Jimi Hendrix wanted to jam), the 1993 Rock Hall induction, and 2005 reunion are covered. Guitar, bass, and amp info is sprinkled throughout. – **BA**



YARN

Sunday Night Sermon

This NYC-based unit has been around the Americana scene 20 years, led by singer/guitarist Blake Christiana, takes a no-frills approach free of artifice. Lead guitarist Andy Thomas’ straightforward accompaniment proves the perfect foil whether he plays slide or standard leads. His nuanced lead-in on “Where We Land” fits Christiana’s vocal hand-in-glove and he adds edgy licks to “Good Day.” – **RK**



ROBERT FRIPP

Basing Street/Exposure Sessions

Recorded in December, 1977, these unearthed songs feature a “What if?” supergroup of Robert Fripp, bassist John Wetton, and drummer Phil Collins. The sessions helped shape Fripp’s ’79 *Exposure* album, and are unfinished. Yet as a historical document, “Disengage” and “Slow Groove I” forge a link between the progressive and new-wave eras of King Crimson. For diehard fans. – **PP**



CLOSE ENEMIES

Close Enemies

Bassist Tom Hamilton of Aerosmith and guitarist Peter Stroud from Sheryl Crow have joined with singer Chasen Hampton to create an album of good old-fashioned melodic rawk. With catchy hooks, chunkilicious guitar riffage, and slide guitar, *Close Enemies* time-travels rock back to the super sounds of the ’70s. Highlights include the haunting “More Than I Could Ever Need.” – **OJ**



GIPSY KINGS

Historia

The iconic French-Gitano band is back with guitar master Tonino Baliardo, whose uncle was flamenco giant Manitas de Plata. “Señorita” is an instant GK classic, with a beat that will make anyone dance. Baliardo’s nylon-string mixed with hot electric solos on “La Vida” is intoxicating. The rest of *Historia* is solid, but these two Latin bangers steal the show. – **PP**

VIBE-EVOCATIVE

Eastman's Fullertone Offset '62

When you say the word “offset,” you’re making an indelible reference to some of the great Fender solidbodies of yesteryear – namely the Jazzmaster, Jaguar, and Mustang. In that light, the noted guitar makers at Eastman, who’ve carved a reputation for making high-quality instruments from their facility in China, have unleashed their Offset ’62 as part of their Fullertone Series. Let’s spank one.

Price: \$1,259
www.eastmanguitars.com

The Offset ’62 offers a lot of fine ideas in an upper mid-price guitar. You’ll note the asymmetrical “offset” hips of the body, which is made of roasted black limba (a.k.a. korina). The neck is 25.5"-scale roasted maple with a rosewood fretboard featuring a 12" radius, a two-bolt neck joint, and 24 medium-jumbo Jescar frets. There’s an anodized pickguard, nickel hardware, Goldo DG vibrato, and two Tonerider soapbar humbucker pickups with gold-foil covers. Two Volumes, a Tone, and three-way toggle complete the electronics package, along with Orange Drop (022µF) capacitors and CTS 250K audio-taper pots. The model comes in two colors, Dakota Red and Gold.

In hand, the Offset ’62 offers a chunky, C-shaped neck and comfortable body; our tester had a fine setup with low action. This being an offset, it’s hard not to dive into the surf-guitar classics, from “Walk Don’t Run” to “Miserlou” and, no surprise, the Eastman sounds great with reverb, tremolo, and all your favorite twangy licks. The vibrato is Bigsby-styled and set to dive-only for light wiggling. But, as it’s loaded with humbuckers, go ahead and ladle on some gain for heavy riffs, blues, country, or whatever your heart fancies; again, though, the accent is on retro sounds.

In all, the Fullertone Offset ’62 is an above-average performer meant to evoke a certain vibe, and delivers on it. It’s a sturdy plank that combines vintage looks and appointments with modern features. – **Pete Prown**



Price: \$350
www.dophix.com

BOOSTER X TWO

The Dophix Magnifico

Hand-built in Italy, Dophix’s Magnifico Dual Boost was designed in collaboration with Brazilian blues-rocker Artur Menezes. An all-analog box, it’s two booster pedals in one. Why would a player want two boosters? Turns out there are tons of reasons.

Simple in layout, the Magnifico is constructed with high-quality components including vintage-grade resistors, and its secret sauce derives from each boost having independent input and output jacks with on/off (true-bypass) footswitches and Level knobs. Boost A can be used to smack the front of a great overdrive pedal to derive even more drive or crunch, then Boost B can enter at the end of a pedal chain to raise overall volume for, say, a solo. Another idea – use the boosts to fuel separate amplifiers. Or three, take the output of Boost A and (with a short cable) plug it into the input of Boost B, chaining Magnifico’s path into a three-stage gain booster. Cool!

The Magnifico can make a good amp sound like a great amp, and a great amp sound like warm, clear heaven. Its dual ins/outs push the box into a category all its own, and the all-analog guts are icing on the cake. – **Pete Prown**

FLAGSHIP COMPANION

The Martin DE Retro Plus Granadillo

Martin's D-28 has been one of the most iconic boxes for nearly a century, and it's also one of the most copied. Even Martin is working to replicate it: "Inspired by iconic 28-style dreadnoughts," their marketing says for the DE Retro Plus Granadillo. While not a clone of the 28, it's in line.

Sporting solid granadillo back and sides, it's a welcome departure from rosewood; its wider, wilder grain and chestnut color mark the appearance outwardly, while its sonic differences are all but imperceptible. The top is torrefied spruce with an aged toner that makes the top shine. Scalloped X-bracing is similar to the 28, even if current 28s have the braces forward-shifted. Binding on the top, back, and rosette round out a look similar to the flagship.

With its mortise-and-tenon joint, the Grenadillo's neck departs slightly from the D-28's dovetail. The latter has a low modified-oval profile that's slightly beefier than the Grenadillo's, but the dimensions are otherwise the same – 1.75" nut, 25.4" scale. There is no volute.

Martin made a laudable choice with the ebony bridge and fretboard; the slight streaking is plainly visible where it could have been dyed dark. And the open-back tuners feel premium, especially compared to those on most import Martins. L.R. Baggs Element electronics are also a step up.

Our tester played and sounded like a premium instrument, and that should be expected at its price point. Warm and articulate, it offered great balance, the neck is comfortable, frets well-dressed and polished. In all, it sounds and feels like a proper Martin.

The DE Retro Plus is part of the builder's Road Series, made in Mexico. The Grenadillo ships with a fantastic gig bag, which some may find preferable to the molded hardshell of the American version. – **Michael Shirek**

Price: \$2,099
www.martinguitar.com



FRYETTE VALVULATOR MINI

Fryette's Valvulator Mini is a high-voltage buffer for guitarists who use modelers, digital amps and long signal chains. Housed in a steel chassis, it uses a JJ 12AX7/ECC83 tube and is AC-powered. Controls include two impedance switches, phase switch, and ground-loop switch. Outputs include 1/4" unbalanced low-impedance and transformer-isolated, along with balanced XLR out.



GATOR ICON TRAVEL BAG

Gator's Icon Stadium travel bag has a 1000D nylon exterior with 1" padding and padded interior with removable neck support and body padding. Interior pockets provide storage for cables and accessories, and a dedicated exterior pocket is sized for multi-effects units or a small, loaded pedalboard. Other details include reinforced carry handle and hideaway backpack straps.



TECH 21 DOUBLE DRIVE REISSUE

Tech 21's Double Drive Reissue has two cascading Drive controls to set the amount of Class A power amp output stage distortion as well as Class A/B power-amp output distortion. Its Tone control is a low-pass filter that removes high-end without losing mids.

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

TICKET TO RIDE

The PRS S2 Vela HHT

PRS created its S2 line to offer an American-made instrument at an earthly price. The Vela is the Maryland builder's offset model, with an asymmetrical shape harkening to that stretched-out Fender Jazzmaster design of yore, and its latest is the HHT, a designation that stands for a humbucker/humbucker/tremolo configuration.

For goodies, the S2 HHT offers a mahogany body and neck with a 22-fret rosewood fretboard. The body has a bevel around the top for comfort, and it nicely complements that distinctive scoop in the cutaway. Like the Starla, the Vela is a top-loaded solidbody, so its pickups sit within a large, fanciful pickguard reminiscent of Gibson's Marauder from the '70s. Add in a PRS vibrato bridge, PRS Phase III locking tuners with wing buttons, and bird inlays.

Price: \$1,769 (satin),
\$2,049 (gloss)
www.prsguitars.com

you can pull up the Tone knob and tap the coils to conjure single-coil sounds, making it very useful for gigs. Also look for a variety of nitro finishes in gloss and satin; our tester was an attractive Dark Cherry Sunburst.

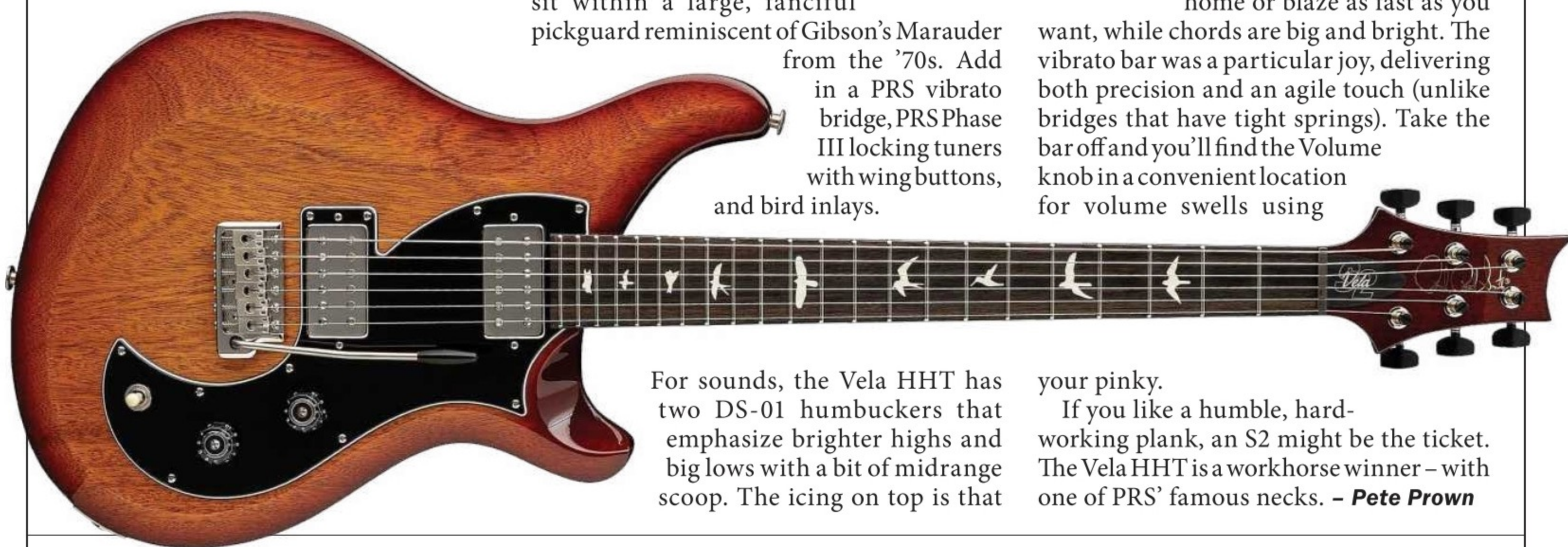
On the job, the Vela HHT dazzled with its Pattern Regular neck carve. Feel is subjective, but the 25" scale, 10" radius, and excellent setup and fret dress (on PRS Standard fret wire) make this plank a joy to play. You can bend strings 'til the cows come home or blaze as fast as you

want, while chords are big and bright. The vibrato bar was a particular joy, delivering both precision and an agile touch (unlike bridges that have tight springs). Take the bar off and you'll find the Volume knob in a convenient location for volume swells using

For sounds, the Vela HHT has two DS-01 humbuckers that emphasize brighter highs and big lows with a bit of midrange scoop. The icing on top is that

your pinky.

If you like a humble, hard-working plank, an S2 might be the ticket. The Vela HHT is a workhorse winner – with one of PRS' famous necks. – **Pete Prown**



NEW UNIVERSE

The Blackstar Beam Mini

The guitar universe is filling with app-fueled tools. One of the latest is Blackstar's Beam Mini, a 24-watt stereo amplifier that runs on battery or wall wart with (of course) an app that accesses a universe of amps, cabs, microphones, and effects. And that's barely scratching the surface.

Connecting the app reveals a graphic interface of amplifiers and pedals that can be used to build a virtual rig. There are artist signature patches, community tone sharing, backing tracks for jamming, video lessons, and a built-in tuner; you can even multi-track guitar into your favorite DAW. There are 35-plus studio-quality FX

for instant on-the-fly adjustments, CabRig IR-based speaker and mic simulation, and audio streaming. A Moises AI update will soon offer instrument isolation on tracks – think of the possibilities when learning guitar or bass parts from records.

The upside of the Beam Mini is that, as a portable amplifier, pedalboard, and learning tool, you'll have a zillion patches at your command;

Price: \$229.99
www.blackstaramps.com

conversely, if you're the plug-and-play type who gets frustrated by technology, this isn't the gizmo for you. But here's a better thought – give it to a teen just learning to play and watch them blossom. It'll make you wish Blackstar had invented the Beam Mini 50 years ago. – **Pete Prown VG**





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 '71 Sunburst "Lefty" 4Bolt One Piece Maple neck Refret & Cahnged nut.
 '71 Black/3Bolt Rose neck Early 3Bolt neck Strat, 1Strings Tree Steel Tremolo Assy.
 '72 Sonic Blue/3Bolt 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.
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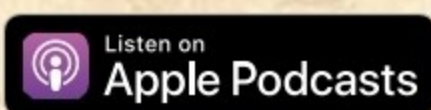
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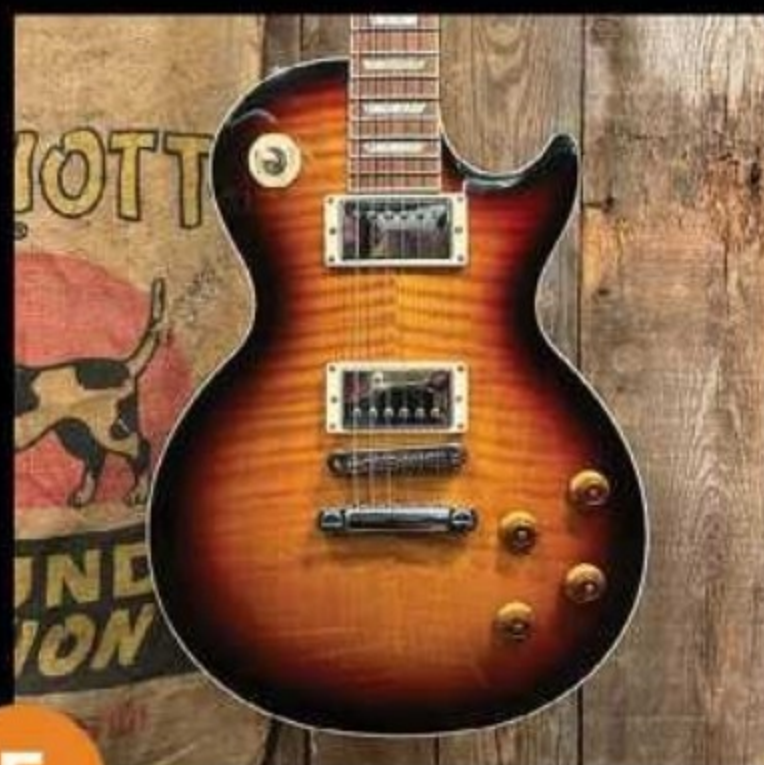
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01 J.C. Long is an avid VG reader and these are a few of his "old bangers," mostly Martins. Along the top are a '96 HD-28VR, '06 D-28, '07 HD-28, and a '98 HD-28VS. The bottom row starts with an '09 Bourgeois BR/AD, followed by a '12 D-45, '06 HD-42, '17 D-41, and an '08 D-35.

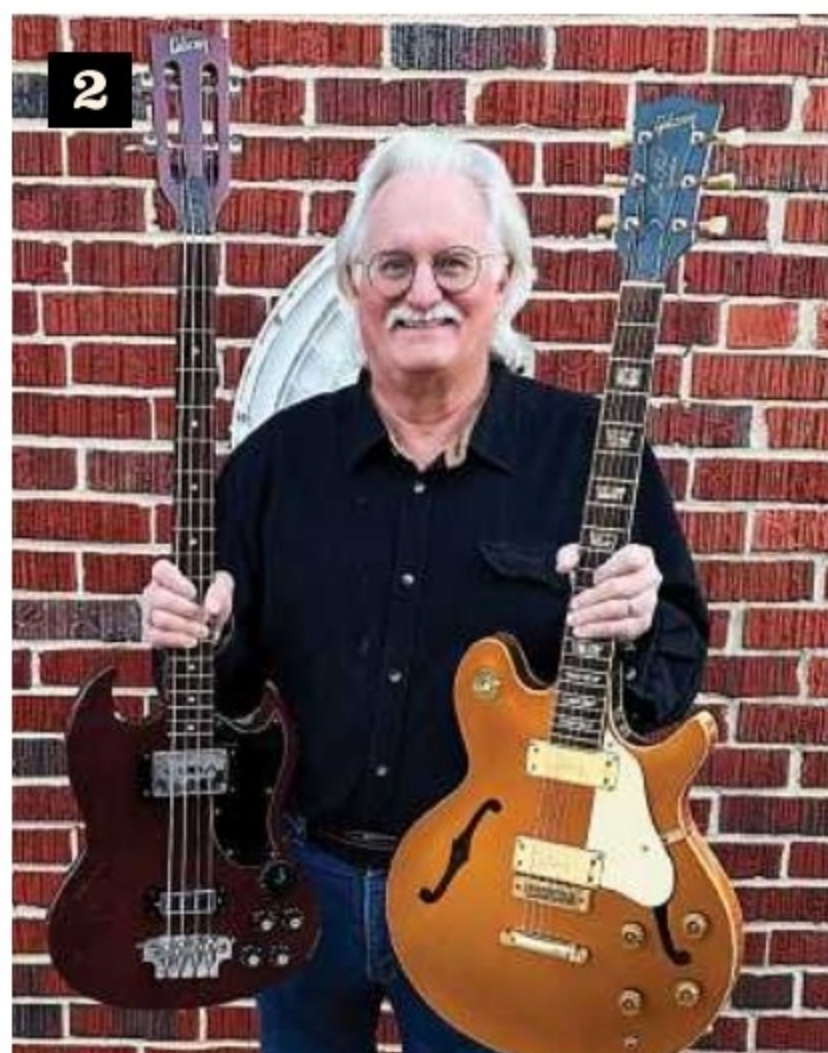
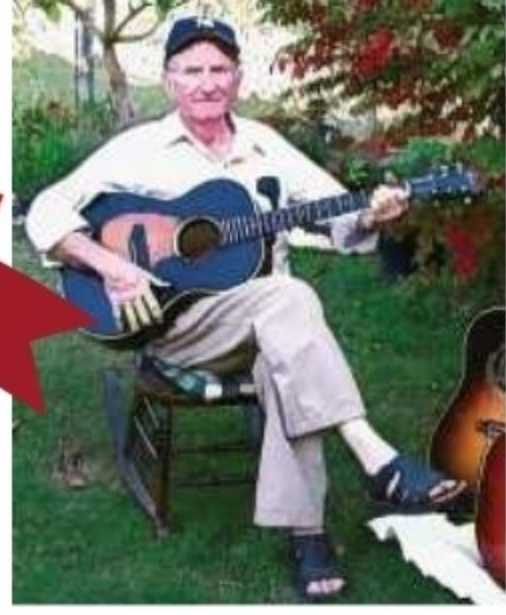
02 Edward Sparks says two of his five Gibsons are considered vintage – the 1970 EB-3 and '76 Les Paul Signature. Both had short production runs, and today teeter on "rare" status.

03 "Desert Fred" Stevens recently dressed his Gibson '59 Tribute double-cut bass and Special with color-matched pearl pickguards (left) and liked them so much he grabbed a couple other favorites for this shot. They're joined by a Les Paul Standard '60 reissue and '63 Custom reissue.

04 Paul Johnson believes guitars are works of art, and three of his favorites are this Heritage 535, 150, and 575.

05 Kevin Hart is a longtime subscriber whose collection includes this '66 Strato-caster (left), '66 Princeton Reverb, '66 Guild Starfire III, '99 J-45, Marchione Vintage Tremolo, Tom Anderson Classic S, and a Divided By 13 JRT9/15.

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