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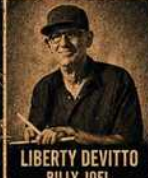
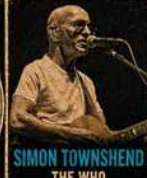
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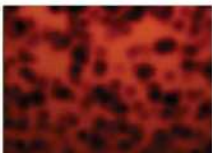
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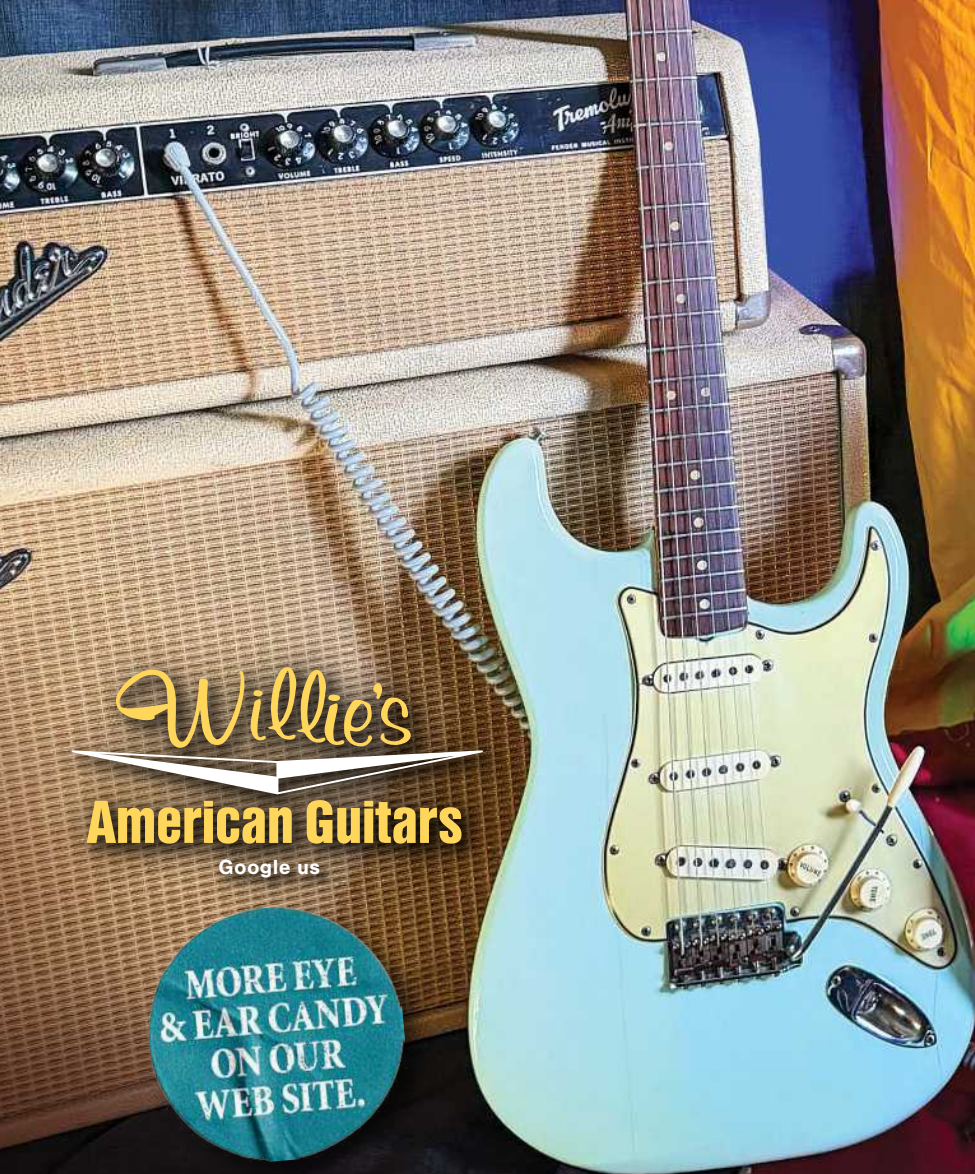
Tremo-o-Strat-Strat

Our scruffy "selected by coin toss" photo for your eyes and heart features a **late '65 Tremolux** in original white Tolex (in '65? No Way... yes way, we've seen 3). See Eric Clapton's Tremolux on the cover of Blind Faith, this one is clean, all stock.

'64 Clay Dot Strat striking in older "sonic blue" repaint

'69 Strat, Ex, original - Pre dates "Woodstock" by 2 months

'59 Martin 110T (Yes C. F. Martin) Caution these are Cult amps, turn away.



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24 CALIFORNIA KING Rivera Stage 2 Mod Fender Deluxe Reverb

Amp guru Paul Rivera was tapped by the top echelon of West Coast guitarists to dress up their lead tones. Here's one reason his work has garnered so much respect.
| By Dave Hunter

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| By Ward Meeker

58 THE 40 GREATEST GUITAR ALBUMS
Marking 40 years of publication means polling VG readers and followers to learn what they think are the best guitar-centric albums.

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COVER: Bill Kirchen: Tommy Kile. Tyler Armstrong: Josh Meredith. '57 Precision fretless: Guitar Center.

THIS PAGE: Tyler Armstrong courtesy of artist.

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READER MAIL

ZERO FRETS, MANY FANS

Reading Michael Wright's "From Gypsy Jazz to Queen: A Zero Fret Tale" in the July issue was of personal interest to me.

Back when I was a teen playing in my local rock band in Bayonne, New Jersey, I was looking for a guitar to replace my Supro Dual Tone. I settled on a 1964 Ampeg Wild Dog Jazz Split Sound – a beautiful guitar by Burns of London. I never gave any thought to that "zero" fret. It was there, but I didn't think it odd or different. The guitar always played great and as much as I played back then, I never had to do much tuning from song to song. What a great guitar.

I still own the Wild Dog, but have relegated it to inactive duty. I can't bring myself to get rid of it, though – too many fun memories made.

Thanks for always taking the time to write articles that strike a familiar "tune" with your readers.

Dominick Trupia
Spring, Texas

I really enjoyed the July issue, especially seeing Elliot Easton's nice selection of lefties for us southpaws, a smaller part of the VG family. Usually, we have to imagine the reverse of the beautiful right-hand instruments we see monthly. That Rickenbacker was particularly tasty, being one of three made.

The zero-fret feature did a great job of cataloging some interesting models. The zero fret made it easy to string my lefty '72 Penco with minimum work to the nut. And, all strings ring true on the zero.

Dennis Bator
Nutley, New Jersey

ALPHA WOLF

Wolf Marshall's always excellent "Fretprints" columns are always a must-read. His insight on Peter Green ("Arrival of the Green God," August '26) reminded me of meeting Peter briefly in New York. I later authored a Signature Licks book, and sent a copy to Peter's nephew, Joe, thanking him for his biographical assistance and asking if he would give it to Peter. They sent back a photo of Peter holding the book, which I treasure.

Dave Rubin
New York, New York

I really enjoyed Wolf Marshall's "Fretprints" featuring *A Hard Road* by John Mayall & The Bluesbreakers.

I vividly remember being 17 when the album

was released, and I immediately bought it. Back then, I couldn't imagine how any guitarist could fill the shoes of Eric Clapton, and to be honest, when I first listened, I wasn't knocked out. I now know that was mainly because Green's guitar tone was different – subdued – compared to Clapton. His solos were also different; he could do traditional blues extremely well, but included a more-humanistic emotion in his phrasing. I got to thinking...

Clapton, too, played with immense emotion, but it was different – more song "focused," if that makes sense. Green's emotion was directly from his soul, and it didn't matter if it was blues. In contrast, listen to John Mayall's *Crusade* album, featuring Mick Taylor. I've always felt Taylor did a better job portraying traditional blues, rigidly adhering to the Claptonist mold of what electric blues should be.

Thank you, Wolf, for doing a superb evaluation and review of *A Hard Road*, finely dissecting each track and reminding us of these fine performances. Even cooler, it took me back to 1967 and the excitement of hearing this great music for the first time.

John R. Wiley
Beaumont, California

Wolf Marshall's "Fretprints" has been one of the things I have enjoyed reading most over the many years of subscribing to VG. The April '26 issue on Steely Dan's *Aja* was spot on and so well-written.

Aja has been one of my favorite LPs since I first heard it. Wolf's descriptions of the songs' themes and the inside information on the recording process made for a very interesting and informative piece.

Douglas Watts
Estero, Florida

PAEANS TO PAPER, PEOPLE & PERSISTENCE

I enjoy all aspects of VG, especially "Pop 'N Hiss," "Fretprints," and the contents of both "First Fret" and reviews. I enjoy the feature articles, too, especially when an artist or band I do not expect is interviewed.

Keep up the excellent work. I look forward to each month's content and love a quality print magazine; I'm old-fashioned, perhaps.

Matthew Bair
Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania

VG's interviews are spot on, discussing



Peter Green with Dave Rubin's *Signature Licks* book.

anything from influences to practical tips and experience, to gear used on recordings and live.

I also really enjoy the reviews of equipment and hearing about artists I'm unfamiliar with. It opens up a lot of new listening; I've been a subscriber for many years going back to newspaper, and will remain one for however many years I have left on the planet.

Keep of the great work – and the hardcopy format!

William Beals
Lebanon, Ohio

Keep going, VG, you have really good content that keeps me informed and motivated to keep playing and improving my guitar skills.

Andy Millar
Christchurch, New Zealand

Whether or not I'm interested in an artist being interviewed or piece of gear being reviewed, VG maintains a standard of journalism – the writers always know what they're talking about. Dan Forte's June column, "Get Punked," wasn't of particular interest to me, but I'll always read it because of his byline. I'll also read any article discussing Teles on the off-chance I discover something new after playing one since I was 19 (the logic/passion balance is always tricky!).

Tony Batey
Oxford, U.K.

VG has changed tremendously in the 28 years since my first issue, and I'm glad to see it has adapted with the times while still publishing something that is printed and delivered to my mailbox every month. Thank you, and I hope you continue to offer the print version for years to come.

David Haberlau
Auburn, New York

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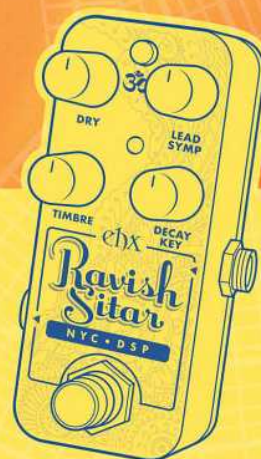
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VG MARKS 40 YEARS

It's hard to believe that we're marking 40 years of publishing *Vintage Guitar*! Of course, the keys to that longevity are you – the subscribers and advertisers – many of whom have been with us through the majority of that time.

We hope you've enjoyed our anniversary celebration so far with "The 40 Most Valuable Guitars" in the February issue and "The 40 Most Valuable Basses, Amps, Banjos, and Mandos" in May. We continue in this issue with our tribute to the "40 Greatest Albums" on page ?? and our 40th Anniversary Dream Gear Giveaway, on page ??.

Our final anniversary feature will be "40 Greatest Guitarists" in our December issue. Watch for it! I want to take the opportunity to remind of/introduce you to VG's Subscriber Rewards Program, which offers discounts on apparel, subscription renewals, *The Official Vintage Guitar Price Guide*, and other items. If you're not familiar, it's likely because we promote the program via e-mail notifications. If you have not received any offers or notices, you can add (or update) your contact info with a few simple steps:

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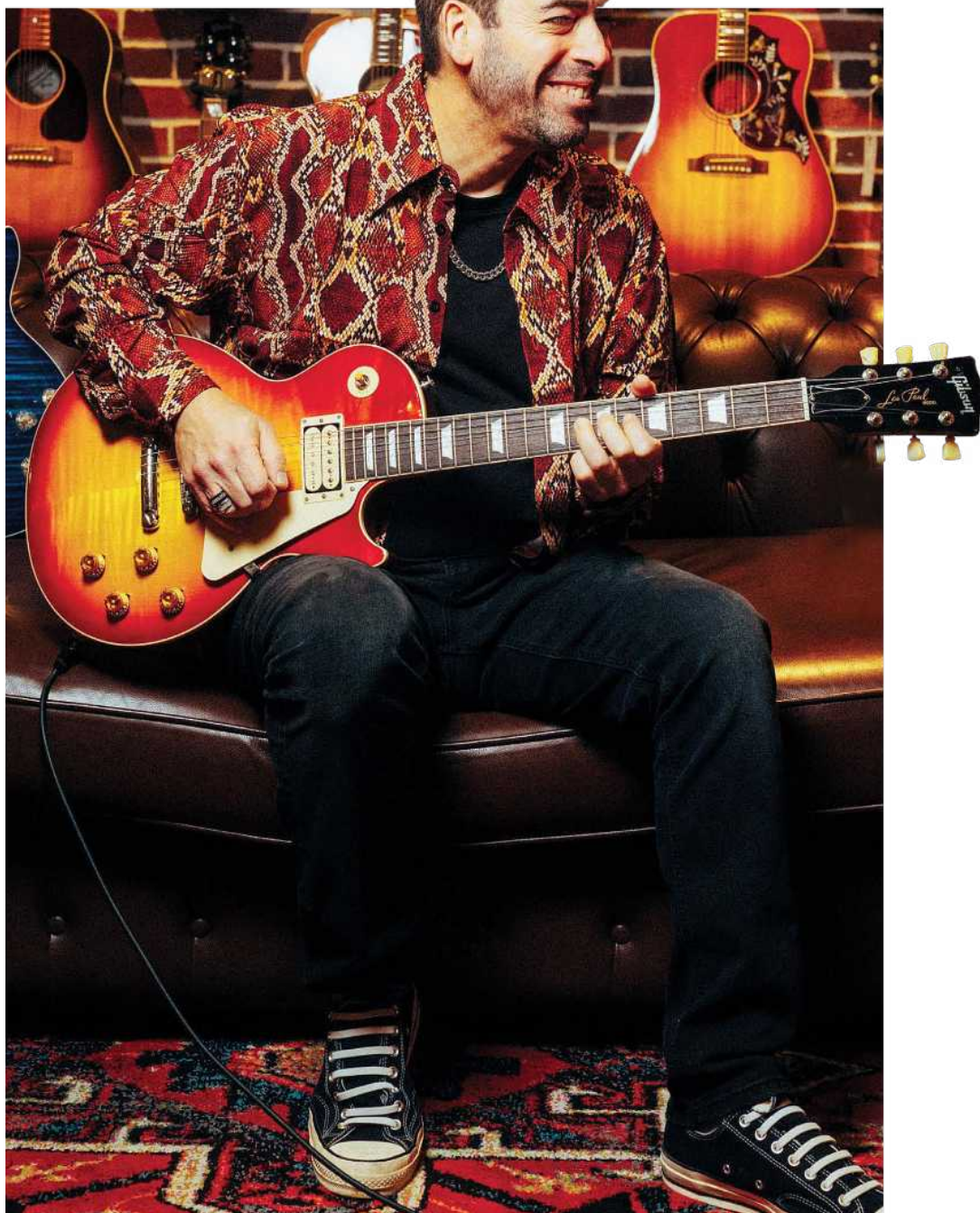
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– Alan Greenwood, Founder/Publisher

LIVING BLUES HONORS STROGER

Blues musician Bob Stroger ("Check This Action," August '25) was named Blues Artist of the Year and Best Bass Player by *Living Blues* magazine during its annual awards show July 1.

At 94, Stroger is the oldest blues musician still actively touring, recording, and performing. All told, he has appeared on more than 30 albums as a bassist. He received a Lifetime Tribute at the Chicago Blues Festival, and in 2025 was inducted to the Blues Hall of Fame.



ALBERT CASTIGLIA

Abbey Road Blues

London is no stranger to cool blues albums and shows, so when the opportunity came up for Albert Castiglia to work there, he jumped on a plane. His edgy latest, *Grits & Glory*, travels the spectrum, from the U.S. blues-rock

of "In My America" to a cover of the Beatles' 1968 stomper "Yer Blues." Albert and band cut tracks live within the vaunted walls of Abbey Road Studios, resulting in a properly punchy recording. We asked him how it all unfolded.

Albert Castiglia: Blackham Images.

Why did you venture to Abbey Road to make this album?

Olly Overton, the president of Gulf Coast Records, asked if I'd like to record in the U.K. and I said "Sure... Can we do it at Abbey Road?" I was just being a wise-ass, but Olly came back a week or two later and said he secured five days in Studio 3! The sessions went extremely well, but there were a few hiccups; we had to [change dates] because some dude named McCartney needed the studio (laughs). We graciously obliged.

What got you in the mood for the songs on *Grits & Glory*? They sound fierce and, at times, angry.

My albums are a reflection of my life and the times we're in. In the last few years, I went through some betrayals, personally and professionally, and that was a factor. Also, the whole world is freaking angry right now. It's hard to not have it influence your writing. That said, there's also a bit of optimism that good times will eventually come.

Your slide playing punches hard on "I'm Afraid to Fall Asleep." Who are your bottleneck influences?

I love the raw, visceral players like Elmore James, Duane Allman, Hound Dog Taylor, Johnny Winter, and Lowell George. Derek Trucks, Warren Haynes and Sonny Landreth, as well – I can't play like them, but they are otherworldly!

You rip it up on "Uncertainty." Sounds like you recorded your guitar pretty loudly in the studio?

That's the beauty of having a great producer like Dave Gross. When you're wearing cans in an isolation booth, you can keep the volume at a reasonable level, but when you're done and you listen to the playback, it sounds a little louder and a little more powerful. Dave did a great job.

As related to Chicago's blues heritage, what does your song "Michigan Avenue" mean to you?

Chicago is where I received my master's degree in blues. That city means a lot to me; it's a resilient, tough, midwestern place full of great people who are proud of where they're from. Michigan Avenue is a street that covers the spectrum of Chicago life, white collar to working class, a microcosm of the city. I believe I was trying to convey the Red Line train I used to take downtown. The rhythm just chugs along like that train!

"The Milk is Still Good" has shades of the Beatles' "Come Together." Was that intentional?

I was channeling more of a Meters/Funkadelic feel, but it doesn't surprise me that The Beatles influence comes through, as they were into the funk stuff coming out of the late '60s. I'm influenced by every piece of music that gave me the goosebumps, so yeah, I'll go with that!

What gear did you use on the album?

The Gibson Garage in London provided me with Les Pauls, SGs, and Hummingbird acoustics, and I ran them through a dined Marshall Bluesbreaker combo. I used an RMC Custom Wah and a Vox AC30 for overdubs. I didn't use a whole lot of pedals.

Which guitars do you own?

I have a Gibson Custom Shop Eric Clapton 1958, #150. It was gifted to me by a fan and friend, and I also have a 1990 Custom 1958 Les Paul that was gifted to me by Mike Zito. I love Custom Shop Gibsons and got an eye on a '54 Les Paul reissue. I played a real-deal one earlier this year and it played like butter!

You worked with blues hero Junior Wells in the '90s. Did he give you any lasting advice?

I learned a lot from him about stage presence and how to connect with an audience. He also taught me to be fearless and real; all those things prepared me for being a band leader. If not for those lessons, I probably wouldn't be talking to you right now. – **Pete Prown**

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IN MEMORIAM

JAMES BLOOD ULMER

Avant-garde jazz, funk, and blues guitarist James Blood Ulmer passed away June 3 in New York City. He was 86 and suffered cardiac arrest.

With comparisons ranging from Wes Montgomery and Jimi Hendrix to his mentor, Ornette Coleman, the Brydland-slinging Ulmer performed on a multitude of albums as both leader and sideman.

Born Willie James Ulmer in St. Matthews, South Carolina, on February 8, 1940, he was a fearless musician and a creative free spirit who received his first guitar from his father at age four. After high school, Ulmer moved to Pittsburgh, backing R&B groups like the Savoy and the Del Vikings. He gigged in Ohio and Michigan, and after receiving the cold shoul-

der from Montgomery, he vowed to develop his own language on the guitar.

In 1971, he moved to New York and joined the house band at the legendary jazz club Minton's Playhouse and Ornette Coleman's funk band, Prime Time. He became a disciple of Coleman's "harmolodic music" concept, which freed musicians from the need for specific keys. The idea of tuning his guitar strings to the same note came to him in a dream. It was a key innovation in shaping his guitar style – a sound that blended drones, dissonance, hallucinatory psychedelia, and composed abandon.

In the '80s, Ulmer formed the Music Revelation Ensemble and became a fixture in New York's



James Blood Ulmer

downtown music scene. He performed for jazz, rock, and punk fans, wowing audiences at venues like CBGBs, opening for

bands as diverse as Public Image Ltd and Captain Beefheart. Highlights from his discography include 1993's *Harmolodic Guitar with Strings*. In the 2000s, Ulmer collaborated with Vernon Reid as producer on the albums *No Escape from the Blues: The Electric Lady Sessions*, *Birthright*, and *Memphis Blood: The Sun Sessions*, which earned a Grammy nomination for Best Traditional Blues Album.

Other notable records include *Are You Glad To Be In America?*, *Free Lancing*, *Black Rock*, *Odyssey*, and the Grammy-nominated *Bad Blood In The City*. His final live

performance was at the Detroit Jazz Festival on September 1, 2024. He retired soon after due to poor health. – **Oscar Jordan**

James Blood Ulmer: Marek Lazarski/Wikimedia Commons.

AUTHENTIC DIECAST STOMP BOXES



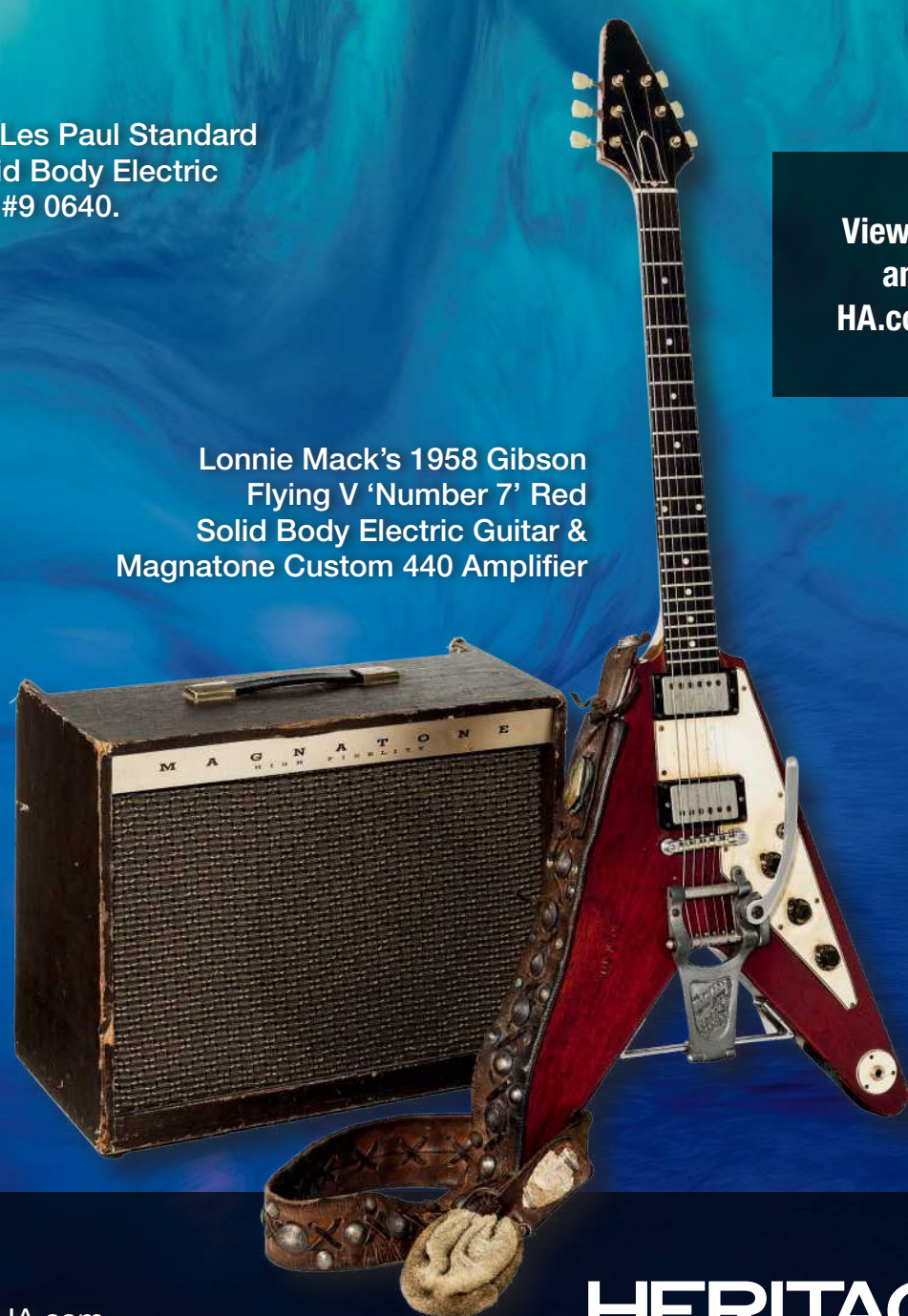
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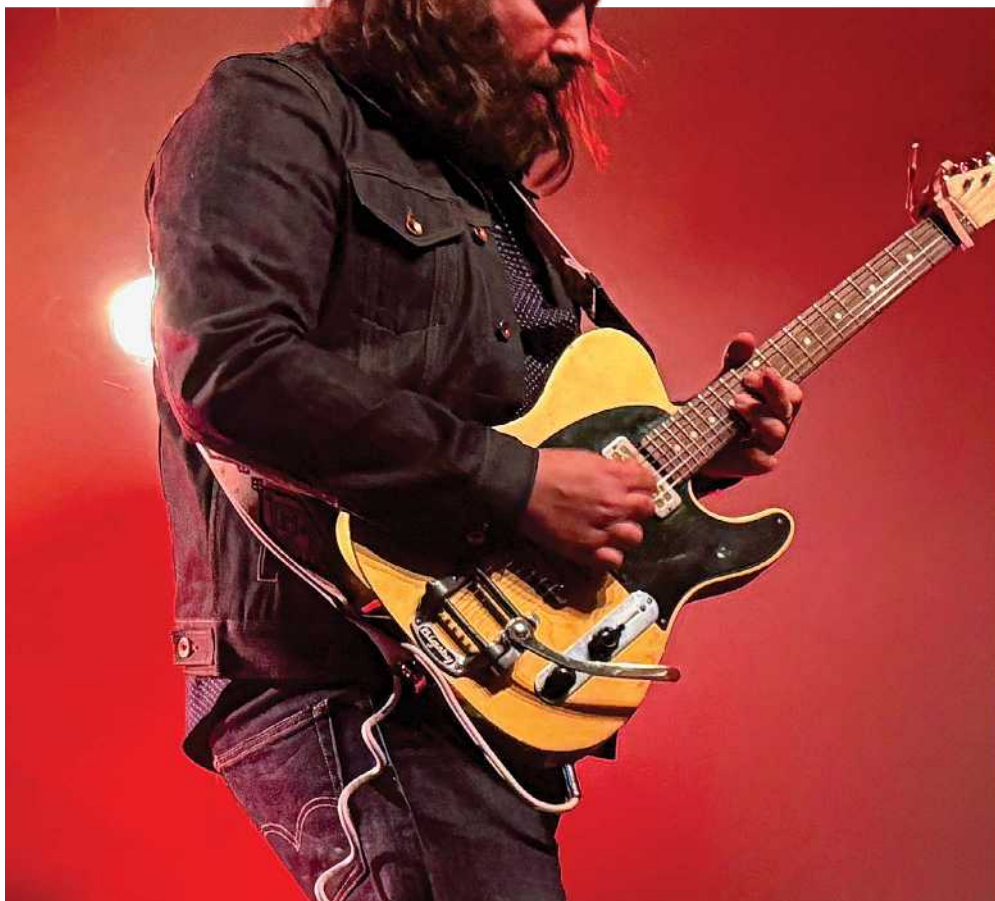
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HERITAGE
AUCTIONS



MATT STUBBS

Generations

Harmonica legend Charlie Musselwhite recently joined GA-20 on *Blues Now*, an album that's 100 percent true to form. Along the way, it rekindled old friendships, classic songs, even passed the torch. While guitarist Matt Stubbs' head is in Chicago, the band is ready for the world.

What inspires you most?

I listen to all kinds of music, but when I listen to blues, it's late '50s to late '60s. I love the playing, the way it was recorded, and the spirit of it. For whatever reason, that era speaks to me.

Charlie Musselwhite is the real deal.

In the '60s, Charlie was hanging out in Chicago with all the legendary blues artists. I'm a lot younger than Charlie, so I never saw those guys. They died before I was playing guitar. Charlie has great stories, and I got to hear them when we traveled, backstage, and at events.

With that in mind, I wanted to pick songs from people that he had a connection or relationship with – or stuff I've done with Charlie over the

years, like "Christo Redemptor" from Charlie's *Stand Back!* album. Those are songs I played every single night for 18 years, backing him. Blues is about storytelling and generations passing music down to others. I wanted to take those stories and connections Charlie had and incorporate them into the record.

With so many songs to choose from, did you and Charlie always see eye to eye?

I went into it with my perspective, and Charlie's team said they wanted it to sound like a GA-20 record but with Charlie being part of it. I basically took the lead as far as producing and arranging. We had a couple of rehearsals leading up to recording. We went over everything, so it was very easy. We had the studio for six days, only ended up using five days, and recorded 18 songs. I went back after everything was done and started listening. I chiseled it down to what I thought were the 10 strongest tunes that went together. We tried different things, but I wanted it to feel like an album. We went in there and had fun.

Blues Now has a live-in-the-studio feel. What was the setup?

We recorded at this great studio in Cambridge, Massachusetts, called Rare Signals. The engineer is a good friend of mine named Brian Charles. It has high ceilings, and Brian really knows how to record classic-style recordings – soul, blues, and jazz. We set up in one room with the drums in the middle, my amp on one side, and Cody Nilsen's amp on the other. Charlie's amp was across the room. The only thing we isolated was vocals. The songs that Cody and Charlie were singing were in a booth, but live with us. No overdubs. What you hear is the performance. GA-20 typically doesn't have bass, but a few tracks called for it. We wanted to do the tracks justice, so we brought in Marty Ballou, who played bass for John Hammond and Duke Robillard.

Who's playing all the cool guitar parts and slide work?

Cody and I split it down the middle as far as guitar solos. I don't play slide guitar, so Cody is on slide. There's no ego. We have different styles, so it's pretty clear who can do the song justice. On "Cristo Redemptor," Cody plays lap steel. He comes from a country background, and I love the way it came out. It's never been done on that song. It has become Charlie's signature tune when we close the show. You don't see many people playing lap steel Chicago blues (laughs).

What kind of gear did you guys use on the recording?

I played through a 1960 Fender Deluxe, an early-'50s Gibson GA-20, and a 1960 GA-20. We also had a five-watt Supro that sounded really good for slide. Cody played through that and a five-watt Silvertone.

As for guitars, I used a '60s Silvertone 1454 with Gold Foil pickups and my Waterslide signature Tele copy. I also played a '57-reissue Stratocaster on a few songs, and I rarely play a Strat. I took a solo on Buddy Guy's "Crazy Love," so that had to be a Strat. Cody played a Teisco Del Rey and an old Ibanez black beauty lawsuit model from the '70s.

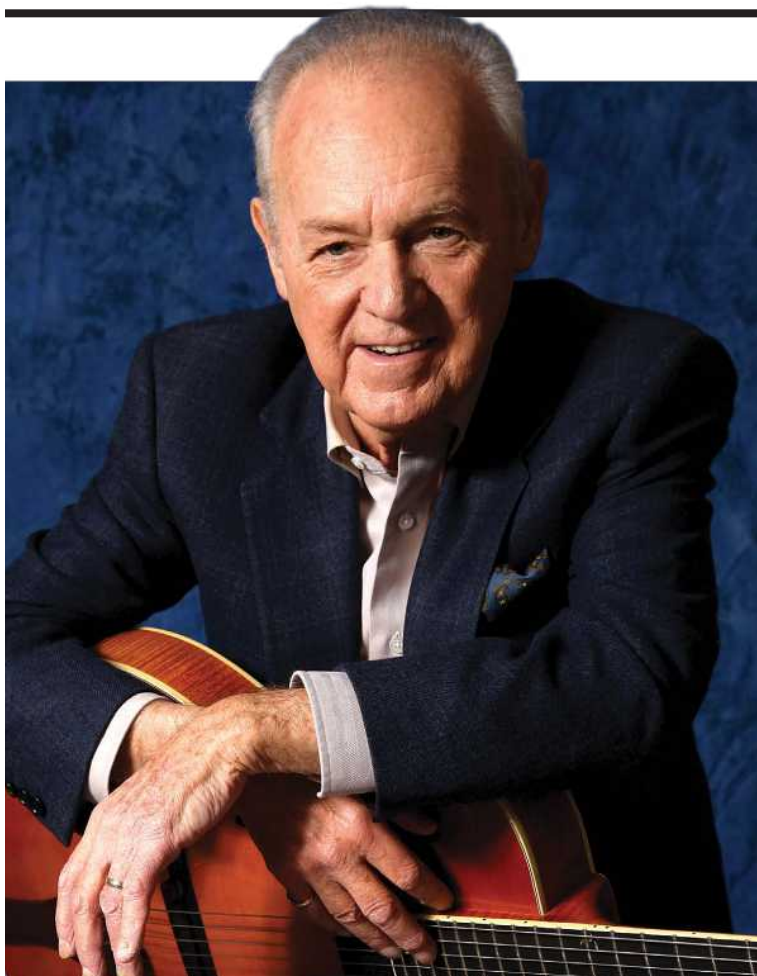
Do GA-20 and Charlie plan to take this on the road?

Before we announced the record, we played the Tampa Bay Blues Festival and the New Orleans Jazz Fest, which went great. He has more festivals and theater venues booked. We're doing a mixed catalog of GA-20 tunes, Charlie's songs, and songs from the new record.

You must feel fortunate to play with such a harp legend.

I'm very lucky. I'd been with him since my early 20s. It's cool to go from being his sideman to doing a project together where we're all equals.

– Oscar Jordan



JOE NEGRI

1926-2026

Jazz man Joe Negri, who gained international fame for his virtuosity and long-time role as “Handyman Negri” on “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” died May 30 at his Pittsburgh home. He would have turned 100 on June 11.

Before becoming a serious musician, Negri was a child entertainer. The oldest of three children, his music-loving Italian dad, Mike, a stonemason, wanted sons Joe and Bobby to find careers free of hard labor. To that end, he bought a ukulele for Joe, taught him chords, and put him in tap-dancing lessons. Bobby studied piano.

Dance teacher Gene Kelly, the future Hollywood singer/actor/dancer, added the boys to his dance productions in Pittsburgh. With a cousin, they performed as the Rhythm Boys on local radio shows.

When Kelly noticed Joe trying to play a guitar, he alerted the boy’s father, who bought a Stella for him, then upgraded to an Epiphone Beverly when Joe began studying with Vic Lawrence.

After mastering Eddie Lang-style acous-

tic jazz, Negri embraced Charlie Christian’s new amplified improvisations. He joined the Musicians’ Union at 16 in ’42, the year local guitarist Frank Andrini engaged John D’Angelico to build him a blond New Yorker.

Andrini recommended him to a friend, renowned bandleader Shep Fields, who led an innovative all-reed orchestra. From ’43 until August ’44, Negri was rhythm guitarist and featured amplified soloist.

After a year in the Army, Negri returned home in ’45. Committed to the new jazz style of bebop, he formed the Joe Negri Trio with his brother as pianist. They played jazz and pop at clubs, dances, and parties, though he dreamed of doing

studio work in Manhattan.

In 1950, he began studying composition at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie-Mellon University) as he performed on local TV and in downtown nightclubs. During their Pittsburgh engagements, he accompanied – and impressed – Johnny Mathis, Tony Bennett, and Andy Williams.

Negri’s studio dream nearly came true when his friend, NYC studio great Tony Mottola, encouraged him to relocate. After a 1957 visit, married with his first of three daughters, he opted to raise his family in Pittsburgh, where work remained plentiful.

When he joined Pittsburgh TV station WTAE in 1961, local stations still used live music. He served as music director until ’85; the onstage skills he developed as a child entertainer gave him the poise to host local musical and non-music programs.

Fred Rogers, who’d briefly worked with him at WTAE, while creating his iconic program, offered him the roles of “Handyman Negri” and

(as himself), owner of “Negri’s Music Shop.” He remained for the show’s entire run (1968-2000).

His two primary guitars were the New Yorker (with a DeArmond pickup) from 1942 until the late ’60s, followed by a series of Guilds, and finally, a custom Benedetto Bravo.

He returned to local stages and clubs after leaving WTAE in ’85. In non-jazz settings, he offered his dazzling, high-velocity “Flight of the Bumblebee,” sing-alongs, and medleys of “Mister Rogers” songs. For jazz crowds, he created breathtaking, uncompromising bop and hard bop with occasional forays into Brazilian jazz and unaccompanied pieces.

An adjunct faculty member in Duquesne University’s Music Department, he established its jazz guitar studies program in 1973 and taught there until the pandemic. He also taught at the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie-Mellon.

Among guests he hosted at Duquesne’s annual guitar clinics were Jack Wilkins, George Van Eps, Howard Alden, Bucky Pizzarelli, and Johnny Smith.

Pizzarelli lauded his skills in 2010, saying, “I have high regard for his musicianship, and he’s a gentleman. They don’t come any finer. I think he’s a supreme player.”

Smith felt the same, calling him “a very dear friend... certainly a very special person, as well as a special talent.”

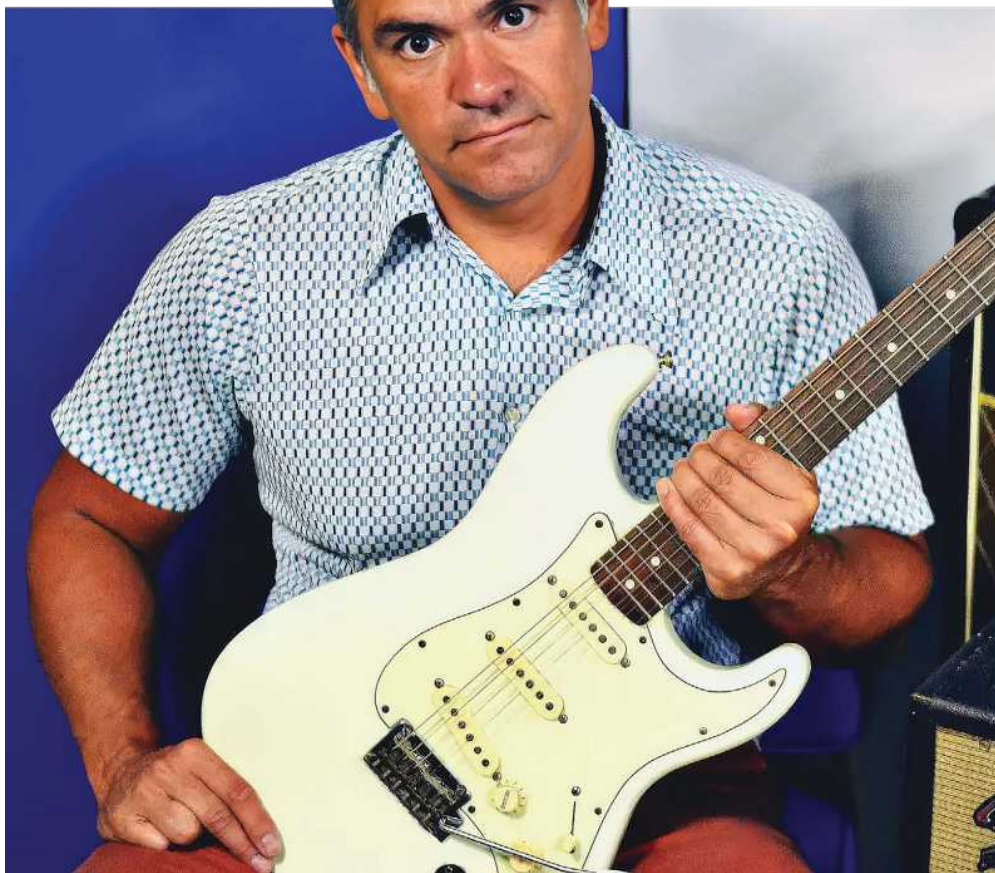
“I studied with him at Duquesne for a year and will always remember the advice he would give me about how to voice a certain chord progression, grooving comping patterns, and how to be prepared for the bandstand,” said Pittsburgh-born jazz great Sheryl Bailey, Assistant Guitar Chair at the Berklee College of Music and a former student. “We studied his chord solos, and they enriched our expressive palette with colorings of standard melodies.

“(He was) the master of tasteful, swinging guitar accompaniment,” she adds. “He knew any tune you could call, any tempo, and always with a warm and open smile. This had a great influence on me, and defined exactly what I wanted to emulate in my life.”

Negri recordings are few. After a 1969 LP straddling easy listening and jazz, he recorded three albums for Pittsburgh’s MCG Jazz label, an album with singer Michael Feinstein, and a poorly-distributed 2010 CD.

His health was good when, at 91, he performed his final concert in 2017 – all jazz – with his longtime quartet. Even fully retired, he practiced guitar half an hour a day.

“I will work my hardest to keep his tradition alive and share his words of wisdom with my students, and always swing hard and smile!” said Bailey. – **Rich Kienzie**



ERIC PENNA

Route '66

Hailing from Portland, Oregon, Trabants is a trio that blends surf/instro, psychedelia, Pacific tiki, crime jazz, garage rock, and any other groovy sound that comes its way. The group is led by guitar man Eric Penna, who melds twang, fuzz, and jangle on *Mirage*, a platter that evokes the sonic vibe of 1966, one of rock and roll's greatest years. With that in mind, let's check in with the retro raconteur.

Trabants drip their toes into everything from the '60s, yet make it their own.

Thanks. We keep an old-school workflow in the studio, favoring minimal edits and almost no software plug-ins. We also embrace the imperfections that come with recording onto *real* tape. For example, we recorded all the basic tracks in a room together with no headphones; the audio bleed in all the rhythm tracks adds a sort of glue that fits the tracks into the same space. The way I see it, if we use the original gear and an old-fashioned recording process, we're essentially time-traveling, sonically.

You work horn arrangements into the Tra-

bants' fuzz and twang guitar. Did you grow up listening to catchy TV themes?

I do get the specifics for my horn arrangement ideas from listening to Italian television and movie music and reading Mickey Baker's book, *The Complete Handbook for the Music Arranger*. But going back to the root of it all, so much of the musical arranging on TV during my childhood was incredibly savvy, so that may have inspired the ideas in my head. On one of our old tracks, I worked with a trumpet player to find the car-chase harmony note that builds the tension so effectively. That sort of thing certainly came from too many hours of television!

There's plenty of guitar on the album, but it's not overpowering.

Since we don't have a vocalist, I try to maintain an element of lyricism in the guitar work. I like to have a melody line but then break it into pieces, which adds more colors to the space left by the absence of vocals. I let the melodies guide the song, and they're rarely complicated. If I do a decent job representing that, the guitar should

never be overpowering.

Who are your guitar heroes?

I know it's generic, but I have to say Jimi Hendrix is one of my favorites. These days, I'm really excited by global guitar players like Erkin Koray from Turkey and Takeshi Terauchi from Japan; I'm also into all the Tuareg blues music from northern Africa. My musical DNA growing up featured the more-conventional likes of Rory Gallagher, Peter Greene, Adrian Smith, Pee Wee Crayton, Glen Campbell, Duane Eddy, and Ritchie Blackmore.

"Midnight Bells" has that 12-string jangle, as if the Byrds played spy intro. How did you come up with that?

Totally by accident. The riff developed because I wanted to see how far I could push my Rickenbacker 360/12 GH to sound like church bells or something *chime-y*. That was a song that dictated its own sound and I was definitely thinking about the Byrds, but more widely, about 1966 in general. It was an expansive year for the evolution of recorded guitar.

Speaking of, which guitars and amps did you use on the album?

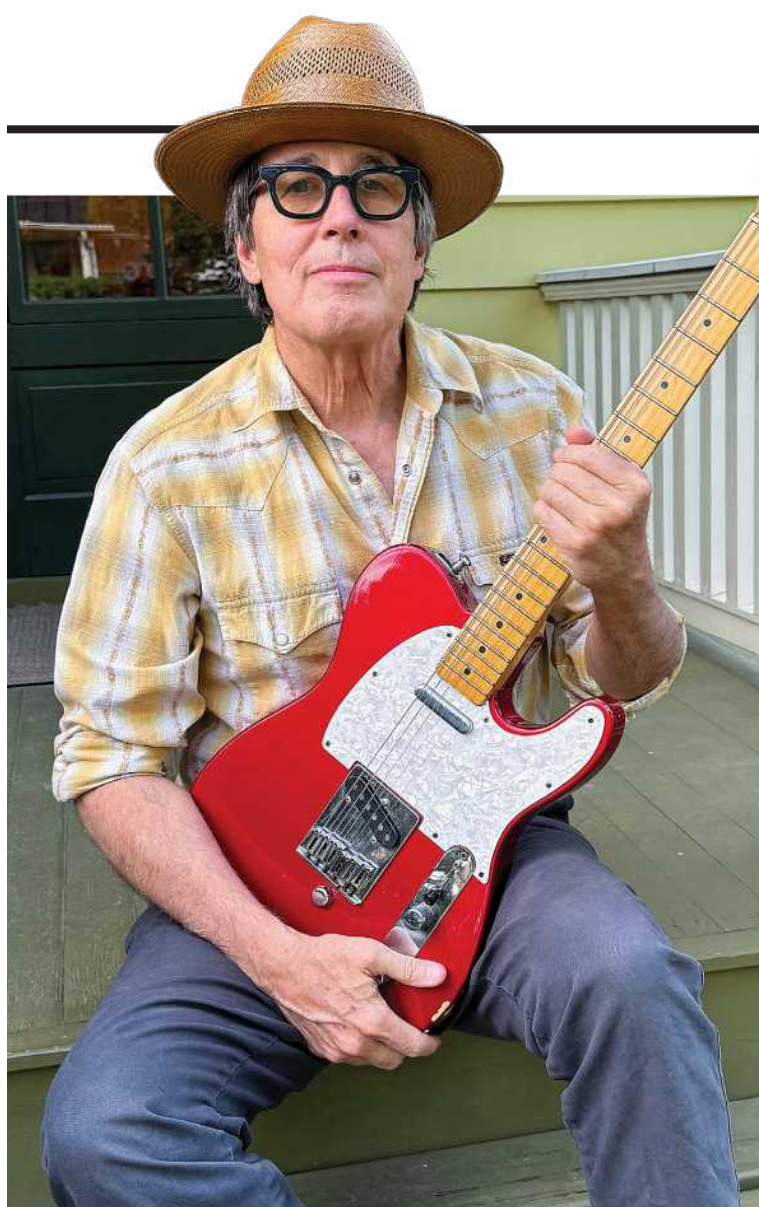
I used a few different Strats from different eras that I've modded extensively, including one with Kloppmann pickups. I do have a '66 ES-335 that I love, but used it sparingly. I have a Vox AC30 that has been with me since I scored it cheaply at the height of rap-metal. It was put together in April of '66 and has been a trusty steed for years. It's certainly not a surfamp, but Trabants is not exactly a surf band, so it fits. We did borrow a '63 Showman from legendary Portland surf rockers Satan's Pilgrims, and there's also a '66 Showman on one track.

What about pedals?

I used a Tycobrahe Octavia for all of the fuzz tones. It was the core sound that I built the whole record around, so it's prominently featured. I play a vintage Mosrite Fuzzrite live and I love it, but for this album, I searched long and hard for that Tycobrahe, just so I could make this record the way it was in my head. That pedal created a truly wild, singing octave tone that resonated deeply with me and is the source inspiration for the majority of this material.

Did you use actual reverb tanks?

A reverb tank is essential, and I own a couple. I have a '66 and a reissue from the '90s. When I'm forced to travel within the confines of a backpack, I bring my Surfycat unit. There is no reverb substitute besides the Surfycat tank, and I've tried them all. They don't pay me or anything! – **Pete Prown**



STEPHEN MCCARTHY

Long Ryders' Multi-Tool Ace

Formed in 1981, the Long Ryders' career has been marked by breakups, reunions, and hiatuses lasting more than a decade. The three constants have been singer/guitarist Sid Griffin, drummer Greg Sowders, and Stephen McCarthy, who handles acoustic, electric, 12-string, slide, and pedal-steel guitars, in addition to splitting songwriting and lead vocals with Griffin.

The 68-year-old grew up in Richmond, Virginia. In his early 20s, he moved to Southern California and played country bars before joining the nascent Ryders.

The band's latest, *High Noon Hymns*, features some of the roots-rockers' strongest material, including McCarthy's plaintive "Knoxville On

The Line" and Bakersfield two-step "Wanted Man In Arkansas." He wrote "World Without Fear" shortly after Brian Wilson died.

"Tome, the Byrds are an amazingly cool '60s band, and that's more stylistically related to what the Long Ryders do," he says. "But Brian Wilson is at the top of the mountain in L.A."

He regularly performs with the Jayhawks, and his duo with Kevin Pittman, the Sky Chiefs, recently released their first CD.

What was your first instrument?

When guys got together to form bands, they'd say, "We need a drummer." So I'd borrow a drum kit. Then, "We really need a bass." Around '74, I bought a Precision Bass, and that was really my first instrument. After I moved to L.A., I played bass with

Pete Anderson before he joined Dwight Yoakam, in a rhythm section with Jim Gordon on drums. Then I answered Sid's ad in *The Recycler*. "Band looking for a guitar player/singer. Buffalo Springfield meets the Clash." Okay, I could do that.

What age did you take up guitar?

My first electric guitar was a Harmony Stratotone. My next-door neighbor gave it to me when I was 10. It's a '57, and I still have it.

Who were your early influences?

Certainly George Harrison. Another, when I got to be the age where you can go out and buy records, like 11 or 12, was Dave Davies. I loved his playing with the Kinks. He was aggressive, and it really fit in with that band.

Realistically, for musicians forming bands, early on you're taking your record collection and putting it into the blender – be it country, punk, whatever you're into. You're adding your own mix to whatever degree. Like the Stones were doing all kinds of covers when they first started. As it grows, hopefully your own influences outweigh the other things. I think we were a cool mix of revved up rock and roll combined with country.

What models of pedal-steel do you play?

I've got a Sho-Bud Pro 1 from the late '70s, a GFI Ultra, a '49 Fender Dual Professional console steel – double-eight – some single-neck Fenders, and a Supro lap-steel.

How did you get into the sound of pedal-steel?

It always attracted me. I saw the first Eagles tour and was really attracted to Bernie Leadon. "How is he making his guitar sound like a steel?" Then I saw the Earl Scruggs Review, with Randy Scruggs playing a guitar with a palm pedal. I said, "What is that sound?" I was loving it. Gene Parsons, who was in the Byrds, made the first B-bender for Clarence White. In 1984, I sent a body to him. He installed one and sent it back. It's a red Tele knockoff with the StringBender, a Joe Barden lead pickup, and a Lindy Fralin in the neck position.

Which other guitars do you use?

I've got a Danelectro baritone that I tune A to A – great growl if you use the smallest amount of overdrive. I have a blond '63 Esquire with a '67 Telecaster neck. Acoustics, I've got an old D-18, late '60s, a mid-'60s D-25, a smaller body OO, an early-'60s Guild Jumbo F-50, and I love my 1966 Gibson J-45.

What about amps?

My main amplifier is a Carr Rambler. It's 1x12, 28/14 watts and has lush reverb and smooth tremolo. I also have a Princeton tweed clone put together by my talented amp guru friend here in Richmond, John Hanor. It has a 10" 8-ohm speaker in a slightly larger cabinet – great for recording. And I really like my early-'70s Princeton Reverb. I'm happy to say my days of hauling around a vintage Twin Reverb are over.

With two main writers and lead singers, how do you decide what songs get onto an album?

Our producer, Ed Stasium, has a great ear. He really is a brilliant guy, great with production and arrangements. Greg Sowders, our drummer, has been an A&R man and a publishing guy in L.A. for 35 years. What we normally do is say, "Here's 10 songs from Steve and 10 songs from Sid. You guys figure out which songs seem the best." That way, it's out of Sid's hands, out of my hands, and we kind of like that. – Dan Forte VG



CALIFORNIA KING

Rivera Stage 2 Mod Fender Deluxe Reverb

BY DAVE HUNTER

As the concept of high-gain guitar amps took root in the '70s and the industry was deciding how to fit the new market, many players sought that sound via professional modifications rather than factory-built amps. This one emanated from the work bench of a master.

These pages have featured rock-oriented reworkings of amps by names such as Howard Alexander Dumble, Randall Smith, and even Reinhold Bogner, but we have yet to trace the seminal work of top California high-gain designer Paul Rivera. Back in the day, Rivera's mods were in the top echelon of those tapped by professional players on the West Coast scene

who were chasing amp-generated lead tones and endless sustain. Variations of these circuits even found their way into the acclaimed (but short-lived) Fender "Rivera" amps of the early/mid '80s, while he was head of marketing and R&D, which added high-gain channels and other modern features that launched the brand into a new era.

1965 FENDER RIVERA STAGE MOD 2 DELUXE REVERB

- Preamp tubes: four 12AX7, two 12AT7
- Output tubes: two 6V6GT
- Rectifier: 5AR4
- Controls: Normal (aka Clean): Volume, Treble, Bass; Vibrato (aka Lead): Volume, Treble, Bass with push-pull Bright and Notch on latter two; Reverb, six-way Fat switch, Master Volume
- Speaker: 12" Eminence Legend (originally EVM 12L)
- Output: approximately 22 watts

Rivera went from designing for Fender to manufacturing amps under his own name in 1985, launching the Rivera Amplification company that continues to build highly respected tube amps to this day. Like other acclaimed hot rodders, though, before going into business for himself, Rivera modded the ubiquitous Fender combos that flooded the scene and were regarded at the time as "old amps" rather than classics. This '65 Deluxe Reverb is one such donor.

"I acquired the amp around 1990 in Los Angeles from an ad in the *Recycler*," VG

Amp and photos courtesy of Jeremy Graf.

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reader Jeremy Graf tells us. “I had no idea about the ‘Rivera mod,’ and just wanted an old Deluxe Reverb. Then, once I figured out the controllayout and all the options, I loved its robust sound.”

Along with the circuit modifications, Rivera, like many of his hot-rodding peers, also upgraded the speaker to better handle the added gain and extended range. The rugged EVM 12L used by Rivera and other high-end modders could handle 200 watts but weighed more than 16 pounds, which

The lack of any altered control legends hides the fact that push/pull controls lurk behind the Vibrato channel’s Treble and Bass knobs, and the vibrato controls include a six-way Fat switch and Master Volume.

dampened Graf’s enthusiasm on the gig front.

“I didn’t use it much for a while because it was just too heavy,” he tells us. “After much speaker auditioning, I settled on an Eminence Legend, and it then became my main amp for the next 20 years.”

The changes made to the amp’s circuit constituted what Rivera called his “Stage 2 Mod,” one of the more-popular options on a menu available from his bench at the time, possibly performed in January of ’82, according to a date and signature inscribed inside the chassis. The alterations included splitting the stock Normal and Vibrato channels into Clean and Lead/Overdrive, with push/pull Bright and Notch switches on each channel’s Treble and Bass controls, respectively (Graf’s

From the back, the amp looks like a standard ’65 Deluxe Reverb, other than the added Line Out and speaker swap for an Eminence Legend.

amp only has these switches on the Lead channel EQ). A six-position midrange-voicing switch replaced the former Speed control for the tremolo (not tremendously popular in the early ’80s, that effect was eliminated), and a Master Volume replaced the tremolo Intensity knob (some versions positioned these controls differently, and a Presence control was often added).

Changes were also made to the output stage and other parts of the circuit, to achieve more clean headroom and reduce the flubby low-end often heard in vintage amps when pushed hard. Add it all up, and it transformed these





combos and other Fenders into a compact, extremely versatile amp that made a great do-it-all, especially in the studio. Major users of the era included Rick Nielsen, Dean Parks, Jay Graydon, Lee Ritenour, Paul Jackson, Jr., Larry Carlton, Steve Lukather, and others. So many L.A. session pros, in fact, that Rivera's own-brand re-creation of the circuit, a model dubbed the Stage IV, has been referred to as an updated rendition of the "most-recorded amp of all time." Whether it truly beats out a stock Fender Princeton Reverb or Deluxe Reverb for that honor is hard to say.

Aside from Rivera's circuit alterations – seen where a couple of Sprague "orange drop" signal capacitors have been added along with other wiring changes and the addition of two push/pull potentiometers on the erstwhile "Vibrato" channel – much of this Deluxe Reverb is impressively original. Several of the stock blue Mallory "Molded" coupling caps remain, as does the majority of the original cloth-covered wiring soldered by hand in Fullerton more than 60 years ago. All of which further emphasizes why these ruggedly built '60s Fenders

were such popular platforms for modding. In any case, this one is still going strong a full six decades after its construction, and more than four decades after its modification by Rivera. Even so, it has taken its owner several decades to fully plumb its capabilities.

"The versatility of the six-position tone shaping dial was lost on me," Graf recalled. "Just like with a Veritone, I'd set it to the thickest position and leave it. As long as the Master is around 4 and the pre-amp past 5, it has a very full, powerful sound. Since I personally favor a tight, punchy sound, I've never been too interested in reverb, so I never minded that it didn't work, and only found out a few years ago that

The addition of two "orange drop" coupling caps and some changed wiring are clues to the Rivera mods, but otherwise the amp's circuit retains many of its original components.

the Reverb knob has to be pulled out for it to function. So, the reverb works fine! As a bonus, in my older age, I can now appreciate the beauty that reverb can bring – as long as you don't need a tight, punchy sound!" **VG**



One of the few real clues to the modification hides in this "Rivera Research and Dev. Co." sticker inside the chassis.



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When it was modified/fixed at the Fender factory, workers applied nail-marked numbers to the neck end and neck cavity to ensure they'd be properly reunited.



Markings in the pickup cavity say "1-57."

Classics

One of a handful of vintage buyers working nationwide for the Guitar Center chain, when Nicholas Conte received an e-mail in March of 2025 showing what looked to be a beat up old Precision Bass its owner was interested in selling, his initial reaction was tepid.

"We receive so many e-mails, often without a good description, and sometimes they're truly great instruments," said Conte, who started with the company at the grand opening of its Tempe location in 2003 and became a vintage buyer 10 years later.

"I remember one with the subject line that said only 'V,' and there was *nothing* in the body of the e-mail. But as I scrolled through the photos, I thought, 'Hold on a second... this is a '58.' That guitar is now the 'Trashbag V' that belongs to Joe Bonamassa."

This is another example, but involves an even rarer instrument.

"When I first saw the photos, I thought, 'Looks like a '50s Precision body with a '70s neck,' because I'd never seen a fretless Precision from the '50s. I assumed it was something someone put together. The pickguard was changed, the pickup was from a '70s Telecaster Bass, and the pots were random replacements."

The bass was owned by Ed Scroggins, who

had taken it to his local Guitar Center, in Lewisville, Texas. After examining the bass, associates there photographed the instrument in detail and sent the images to Conte and the vintage-acquisition team. Through a series of e-mails, they made an important determination.

"As we carefully took the bass apart, it had everything you want to see in a vintage instrument when you're told its modifications were done at the factory, especially the markings in the neck pocket and on the back of the neck heel," said Conte. "Hammered in with a nail tip, they are indicative of factory work."

The non-original electronics didn't bother him.

"It was a working man's bass," he added. "What we wanted to get down to was, 'Are the neck and the body original wood?'"

When an instrument raises eyebrows, Conte shares what he's seeing with a list of player/collectors and vintage dealers that includes Bonamassa, Charlie Daughtry, Francesco Balossino, and Bill Pandolfi.

"I want to get multiple opinions because, as I like to say, 'It's okay to be wrong, but don't be wrong alone. Be wrong with friends!'" (laughs)

Scroggins, though, told a story that erased any doubts. The son of a musician who began busking at the age of seven to support his mother and seven siblings, he was deeply impacted by his father, Carl.

"During The Depression, Dad would play his guitar on a street corner in Long Beach, and people would put money in the case that he gave to his mom to feed everybody. He always told me, 'As

long as you have a guitar, you'll always eat.'"

Through the '40s and early '50s, Carl was part of a simmering pop-music scene in Southern California. And being an accomplished player, he never wanted for gigs; when local rockabilly bands were struggling to find bassists, he deftly turned his focus to the "doghouse." He modified an upright with a pickup and ordered a Standel amp from Bob Crooks' shop in Baldwin Park.

Rockabilly being raucous, the amp couldn't keep up with the hammering drums or guitars running through big, clean-sounding Fender amps. Being particular about his sound, Carl asked Crooks to modify the amp to better suit his needs. The two became friends and Crooks asked Carl to field-test amps.

In 1957, Crooks suggested that Carl ditch the doghouse and introduced him to Leo Fender, whose factory was producing the solidbody electric guitars and basses that had become all the rage.

Carl approached Leo about getting one of his Precision basses, but without frets to approximate the upright he knew so well. Leo,

Ed Scroggins' '57 Precision Bass.

The back of the neck has some notable birdseye and knurled figure.

always happy to accommodate requests from pro players, had this one built for him.

"I would tag along with Dad to the Fender plant in Orange County," Ed recalls. "I remember there was nothing out there but strawberry fields, and every time we'd go, there'd be a couple guys playing guitars or working on something at Leo's bench. I tried to watch when they'd play around with the pickup or wiring in Dad's bass, but I could barely see the top of it." (laughs)

For parts of three decades, Carl played the fretless across Southern California – Long Beach, Rivington Beach, up through Hollywood and the Hills, doing jazz, blues, rock and roll.

"Everybody in the city knew him," Ed says. "He'd throw the fretless in his car and go to a gig on a moment's notice. He filled in a lot with The Champs, and for several summers was part of the house band at Disneyland, which backed Roy Clark, Tex Ritter, Pat Boone, Minnie Pearl, and others."





"A friend and I went with him nearly every Saturday and Sunday. They'd bring in a different famous musician every Sunday afternoon and I remember sitting in the dressing-room trailers and going through a tunnel to the back of the stage. Dad also played with his own group, the We Three Trio, which was pretty popular in the city."

Starting as a teen, Ed played in bands and gigged on guitar and bass; Carl let him use the fretless every so often, as long as he was careful and kept a close eye on it between sets.

"He always told me – and I mean he was *emphatic* about it – he said, 'Do *not* let that sit on a stand, and don't lean it against your amplifier. You stay by it! That was his baby!'"

As an adult, Ed followed in his dad's footsteps, staying busy in bands like his current group, Eddy & The Heartbreakers, and preferring to play the fretless versus a regular bass.

"I like it because you can land a little off the note – sharp or flat – and just slide your finger into tune. I've always called it the 'cheater' because it sounded good if you were just *close* to the note."

Today, Ed looks back fondly on the memories and impact of his father's life.

"Of course I'm glad I inherited his love of music and guitars," he says. "My significant other always tells me, 'When we go into a club, you turn into a different guy,' because I want to go up there and play. I know I'm different." (laughs)

He was also the beneficiary any time his dad

tired of an instrument or simply didn't like it; one was a Les Paul Black Beauty, which Carl deemed "...too heavy."

"I didn't know how important all that stuff was because I always had great instruments

Family photos from 1972 show Carl Scroggins playing at the wedding of his daughter, Becky, with the pickguard as it exists today.

were made – they're rare because of the musicians who played them and the journey that brought them here. This fretless Precision is a perfect example. It was custom built after a working musician approached Leo Fender with a unique request, played across Southern California for decades, and passed from father to son. Helping preserve stories like that and connect them with the next generation of players and collectors is incredibly rewarding." – **Ward Meeker VG**



The one-piece neck was never fretted.

around me. I'm a lucky guy."

Hoping to reinforce his thoughts regarding its originality, Conte took the bass to the 2025 Mesquite Guitar Show, where people who've been dealing in vintage instruments for 40 years or more could see it in person.

"I figured that nobody had ever seen one, and sure enough, their minds were absolutely blown," he said. "I left there confident that this was the only '50s fretless Fender Precision to surface."

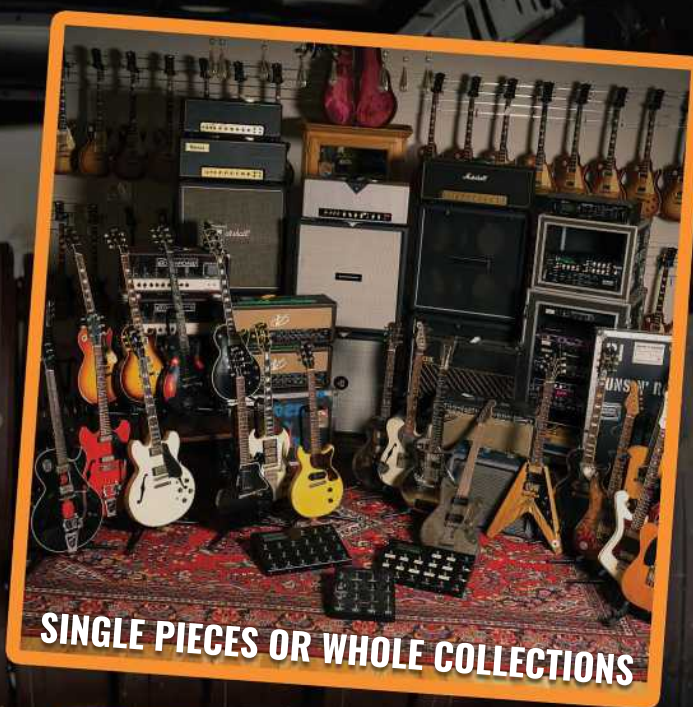
"One of the things I love most about vintage instruments is that every one has a story," said Gabe Dalporto, CEO of Guitar Center. "They're not just rare because of when they



Carl Scroggins in the '50s.



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Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Ram W. Tuli



1937
D'Angelico
Excel

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1962	Alamo Twin Speaker Tube	Various speakers	\$525	\$750
1960	Ampeg J-12 Jet	Blue	\$425	\$550
1980s	Applause AA Models	Import	\$150	\$250
1987	B.C. Rich NJ Series/NJC Series	Made in Korea	\$500	\$900
1970s	Carlsbro Suzz		\$650	\$850
1937	D'Angelico Excel	Non-cutaway, sunburst	\$16,000	\$20,000
1970s	Dallas/Dallas Arbiter			
	Fuzz Wah Face	Black	\$300	\$400
1967	Danelectro Slimline (SL) Series	12-string	\$1,200	\$1,800
2007	Dean Soltero SL		\$1,500	\$2,200
1965	Dobro D-40E Texarkana		\$1,000	\$1,500
1981	DOD Performer Phasor 595		\$75	\$165
2010s	EchoSonic Ray-O-Fuzz		\$275	\$500
1975	Epiphone ET-290 Crestwood		\$650	\$850
1968	Epiphone FT 90 El Dorado	Mahogany	\$1,500	\$2,300
1961	Epiphone Rivoli (1 Pickup)	Standard tuners, natural	\$4,250	\$5,500
1968	Fender Blender		\$475	\$650
1966	Fender Coronado XII	Wildwood	\$2,800	\$3,500
2007	Fender Fuzz-Wah	Switches on side	\$110	\$150
1971	Fender Jazz	Rare color	\$8,500	\$12,000
1954	Fender Stratocaster	Early-mid '54, typical features	\$100,000	\$210,000
1992	Fender '54 Stratocaster (Custom Shop)		\$3,000	\$4,500
2011	Fender '64 Stratocaster (Custom Shop)	Closet Classic	\$3,000	\$4,500
2007	Fender Eric Clapton Crossroads Stratocaster	Guitar & Twin Amp	\$15,000	\$20,000
1988	Fender Yngwie Malmsteen Stratocaster		\$1,200	\$1,800
2018	Fender Parallel Universe Troublemaker Telecaster	with Bigsby	\$2,000	\$2,800
2003	Fender Antigua Telecaster	Japan, 400 made	\$1,800	\$2,800
1991	G&L ASAT Commemorative		\$1,750	\$2,250
1962	Galanti Electric	Plain features	\$400	\$800
1966	Gibson C-0 Classical		\$400	\$800
1979	Gibson ES-335 TD CRS		\$2,500	\$4,000
1966	Gibson ES-355 TDSV	Sparkling Burgundy	\$9,000	\$11,500
2020	Gibson 1961 ES-335 Reissue (Custom Shop)		\$4,500	\$6,500
1965	Gibson Firebird III	Sunburst, non-reverse, 3 P-90s	\$6,000	\$8,000
1948	Gibson L-7 CN	Natural	\$6,000	\$8,000
2007	Gibson Les Paul Custom Historic '68	Reissue chambered	\$4,000	\$5,500
1954	Gibson Les Paul Junior	Sunburst, single-cut	\$10,000	\$12,500
1980	Gibson Les Paul Standard	White (R.Rhoads)	\$3,500	\$5,500
1950	Gibson LG-1	Rosewood bridge	\$2,500	\$3,500
1934	Gibson Roy Smeck Radio Grande Hawaiian	Brazilian, Spanish converted	\$18,000	\$25,000
1963	Gibson Thunderbird II	Sunburst, reverse	\$10,000	\$14,000
1960s	Goya Electric Solidbody	Various models	\$575	\$850



Vintage Guitar presents **Buy That Guitar**. Hosted by **Ram Tuli**, co-author of *The Official Vintage Guitar Price Guide*, who explores the joy of buying, selling, and collecting vintage and new guitars, amplifiers, and other gear. Listen to season four at www.vintageguitar.com/category/podcasts/buy-that-guitar-podcast

Also accessible on Apple Podcasts, YouTube, and Spotify for your listening pleasure!

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND.	
			LOW	HIGH
1963	Gretsch Corvette (Solid Body)	Custom color, 1 pickup	\$1,750	\$2,250
1951	Gretsch Model 6003		\$1,000	\$1,500
1939	Gretsch Synchromatic 75		\$1,000	\$1,500
1997	Guild Custom Shop 45th Anniversary		\$2,500	\$4,000
1998	Guild X-150 Savoy		\$1,100	\$1,600
1986	Hamer Scepter		\$3,000	\$4,500
1986	Hohner ST Series		\$300	\$500
1987	Ibanez Fat Cat			
	Distortion FC10		\$150	\$300
1974	Ibanez Model 2384 Telly		\$700	\$1,000
1991	Ibanez Tube Screamer TS5 (SoundTank)		\$25	\$100
1970s	Kopy Kat Acoustic	J-200 copy	\$300	\$500
1987	Kramer XL Series	Wood neck	\$300	\$400
2001	Larriavee D-09	Indian or walnut	\$2,000	\$3,500
1999	Marshall MG Series	Various models	\$50	\$450
1971	Marshall Model 1992 Super Bass 100-Watt Head	Black, hand-wired, small box	\$3,250	\$4,500
1921	Martin 2-30		\$7,800	\$11,000
1931	Martin 00-28T	Tenor	\$7,500	\$10,000
1937	Martin 0-28	Belly bridge, 14-fret, 6 made	\$20,000	\$26,000
2003	Martin D-16 Lyptus		\$1,200	\$1,800
1984	Martin D-28 150th Anniversary	No stamp	\$7,500	\$11,500
2004	Martin J-41 Special	Indian rw	\$3,500	\$5,000
2004	Mesa-Boogie Lonestar Series	Combo 2x12	\$2,000	\$2,750
1967	Microfrets Thundermaster		\$1,750	\$2,250
1970	Mossman Golden Era Custom	Brazilian rosewood	\$7,500	\$10,000
1939	National New Yorker Spanish		\$2,000	\$2,500
1970s	Peavey Decade	50 watts, guitar and mic	\$100	\$150
1987	Peavey VTM60	60 watts, head	\$450	\$800
1940s	Rickenbacker Electro Lap Steel	Headstock logo	\$700	\$950
1991	Rickenbacker Model 360WB	No vibrato	\$2,750	\$4,000
1937	Rickenbacker Silver Hawaiian Lap Steel		\$1,500	\$2,500
1930s	Slingerland Nitehawk	Archtop, fancy markers	\$1,200	\$1,800
2012	Strymon Mobius		\$375	\$475
1964	Supro Jet Airliner Steel	With optional legs	\$725	\$950
2002	Taylor NS32ce		\$850	\$1,125
1967	Traynor YBA4 Bass Master	45 watts, 1x15 combo	\$850	\$1,125
1940s	Vega Lap Steel	1x10, tweed	\$500	\$650
1973	Yamaha SG-60T		\$800	\$2,000

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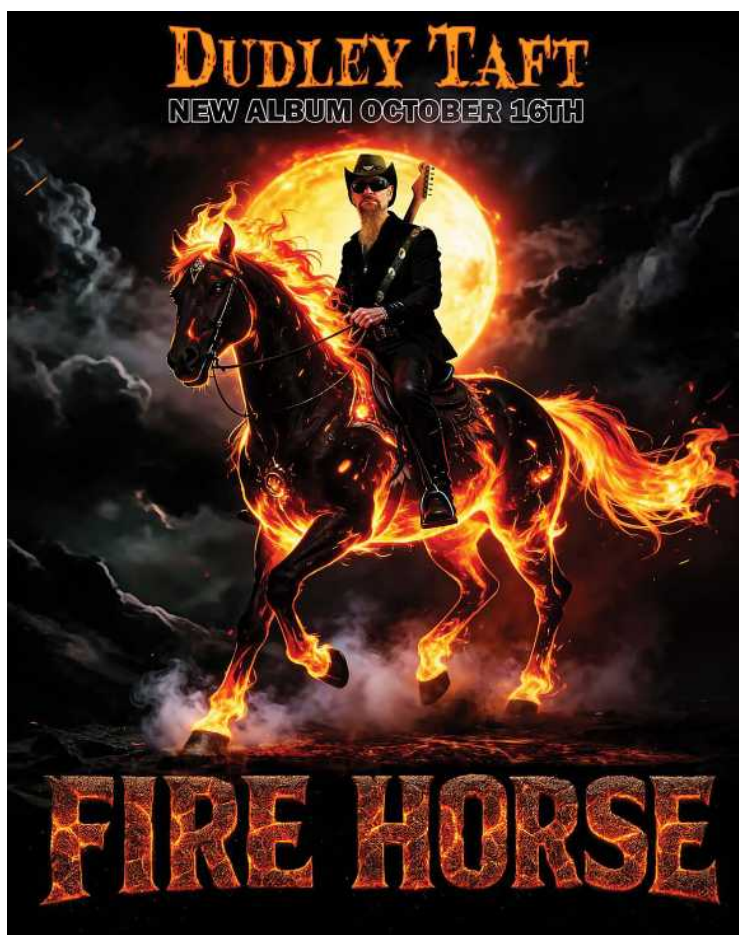
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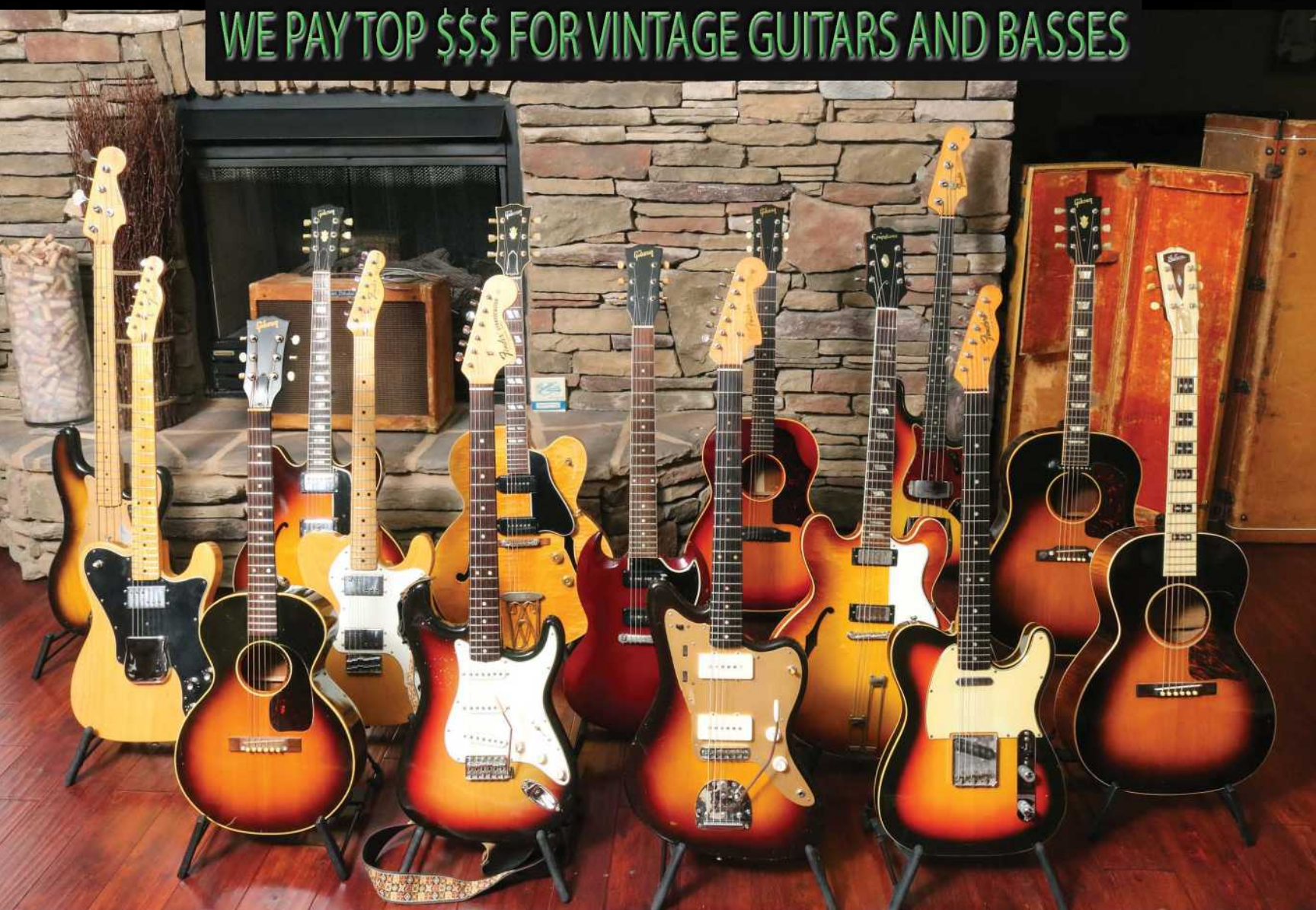
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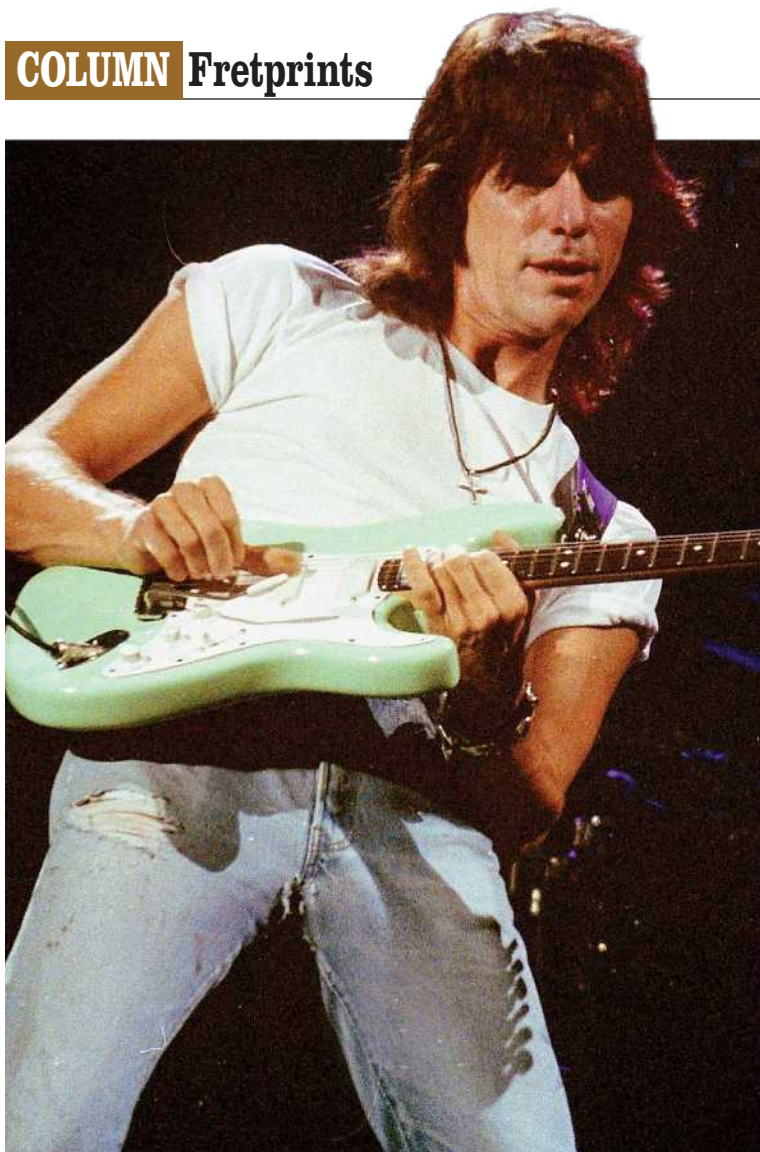
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extraordinary, distinguished by “Jeff’s Boogie,” “Beck’s Bolero,” “Rice Pudding,” “Love is Blue,” and *Blow By Blow/Wired* excursions.

Following a six-year hiatus, he re-emerged with *Flash* in ’85, then vanished again for four years.

Seeds planted in his ’70s ventures reached fruition in ’89, when his sixth studio album, *Guitar Shop*, capped an era of guitar heroics, underscored his role therein, and proclaimed Beck was again open for business.

Guitar Shop, the first recording to fully document Beck’s fingerstyle approach and showcase his compositions, was an all-original set. He wrote/co-wrote eight of its nine tunes with classically trained Tony Hymas (keyboards, synthesizers, keyboard-bass) and Terry Bozzio (drums,

percussion, spoken word), who participated in writing, arranging, and production. The absence of bass facilitated a novel sound and Beck’s focused rhythm playing. Joined by producer Leif Mases, they started at Chipping Norton before final sessions took place over eight months (winter ’88/’89) at Page’s Sol studio in Cookham, Berkshire. Beck strived to make a rock record, and spent six months developing ideas; characterized by simpler one-chord grooves and rock riffs substantially different than harmonically enriched fusion forays.

“When I heard Simon Phillips call it [fusion] ‘Fuzak,’ I boxed it up and threw it away,” Beck told *Guitar Player* magazine. “I was revitalized by punk rock and determined not to bore anyone with any jazz.”

Significant is the album’s thematic guitar/car imagery, reflecting Beck’s two obsessions; the cover depicts the master at work and hot-rod references like “Big Block” and “Stand On It.” Released August 2 in Japan and in October in the U.S. and U.K., *Guitar Shop* reached #49 on *Billboard*, won a Grammy for Best Rock Instrumental Performance in 1990, and remains a milestone in the genre.

Beck favored a Strat – blond ’59 body and rosewood-board ’60 neck fitted with Alnico II pickups and assembled by Seymour Duncan. He also used a prototype signature Strat, ’54 Telecaster, 24-fret Jackson Soloist with three single-coil pickups (“to get some high notes”) and Gretsch hollowbody for one track. His primary amp rig was minimal – a late-’80s The Twin bi-amped with a nine-year-old Princeton that “added warmth inside the sound.” He relied on The Twin’s channel-switching circuitry, sometimes cascading channel-into-channel, and sparingly used a 100-watt Marshall stack. He sampled various pedals but always returned to his ProCo Rat, variable from clean to full distortion. Processors included an Alesis Midiverb and Yamaha REV 7 for “...wash behind the guitar.” He overdubbed in the control room while engineers changed amp settings as needed.

Beck’s travelog begins with “Guitar Shop” – a visit to a store “...on a Saturday morning, with would-be guitar heroes struggling away. There’s always a dozen playing. I wanted an angry, industrial sound.” Pursuing exactitude in the Prince-inspired groove, the band resorted to a click track – the only instance on *Guitar Shop* – after several live-take attempts. Bozzio’s broken rhythms and Hymas’ pads and abstract sounds laid a bed for Beck’s deceptively simple A5 riff (“I wanted something a 12-year-old could play”) and sonic puzzle-pieces over the A tonal center. He employed his Tele for rhythm parts, saving the Strat for main riff (doubled with harmonizer) and solo licks, and exploited rhythm/lead guitar interaction for a contrapuntal result. Over the heavy-rock pulse, Beck inserts solo licks and fills, an assortment of careening guitar art-noises – snapped strings, whammy-bar zaniness, percussive effects, tapping, quick single-note runs, pre-recorded guitar samples, and echo-processed chord phrases. Bozzio’s Zappaesque processed voice-over (1:41), conveying a zealous salesman’s buzz words, adds comedic flair to Beck’s controlled-chaos soundscape.

Beck recalls his roots in “Savoy.” The swinging E shuffle-rocker necessitated the “Blue Caps-type” Gretsch tone heard on the theme, doubled for thickness. The quirky intro is Beck rhythmically scraping the sixth string with thumb and index finger “...to mark time because we didn’t know what to play next.” The solo

MASTER MECHANIC

Jeff Beck’s *Guitar Shop*

By Wolf Marshall

Jeff Beck’s musical journey was riddled with detours and exiles. In 1965, he replaced Eric Clapton in the Yardbirds as they elevated “Heart Full of Soul,” “Over Under Sideways Down,” and “Shapes of Things” with his exotic, sometimes free-form, daring, often startling guitar work.

Beck was London’s leading innovator by ’66, then turned the band over to Jimmy Page and dabbled with a solo career as pop vocalist. His ’68 Jeff Beck Group presaged Led Zep’s blues-rock and introduced the world to Rod Stewart in the process. After an auto accident, he returned in ’71 with an eponymous R&B/fusion group, formed the short-lived Beck, Bogert & Appice, and embraced jazz-rock. His affinity for instrumental music traversed the traditional to the

Moderate Rock

0:13

Gtr. 1 A5 clean

Gtr. 2 dist w/bar----- 1/2 full

0:52

full snap string w/bar-- 1/2 full w/bar-- 1/2 snap string

1:07

1/2 w/bar-- 1/2 h.o. w/o picking flutter bar 1/2

full 1/2 full 1/2 full

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"Guitar Shop" was Beck's tongue-in-cheek reaction to '80s shredmania. A glorious array of guitar sounds and noise-as-art mannerisms, part overt histrionics and part rock-guitar mood music, it is Jeff at his wittiest. This excerpt depicts his simple but effective intro riff: (0:13) A5 power chord plus sparse melodic snippet punctuated with space (Gtr. 1, Tele). His riff (Gtr. 2, Strat) is a basic pentatonic motif

doctored with whammy-bar bending. At 0:52 Beck weaves a variety of elements to reflect "guitars screaming and people playing in 8,000 different styles." (*Jeff Beck: Crazy Fingers*) Notable are his mutated paraphrase of "Hideaway," pull-off flurry harkening back to Les Paul, and multiple whammy-bar antics. Check out the flutter bar effect in measure 6-7 and the articulated bends, dives, and slurs in 7-8.

evokes the spirit of Cliff Gallup but with greater overdrive distortion and hard-rock edginess. Beck's reimagining of Gallup-inspired rockabilly informed a '40s swing groove that permeates the tune, underscored by Hymas' faux upright-bass sound via Emulator 3 sampler.

"Behind the Veil," Hymas' sole composition,

presents a model of Beck's restraint and thoughtful song interpretation. He renders "verse" melodies over the light reggae groove and simple harmonic structure with typical deftness; handling F#m sections with funkier articulation rich in compressed twang, percussive effects, timbral variations, palm-muted textures, and spacious

punctuation emphasized by his fingerstyle technique and nuanced inflections. Contrasting Gm sections find him developing Hymas' elegant, singable "bridge" line with a thicker distorted sustaining sound and ample whammy-bar vibrato—a neat counterbalance to the freer verses.

"Big Block" is a menacing slow blues with a heavy power-chord riff and driving drum beat. Synth-bass ushers in Beck's two-guitar textures in E, part feedback-laced metal and part "Voodoo Chile." He told *Jeff Beck: Crazy Fingers* author Annette Carson the sound could only be achieved with a "wide-open Marshall and Strat," mirroring vintage Hendrix, and further insisted "The riff is the melody. The rest is punctuation." The shuffling 12/8 groove is interrupted by measures of 11/8 and 3/8 meter to accommodate asymmetric connective figures and breaks—arguably the album's only vestige of '70s fusion/prog-rock. A cinematic bridge (2:03) introduces greater chromaticism with a dissonant ensemble riff (of doubled guitars), implying a "barbaric band" transforming "David Rose Big Band, Buddy Rich." Beck's solo in F#m (2:27) flaunts aggressive string bends and dives with whammy-bar, bent double stops, tapped trills, and pinch-harmonic episodes. A mid-solo modulation to A (2:50) signals a change of tone and mood (reputedly induced by his girlfriend entering the room) with exhibitionistic whammy-bar phrasing and faster tapped-ostinato patterns ("three things going on at once": tapping, sliding up above the fretboard, and maintaining a pull-off pattern on the open G string).

A series of dynamic ensemble figures begins a synth-dominated section with quasi-horn sounds reminiscent of '80s Yes, culminating in a dramatic conducted cadenza in mixed meters neatly wrapping up the arrangement.

Eulogizing Beck, Brian May said "Where

Were You” was “...possibly the most beautiful bit of guitar music ever recorded.” The track was inspired by *La Mystère Des Voix Bulgares*, a remarkable recording of a Bulgarian choir singing modern arrangements of indigenous folk music. Its exotic harmonies, stirring melodies, and “glorious openness” prompted Beck’s guitar interpretation, demonstrating his ability to sing on the guitar, playing distinct melodies rather than improvising. He initially recorded parts with his Jackson but settled on the Duncan Strat, overdubbing discrete phrases treated with heavy compression and echo. The careful handling of fretted notes, harmonics and precise manipulation of the floating whammy-bar for the vocalesque melody required he switch midway to his new Strat with Lace Sensors, Wilkinson nut, and modern vibrato. Beck recalled the piece was in the guitar, he just had to get it out.

“We did all sorts of things to get rid of extraneous string-rattling,” he said in *Crazy Fingers*. “We wanted a full-bodied tone, as though coming from heaven. The Rat distorts less in the high register, so I got a pure sound with the right sustain. Initially, I was sneaking notes in, playing with the volume, but Tony didn’t like it at all. Sometimes I’m doing four things at once – hitting harmonics, doing volume swells, manipulating the bar, and muting strings!”

Beck channeled ZZ Top and street-smart hot-rod allusions in “Stand on It.” Issued as a single in ’89, it reached #35 on the Mainstream Rock chart. The chugging rocker in A is propelled by Beck’s crunchy in-the-pocket riff, redolent with staccato dyads, palm-muting, growling low bends, and whammy-bar vibrato. Hymas provides a secondary theme (0:42) where Beck adds background slide-guitar flourishes occasionally colored with backward echo, that weave through the arrangement. The potpourri of overdubbed guitars includes sampled Beck motifs (1:08), various whammy-bar effects like

Free Time (rubato)

N.C. (A) D/F# Gsus2 G(add2)/B 0:18

w/bar----- Harm.-----
w/bar----- 0 +1 -5 0 -1.5 -5 -2.5 -1.5

T
A 18 17 (17) (17) 18 17 19 19 (19) (19) 16 18 19 (19)
B

Em7 Bm Em Bm 8va Bb Gm 1:35

Harm.----- w/bar----- w/bar-----
0 -5 0 +1 0 +1.5 +1 0 0 -5 -1.5 -2.5 -3

T
A (5) (4) (7) (7) (5) (4) (7) (3) (3) (3)
B

Em7b5 A7sus4 Bbmaj7#11 2:12

w/bar----- Harm.-----
-5 +1

T
A (5) 14 12 14 12 14 (14) 15 14 17 15 17 15 17 (17) 18 17
B

“Where Were You” is a standout piece on the album, and in Beck’s repertoire. Painsstakingly assembled in the studio, it’s a stunning example of world music in Beck’s universe – his distillation of Bulgarian choral sounds transformed into a discrete guitar voice. Throughout, he employed the whammy bar and its nuances to create the impression of otherworldly singing. The opening phrase is rendered as fretted notes

answered by an open harmonic bent in vocalesque manner that becomes thematic. At 1:35 he uses open harmonics as diatonic melody (compare fingered shapes with actual pitches) and melisma to expand the atmosphere. The last two bars of the excerpt find Beck playing contrasting pattern lines that recall his fusion period, reimagined as climactic harmonically centered runs.

fluttering vibrato and discrete pitch bending, feedback, slide chording, tapped episodes, and fast chromatic and pentatonic runs.

“Day in the House” is one of the first grooves the band developed. A cross-cultural piece, it embodies Beck’s Cajun-filtered transformation of a Bo Diddley beat reconciling synth-driven

R&B/hip-hop/dance leanings with African polyphonic allusions, made funkier with his slicing 16th-note rhythm chording on clean Strat. The track spoofs the ecology movement with Bozzio’s staid British narrative over the band’s urgent rhythmic backdrop. Beck’s solo (2:35) is one of his roughest, asymmetric, and punk in attitude.

N.C. (E)

a dissonant mutated blues-lick (9) leading to cascades of legato runs that merge and transform Les Paul, Chet Atkins, and Cliff Gallup influences (10-13). The bizarre effect in 14-15 finds the maestro manipulating a fingered triad with whammy bar before ending the sentence with a conclusive dive bomb.

Beck considered "Two Rivers" "a dream

A pastiche of Beckisms in E on multiple guitars define the head – a heavy, palm-muted power-chord intro, rhythmically charged triad figures answered by synth lines (0:10) and a mutated rockabilly ensemble riff (0:28). His striking whammy-bar treatment of a secondary theme in A (0:48) delivered with three guitars provides contrast, followed by a return to E and triad figures decorated with overdubbed pull-off runs. Beck's solo (1:30) exemplifies aggressive rock-virtuoso shredding and features his most ostentatious wobbly bar-generated sound effects. Also noteworthy are his Moog-like melodies, complex double-timed licks, and a climactic double-stop ascending chromatically.

VINTAGE GUITAR **43** September 2026

A full-page photograph of Bill Kirchen, an elderly man with white hair and glasses, wearing a black shirt with white floral embroidery. He is holding a Fender Telecaster guitar with a natural wood finish. The background is dark with some starburst and geometric line graphics in the upper left.

Bill Kirchen

Lost Planet Guitarman

By Dan Forte

“Someone let this old town out of the sack. We lost a couple of years, and I’m tired of looking back. Been streaming my songs, living on Zoom, rockin’ around the world from my living room. I’m putting on my boots; I got to get back on track.”

During the pandemic, Bill Kirchen did what thousands of sidelined artists did when the clubs went dark. The “cabin fever relievers” he streamed online were a welcome repast for a fan base he had cultivated across five decades. Itching to get on the road and play in front of live audiences, the title tune from *Cat Out Of The Bag* is a clarion call for everyone to do the same. In place of his trademark chickenw pickin’, his trusty Tele rings out a crystalline, anthemic fanfare.

Kirchen with “Excalibur,”
built by Rick Kelly.

Photos by Tommy Kile.



Kirchen's "Hammer of the Honky Tonk Gods" Telecaster with serial number 2222, modified including with Joe Barden pickups, was his main axe for 50-plus years.

Harmony-made 1962 Silvertone 1446L (left).

Kirchen's late-'30s National Duolian has its original enamel "piano" finish. "Jerry Douthett, who sold it to me, called it the 'tin can.' So many of those things rattle, but this one is tight," he says.

This mid-'30s Gibson L-7 has picture frame/"Nick Lucas" banjo inlays.



The 12th solo album by the "King of Dieselbilly" – which I accurately describes as "a roaring hybrid of twangy country, rockabilly, truck-driving music, and roadhouse rock" – is typically eclectic and truest to his wide-angle musical tastes.

"I've never been too good at sticking to a genre, and this record is probably the broadest scope of songs I've ever done," he says. "It's a natural progression. But I don't think I've strayed too far from the fold."

At 78, Kirchen's life has been nothing if not colorful. He was a high-school classmate of James Osterberg, better known as Iggy Pop. By the time his guitar and vocals with Com-

mander Cody & his Lost Planet Airmen hit the airwaves, he'd thumbed his way from his Michigan home to Rhode Island's Newport Folk Festival, seeing Dylan (acoustic and electric) as well as blues legends Skip James, Son House, and Robert Pete Williams. His tale of failing to heed an old-timer's advice hopping a freight and landing in a hospital is worth a TED Talk at minimum.

After the Airmen came the Moonlighters, with his longtime friend, the late Austin "Audie" de Lone (the pair released *Transatlantica* in 2016), sideman gigs with Danny Gatton, Nick Lowe, and Elvis Costello, and solo albums that are both reverent and progressive.

Cat's songwriting credits are sprinkled across stops on Kirchen's career, from Moonlighter Tony Johnson to Cody guitarist John Tichy, songwriter Blackie Farrell, bassist Sarah Brown, NRBQ's Al Anderson, de Lone, and Bill's wife, Louise. It also marks the first appearance by his Austin-based rhythm section of bassist Jack Saunders and drummer Rick Richards.

"The last album, I recorded with my English guys, Paul Riley on bass and Malcolm Mills, the president of the record company who also plays drums," he details. "This is the first time with Jack and Rick, and I'm so happy to be doing that. So we're touring now with the exact people who made the new record."



Kalamazoo Senior
from 1933/'34.

This Gibson LG-2's X
bracing and 19-fret neck
date it to pre-1955 (left).

Kirchen's '34 Martin
O-17 has a spruce top,
mahogany back and sides,
and a Brazilian rosewood
fretboard. "I might have
paid as much as \$170
for it, which was a lot of
money in '65," he says.

Kirchen's Collings D1
A is from 2003.

On any given night, the trio will launch into "Hot Rod Lincoln," the Airmen's hit from '72, transforming into a tour de force quoting everything from "Buckaroo" to "Foxey Lady." Kirchen's mix of flicks and humor has earned him a following that's loyal but still growing.

"Cat Out Of The Bag" is reminiscent of Dylan's grander rock or the Elvis Costello of "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love, and Understanding."

That's what I was trying to channel. And my version of "The Times They Are a-Changin'" is not like Dylan's but is a big jangly G, wide open. It was the last thing Audie and I did together; he plays rhythm

guitar and really drove it. I was playing guitar and singing. When the producer, Paul Riley, played it for me, I said, "Did my rhythm guitar make it?" He said, "Nope. Audie was running the show."

Before the guitar and folk music, you played trombone.

Growing up, I listened to classical music and Broadway. We had the 78s of *Oklahoma*, *South Pacific*, *My Fair Lady*, and *The Music Man*. That's what I liked.

My earliest exposure to folk music was exclusively CBEW radio, across the river in Windsor, Ontario, from where we lived in Ann Arbor. They had a folk singer named Alan Mills, who wrote "I Know An Old

Lady Who Swallowed A Fly" and had a radio show.

For four summers, 1960 to '63, I studied trombone at the National Music Camp at Interlochen; eight weeks long, people from all over the country. One of the first years I was there, a guy named Dave Siglin played acoustic guitar and sang. He ran The Ark, a very important place in Ann Arbor, a city with a history of being involved in folk.

When did you start to play folk music on guitar?

I was exposed to the folk world by Pete Turin. He showed me how to play "Mississippi Blues" by Willie Brown, and he played me records like John Fahey's *Blind Joe Death*,



Kirchen's amp collection includes this mid-'60s Fender Pro Reverb (left), early-'60s Princeton, and a tweed Deluxe of which he says, "It could be as old as me and the Telecaster – we're both about 1948 models."



and Backwards Sam Firk, who was of the D.C. folk scene. I met him in '64, when I was a junior in high school. He said, "Mississippi John Hurt is gonna be at Newport this year. You oughta go. So, me and another guy hitchhiked. If you look at the cover of *The Blues At Newport/1964*, with David Gahr's photograph looking from the back of Mississippi John Hurt, you can see me on the left, four rows back. I slept on the beach, with my sleeping bag and a little nap sack. When I think back, it seems unlikely that I would have found my way there. It was just gentler times.

In '64, all I had was a banjo. My mom had it, and I got it out of the attic. She sewed a little gray Naugahyde case with snaps. That's what I took to Newport, so that was my entree to folk music.

Did you get the Pete Seeger banjo book?

Sure did. I had a 10" record with "Goofing-Off Suite," and two or three of the *Anthology Of American Folk Music* LPs. Then I had the first three New Lost City Ramblers records with Tom Paley on guitar. So, Pete Seeger, Mike Seeger, Ramblers, Weavers a little bit, and I ended up with a Mark Spoelstra record and learned "Buck Dancer's Choice," fingerpicking off of that record. I had a few blues compilations on the RBF label, and of course I had the first John Hurt record on the Piedmont label, with stuff like "Candy Man," "Louis Collins," "Richland Women Blues." I was a Jim Kweskin Jug Band fan, saw early Lovin' Spoonful at the Night Owl Cafe. I was all into that stuff, and I still go back to that as my touchstone.

We would hitchhike to New York. I heard you could stay at the International Student Hospice for 50 cents a night. Hospice, that's what they called

it, but it was a hostel. I would wander around, go to the Folklore Center, buy *Broadside* magazine. I really liked Dave Van Ronk and learned to sing about sex and drugs before I had any experience with either. It was just

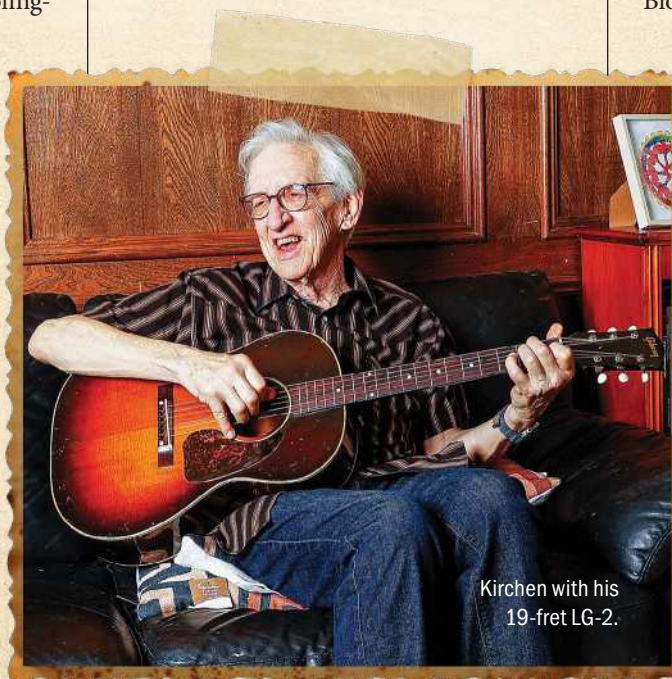
exciting to me, but by the time I could have gotten involved in that, I was playing electric guitar with my folk-rock band, the Seventh Seal.

Also at Newport, of course, was Bob Dylan.

In a one-year period, '64 to '65, there were both Newports and, in between, he played Ann Arbor High School. The first Dylan album I got was the second one, *Freewheelin'*. For Christmas, my dad bought me a big-brass-band record. At the dinner table, he goes, "Bill, would you like to hear your new record?" I'm going, "Oh yeah, sure." By this time I'd moved on. But he'd really bought the first Dylan album and stuck it into this other cover (laughs).

Dan Erlewine was the first electric-guitar player I saw live. Danny knew Michael Bloomfield, and he had the Prime Movers, a blues band. He was good. His brother, Stephen, played harp, and Iggy was the drummer. They did two songs that I really loved; one was "Ooh Poo Pah Doo" by Jesse Hill, and they had a line from it written on the side of their van, "Gonna Ring A Few Bells In Your Ears." The other was "Seek Seek (And Ye Shall Find)." I got the *New Orleans – Home of the Blues Volume I*, which is one of the greatest records ever made, with Aaron Neville and Ernie K-Doe and Jesse Hill. "Seek Seek" was the Swan Silvertones, with Claude Jeter singing and some great guitar. That was all in 1965, pretty heady stuff for me to learn.

I got into Danny Kalb first on a record called *Meet The New Strangers*, which was Kalb and Sam Charters. Sam played piano and Danny played a J-200. I also had *The Folk Stringers*



Kirchen with his 19-fret LG-2.



Kirchen's "Excalibur" was built by Rick Kelly at Carmine Street Guitars. Its body is Bowery pine from filmmaker Jim Jarmusch's loft, and it has Don Mare pickups. After 15 years playing it, Bill points out, "Part of the body is worn smooth from my hand, and where the pick hits has grooves that are $\frac{1}{16}$ " deep." It's substantial D neck has "really steep shoulders."

A pine-body custom built by Jonathan Thatcher (left).

Kirchen has two guitars built by Ignacio Banos. "The first was serial number 2222; he labeled the second one 2223 for me, but it was built years later."

Kirchen's Bajo Sexto baritone was built by Dan Erlewine using a Fender body and neck. "I tune it A to A, an octave below standard, or B to B. On the record, I did something in F, and it was tuned C to C."

record with him doing Snooks Eaglin's version of "High Society."

When I had my first band, we had the *Projections* record by the Blues Project with Al Kooper and Danny and "Flute Thing." He was the electric guitarist on that. I went to New York and saw them at the Cafe A Go Go on a triple bill with the Youngbloods and the Kweskin Jug Band. That would have been '65 or '66.

With the Seventh Seal, were you guys writing your own material?

No, it didn't occur to anybody to write songs. We did stuff like "Leaving Here" by Eddie Holland and a bunch of Marvin Gaye songs, some Dylan songs. We did Donovan

songs like "Catch the Wind" and "Colors," and I did all the singing. I did "Diving Duck Blues" because I'd seen Sleepy John Estes do it at Newport. When we were looking for a drummer, we offered Iggy the job, because he wasn't playing with the Prime Movers anymore, and he said, "No, I want to be a front man." (laughs).

What was your rig at the time?

I had a borrowed Jazzmaster and played with plastic finger picks; I didn't know any better. And I had a tweed Twin, which was the first guitar amp I bought, and I had an Echoplex and an outboard reverb unit. You could stick the guitar in front of the Twin and get feedback, and I had a wang bar. It

was good to go – tone for days, a miracle rig. I peaked too soon (laughs)!

John Tichy and George Frayne, who became Commander Cody, were playing in frat bands. They saw me and said, "We don't know what this guy is up to, but people seem to like him, and he's got a cute girlfriend, so he must be okay." So they invited me to hang out and play a little. I sang "Do not forsake me, oh my darlin'" – "High Noon" by Frankie Laine. I hooked up with those guys, and Tichy sold me a Gibson SG for \$100.

When you were still in Ann Arbor, the band had about eight guys...

Yeah, a lot of people. We had the Fabulous Green Sisters, who tap-danced in green bras

and panties. We had another girl dressed in the American flag doing jumping jacks, and we showed movies. It was art school, right?

Billy C. [Farlow] already knew blues and a number of Hank Williams songs, so we did tons of Hank. He also did “Bon Ton Roulet,” the Clifton Chenier version. I brought in some Merle Haggard songs that I’d just discovered. Tichy sang Buck Owens songs and rock and roll, and also knew hard country – for instance, a song that Willie Nelson had written called “Family Bible.” I found “Hot Rod Lincoln” on a Johnny Bond record that also had “Smoke! Smoke! Smoke! (That Cigarette)” – we had two chart hits doing songs off of that one record. I gave them to George because he professed, “I can’t sing,” but he had a gift of gab.

But you moved to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Right, and then I told the band to move there. I started playing Big John & Harris’ Town Pump, in the Mission District, and I’d do whatever country songs I knew. I called the guys and said, “You’ve got to get out here. We can do something.” They showed up in late ’68 and we started trying to get gigs.

I had a job as a motorcycle messenger. I’d sit on a bench in the blueprint duplicating office, and when an order came in, I’d put it in a canvas bag and drive to downtown San Francisco. On the bench chatting with another messenger one day, the guy said he was managing a band. I said, “I got a Gibson SG,” and he goes, “I’ve got a Telecaster.” “Well, I’ve been looking for a Telecaster.” He had been looking for an SG. So the story that this happened with a stranger on a bus is not true, but we traded and the Tele was the one I played until 2016. I sold it during the pandemic; I wasn’t playing it anymore, had another Tele I liked, and I needed the money.

You’d made various modifications on it.

I always said the only thing original

was the neck, the body, what precious little paint was left, and the six ferrules. Every knob, tuning peg, pickup, nut, wire, capacitor, switch, bridge plate, and everything else had been changed.

Playing electric, who do you consider influences?

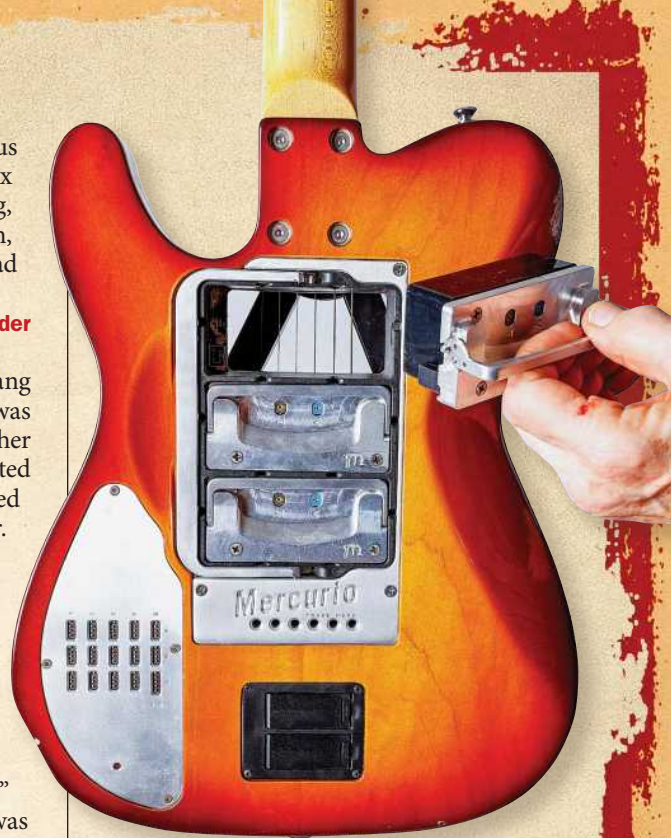
I thought any guitar that had twang was a Tele, but it turned out there was all kinds of great stuff played on other guitars. One of the reasons I wanted a Tele was *Roll Truck Roll* by Red Simpson with Gene Moles on guitar.

I didn’t know he didn’t play a Tele, but I was exposed to Tele players on Merle Haggard records with Roy Nichols, but also James Burton, and Buck Owens records with Don Rich – and Buck, too. I was knocked out by that kind of playing. I had the first couple of Haggard albums with “Sing Me Back Home” and “Lonesome Fugitive.” I did “Wine Take Me Away,” and it was going over good. Billy C. decided, “I’m gonna write a wine song to get it out from under Bill” – which he did. He and Cody wrote “Wine Do Your Stuff,” a great song.

Gene Moles on the Red Simpson record, in particular the lead to “Truck Driving Man,” which I tried to steal – got maybe 80 percent of it, but it’s such a great ride. The other thing I tried to learn note for note was the lead by Wayne Mosson “Only Daddy That’ll Walk The Line.” Also, I didn’t know it was Grady Martin, but I loved everything I ever heard him do, never realizing it was the same guy on all the Johnny Horton stuff,

like “Honky Tonk Hardwood Floor,” on the six-string bass drenched in reverb, and “One Woman Man.” I didn’t know until recently that he did all the pretty fills on the Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty records, and of course he did “El Paso.”

I went to the trouble of learning Freddie King stuff because I loved it so much. To me, it was the roots of rock and roll – the intent and drive. Obviously, there’s some awesome



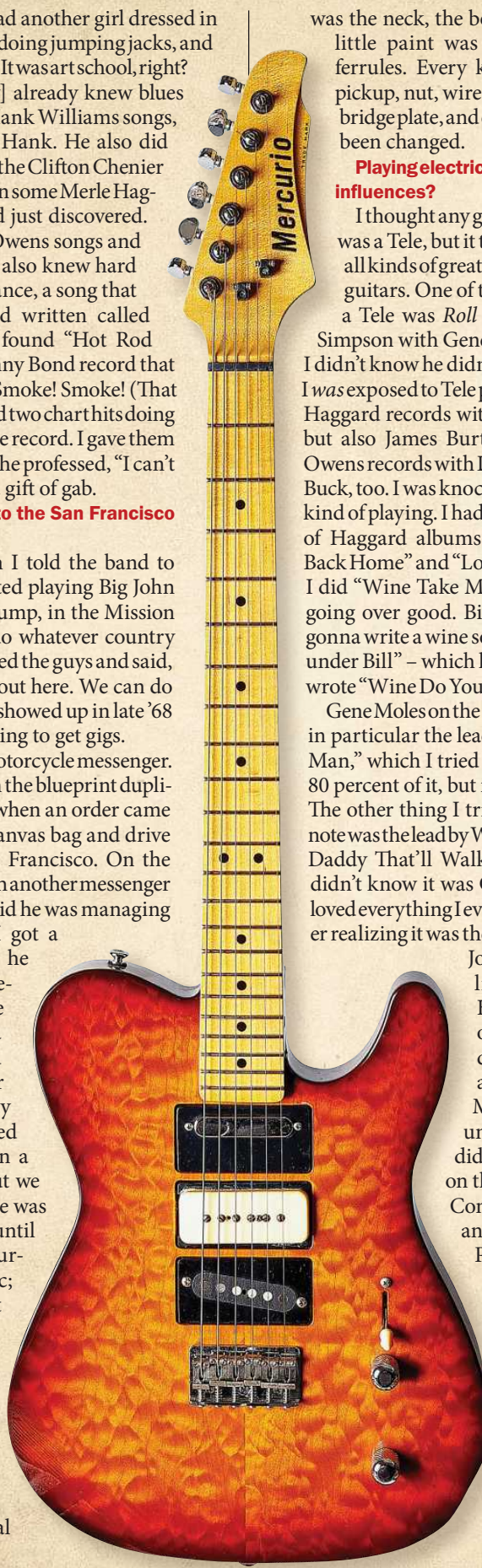
Early-2000s Mercurio (left) with modular “Pickup Pak” system, designed by Peter Mercurio. “On the back are dip switches and pots on each pickup to balance it with the others. It’s a funny choice for me because I’m the guy who plays the simplest guitar in the world – stick, slab, wires, two pickups, one switch, two knobs.”

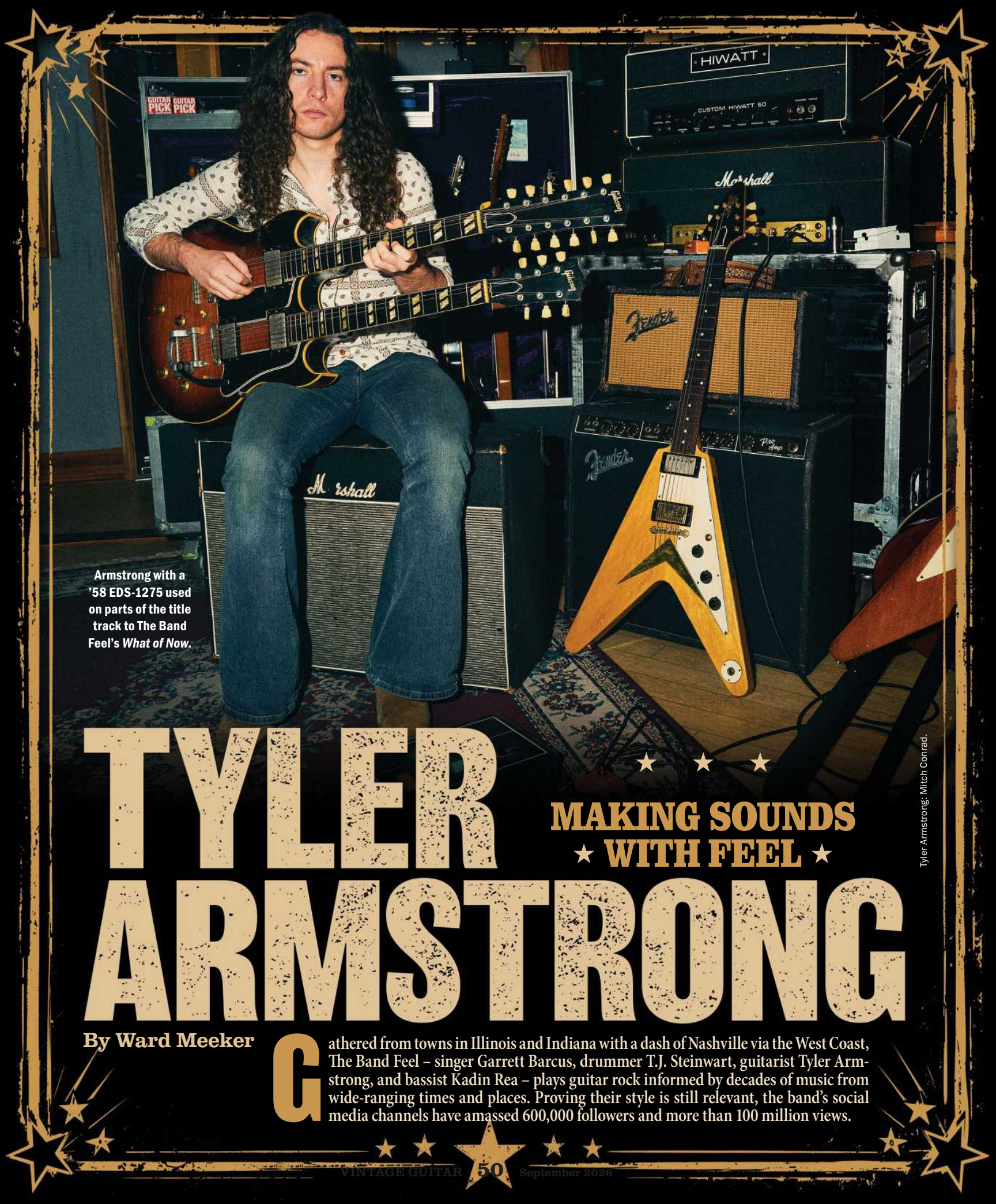
tunesmithing and arranging by [pianist/co-writer] Sonny Thompson. The other thing is, I love steel guitar. So I always tried to learn Ralph Mooney licks.

To this day, that is the basis of me playing rock guitar.

You’ve jammed onstage with Junior Brown, toured with Redd Volkaert, and were once in Danny Gatton’s band.

Well, you just gotta screw up your courage to do that stuff. Suck it up. You’re not trying to do what they do. That’s the secret. Don’t think I can stand next to Redd and go, “See what you did there? I can do that, too.” No, I can’t. Penalty buzzer! That’s the trap. If I’m going to compete, I’m going to lose on a technical level. I think my strength in rock guitar is conceiving and playing melodic stuff. I don’t have a tremendous arsenal of rock licks, I’m not a rock shredder, but I can play fast enough to get away with enough dazzle. Let’s put it this way: There’s nothing I’m playing that they wouldn’t know how to play, but the fact that I chose to play that is my only strength there – whereas they can do stuff that would take me a heck of a long time to figure out, if at all. That’s just a classic example of “be yourself.” I just do what I do. **VG**



A full-page photograph of Tyler Armstrong, a man with long dark hair, sitting on a Marshall amplifier. He is holding a Gibson Les Paul guitar. Behind him are several other amplifiers, including a Hiwatt and a Fender, and a yellow Fender Telecaster guitar leaning against them. The scene is set in a studio or rehearsal space with a patterned rug and a star-themed border around the image.

Armstrong with a '58 EDS-1275 used on parts of the title track to The Band Feel's *What of Now*.

TYLER ARMSTRONG

★ ★ ★

MAKING SOUNDS WITH FEEL ★

By Ward Meeker

Gathered from towns in Illinois and Indiana with a dash of Nashville via the West Coast, The Band Feel – singer Garrett Barcus, drummer T.J. Steinwart, guitarist Tyler Armstrong, and bassist Kadin Rea – plays guitar rock informed by decades of music from wide-ranging times and places. Proving their style is still relevant, the band's social media channels have amassed 600,000 followers and more than 100 million views.

Tyler Armstrong: Mitch Conrad.



Running through a '69 Marshall Super Bass and '63 Bassman, Armstrong's '64 SG Standard (left) drives "A Thousand Mornings." Other guitars heard on the track include his '53 Tele and producer Paul Moak's '69 Gretsch Country Gent.



Armstrong calls his 1935 Stahl Model 6, "... the best-sounding small-body guitar on earth." It's the primary on "Libby Hill."



A diehard lover of vintage gear, apart from a handful of his own impressive pieces, high-profile players, collectors, and dealers have put in Armstrong's capable hands some of the most-notable examples ever made to use in-studio and onstage.

We sat with him to discuss his musical roots, assembling the band, and the creation of its first LP, *What of Now*, set for release August 21.

What are your earliest memories of hearing music?

My dad wanted to play guitar when he was growing up, but his family could not afford one, so he often said he "played" the radio. He loved music, but I don't remember it being

super-prevalent in our house besides faint memories of him occasionally singing things like "Carry On Wayward Son." I mostly heard contemporary Christian music of the day.

My parents talk about how I started hitting on things and making sounds when I was really little. I was always drawn to music, and anytime I'd see musicians, like in church, I was pretty focused on them. I got a small drum kit when I was little, but didn't start playing guitar until middle school, when my dad's music taste became more evident in my life and getting a guitar was a total pathway to that. In a lot of ways I'm living both of our dreams.

At that time, what spurred you to grab a guitar?

I can't recall the exact order of events, but I remember getting into my mom's CD collection and coming across this all-female Christian rock band called Rachel Rachel's album that had a cover of "Carry On Wayward Son." That sparked the memories of my dad singing that song. Sometime later I watched *Wayne's World* and the "Bohemian Rhapsody" scene really made me go, "Woah!" I didn't know what a guitar riff was, but I knew I wanted to do that and remember thinking "That is beyond sick." I asked my parents for a guitar and they ordered a Squier Strat Pack.

What was the first riff you learned?

Well, even before seeing *Wayne's World*, I was making up songs – writing lyrics in a notebook that I'm glad I still have. They're



The Band Feel: Garrett Barcus, Kadin Rea T.J. Steinwart, and Tyler Armstrong.

Alongside the sounds, songwriting evolved dramatically.

Yeah, I was drawn to the lyrics and melodies just as much as the guitars. And really, the instruments were so melodic because of it. Music was so... *musical*. And yeah, '60s and '70s guitar tones are insane, but the songwriting was even more spectacular, especially when the Laurel Canyon stuff started to take off with the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, Love. Then came Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, Flying Burritos, Poco, Dan Fogelberg. It was an exciting time. I wish I'd been there.

What was your first step up from the Squier Strat?

terrible (laughs), but fun. While waiting for the Strat Pack to arrive, I was looking up "How to play 'Bohemian Rhapsody' on guitar," and that's when I found out what tabs are. I thought, "This will be easy... It's right here in front of me." Obviously, I had no idea (laughs).

The very first thing I played on guitar was a song I made up using just the open strings. The first song I truly learned was "Dust In The Wind," which is fingerpicked. At first, I played it straight because I didn't know otherwise, and would think, "This doesn't sound right."

Eventually, I learned I had to swing the groove, which opened my eyes into really listening to what was being played, so I became obsessed with learning the specific techniques and feels of other players, which I'm still doing with John Coltrane, Curtis Mayfield... everybody.

What were you hearing most as your playing style was taking shape?

When I was first learning, I'd listen to anything that was guitar-heavy, which to my ear at the time was classic rock. I'm very into history and research, so my first inclination was to go to Youtube and search for things like "Top 10 classic rock songs of all time" or something like that. That's how I found out about "Time" by Pink Floyd, Queen, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Zeppelin, Deep Purple. Eventually, I got very into Van Halen and that led to hair metal like Whitesnake and Ratt. Then I started to

expand a bit and dove into bands like The Hollies, The Turtles, The Zombies, Gerry and the Pacemakers. When I was 15, I got really into the Beatles, and that changed my universe. They're *everything*. After that, I started to accept that there was validity in all of that music rather than just the shreddy stuff. That began my love for R&B, soul, country, folk... all of it.

Were you drawn to the cleaner guitar tones and playing styles of the '60s?

In the '40s and '50s, what became rock and roll was underground until Elvis, Carl Perkins, Chuck Berry, Gene Vincent, and a few others came around – 1955, with "Maybellene" to be exact. That pushed guitar to the forefront and what I loved about the '60s was the progression of experimentation. Even with pop records, the guitars sounded fantastic. Something like "All I Have To Do Is Dream" by The Everly Brothers has the most-perfect clean tones. What was so great about the '60s was that, for the most part, it was a pure expression of an authentic nature. There were absolutely no rules, and you could *feel* it.

As far as tones go, I love that in '60s and '70s recordings you can hear which guitars and amps people were using and identify them; Clapton with a Les Paul through a Marshall, Townshend with a Rickenbacker through a Fender or Vox. You'd find out what those people were using and use it yourself, but everyone had a unique voice because of the purity of the gear and the times.

Well, before I got another guitar, I began modifying the Squier. I'd read about guitarists modding them, so that was the beginning of my interest in making a guitar what I need it to be. But the big step up turned out to be the last guitar my parents bought for me – a white 2006 Les Paul Studio. We got it used at The Rock Shop, in Springfield, Illinois. I'd been there a few times and would just stare at it. One day we were there; I remember it was a Monday and my dad had taken off work, and he said, "Why don't you play it?" So I did. He asked if I liked it and then told the dude working, "We'll take it."

I almost soiled myself, I was so excited (laughs). I would have never thought that was going to happen. I did tear up – not sobbed, but I was like, "Oh my gosh!" All I'd thought about was one day having a white Les Paul Custom, and even if we'd had a lot of money my parents wouldn't have been like, "Let's buy the kid who's been playing for a year and a half a \$3,000 guitar," so the Studio was more than fine with me – I had a real Les Paul! I owe so much of where and who I am to my parents. We didn't have a lot of money, but they sacrificed to provide the best life possible for me.

I still have that guitar and it will be the last piece of my gear to go because it's such a prominent part of my life. It's a good one, too. I spent so many hours on that guitar and modded the crap out of it. The very first thing I ever did on guitar was learn to work on one. My dad was really into



This modern Rickenbacker 660/12 is heard on "Better Days."

This '53 Southern Jumbo is, Armstrong says, "One of my favorite acoustics because it does it all – loud, sweet, dynamic. I've written countless songs with it, and it's my touring acoustic of choice."

Armstrong calls his '65, "The perfect Strat. It sits so well in a mix, shines when it needs to, and supports when asked."

"A black Les Paul is arguably the coolest guitar ever, and this one knows me well; it's one of my soulmates," Armstrong says of his '69 Custom.

electronics, and the day we got the Squier, he said, "This is just like a car. If you're going to have it, you need to know how to fix it." So he took it apart – unsoldered everything – and spent a week teaching me how to put it back together. Because of that, I became a tinkerer and I've often said I've been working on guitars longer than I've played them (laughs).

What did you swap out?

Everything that isn't wood has been in and out of that thing 20 times if not more (laughs). Seriously. The first thing I did was put a Seymour Duncan JB and Jazz in it. The only thing I didn't change were the frets.

What was your first step up in amps?

I traded the amp from the Strat Pack for

a Fender G-DEC 30, and a year or so later bought a 50-watt JCM 900.

Big step up.

Yeah, it's a first year – 1990 – that originally would've had EL34s, but someone put 5881s in it. When I got it, I had no idea what any of that meant, but I loved it either way. Six months after I started playing, I joined the school jazz band, playing "Satin Doll" and "Louie, Louie" sort of stuff. Shortly after, I started my first band with a couple buddies from school and another kid we knew through the drummer's dad. The singer's dad, Pat Rolens, is an insanely good player and had a huge influence on me. We practiced in their basement and he showed me a lot of great music, taught me how to sing harmony,

and had some really great gear including a '76 Marshall 2203 – early Master Volume. That was my practice amp (laughs). I remember plugging in for the first time and everything changed. I was already interested in old things, but those experiences really started not only my vintage-gear obsession but my ear for crafting tones.

From there, I knew I needed a tube amp, so I got a paper route and found the 900 on Craigslist for \$525. I had to borrow 75 bucks from my parents and didn't have enough for a cab yet, so the amp sat on our living-room floor. I'd lay there and stare at it, thinking, "I have a Marshall, man!" Eventually, I got a matching 4x12, but unfortunately traded both of them off a few years after that.

Pat still has that '76 Marshall, I hope to get it from him someday.

What was the first old guitar you played?

It was one that belongs to a friend's dad, Bob Cain – a mid-'70s SG Custom, which also aided in my vintage journey. I'd love to have that one, too!

What was your first band?

It was a trio called Midnight Rush, and we played Zeppelin, Boston... all that stuff. Two of us were 13 and our singer was 11.

Were you gigging, or just hammering away in the basement?

Oh, we were gigging, and we tried *crazy* stuff – “Bastille Day” and “YYZ” and the whole first side of *2112*. Lots of classic rock, some harder-to-play stuff that probably didn't sound as good as we thought it did. People loved it.

Within a year, we were playing original tunes. I'd write music and melodies, and our drummer wrote lyrics. We got some local radio play, which was the most-thrilling thing ever. I've still got our demo CDs, posters, and setlists. My mom videotaped everything in my life from the time I was born (laughs), so I have video of gigs from every year starting when I was 13 until I left home.

How many songs were in the set?

We never got to a four-hour show, but we couldn't stay in the bars past 10:30 anyway. We'd play 12 songs or so, opening for another band. Early on, the set always included “Moby Dick” and “Eruption.”

Full drum solo in “Moby Dick”?

Oh, yeah! And we did “Eruption” into “You Really Got Me” and I'd play mindlessly for five minutes. It was terrible (laughs), but we were *serious*. We were going to take over the world.

Were you getting paid?

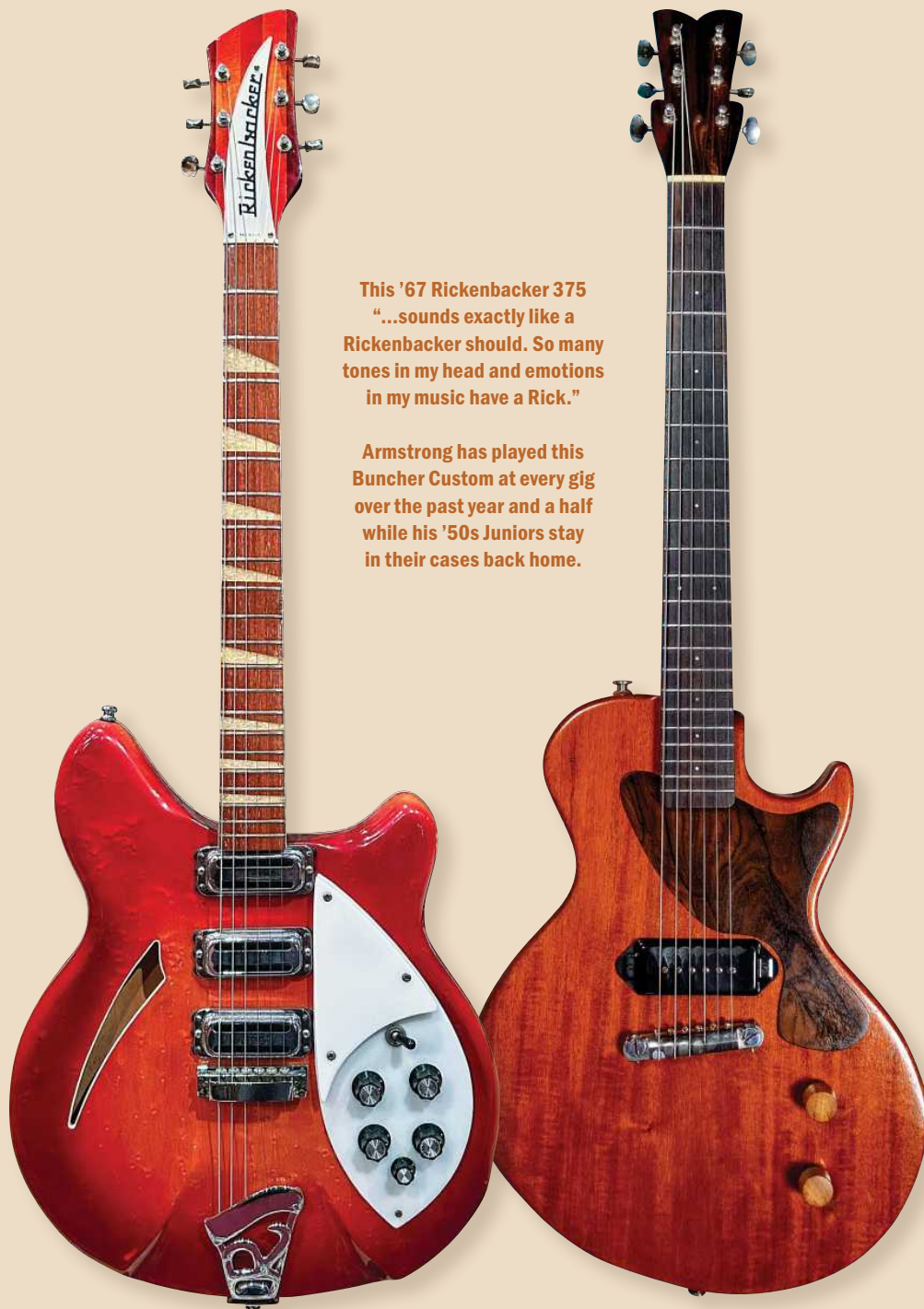
Mostly in bar pizza. Sometimes it would be a hundred bucks. But we were happy as clams.

How long did that band last?

Three and a half years, then it transitioned into another band that was doing original metalcore and hard rock. I listened to a ton of Avenged Sevenfold, Bullet For My Valentine, Killswitch Engage – heavier stuff compared to what the band had been doing. That iteration never played a gig, we cut demos for a little label and then it fell apart.

What were the beginnings of The Band Feel?

For a very short period of time, I was in Nashville studying audio engineering and doing development-deal sessions on guitar – nothing anyone has heard. While doing that, I met a dude named Nick, who needed a guitarist for his band. They were established in southern Illinois and we ended up doing some cool stuff. One time we opened for Boston, and meeting Tom Scholz was the coolest freaking thing. Tom and his band were a big influence on me. They were one of the bands my dad would daydream about



This '67 Rickenbacker 375
“...sounds exactly like a Rickenbacker should. So many tones in my head and emotions in my music have a Rick.”

Armstrong has played this Buncher Custom at every gig over the past year and a half while his '50s Juniors stay in their cases back home.

being in, so telling him he was going to see me open for Boston was the thrill of a lifetime!

Eventually, that band fizzled out, but the drummer, T.J., and I wanted to keep going. Between that band stopping then continuing, I was in a very cool cover band that played only deep cuts, which really helped me grow as a musician. We probably played 500 gigs. After that, The Band Feel started.

Who was in the original version?

T.J. and I, a guy we knew named Dillon was our singer, and Rodger Lenhardt played bass. Life things led to Dillon departing, and then we got Garrett.

How did you connect with him?

Through one of his friends. The band posted, “Hey, we need a singer,” and he was

like, “I told my buddy about you guys and that he should be singing in your band.” So I chatted with Garrett and sent a demo for a song we'd tried a few times but hadn't thought about for awhile. Within a day, he sent it back with harmonies and full lyrics. It became “Find a Love.”

Garrett was in a local Sacramento group and T.J. listened to some of their tunes. I only heard a video of him, basically a cappella. So my first time *really* hearing him was on that demo. I was pretty happy with what I heard, to say the least.

What do you remember thinking of him and his voice?

Part of it was how he didn't remind me of anybody in particular, which was cool



Armstrong having access to Gibson's vault of Certified Vintage instruments means you'll hear this '59 Flying V, '60 mono ES-355, and '63 Epiphone Casino on The Band Feel's new album.



Gibson Flying V, ES-355TDC Mono, and Epiphone Casino: Mitch Conrad.

because when you're a rock band these days, the first thing people do is compare you to something. People like to say we sound like the Black Crowes, which might have to do with certain vocal inflections Garrett used to use, and we do some songs in Open G. But I didn't grow up listening to the Crowes. We've opened for them and I think they're so great, but I'm not drawing from them when writing. Groups just share so much musical DNA and we pull from the same places. When I heard Garrett, I didn't go, "Oh, Robert Plant! Steve Marriott! Chris Robinson!" It was just, "This guy can sing. His voice has this warmth." He's versatile and has quite the range. He has really come into his own on this debut LP.

What were your first steps as a group with him?

About six months before we got with management or booking, we went on a "tour" that was really just a small run in Florida with Blackberry Smoke. Before and after that, we did a few of our own gigs. With about 30 gigs under our belt, stuff started taking off on social media in the spring of '24, and that's when management and booking agents started contacting us. Before we released any music or did our first tour that fall, Rodger left because of life things, and Kadin hopped in on bass.

What was the creative process for the new album?

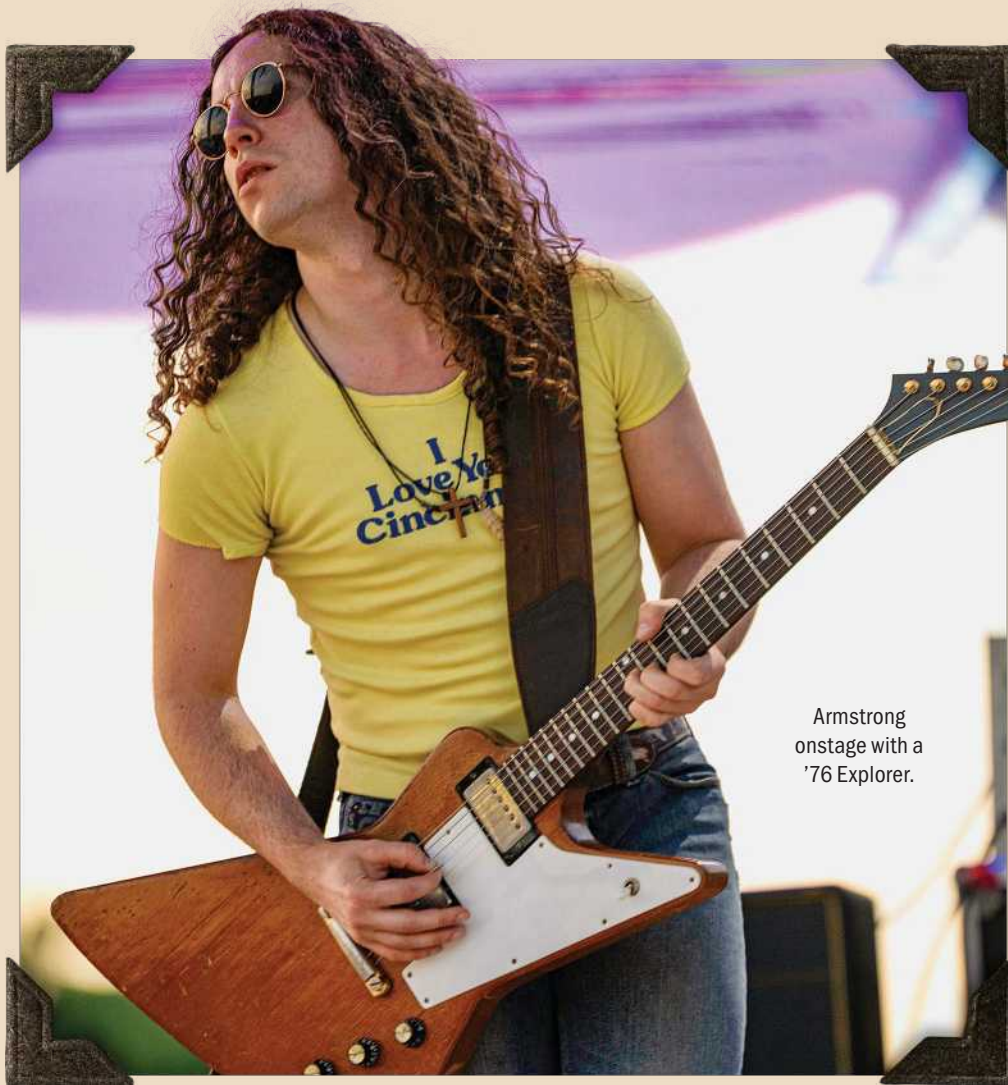
I'm *always* writing. I present the group

with music and from there we'll change arrangements, parts, scrap the tune, or keep working on it. I'll sometimes bring songs that are fleshed-out with lyrics and melodies, but that's predominately Garrett's world at this point, which I love and respect his unique style so much.

Most of the tunes were pretty put together coming into the studio, a couple weren't quite there but we felt good about them becoming something, and one tune was almost entirely put together a half hour after showing the music to the guys.

Does the band write or rehearse in a room together, or are you sharing sound files?

We don't rehearse much, and we've only had "official" music out since September of



Armstrong
onstage with a
'76 Explorer.

“...when you’re a rock band these days, the first thing people do is compare you to something.”

2024. But in that time, we’ve played 200-some shows. So we’ve played together a lot and have great chemistry. We have become a band on the road in the truest sense.

What of Now is 13 songs – 51 minutes – which is a lot for a debut.

There are a lot of sides to it – rock, hard rock, a lot of acoustic elements. It’s laid back, it’s heavy, it’s up and down.

Dynamics are one of its standout elements, including the fingerpicking.

Yeah, that’s massive for us. I fingerpick all the time and do some hybrid picking. But dynamics are such a core element to this band.

How did you sort guitars and amps for the sessions?

Well, I’m fortunate in that I’m around a lot of guitars and amps, new and old, beyond those that I own. Being that I have spent in-depth time with these kinds of pieces, I know exactly what they’ll do when in my hands. So, putting the record together, I knew which tones I wanted for rhythm tracks,

leads, overdubs, or whatever. It wasn’t a super thought-out thing, but more like, “What do I want this to sound like *right now*?” and knowing exactly how to get those sounds.

Which songs best represent the band’s attitude at this point in time?

The opening track, “Thousand Mornings,” is a prime example of us as a rock band – tonally, melodically, lyrically, dynamically. It has a lot of movements and it’s the perfect opening track.

Which guitars did you use for it?

That’s my ’64 SG Standard into a ’69 Super Bass and a ’63 Bassman with a bit of slap-back. There’s also a ’53 Tele on the choruses, along with a ’69 Country Gentleman and an early-1960 mono ES-355 – *God* that guitar is good. And I’m about to mic-drop here, but the solo is a ’59 Flying V that belongs to Gibson Certified Vintage. I’ve played six original Vs and it was by far the best.

How’d you get your hands on six of them?

There are some very generous people in the

vintage world and I’m one of the “new guy” rock players out there using this kind of stuff. So we’ll get to know each other and hang out.

Which other songs would you point listeners to?

“Better Days” is one of my favorites. It doesn’t have a massive guitar solo, but it does have a 12-string solo, which I especially like. It’s a 2010 Rickenbacker 660/12 on that whole tune – one of the wide-nut ones. I love Ricks when they’re good and the wider nut those is nice.

“Summer Song” is a very acoustic tune that shows a completely new side of the band. Very much a mix of ’71 Laurel Canyon with... I don’t even know (laughs). It’s hard to describe, which is another reason I like it. You hear a lot of the influence of Crosby, Stills & Nash, Nick Drake, and America, but the choruses are pretty Latin-influenced and the bridge is a whole unique thing on its own.

Which guitars do we hear on it?

I used a ’67 D-28, ’53 Southern Jumbo, and 1950 LG-3. There’s some electric stuff toward the end, and I’m pretty sure I used a Country Gentleman.

Were those instruments yours?

They are except for the Country Gent, which belongs to our producer, Paul Moak. It’s Baldwin-era, but I really like it.

What was it like, working with Paul?

His production style with us is very hands-off because he knows we are serious about our vision and know how to get to where we’re trying to go. We’ll ask questions, he gives input. If he really doesn’t like a take, he’ll speak up. He’s the ultimate sounding board and has a ton of gear. He and I are very close and our relationship is full of, “I’m going to say this, but know I love you a lot.” For example, there was one day when my head was not in the game and he said, “Hey, you need to get it together. What’s going on?” And we got a bit snippy with each other. I was like, “Man, I’m tracking this song, but I’m already thinking about the next record.” Because I just have to, it’s my role in this whole thing. But Paul forced me to be in the moment, and that’s all I needed.

He pushes us to be the best we can be while letting us be “us” and that’s perfect for our situation.

“Answers” is reminiscent of “That’s The Way” and a bit of Pink Floyd’s “Pillow of Winds.” Any fan of ’70s folk-rock will dig it.

It holds a universally understood emotion about summer love or that person you still think about but it just never quite worked out. I wrote the verse lyrics, Garrett wrote the choruses, and song is basically a conversation between two people asking questions about their past, present, and future. It’s a very laid-back tune, but very emotional. The bridge has my piano debut and when it hits, it creates

the peak of the whirlwind of emotions and self-evaluation about “What would my life look like if...” then it drops out and you’re back to the conversation. It’s two vocal tracks, one guitar track, and piano. That’s it...

Which guitar do we hear?

I’m almost certain that was the D-28.

“What of Now” is not what most would think of as a title track.

Well, it’s the longest song by far. I especially like the arrangements, production, and the tones. I think it’s a good mix of a lot of things with a modern sensibility. There’s some Allman Brothers, a prog mindset like Peter Gabriel-era Genesis, Curtis Mayfield, but modern in the sense of an era can’t be pinpointed. It’s truly unique to us.

Which guitars do we hear?

If I were to list every guitar I used on that song, you’d need three pages, but some of them were a ’63 Epiphone Casino, ’65 Strat, and the 1960 mono 355. The *coolest* guitar was a ’58 EDS-1275. I used it for the 12-string and some of the six-string parts.

You’ve said “Libby Hill” is a mix of older and newer influences.

Yeah, a lot of Laurel Canyon, British folk revival influence, but one could just as easily call it a modern indie-band song – acoustic dream pop, they might say. Beyond that,

it’s autobiographical to me. It’s beautifully moody and ethereal music but also feels like you’re in the room with the band. The instrumental section goes to almost a Latin feel, with a key change that I solo over. I used the LG-3 for the leads and the main guitar is a 1935 Stahl Style 6 – essentially OM-28 specs made by the Larson Brothers. I found that guitar on Facebook Marketplace, and it’s the best-sounding small-body guitar on earth. I’m super lucky to have it.

The instrumental after it, “A Forever With You,” is also that guitar; it’s an extension of the emotion behind “Libby Hill” that bookends the idea.

The last song, “Heavy Echoes,” is straight-up rock. What do we hear?

I used the ’65 Strat through the ’69 Super Bass and something else, I can’t remember. The solo at the outro is the mono 355 but I can’t remember the amp. On the pre-choruses, you’ll hear a Leslie Model 16. Again, those dynamics are what I like about this album. It’s like when you listen to *Dark Side* or *Sgt. Pepper*. People will not like me mentioning this album in the same breath, but they’re perfect albums in the way they’re almost one long song with all these different moods. It sounds like, quite literally, a day in the life – up and down, happy and sad, “think songs”

and dance songs. That’s what I like about this record, it’s every emotion. You start way up then laid back, then you’ll get to the solo in “What of Now” which is the peak and right after, you hit “Libby Hill” that brings you back down again. It’s a very complete album with some beautiful moments.

Do you have any expectations for how it will be received?

Whatever decade you’re from, you’ll think it sounds like that. If you grew up in the ’70s, you’re going to go, “This is my music!” or “I’m glad this is what rock music sounds like now.” Older generations might say, “This is what it was like back then,” but my generation will be more of, “We haven’t heard or felt something like this.” *Fantastic*. Both are timeless.

Greta Van Fleet is a great example of how this plays out with a modern listener, and we’re a bit the same in how we go about it, because again, at the risk of sounding pretentious, it’s genuine and authentic, not derived from just one kind of music or one era. If you can pick out influences, great. If someone were to tell me I play and sound like Terry Kath, Neal Schon, or Peter Frampton... awesome! I love that. But if you’re really listening, I don’t know if you can say we sound like anybody. **VG**



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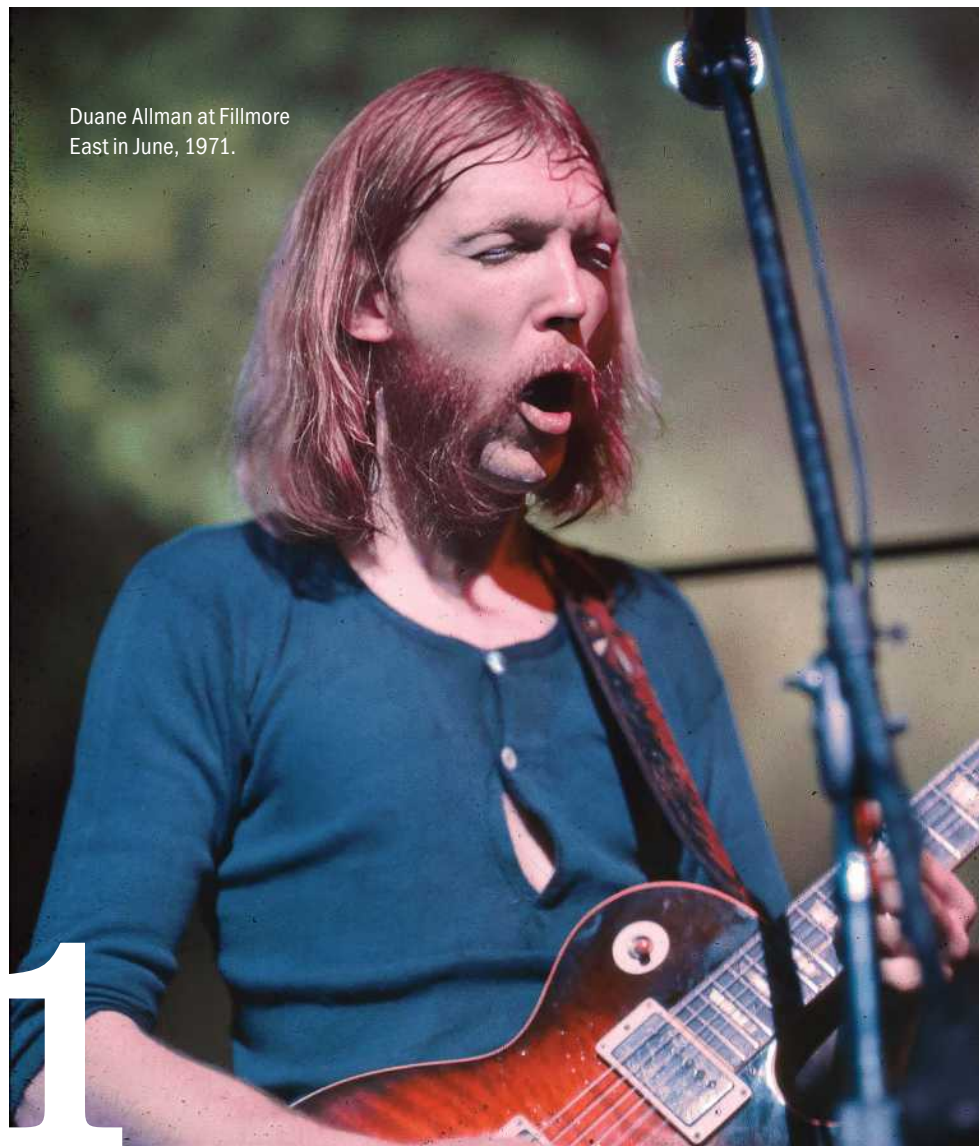
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THE 40 GREATEST GUITAR ALBUMS

BY VG STAFF

Vintage Guitar is marking 40 years of publication, this month by asking readers and followers on social media to tell us their five favorite guitar-centric albums. Here, the results are compiled to create a list of 40 unforgettable sets.



Duane Allman at Fillmore East in June, 1971.



1 The Allman Brothers Band At Fillmore East (1971)

The greatest live album in the galaxy is blues fusion at its finest, highlighted by the blistering guitar artistry of Dickey Betts and Duane Allman, triple-thick organ, hellacious dual drumming, gruff blues vocals, and the sublime “Whipping Post.” It will always be the template for jam bands. – **Oscar Jordan**



2 The Jimi Hendrix Experience Are You Experienced (1967)

Anyone who says Hendrix was all volume and effects just doesn’t get it. Rock’s elite knew better, and became fans instantly. Workmanlike R&B-circuit gigs gave no hint at his staggering technique, nor the mix of blues, soul, and psychedelia he was brewing. “Purple Haze,” “Foxy Lady,” “Hey Joe,” “Manic Depression” – few debuts even come close. – **Dan Forte**

Duane Allman June '71: Ed Berman/Wikimedia Commons.



3 Derek and the Dominos Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs (1970)

Eric Clapton and Duane Allman share incandescent interactions on the enduring title song, “It’s Too Late,” and blues standards “Key to the Highway” and “Have You Ever Loved A Woman.” Even their supporting licks are brilliant, proof being Allman’s licks behind Clapton’s solo on “Nobody Knows You When You’re Down and Out.” – **Rich Kienzie**



4 Van Halen Van Halen (1978)

A decade after Jimi Hendrix rewrote the rules of rock guitar, Edward Van Halen became the most innovative and influential guitarist in the realm. This game-changing debut burned thanks to EVH’s astounding two-hand tapping, “Runnin’ With the Devil” and “Eruption” inspire you to practice – or quit. – **Bret Adams**



5 The Jimi Hendrix Experience Electric Ladyland (1968)

A double-album masterpiece inviting guests to the party and utilizing the studio as a fourth bandmate, it includes a relaxed funk jam, epic 15-minute blues, an R&B burner, romantic



Jimi Hendrix onstage in Sweden, 1967.

soul, and Dylan definitively reimagined with six distinct solos. For the record, Jimi’s highest strings were (like yours) closest to floor. – **DF**



6 Stevie Ray Vaughan Texas Flood (1983)

Vaughan’s debut introduced a vital new voice, rooted in his blues heroes with fire, passion, and originality that set him apart from his peers. Its title song planted the flag, joined by the searing “Testify” and “Rude Mood,” countered by the contemplative “Lenny” and his raw solos on “I’m Cryin’.” – **RK**



7 Jeff Beck Blow By Blow (1975)

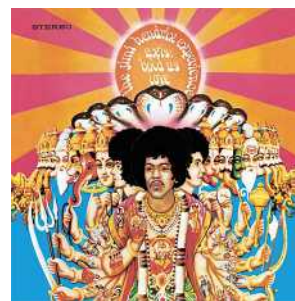
Jazz-fusion was a hot sound in 1975, and Beck delivered a master class. Unlike the speedsters, he simplified the guitar licks so any player could try them. For “Freeway

Jam” and “Cause We’ve Ended as Lovers,” Jeff delivered finesse and fury like no guitarist of his generation. – **Pete Prown**



8 John Mayall Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton (1966)

While Clapton’s work with the Yardbirds (uncredited on American releases) was nothing to sneeze at, it was his gigs with Mayall that inspired “Clapton Is God” graffiti. The tone and sustain of his Les Paul through Marshall combo (e.g. “Steppin’ Out”) influenced guitarists everywhere – even blues elders who’d influenced *him*. – **DF**



9 The Jimi Hendrix Experience Axis: Bold as Love (1967)

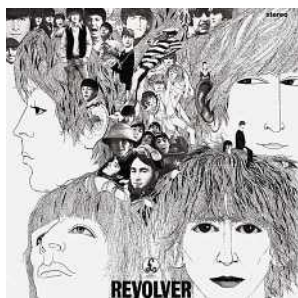
Usually overshadowed by the titanic *Are You Experienced* and *Electric Ladyland*, the second JHE album stands its ground. Steeped

in the era's psychedelic rock, it's also timeless; "Spanish Castle Magic" rocks, while "If 6 Was 9" is blues-heavy, and "Little Wing" and "Castles Made of Sand" are sonically unique ballads. – **BA**



10 Led Zeppelin Led Zeppelin II (1969)

More confident and self-assured, this walloping sophomore effort opens with the mighty "Whole Lotta Love," a rare hit single. "Heartbreaker" includes Jimmy Page's woozy mid-song guitar a cappella. Other notables are the blues-soaked "The Lemon Song" and emotional ballad "Thank You." – **BA**



11 The Beatles Revolver (1966)

On the cusp of psychedelia, the Beatles rewrote the rule book for this pop manifesto. George Harrison's "Taxman" was funky before there was funk, with Paul McCartney executing its fiery solo. John Lennon's "And Your Bird Can Sing" was an amplified Mount Everest, topped by George and Paul's soaring guitar harmonies. – **PP**



12 Led Zeppelin Led Zeppelin (1969)

Guided by former Yardbird Jimmy Page,



this monumental debut blended rock, blues, and folk that would push the quartet to rule the music world for a decade. "Dazed and Confused" and "Communication Breakdown" sit comfortably alongside covers like "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You" and "You Shook Me." – **BA**



13 Pink Floyd The Dark Side of the Moon (1973)

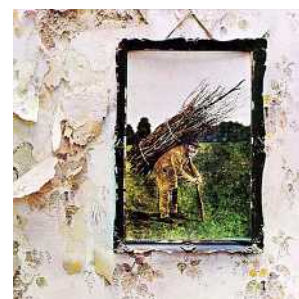
One of the best-selling albums ever, *Dark Side* is where David Gilmour codified his style, borrowing from Hendrix, Clapton, Beck, and Green. For "Money," his solo was triple-tracked for wide stereo effect. His break on "Time" remains definitive – a Stratocaster drenched with blues bends, fuzz, and *gobs* of echo. – **PP**



14 Cream Disraeli Gears (1967)

Their sophomore album was a step up from *Fresh Cream*, compositionally and commercially, with Clapton combining aggression and melodicism as few could.

On "Outside Woman Blues," he trades licks with himself – introducing "woman tone" (Volume cranked, Tone rolled back). "Tales Of Brave Ulysses" features wah, while the Byrds-influenced "Dance The Night Away" employs a Fender XII. – **DF**



15 Led Zeppelin Led Zeppelin IV (1971)

Zep's untitled fourth album remains an FM milestone, from John Paul Jones' mighty "Black Dog" riff to the acoustic/mandolin interplay of "The Battle of Evermore." Recorded with Fender XII 12-string and a Telecaster, "Stairway to Heaven" established Jimmy Page's vision for the guitar epic, while "When the Levee Breaks" conjured a blues thud worthy of the Mississippi Delta. – **PP**



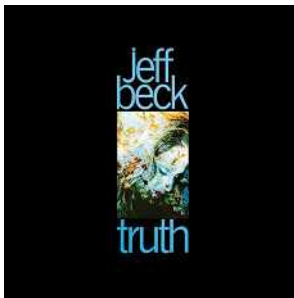
16 Cream Wheels of Fire (1968)

The supergroup's revered third release is a double whammy – one studio album (featur-



The Beatles onstage in Germany, 1966.

ing the hit “White Room”) and one live album recorded at three San Francisco shows. Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce, and Ginger Baker peak combustibly on the live songs, particularly “Crossroads” and “Spoonful.” – **BA**



17 Jeff Beck Truth (1968)

Proto-Zeppelin becomes proto-blues-rock swagger – rock, folk, boleros, and Chicago blues. The blueprint for a million bands and even more blues jams that flatten beneath the mighty Rod Stewart. Beck splendidly manipulates Les Pauls and wah with guests Jimmy Page, Ron Wood, John Paul Jones, and Keith Moon. – **OJ**



18 The Beatles Abbey Road (1969)

The Fab Four’s swan song was a thrilling guitar fest. Harrison delivered six-string magic on “Something” and “Here Comes the Sun,” while Lennon dug into acid-blues for

“Come Together.” Paul led the guitar frenzy during “The End,” trading fiery solos with George and John. Truly, *the end* of an era. – **PP**



19 The Beatles The Beatles “White Album” (1968)

The Fab Four’s double album sees Lennon insert a jazzy phrase into “Wild Honey Pie,” Harrison max distortion on “Savoy Truffle,” and McCartney fingerpicking on “Blackbird.” Was “Yer Blues” a parody mocking Brit blues bands? Ironically, guest Clapton delivers one of the best blues solos ever, on “While My Guitar Gently Weeps.” – **DF**



20 The Rolling Stones Exile on Main St. (1972)

Raw, grimy, and decadent rock, country, blues, etc. This sprawling double album – often cited as the band’s best – somehow came to fruition despite guitarist Keith Richards’ heroin haze. A mix of players performed, including perpetually underrated guitarist

Mick Taylor. From it, we got “Tumbling Dice,” “Happy,” and much more. – **BA**



21 The Beatles Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967)

Not for the first time, the guitar solo on a Beatles session – here, the incendiary title track – was played by McCartney, not lead man Harrison. “Good Morning Good Morning” was another, again, with Paul shredding on a flipped ’64 Esquire. George added spacey Indian sitar on “Within You Without You.” – **PP**



22 Santana Abraxas (1970)

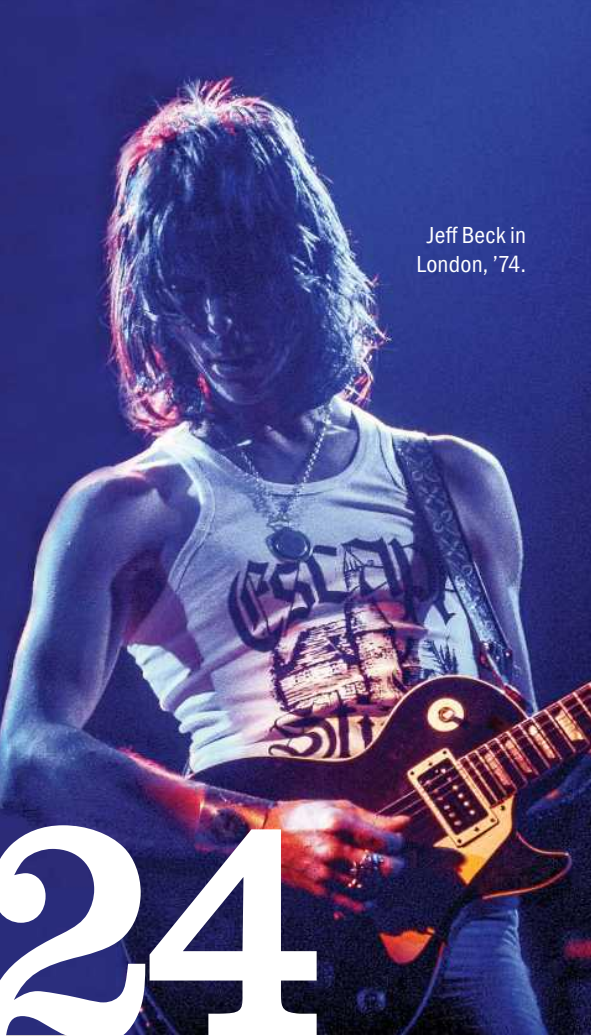
Carlos Santana left a musical rubber stamp that still resonates today. This second offering yielded a sheen and confidence that cemented his psychedelic Latin-rock legacy. “Black Magic Woman” and “Incident at Neshabur” shook the zeitgeist. Carlos’ playing remains deep, profound, and identifiable on every continent. – **OJ**



23 Joe Satriani Surfing With The Alien (1987)

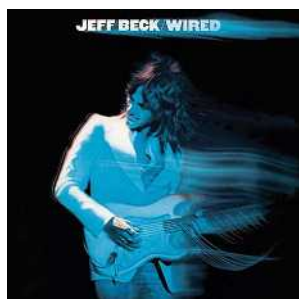
This breakthrough proved that achieve-

24



Jeff Beck in London, '74.

ment-level rock guitar could groove. Melodic, thoughtful, and flamboyant, Satriani innovates high-velocity fretboard hijinks while retaining his soul. Satch boogies, bombasts, and reflects with the brilliant “Always with Me, Always with You.” Notched-wah tones, jazz-approved chord voicings, and songs to outrun the cops. – **OJ**



24 Jeff Beck Wired (1976)

Aided by synth master Jan Hammer and hit “Blue Wind,” *Wired* earned heavy airplay for Jeff and wins in jazz polls. Charles Mingus’ “Goodbye Pork Pie Hat” and electro-funk of “Led Boots” reimagined instrumental fusion for the masses. El Becko became the hottest guitarist alive. – **PP**



25 AC/DC Back in Black (1980)

Released as a tribute to late vocalist Bon Scott, brothers Malcolm and Angus Young lead the band through an arguably perfect sledgehammer set. Credit “Hells Bells,” “You Shook Me All Night Long,” and the title track for selling 27 million units in the U.S., 50 million worldwide. – **BA**



26 Led Zeppelin Physical Graffiti (1975)

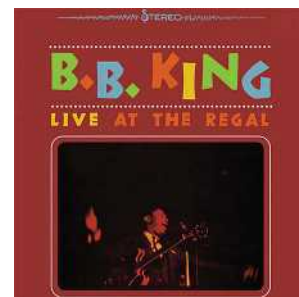
At the top of his game here, Page was composing at near-genius levels. Using a cheap Danelectro in DADGAD tuning, he evoked the entire Indian subcontinent on “Kashmir,” while “Custard Pie” and “The Rover” perfected his “guitar army” method of overdubbing. In ’75, Page was the indisputable deity of rock guitar. – **PP**



27 The Who Live At Leeds (1970)

Pete Townshend’s volatile head and hands untether the band from its past with explosive passion. Drummer from hell Keith Moon propels bassist John Entwistle, who upends

how his instrument was played in *any* genre. “Young Man Blues” is not for couch potatoes, Roger Daltrey especially shines on “Summertime Blues,” and the whole band does fine work on an extended “My Generation.” – **OJ**



28 B.B. King Live at the Regal (1965)

Is there a more-riotous blues lyric than “I gave you seven children, and now you wanna give ‘em back”? King proves that blues can be simultaneously sophisticated and lowdown. Ever the master of economy, his five-note intro to “Sweet Little Angel” brings down the house. Required listening for beginners and megastars alike. – **DF**



29 Deep Purple Machine Head (1972)

Ritchie Blackmore and DP fused rock and roll, blues, Hendrix, and Bach to create an invigoratingly fresh sound. One of the blueprints for hard rock and heavy metal, its highlights – “Smoke on the Water,” “Pictures of Home,” and “Highway Star” – never get old. – **OJ**



30 Johnny Winter And Live (1971)

With Rick Derringer behind him for this

Jeff Beck 1974: Ilpo Musto/Alamy.



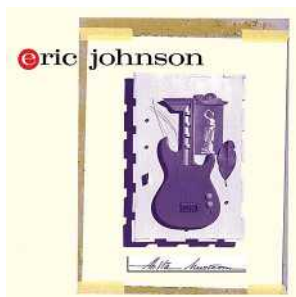
stood amongst the giants, combining profound musical sensibilities with jaw-dropping dexterity. – PP

rock-flavored collection, Winter faced off starting with “Good Morning Little School Girl,” “Mean Town Blues,” “Johnny B. Goode,” and a snarling “Jumpin’ Jack Flash.” Winter didn’t ignore classic blues, however, offering an extended and high-velocity take on “It’s My Own Fault.” – RK



31 Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble Couldn't Stand the Weather (1984)

After returning blues to the mainstream, Double Trouble’s winning streak continued on its second album. The title track blisters with SRV’s slashing chords and riffs while “Cold Shot” and “Tin Pan Alley” bring a ton of laid-back swagger. Instrumental highlights are the manic “Scuttle Buttin’” and jazzy “Stang’s Swang.” – BA



32 Eric Johnson Ah Via Musicom (1990)

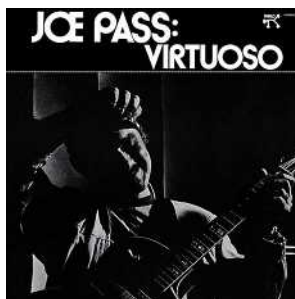
A milestone in guitar tones, production, songwriting, and song-forward guitar dexter-

ity, *Ah Via* mines a plethora of guitar-centric influences and textures that congeal into a unique trademark. “Righteous,” “East Wes,” “Steve’s Boogie,” and “Cliffs Of Dover” are still Mount Everest. – OJ



33 Dire Straits Dire Straits (1978)

Maximum-strength cluck-and-twang, the debut from Mark Knopfler and company features pristine Strat tones, string rakes, bottlenecks, and London poetry delivered with Dylanesque vocals (“Six Blade Knife”) and roots. Stripped-down and moody, dig “Down to the Waterline” and the timeless “Sultans of Swing.” – OJ



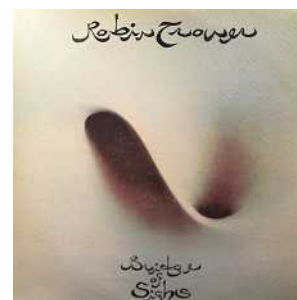
34 Joe Pass Virtuoso (1973)

A one-man recording, Pass’ archtop renderings of jazz standards dazzled on every level, between chord comping, single-note soloing, and simultaneous bass lines, as on “Night and Day.” Suddenly, the 40-something guitarist



35 Mahavishnu Orchestra The Inner Mounting Flame (1971)

The Big Bang of heavy fusion, this LP *defined* how to play jazz using a solidbody and cranked Marshall stack. John McLaughlin’s chops were unprecedented, melding speed-of-light picking with blues-scale assaults for “Meeting of the Spirits.” Guitar was never the same. – PP



36 Robin Trower Bridge of Sighs (1974)

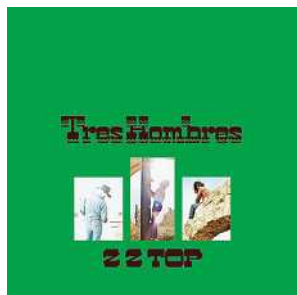
With Hendrix gone, Trower rode the Strat/Uni-Vibe/Marshall sound to success, aided by singer James Dewar and Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick. Robin’s bluesy Stratocaster burned on “Bridge of Sighs,” “Too Rolling Stoned,” and “Day of the Eagle.” The 81-year-old guitarist is still going strong today. – PP



37 The Who Who's Next (1971)

Who's Next launched '70s rock with power

chords, synthesizers, and the loudest rhythm section on Earth. Hard to believe, but Townshend's crunch tone on "Baba O'Riley" and "Won't Get Fooled Again" was recorded using a Gretsch 6120 Chet Atkins through a Fender Bandmaster. Who knew? – **PP**



38 ZZ Top Tres Hombres (1973)

The definitive soundtrack to Texas grit, tequila, stank, and the blues. Billy Gibbons and co-conspirators lean into pungent boogie, less-is-more guitar artistry, groove, and mod-

ern Wild West atmospheric. "La Grange," "Beer Drinkers & Hell Raisers," and "Jesus Just Left Chicago" have become classics for good reason. – **OJ**



39 Lynyrd Skynyrd (Pronounced Lēh-'nérd 'Skin-'nérd) (1973)

Powerful, down-to-earth Southern rock with earthquake guitars courtesy of Allen Collins and Gary Rossington. Vocalist Ronnie Van Zant's lyrics are humorous ("Gimme Three Steps"), emotional ("Simple Man"), and socially conscious ("Things Goin' On").

Most notable for the epic nine-minute jam "Free Bird." – **BA**



40 Aerosmith Get Your Wings (1974)

Boston's bad boys sharpened the songs and their skills for round two. Joe Perry and Brad Whitford drilled the riffs and grooves, though producer Jack Douglas did recruit (uncredited) Steve Hunter and Dick Wagner to swap leads on "Train Kept A-Rollin'"; Wagner stuck around to do the lead on "Same Old Song and Dance." – **BA VG**

HONORABLE MENTION

The Beatles *Rubber Soul*
Deep Purple *Made in Japan*
Stevie Ray Vaughan *In Step*
Paul Butterfield Blues Band *East-West*
Danny Gatton *88 Elmira St.*
Black Sabbath *Paranoid*
Peter Dinklage *Frampton Comes Alive!*
Pink Floyd *The Wall*
The Rolling Stones *Let it Bleed*
The Ventures *Walk Don't Run*
Yes *Close To The Edge*
Jimi Hendrix *Band Of Gypsies*
Rolling Stones *Get Yer Ya-ya's Out*
Boston *Boston*
Chet Atkins & Les Paul *Chester and Lester*

Cream *Fresh Cream*
Fleetwood Mac *Then Play On*
Guns N Roses *Appetite for Destruction*
Kiss *Alive!*
Lynyrd Skynyrd *One More From the Road*
Lynyrd Skynyrd *Second Helping*
Rush *Moving Pictures*
Television *Marquee Moon*
The Allman Brothers Band *Eat a Peach*
The Eagles *Hotel California*
The Rolling Stones *Beggars Banquet*
The Rolling Stones *Sticky Fingers*
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Yngwie Malmsteen *Rising Force*



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Upcoming Events

KEEP UPDATED AT WWW.VINTAGEGUITAR.COM

Denotes a new or updated listing.

AUGUST

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 - 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 - 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 bruce-adolph@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.sohio-guitarshow.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@mvvguitarshows.co/m <https://mvvguitarshows.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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JANUARY

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, January 30, 10 am - 5 pm - 31, 10 am - 4 pm, at the Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL. For more info

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Upcoming Events

contact Britt Keen at (850) 294-5537 orlandoguitarexpo@outlook.com or Morty Beckman at www.guitarexpo.net

MARCH

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday March 7th, 9 am - 3 pm, at the Marriott Hotel, 50 N. Martingale, Schaumburg, IL. For more info contact Beverly Bakes at (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 the 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 at Mike@vintageguitar.com. All submissions must be received by the 10th of each month, or they will appear in the next available issue. This listing is done as a service to our readers and we reserve final determination as to its contents.

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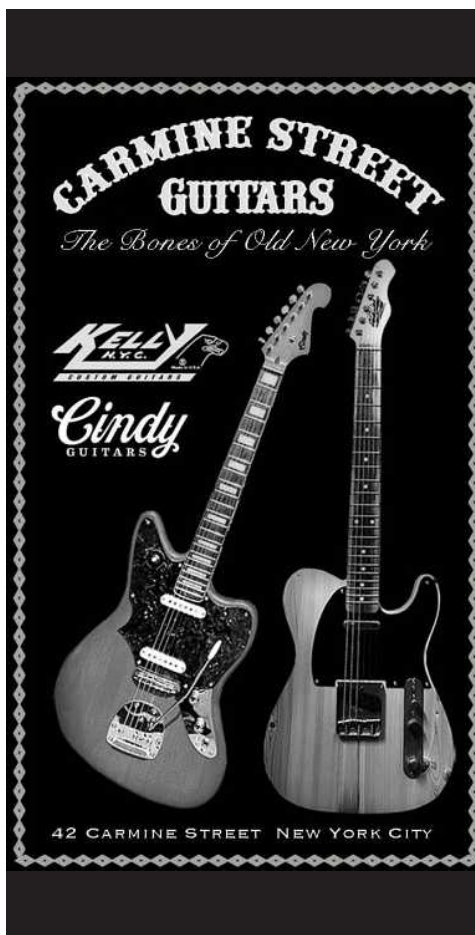
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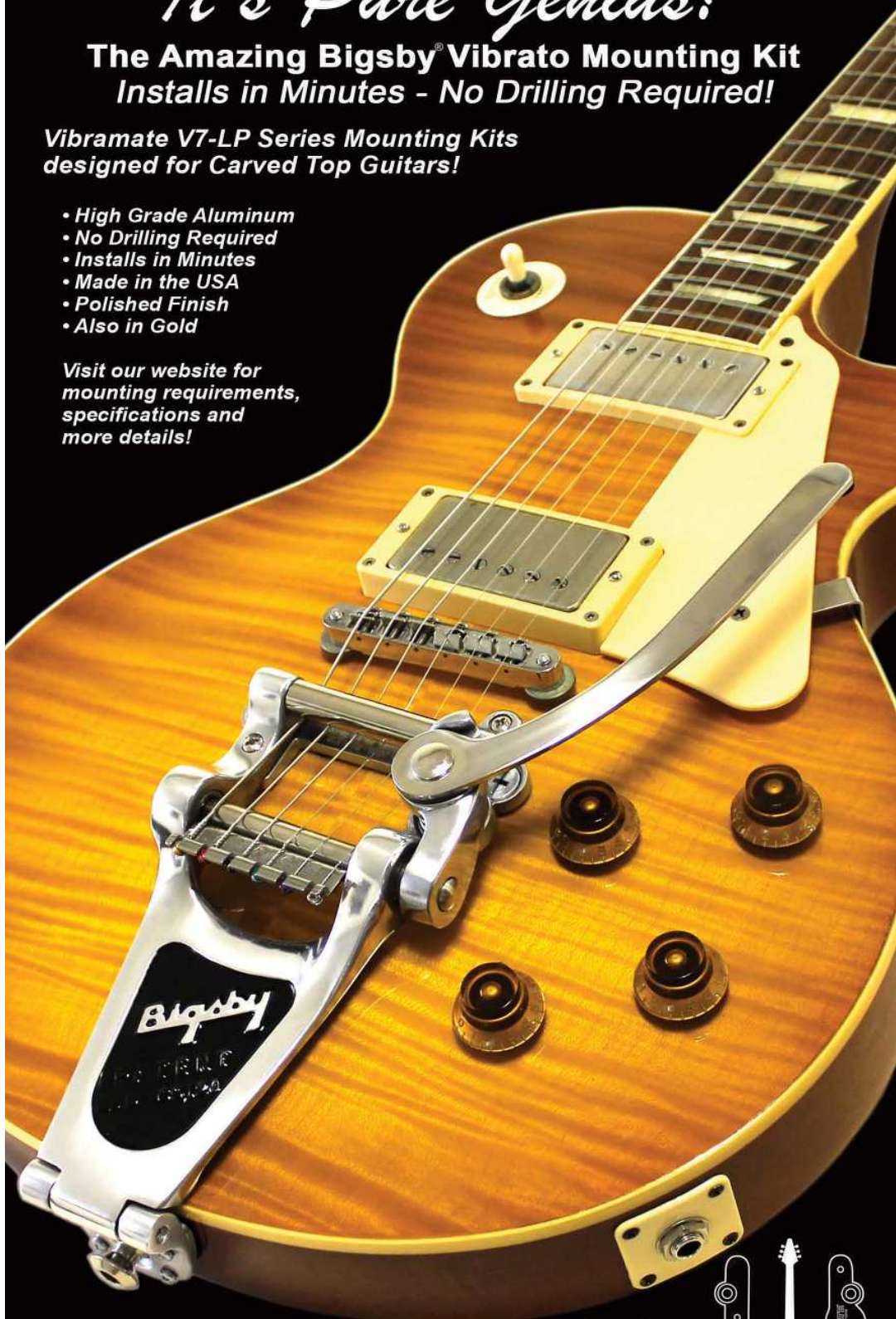
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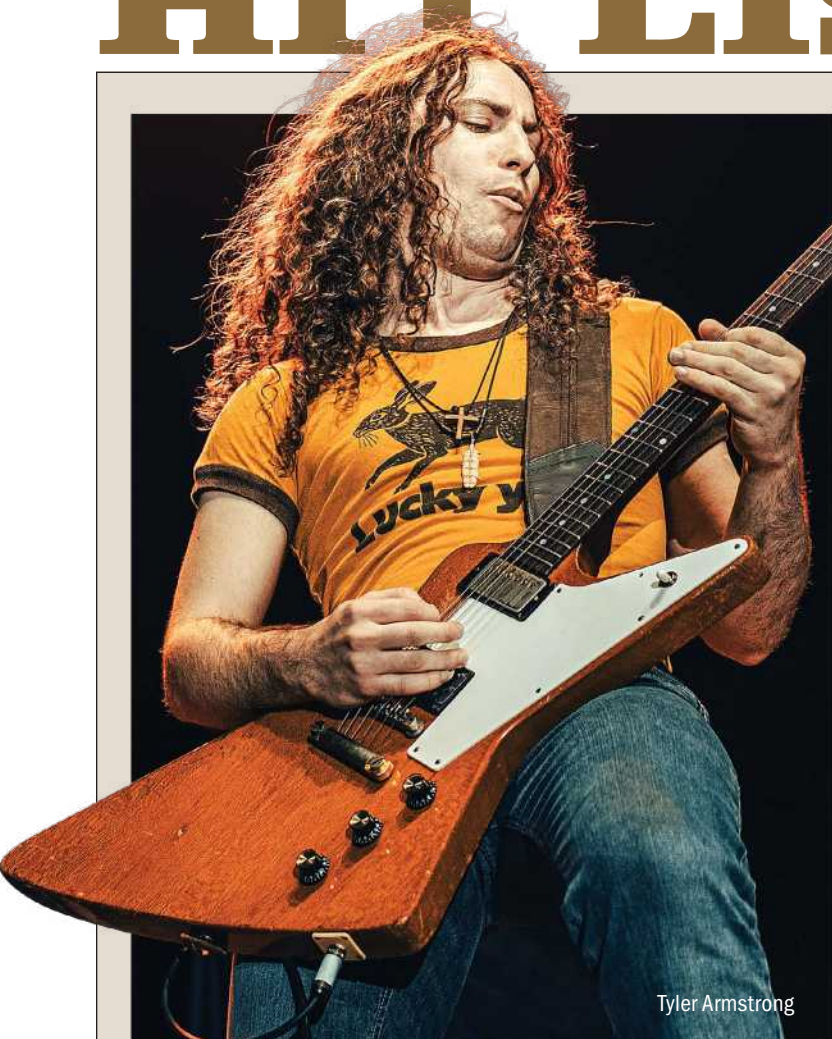
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Tyler Armstrong

EARTHY ROCK 'N ROLL

In the vein of retro hard rockers like Greta Van Fleet, Dirty Honey, and Mojo Thunder, The Band Feel is a quartet fronted by a singer who can hit notes in the clouds and a guitarist with blues-rock riffery to spare. Deftly blending the British thump of Led Zep with '70s California singer/songwriter influences, they embrace time-worn grooves while reaping a fast-growing fanbase.

The soaring voice of singer Garrett Barcus drives TBF, as on the opener "Thousand Mornings," while Tyler Armstrong (see interview in this issue) delivers everything from big power chords to slide, harmonies, and lead runs aplenty. "Better Days" harkens to *Led Zeppelin III* with reverby guitars and hippie poetry, while "Summer Song" breaks out acoustic guitar over a dreamy Joni Mitchell vibe. "Twice Alive" brings crunch that wouldn't sound out of place in early Black Sabbath.



The Band Feel
What of Now

Like the mighty Zep, TBF is adept at mixing lighter motifs with dark, heavier ones, re-creating the broad sonic dynamics of 55 years ago. The foursome doesn't break new ground, but effortlessly restates those much-loved FM vibrations. Fortunately, in a world of K-poppers and Swifties, there's still an audience for earthy, sweaty rock and roll. — **Pete Prown**



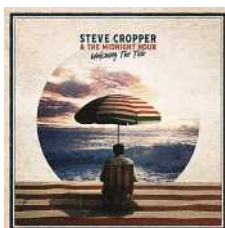
Arlen Roth
Blues Grass

On his new album, Arlen Roth's focus is bluegrass, emphasizing standards with a small, relaxed band and loose arrangements. The sound is quintessential Roth – snarling, articulate amplified slide guitar with occasional non-slide picking. He often swaps breaks with singer/guitarist/mandolinist Danny Knicely. John Previti plays acoustic bass, while Lee Falco handles percussion, and vocalist Mukamuri steps away from his usual R&B focus.

Roth unplugs for "Sittin' on Top of the World," which rides atop a loping beat, and the delicate gospel ballad "Angel Band," with Knicely and Mukamuri harmonizing on both. He delivers an impressive non-slide break on "Sittin'" and an eloquent bottleneck interlude on "Angel Band." Guest Jimmy Vivino jumps head-on into a driving rendition of "Ruby,"

while Roth adds acoustic embellishments to Mukamuri's heartfelt vocal on "Bury Me Beneath the Willow."

Two traditional tunes associated with Merle Travis, "I Am a Pilgrim" and "Nine Pound Hammer," receive contrasting treatments. "Pilgrim" becomes an instrumental showcasing Roth and Knicely, while "Hammer" rocks hard, Roth interjecting masterful slide while Knicely handles vocals and acoustic flatpicking. Roth twangs through a churning "I'll Fly Away" while the venerable country ballad "In the Pines" gets an unexpected Delta-blues makeover. *Blues-grass*, indeed. — **Rich Kienzie**



Steve Cropper & The Midnight Hour
Watching the Tide

When Steve Cropper died last December at 84,

the world lost a towering musical figure. Fortunately, he kept recording until the end, and guests on *Watching the Tide* include Eric Clapton, Brian May, Billy Gibbons, and Ronnie Wood. The project was produced by guitarist/songwriter Jon Tiven. Vocalists Roger C. Reale and Ana Grosh are featured on most songs.

The spry instrumental "Tandoori Chicken" includes juicy horns, Cropper's rolling runs, and sitar splashes. Clapton steps in on "Ticket First," which includes funky Strat licks recalling his '70s Tulsa era. "My Angels Are Calling" showcases May's lead vocals and Gibbons' soloing at the end. Wood's slide adds a joy-buzzer jolt to the blues/pop sound of "Until Now," and Cropper plays memorable repeating riffs and fills on the R&B tune "It's Gonna Get Worse."

Cropper's family issued a statement saying it doesn't support the release or marketing of *Watching the Tide* and that no further music from him will be issued. Nonetheless, a documentary, soundtrack, and two

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TRULY INSTRUMENTAL BLUES

By Dan Forte

It wasn't the Duane Eddy record I'd asked my father to bring home, but I had to admit that instrumentals like "San-Ho-Zay" and "Wash Out" on *Let's Hide Away And Dance Away With Freddy King* were pretty catchy. Just nine at the time, little did I know what a profound effect King would have on the blues, rock and roll, electric guitar, and me.

Forever mentioned as one of the "three Kings" of the blues, Freddy (later spelled Freddie) achieved crossover success earlier than Albert or B.B. In 1961, that LP's title track spent 19 weeks on *Billboard's* R&B chart, peaking at #5 and reached #29 on the magazine's Hot 100 – a rarity for a blues artist.

The instrumentals King and pianist Sonny Thompson wrote weren't amorphous blues jams; each was distinctive, with hip arrangements and memorable hooks. "Hide Away," for instance, quoted Jimmy McCracklin's "The Walk" and Henry Mancini's theme for "Peter Gunn," a popular TV show at the time.

Decades later, I interviewed Bill Willis, who played organ in Jimmie Vaughan's band but had been the bassist on *Let's Hide Away*. He confirmed that Freddie was paying attention to Duane Eddy and the Ventures, shooting for that market. The label, in fact, repackaged the album as *Freddy King Goes Surfin'* in '63. *Freddy King Sings*, depicting

King playing the same Les Paul goldtop on the cover, was recorded and released in the same year, with the same house band.

Going to the well again, 1965's *Freddy King Gives You a Bonanza of Instrumentals* featured more cool numbers. But by then, girl groups and British Invasion had eclipsed instrumental rock. However, a year later, John Mayall sideman Eric Clapton – playing a *sunburst* Les Paul through a Marshall combo – gave "Hide Away" a more aggressive turn.

I first saw Freddie in concert in 1970. Having recorded two albums produced by King Curtis for Cotillion – *Freddie King is a Blues Master* and *My Feeling For The Blues* – he opened for Johnny Winter and Boz Scaggs at Fillmore West. When he returned a year later, promoting his Shelter debut, *Getting Ready*, he opened for Albert King and Mott the Hoople. His version of the Don Nix composition "Going Down" became a rock staple, covered by Deep Purple and Jeff Beck. His band, featuring brother Benny Turner on bass, perfectly mimicked the recording's piano and drums – by Leon Russell and Chuck Blackwell, respectively – and they closed, reprised, and encores with it.

When he played San Francisco's Great American Music Hall in February of '76, I interviewed him for *Guitar Player*. Published in the January '77 issue, it went to the printer

before – but hit newsstands after – Freddie died of pancreatitis on December 28, 1976. He was 42 years old.

He talked about growing up in Texas, learning guitar at six with a Silvertone acoustic, and cited Lightnin' Hopkins, T-Bone Walker, and John Lee Hooker as influences. "I finished school at 16 and went to Chicago," he said. "Carried a guitar on my back. I went there to live in 1954, but I'd been there back in 1950 and 1949. Muddy Waters – that's who I was looking for. So I found him and Jimmy Rogers. Then I met Howlin' Wolf and all those cats."

As for his picking style, King explained, "I never have used [a flatpick]. I use a steel fingerpick on my index and a plastic thumb pick. Jimmy Rogers and Eddie Taylor taught me how to play like that."

His sound was distinct from Texans like Walker and Gatmouth Brown, owing to his association with Chicago's West Side players. "We'd go around and listen to each other, then we'd trade guitar licks – me, Otis Rush, Magic Sam, Jody Williams. 'Hideaway' – Hound Dog Taylor played that; then me and Magic Sam worked it out."

Playing a red ES-355 through a Fender Quad that night, he said he also owned a 335, 345, and Les Paul. "I used to use Fenders but not anymore. Fender is a good-sounding guitar, but for the way I play, I think Gibson is the best." His comment, "I play my guitar like Louis Jordan used to play his saxophone; that's the same sound I get," was laughable, considering how loud he played.

Of the late-'60s blues revival, he said, "These young whites started people looking at me, B.B., and all the rest of them. If it wasn't for them, I think the blues would still be in the same old market. But now it's a bigger market. Johnny Winter, John Hammond, Paul Butterfield, Mike Bloomfield – he hung around us as a kid in Chicago – they're really blues cats. It went okay for me."

The newly released *Feeling Alright: The Complete 1975 Nancy Jazz Pulsation Concerts* features King classics "Sen-Sa-Shun" and "Have You Ever Loved A Woman," alongside standard blues fare ("Sweet Little Angel," "Messin' With The Kid"), and Dave Mason's title track, offering plenty of guitar bang for your buck.

"I like guys like Steve Cropper, Kenny Burrell, Chet Atkins," he told me in '76. "I listen to a whole lot of people, but the thing I'm into is the blues."

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HIT LIST REVIEWS

more albums are forthcoming. Regardless of behind-the-scenes circumstances, fans will cherish *any* posthumous releases, including this one. – **Bret Adams**



Marcus King Band No Room For Blue

The Marcus King Band's follow-up to 2023's highly acclaimed *Darling Blue*

Blue delves deeper into southern rock, temptation, rock and roll, broken hearts, Americana, and the sweet sounds of South Carolina.

As in King's past work, his emotional state is the lynchpin to the lyrics. With a badass band behind him, King starts with the heavy-rockin' "Shiver," with its superb bottleneck-slide intro and aggressive electric soloing. The hypnotic "Dirt" features a guest appearance from Billy Strings, while "Falling For the Devil" again excavates psychological nuggets from King's wild past.

King's group displays excellent groove, chemistry, and an Allman Brothers aftertaste on "Your Favorite Band." They also cover "Ramblin' Man," a crowd favorite from the live shows. Combining sensitive singer/songwriter acoustic finesse, a smidgeon of bluegrass, and top-notch unison lines featuring violin and slide, the band pulls at heartstrings on the earnest "Delilah" and "Lilac Wine."

The Marcus King Band delivers fire here, which bodes well for concert fans down the road. On guitar, their leader cooks like nobody's business, with effortless pentatonic flurries and a genuine mastery of his instrument. – **Oscar Jordan**



GA-20 with Charlie Musselwhite.

Guy starts things rolling with energetic double-stops and a relentless groove provided by Kiggans. Musselwhite is in top form on the harp. The uptempo party continues with "I Can't Hold Out" and excellent vocals from Musselwhite and brutal slide work from Nilsen.

The band changes things up on the crying-in-your-beer ballads "I'll Change My Style" and "Big Stars Falling." Soulful, crafty, and brilliant, the 82-year-old harpist is in his element. For the instrumental "Universal Rock," the sultry "The Blues Never Die," and the shuffling "Strange Land," the party roars. The quartet is in the zone as blues-approved, period-correct guitar lines punch throughout, shamelessly appropriating deep cuts by Elmore James, Junior Wells, and Eddie Taylor. Dig the lap-steel work on "Cristo Redentor." – **OJ**

bender Tele. The remaining dozen tunes are split evenly between Griffin and McCarthy – each handling lead vocals on his respective compositions. Punk urgency drives Griffin's "(How, How, How) How Do You Wanna Be Loved," while the aching country of "Knoxville On The Line" features McCarthy's pedal-steel. Upping the jangle factor, "Down To The Well" glistens with dual 12-strings and oddly appropriate vibraphone. George Harrison's slide influence steps forward on McCarthy's "Rain In Your Eyes." The Buck Owens feel of his "Wanted Man In Arkansas" is peppered with Dobro, mandolin, and phased electric.

Producer Ed Stasium has worked with the Ramones, Talking Heads, the Smithereens, Living Colour, and the Ryders' three previous albums, and it's obviously a winning combination. – **DF**

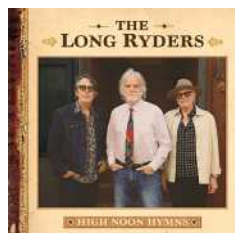


GA-20 with Charlie Musselwhite Blues Now

Charlie Musselwhite joins the power trio GA-20

for an album of 100 percent blues you can use. Produced by guitarist Matt Stubbs, the band's mission is to keep the blues alive and, with a style rooted in 1950s and '60s Chicago, Stubbs and Musselwhite pay homage with the help of drummer Josh Kiggans and guitarist/vocalist Cody Nilsen.

Recorded live in the studio, *Blues Now* is unvarnished, visceral, and fresh. "Crazy Love" by Willie Dixon and recorded by Buddy



The Long Ryders High Noon Hymns

Boasting eclectic influences and excellent singer/songwriters in Sid Griffin and Stephen McCarthy,

the Long Ryders have managed to command a cult-like following across their on-again/off-again 45 years. They and drummer Greg Sowders founded the group in 1981 and are currently joined by Murry Hammond on bass. Benefitting from strong melodies and memorable hooks, this album ranks with the country-rockers' strongest studio efforts.

The sole cover is an admirable reading of Dylan's "Forever Young," with McCarthy on



Trabants Mirage

With Strats, Ricky 12-strings, old Fender and Vox amps, and vintage reverb tanks, the

Portland-based Trabants (pronounced *Truh-bonts*) aim to make a mark with the full spectrum of '60s twang. The Trabants roll everything into one cool sound, including surf, spy-noir, cowboy, garage, psychedelia, and Pacific tiki. For leader/guitarist Eric Penna, every genre is fair game and, here, it simply works.

"Track Zero" kicks things off 1967-style, with Eddie Kramer-meets-Beatles backward tape and echo effects leading into "Hot



Carla Olson

Brew.” This is a good perspective into the Trabants style, as they morph Strawberry Alarm Clock fuzz over a jaunty ’60s beat. “Mirage” evokes riding a camel through the desert with Dick Dale, and Dave Birkham’s spooky bass to “Purple Panther” wouldn’t be out of place in a Geezer Butler doom riff.

While “Soul Garage A Go Go” sports a title seemingly from the marketing department, the music delivers a relentless groove, TV-theme horns, and flower-power fuzz from Penna. “Mata Hari” is appropriately 007-esque and Eric’s Rickenbacker 12-string leads the charge on “Five Alarm.” If you need some solid, twang-tacular driving music, check this Trabants platter. It’s a fun, nostalgic ride. – **PP**



Carla Olson For Pete’s Sake

In addition to her career as singer, songwriter, and guitarist, Carla Olson has produced albums by Barry Goldberg, Jake Andrews, Joe Louis Walker, and Phil Upchurch, and collaborated with Mick Taylor, Gene Clark, Terry Reid, and Allan Clarke.

During the Covid lockdown, she put music to lyrics sent to her by poet/lyricist Pete Brown, who co-wrote the Cream classics “White Room,” “I Feel Free,” and “Sunshine Of Your Love.” The result is an impressive entry into Olson’s catalog and a fitting tribute to Brown, who passed away in 2023. Olson’s Textones bandmate Joe Read added bass and other instruments, and Todd Wolfe (Sheryl Crow, Mountain) supplied masterful lead and Dobro. It’s a testament to Olson’s production that it sounds like a cohesive whole rather than a collection of files and parts.

While Brown’s lyrics are more earthbound than his psychedelic Cream lines, “Careless Dancing” has an ethereal quality, enhanced by Wolfe’s envelope-pushing solo. Olson and Read penned an ode to the process itself, “Lost and Found In Lockdown,” and Brown’s version of “With My Black Cat By My Side,” from his *The Shadow Club* album, is included as a bonus track, featuring Carla’s harmonies and Clem Clempson (Humble Pie, Colosseum) on guitar. – **Dan Forte VG**

extra. EXTRA



CACTUS Temple Of Blues II

Carmine Appice returns with Cactus, delivering high-protein blues and a reimagined “Bad Stuff,” originally recorded on their 1972 album, ‘Ot’n’ Sweaty. A battalion of guitarists assist, notably Steve Morse, Eric Gales, Pat Travers, Ty Tabor, Alex Skolnick, and Bumblefoot. High-voltage highlights include “300 Pounds of Joy,” “Tail Dragger,” and “Back Door Man.” – **OJ**



TRIO GRANDE What’s Left

This bass-free jazz trio is supremely gifted, featuring guitarist Gilad Hekselman and two multi-instrumental wizards. Expect the unexpected as they traverse from sheer beauty (“What’s Left”) to kooky urban chaos (“The Past”). Hekselman plays electric on many cuts and lilting acoustic on “If I Told You.” Hekselman’s chords and single-note improv on “Start of Something” will leave your jaw on the floor. – **PP**



SETH JAMES Motormouth

Don’t let the cowboy hat fool you; call it southern soul. On the Texan’s seventh outing, solid originals mingle with covers of Ray Charles, Leon Russell, and James’ mentor, Delbert McClinton. James’ no-nonsense six-string punch propels the shuffle “I Got To Know” by Memphis soul man Don Bryant, while Time Jumper Eddy Dunlop’s steel swings “I’ll Be Gone.” – **DF**



GUS G. Steel Burner

The former Ozzy guitarist’s fifth solo album is a blast of epic metal. Spiraling arpeggios, juggernaut riffs, and blunt-force drumming are reminiscent of early Tony MacAlpine and offer a melodic, escapist treat. “What If” and “Advent” display nuance and feel. On “Nothing Can Break Me,” vocalist Doro Pesch screams to the cheap seats with unadulterated fury. Gus is an underrated axe spectacle. – **OJ**



CENTO THREEO Halfway to Mellowtown

Austin jazz/Americana guitarist Don Cento and his trio (drummer Don Bergeron, bassist Phil Spencer) offer instrumentals straddling contemporary and earlier jazz. Most, like “Make the Silence Louder” and “Filibuster in E Minor,” are atmospheric originals. The interplay between Cento and his sidemen is particularly solid on “G’Orangers” and a plaintive interpretation of Rosanne Cash’s 1981 country hit “Seven Year Ache.” – **RK**



CHRIS SQUIRE Fish Out of Water 50th Anniversary

The Yes bassist once released a solo album – and 50 years later, we’re still talking about it. A flat-out masterpiece, it showcases prog epics on “Silently Falling” and “Safe (Canon Song),” killer performances from Bill Bruford and Patrick Moraz, and Squire’s surprisingly fuzzed Rickenbacker, a tone he attributed to Jack Bruce. Better yet, this reissue includes fresh stereo, ATMOS, and 5.1 mixes. – **PP**

✓ VG APPROVED GEAR

CHANGE OF PACE

The Powers Electric A-Type

In a guitar universe rife with similar body shapes, features, and sounds, the Powers Electric A-Type is real news. Powers is a new venture from Andy Powers, president of Taylor Guitars, and the A-Type is his step into the electric arena, bringing a unique retro look, interesting construction details, and big tones.

Pick up the A-Type to thwack a few chords and you'll feel something different. One thing is its light and resonant hollow body, lending an acoustic dimension that's louder than you'd expect. It has a solid maple cap, but intriguingly, an ash body from a drought-tolerant tree species that's lightweight (in contrast to heavy northern ash) and grows in Central America, Mexico, and SoCal. Another factor is a larger mahogany neck, which makes sense from a guy who normally builds acoustics. So, you have a guitar assembled on a hollow frame but with a large, comfy carve like a '40s/'50s jazz box.

For specs, the A-Type has that maple cap over what Powers calls a "trussed, slim hollowbody." The neck has a 24⁷/₈" scale and asymmetrical radius, with a Honduran rosewood board sporting 21 jumbo frets, and twin-arch inlays. A camshaft vibrato bar adds wiggle, and the nut and bridge are made of Delrin (the bridge is mounted on a steel base). Made of a resin, its super-groovy knobs and whammy-bar tip are *direct* descendants of SoCal surf and hot-rod culture, while a fancy etched-aluminum truss rod cover seals the deal.

The stars of the show are the pickups, which come in FF42 (full faraday) or PF42 (partial faraday) versions. Our tester had the PF42, and they're full, funky, and spunky. Combined with the hollow construction, you can't help but love the sparkling tones emanating from within. The A-Type's fine neck carve and setup add to the fun as you blast through favorite rock, blues, country, or whatever licks come to mind.

You owe it to yourself to go spank a Powers A-Type. With vintage vibes, excellent electronics, and earthy resonance, it's a wondrous change of pace from the six-string norm. — **Pete Prown**

Price: \$3,799-\$4,299
www.powerselectricguitars.com



Price: \$369
www.robertkeeley.com

TREY COOL

Keeley's RK2000 Funk Siren Delay

Back in the epoch of prehistoric rack gear, there was an '80s unit called the Ibanez DM2000, which became a favorite of Phish's Trey Anastasio. Not only did it provide lush echoes, but unique swooping, time-bending sounds from outer space – cue up the Phish tracks "First Tube" and "Gotta Jibboo" to hear Trey deploying it madly.

Working with Anastasio's guitar tech, Keeley has come up with a stompbox replacement, the RK2000 Funk Siren.

The Funk Siren's 1,023-millisecond delay and phrase looper with Hold and Mod offer pinpoint control; the classic Anastasio approach is to conjure sci-fi sounds – like bleeps on a spaceship – and hold the effect while soloing or riffing on top. It further has 12-bit digital grittiness, giving an authentic '80s vibe (the Input knob can push the signal for intentional overdrive).

To get oriented, cue up one of the many RK2000 demo videos online. Some reveal great delay effects you know, like dotted eighth notes, while others conjure the fabled Anastasio swoop.

While the Funk Siren is a specialty box that will appeal to sonic explorers and Phish fanatics, it comes with Keeley's pro-grade craftsmanship and design, and ample jacks for stereo in/outs and expression pedals. — **Pete Prown**



MODERN CLASSIC?

The Dr Z Route 66 Jr. 1x12

The original Dr Z Route 66 of more than 25 years ago developed a cult following, and though discontinued a while back it remains a modern-classic. Suiting today's drive toward smaller and lighter, Dr Z's Mike Zaitz conceived the new Route 66 Jr. to achieve the same tones at lower volumes, retaining several essential design points of the original to do so.

The Route 66 Jr. uses the same EF86 pentode-preamp stage, known for its girthy-yet-articulate tone, with controls for Volume plus a Bass and Treble that tap an unusual Baxandall tone stage. Rather than 35 watts from a pair of KT66 output tubes, however, it uses just one Genalex Gold Lion KT66 in a single-ended, Class-A output stage that puts out 12 watts. A built-in Dr Z Reactive Reducer attenuator cuts the output to six watts or three watts as desired. Round back, a buffered effects loop includes Send and Return, and there's a single 8-ohm speaker output for the Eminence Platinum Series L12-40A Alnico 12". It's all housed in a 22" x 21.5" x 10.5" cab weighing 42 pounds, in a black-Tolex livery with checkerboard grillecloth and gold panel reminiscent of the vintage Marshall's that made the KT66 famous.

Tested with a '64 ES-335 and Telecaster, the Route 66 Jr. sounded breathtakingly good, recreating the muscle and thickness we recall from the original Route 66 while adding more chime and harmonic shimmer. It all arrived

equally toothsome via humbuckers or single-coils, never folding to the former while fattening up the latter. EF86 tubes interact well with overdrives, and the Route 66 Jr. lapped up several pedals like they were part of its own circuit. On its own, the amp also produced a chewy, tactile overdrive when

pushed – made easier by the interactive tone controls adding gain when dialed past noon. And if you're thinking 12 watts doesn't sound like much, hold onto your hat; Junior belts out a big-amp

sound at volumes that will compete with most drummers in a club setting, yet sounds equally superb dialed down via the attenuator to rehearsal and studio.

Simply put, the Route 66 Jr. is a stellar achievement from Dr Z, and likely another modern classic in the offing. – **Dave Hunter**

Price: \$2,699 (combo);
\$2,099 (head)
www.drzamps.com



GEARIN' UP



GIBSON VICTORY FLOYD ROSE

The Gibson Victory Floyd Rose has a mahogany double-cut body, figured-maple top, mahogany neck with SlimTaper profile, ebony fretboard with a compound radius, 24 medium jumbo frets, Floyd Rose vibrato, locking nut, and 25.5" scale. Its '80s Tribute humbuckers are wired for push/pull coil splitting and selectable inner/outer coil engagement.



CRAZY TUBE CIRCUITS WHITE WHALE JUNIOR

The Crazy Tube Circuits White Whale Junior pedal combines an all-analog/three-spring reverb tank driven by a dedicated power amp with authentic amp-style tremolo in a box that measures 6" x 3.2" x 2.6".



HIWATT SUPER-HI 33

HiWatt's Super-Hi 33 head uses oversized transformers and 6V6 tubes fed by cascading preamp gain with channel-specific controls for Gain and Master Volume. Its footswitch changes channels and accesses Super-Hi boost. Other features include Depth control to fine-tune low-end and a post-gain effects loop.

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

SIX-STRING BLING

Fender 75th Anniversary Player II Sparkle Telecaster

Part of Fender's continued celebration of its seminal solidbody, the 75th Anniversary Player II Telecaster follows the "classic style, modern features" blueprint of the Player II Series while tweaking the aesthetics.

Beyond the obvious Tele-derived elements, several of the Mexican-made guitar's specs follow from the previous iteration – the modern bridge with six block steel saddles, 22 medium-jumbo frets, modern "C" neck shape with rolled edges and 9.5" fretboard radius, and headstock end truss-rod adjustment nut. The pickups, though, are different; a pair of 75th Anniversary Thunderbolt single-coils made with larger pole pieces and designed for a punchier, more aggressive sound.

For all of this, though, so much of the 75th Anniversary model's individuality still comes back to the looks. Its Diamond Dust Sparkle finish is highlighted by deep, three-dimensional silver flake that's reminiscent of the custom Teles Fender made for Buck Owens and Don Rich in the '60s. Over an alder body with white-pearloid pickguard and engraved neck plate denoting the diamond anniversary, it's sure to get noticed onstage.

Overall, the guitar feels soundly put-together and plays easily. At 8.4 pounds, it's a tad on the heavy side, but that's often the case in its price bracket.

While a fun memento to Fender's big year if it's hung on a wall, this guitar delivers surprises when you plug it in. Tested through a Matchless Spitfire combo and a '64 Bassman, it proved a fiery beast with a lot of sting in the tail from the Anniversary pickups. The bridge excelled at snarling, raucous twang and rock and roll, staying clear even through heavy overdrive, while the neck delivered a luscious "fat Strat" tone that so many Teles struggle to achieve. Yet where many higher-output pickups offer muddy cleans, just roll down the guitar's Volume and they shine up beautifully. Great stuff – blinged-out beauty and tonal versatility for barely north of a grand. – **Dave Hunter**

Price: \$1,099
www.fender.com



Price: \$179
www.daredevilpedals.com

WILD WEST

Daredevil Pedals' Double Cocked Matt Pike Wah

The fixed-position wah tone is a distinctive sound made famous by Mick Ronson, Jimmy Page, Michael Schenker, and Mark Knopfler. Matt Pike, of the band High on Fire, has been using Daredevil's Atomic Cocked fixed wah for so long that Daredevil boss Johnny Wator thought there should be a signature version.

The Double Cocked Matt Pike custom edition offers Gain, Blend, and two fixed-wah tone settings with an FET boost follower. It's also true-bypass, hand-wired, and offers eye-catching wild-west artwork. Powered by a 9-volt adapter, each is autographed inside.

Plugging a Les Paul into a Marshall combo, a plethora of punchy, cocked midrange-centric lead tones became available. The pedal's gain circuits work wonderfully for soloists who lean toward shred. The Double Cocked is also great for cutting through a stage mix, thanks to its distinctive lead sounds. With the ability to mix EQ, gain, and wah sweet spots, the pedal can do anything from subtle tonal coloring to over-the-top aggression. Non-traditional boost is also available. The Blend knob is the key to experimentation.

While the Pike may not get as much use in every genre of music, when it's time to take a solo with conviction, intensity, and rich sustain, heads will turn. – **Oscar Jordan**

'60s SIZZLE

The Vox VTB-1 Treble Booster

In the mid '60s, Vox's Treble Booster was the pedal du jour that changed the sonic landscape of British rock. Brian May, Rory Gallagher, Eric Clapton, and others used it to achieve sustain, clarity, and upper-midrange toothiness.

With the new VTB-1, Vox has captured that feel and atmosphere, and modified it using a Silver Can BC108

silicon transistor that yields less noise than its Germanium counterpart, and improves stability. Vox goes one step further by adding a Fat Switch for players who prefer lead tones with a contemporary feel.

Plugged into a 40-watt Marshall combo and a Les Paul, the VTB-1's sounds were expressive and touch-sensitive – the perfect complement for guitarists who ride their guitar's Volume control.

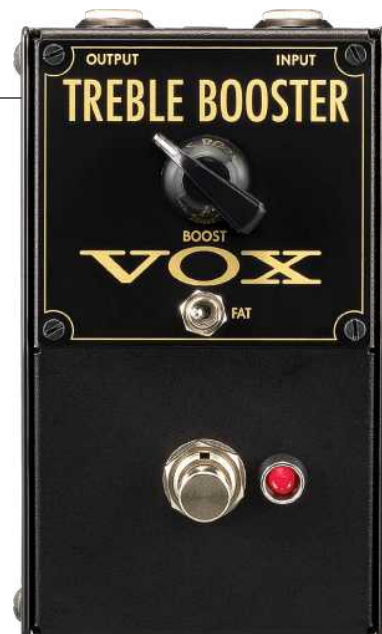
Switching through pickup selections,

the VTB-1 cut with a muscular edginess – sharp but never shrill and, with drive, was sweet, feisty, and expansive. Though the Les Paul/Marshall combination leaned more

to Cream-era Clapton than Queen's *Live Killers*, it was a joy to dial in a bit of Brian May-like sonic majesty. For guitarists hankering for a

magic bullet to relive the heyday of British blues-rock, the VTB-1 is the ticket. It's single knob acts as a volume, clean boost, dirty boost, and a compass to explore the sweet spots for crispy leads, chunky rhythm tones, and chimey jangle.

Switching to a Strat, we were greeted by Rainbow-era Blackmore tones that would cut through any amount of onstage mud. The Fat Switch performs as advertised – beefy, warm, and thick. Sounds morphed from the '60s to later-period heavy rock. Still very



British, but with improved smoothness, body, and awesome sustain. Perfect for caffeinated neo-classical leads.

With the VTB-1, Vox has done an excellent job creating a versatile pedal that is musical, quiet, and user-friendly. It accepts a 9-volt adapter, and whether the genre is blues, rock and roll, or heavier stuff, don't be surprised to see it used by forward-seeking players who honor classic sounds. – **Oscar Jordan VG**

Price: \$149.99

www.voxamps.com



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'65 Olympic White 100% original, Excellent condition, Mint-Green pickguard.
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'65 Olympic White "Tortoiseshell Pickguard" 100% original.
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'66 Sunburst 100% original in EX condition.
'69 Blond/Rose neck 100% original. Amazing tone!!
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'70 Olympic White/4 Bolt Rose neck only refrets changed nut, Super clean!!
'70 Black/Rose neck 100% original.
'71 Black/4 Bolt Rose neck Only changed Nut & 5Way-SW in VG condition.
'71 Sunburst "Lefty" 4 Bolt One Piece Maple neck Refret & Cahnged nut.
'71 Black/3 Bolt Rose neck Early 3 Bolt neck Strat, 1 Strings Tree Steel Tremolo Assy.
'72 Sonic Blue/3 Bolt Maple nneck 1 Strings Tree Steel Tremolo Assy.

'72 Sunburst 1 Strings 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!!
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01 "I've enjoyed playing G&L Legacy guitars for 30-plus years," Karl Maurer tells us. "These all have alder or swamp-ash bodies and I'm sad to see the sun set on all the good people at G&L."

02 Jim Dora and his '58 Les Paul Special recently paid a visit to the grave of Orville Gibson. "I've owned the guitar since '59, when I was 15," he says. "It's my most-treasured possession."

03 Cris Carver has been collecting Teiscos since the mid '80s, beginning with the refin bass perched on his mantle, down to the most-recent addition – the yellow three-pickup at far right. "I've found a few online, but the rest came through deals in my city," he says. "I've always enjoyed VG, especially the writings of Dan Forte a.k.a. Teisco Del Rey. Go figure!"

04 Enjoy this peek at Larry Carter's '51 Fender Deluxe and '56 Gretsch Electromatic 6184 Corvette.

05 Among Ron Cascisa's collection are this Rick-enbacker group – a '58 325, '68 4001, and '87 360/12V64.

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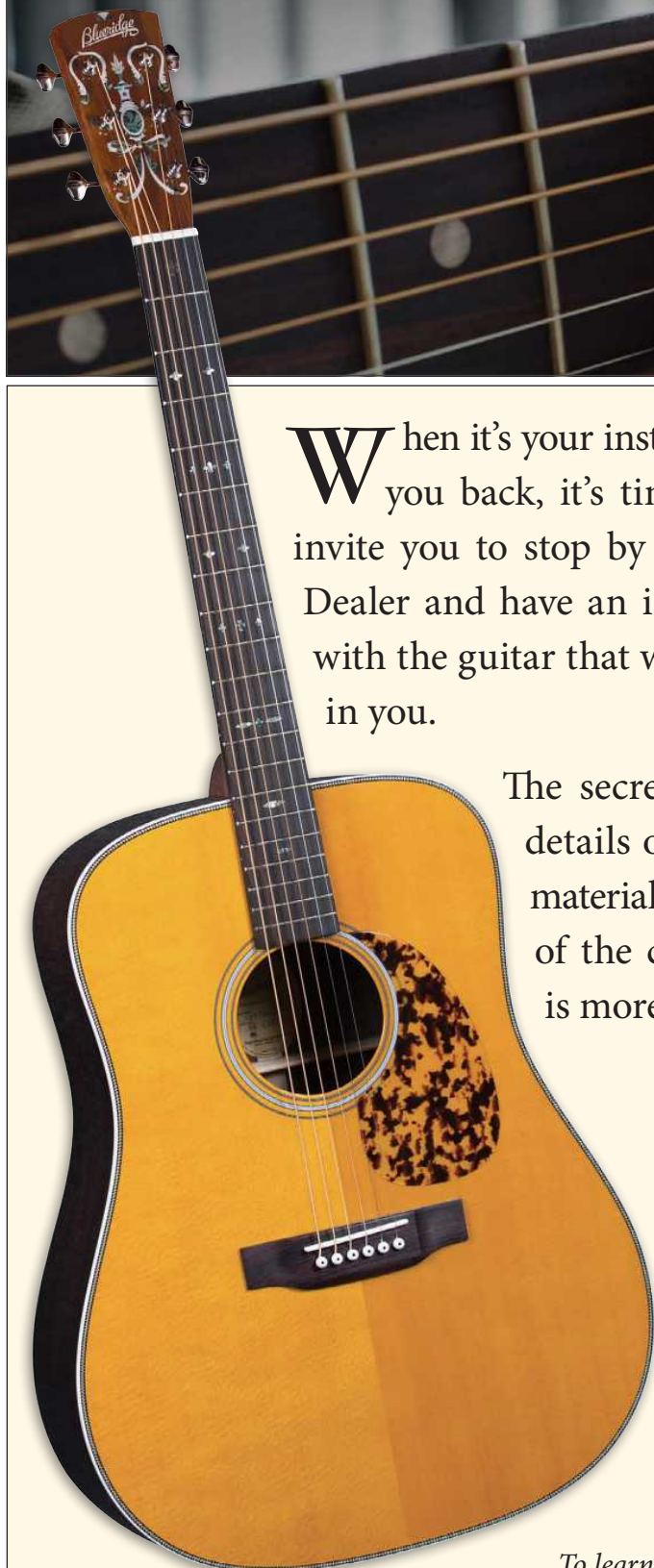
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