

tone & technique | fine guitars | legendary players

Issue 403

Guitarist

FEBRUARY 2016

COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

GARY MOORE

Exploring the guitar collection of a blues-rock legend

LOST INTERVIEW
MOORE ON BLUES

RARE GUITARS
A VERY FINE '59

GARY'S GEAR
UP FOR SALE



WORLD EXCLUSIVE

LIGHTNING BOLT
We rate the return of PRS's bolt-on wonder, the CE 24

Want to know Moore?
We play the gear Gary used on classic albums, from *Victims Of The Future* to *Still Got The Blues*



Richard Hawley on songwriting



Fender Elite Strat & Tele



Andy Summers on abstract guitar



Speaker's Corner amp upgrades



Warren Haynes on taste & tone

Future



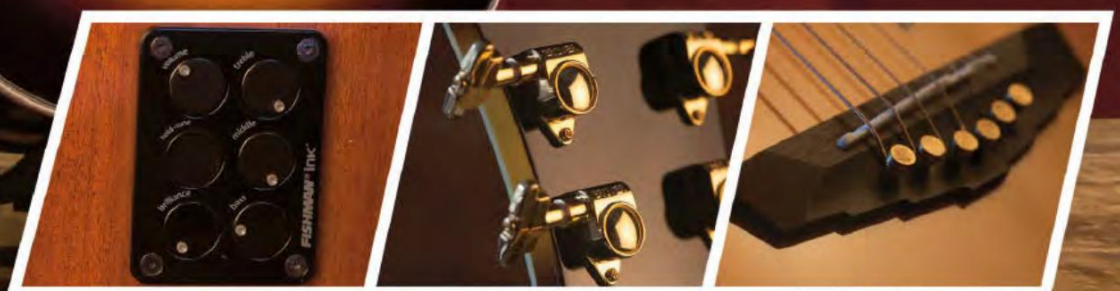
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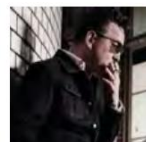
On the fifth anniversary of his passing, we look back on the too-short life of Gary Moore in this issue. He inspired thousands, but our previously unpublished interview reveals him to be unflinchingly critical of his own playing at times. It got us thinking, to what degree is scrupulous honesty regarding one's own abilities – and limitations – on guitar a useful thing? On the plus side, we've seen musicians who would definitely benefit from a little more healthy respect for what can go wrong when they hit the stage. 'It'll be alright on the night' goes only so far as a strategy for making brilliant music. Then again, talented players often can't see what it is about their playing that's so special – if you live with your own 'sound' day in and day out, it can seem like there's little there to write home about. That's an easy trap to fall into, especially when the world's best players seem to have effortless mastery of so many aspects of guitar. Trust us, even the most naturally gifted among them had to work very hard for a very long time to get to that level. So never berate yourself for being good at even a few things – whether that happens to be fingerstyle folk, speed picking or songwriting. Instead, value those skills and find a musical arena for them: what comes naturally to you will likely sound natural and authentic to an audience, too, and they may well love aspects of your style that you consider to be merely workaday. Also, never underestimate the power of doing simple things well in music – it really does sound better than over-reaching from fear that you're not playing showily enough. Put another way, healthy self-respect and patient acquisition of the basics of any new technique will help you grow faster than simply flogging yourself for not being Guthrie Govan yet! Look out for a special *Guitarist* campaign to help you sound great and play more in the New Year, coming soon. Enjoy the issue.

Jamie Dickson **Editor**

Editor's Highlights



Still Got The Blues
Gary discusses blues technique and his love for the genius of Peter Green in this insightful, posthumous interview from 1995 **p56**



Richard Hawley
Musings on songwriting, and how pre-war acoustics helped pull Sheffield's finest songsmith through difficult times **p80**



Moving To Montana
Oven-baked guitars never sounded so tasty as Gibson's ingeniously aged J-45 Vintage and Hummingbird acoustics, on test here **p100**

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TELEPHONE 0844 848 2852 ONLINE www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

Printed in the UK by William Gibbons. Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT Telephone 0207 429 4000 Overseas distribution by Seymour International

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Pete plays Ernie Ball
Power Slinky 11-48

PETE TOWNSHEND

FAMOUSLY SLINKY SINCE 1972.

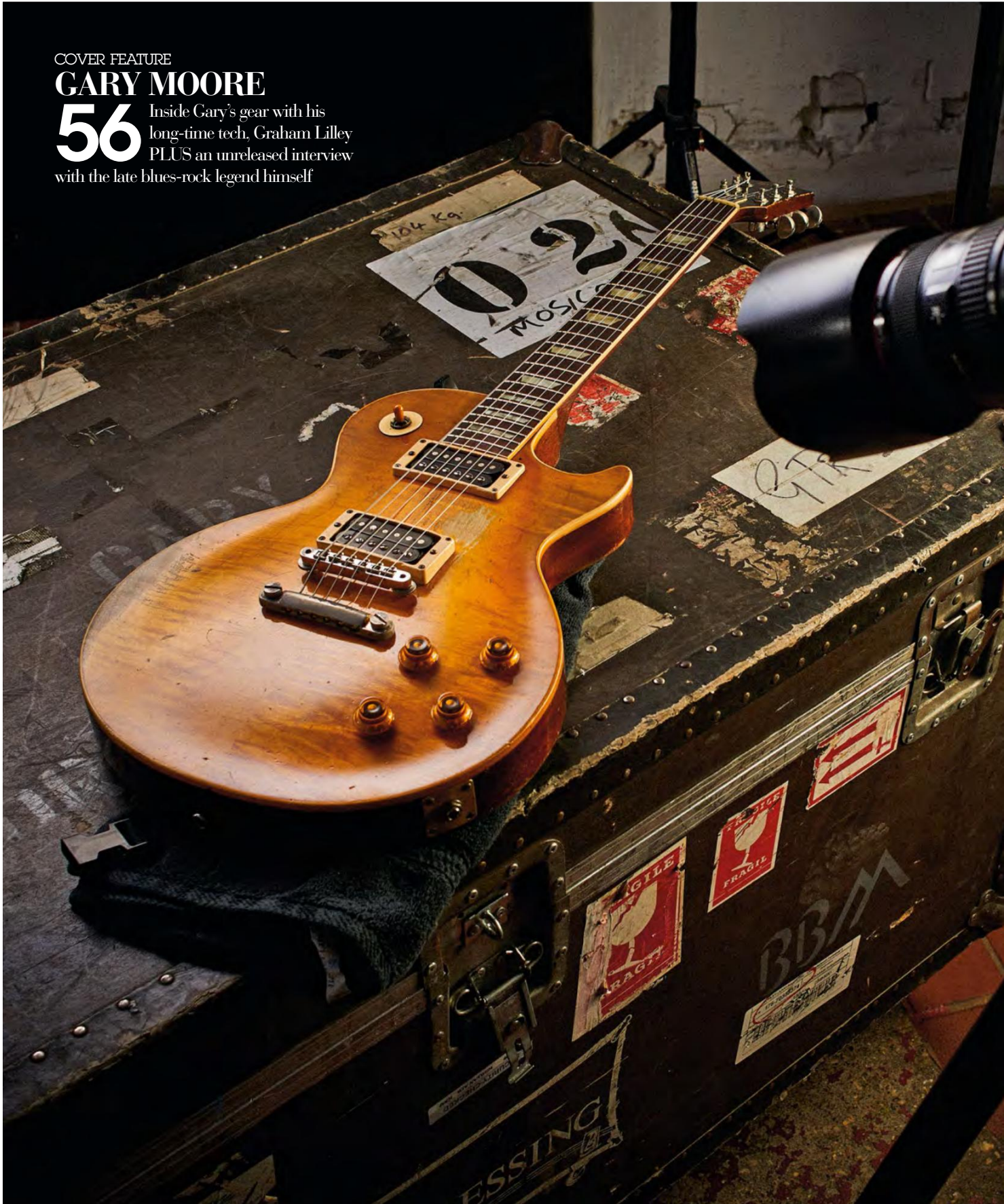


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GARY MOORE

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COVER PORTRAIT BY
Neil Godwin



STEVE VAI
Solo Artist

The flexibility of the Axe-Fx II is supreme. I did extensive tone testing and found it to be flawless... It's exceptional and I'm grateful.



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Ashes Divide

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Animals As Leaders

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Bush, Gavin Rossdale,
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Two-Rock



FIRST PLAY



FENDER JIMI HENDRIX STRATOCASTER £689

WHAT IS IT? Mexican-made Stratocaster tribute to one of the greatest guitarists of all time

If Left Was Right

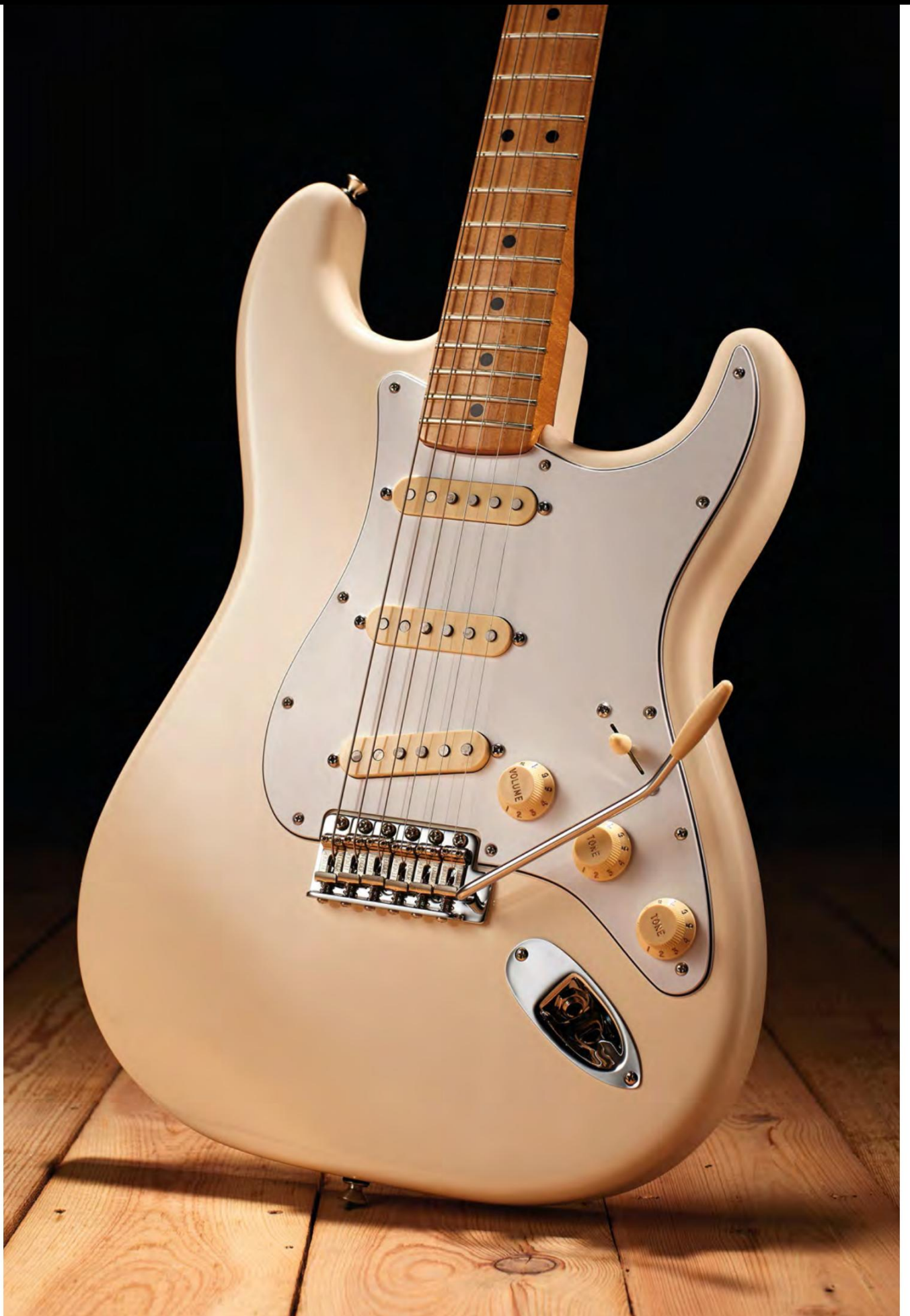
Fender introduces a Hendrix-inspired guitar priced to appeal to younger fans, but which could inspire any guitarist lusting after that elusive 'cool' factor

Words Neville Marten **Photography** Neil Godwin

When we heard that another Hendrix tribute Strat was in the offing, the groans were audible. Often in the past, the great man's name has been used with less sensitivity than we would have liked. After all, he's not here to sanctify any of these products or decisions. The spec, too, seemed odd – a right-handed guitar with upside-down headstock and reverse-angled bridge pickup; surely it could only end up being the proverbial canine's supper?

But it's nothing of the sort. Built in Fender's Ensenada, Mexico factory, the Jimi Hendrix Stratocaster is available in Olympic White or Black, both with maple neck, tinted pickups and knobs on a white-black-white pickguard. Mexican Fenders are built supremely well; their polyester finish is exemplary and their necks never anything but great. Yes, this one's headstock is upside down and, yes, its bridge pickup is reversed, but these facets – the consequence of Jimi turning a regular Strat upside down – contributed greatly to its playability and sound in his hands.







1



2



3



4

For example, the longer bass string travel to the farthest tuners meant greater tension and better tuning stability when drop tuning, as Jimi did, and the consequently slacker treble strings meant smoother bends and vibrato. Also, the 'wrong way round' pickup served to moderate the treble for a slightly thicker tone on the top strings and marginally more twang one on the lower ones. And actually none of this makes the guitar look weird, as we'd predicted it would.

Fender has sensibly chosen not to switch the vibrato block round (Jimi's upside-down Strat's arms protruded awkwardly from the top), while opting for modern-style headstock truss adjustment is a concession that makes real sense.

Two elephants in the room, though: the smaller being that the body is right-handed and not upside down; the larger is that a tribute instrument to the greatest left-handed guitarist ever, is not available left-handed! The latter of these is surely due to economics but seems, well, strange; the former makes tons of sense, as we'll see.

Feel & Sounds

Anyone who's watched Hendrix play will have noticed that his reversed Strat offered little upper-fret access. In fact, he didn't play up the dusty end much at all. Our guitar's right-handed body solves that problem in one fell swoop. The neck's shallow 'C' shape is mega-comfy in the hands and Fender's other modern twist - medium-jumbo frets on a flatter, 241mm (9.5-inch) radius 'board - adds greatly to the experience. Our guitar's action was too low to dig in like Jimi, with the top string almost choking off when going for big bends, but a quick adjustment of the first and second strings' bridge saddles and playability was restored. The vintage vibrato works well, coping with Jimi-style excesses and returning to pitch admirably. It's a joy to try all those great riffs, chords and solos on an instrument that seems much more grown-up than its meagre price tag suggests.

Plugging in, our Hendrix Strat instantly shows its mettle. The selector's five settings bring out a quintet of recognisable tones from these fine-sounding '65 USA Vintage

1. Available in white or black (Woodstock or Isle Of Wight!), the body and neck are perfectly finished in polyester
2. Tinted pickup covers and knobs contrast nicely with the white 'guard, while a vintage-style vibrato offers reasonable wobble and divebomb capability
3. The large, post-'65 Strat headstock looks cool when flipped over, especially with the 60s-style Fender logo the right way up. Some say the added mass even adds something to the tone, while the modern truss rod certainly makes adjustments easier

4. A four-bolt neck-plate proclaims 'Authentic Hendrix' to denote that this is an official release in conjunction with Jimi's estate. His image etched into the plate, and 'Jimi Hendrix' signature on the headstock, are registered trademarks

5. Angling the bridge pickup this way, with the treble end further from the saddles and the bass nearer, adds depth to the top strings and twang to the lower ones, and surprisingly, looks quite normal



Stratocaster pickups. All the sounds are bright, but not overly so, and the bridge pickup does seem somewhat tamed by its treble pole pieces' greater distance from the bridge. Favourite settings? Neck and middle, then middle (very *Hey Joe*); then neck (*Wind Cries Mary*). The bridge unit comes into its own when drive is applied – the more the merrier for those lairier 'voodoo' moments.

You barely notice the 'wrong way round' bridge pickup – which was the thing we feared might look the weirdest

Verdict

Despite initial reservations, we came to really like this guitar. It doesn't look odd at all – in fact, the upside-down post-'65 headstock with Fender facing the 'correct' way makes one feel almost anarchic playing it. What's more, you barely notice the 'wrong way round' bridge pickup – the thing we feared might look the weirdest. And if these changes to the basic Strat's formula do add a spark of Jimi magic to tone and playability, all the better, although it's hard to tell without a similarly equipped 'regular' Mexican Strat for comparison. That said, its range of tones from the USA pickups – a good move by Fender – is full of Strat-y personality, and that, and the use of the occasional Gibson aside, was the essence of the Hendrix tone.

Apart from needing a tiny action tweak, it was hard to fault this guitar in build, price or execution. In fact, more than one *Guitarist* 'old hand' has said how cool it would be to turn up to a gig with one. And if you can turn the heads of a bunch of old cynics like us, Fender is clearly doing something right! 🎸



FENDER JIMI HENDRIX STRATOCASTER

PRICE: £689 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: Mexico

TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody electric

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple with walnut skunk stripe and reverse headstock with Hendrix signature

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/42mm

FINGERBOARD: Maple, integrated with neck, 241mm (9.5") radius

FRETS: 21, medium-jumbo

HARDWARE: Chrome-plated vintage vibrato, Kluson-style six-a-side tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 55mm

ELECTRICS: 3x Fender US Vintage 65 'grey bottom' single coils, 5-way lever pickup selector, master volume and 2x tone controls (neck and middle pickup)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.59/7.9

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: Mexican Standard Strats start at £480, including left-handers

LEFT-HANDERS: See range options

FINISHES: Olympic White (as reviewed), Black

Fender GBI

01342 331700

www.fender.com

8/10

PROS Cool-looking guitar with real Jimi vibe; plays and sounds great

CONS Not available left-handed

FIRST PLAY



VICTORY VX THE KRAKEN
£829

.....
WHAT IS IT? All-valve head with
two gain modes



A TRUE DJENT

Words
Darran Charles

Photography
Joby Sessions

Can a lunchbox-sized amp named after a mythical monster really threaten to slay the competition? We unleash it to find out...

The baritone/extended range guitarist, while these days extremely well catered for in the guitar market, could be considered neglected when it comes to amps specifically designed with that lower range in mind. There are many amps that excel and revel in the low-range frequencies pounded through them, but not perhaps many designed in anticipation of sub-D brutality. Indeed, most of the high-profile seven- and eight-string players (as in the case of Meshuggah and Periphery) tend to gravitate towards digital solutions such as the Fractal Audio Axe-FX. With the release of The Kraken, however, Victory has attempted to redress the imbalance.

When setting out to design the amp, Victory's chief designer Martin Kidd was briefed with designing not just a metal amp, but one "that would also suit the players using detuned/baritone instruments, where the low end of the sound comes more from the instrument than the bass produced by the amp's circuitry". To help ensure this outcome, Victory drafted in Rabea Massaad (guitarist with the band Dorje) to help tweak the amp's voicing as the design



process unfolded. Rabea had himself long been working on a setup that best showcased baritone tunings, and his experiments led him to discover his ‘magic’ formula: a two amp setup consisting of a JCM900 and a 5150 Mk1 (plus two 4x12 cabinets).

With Rabea’s input, “the thinking became more focused”, says Martin. “My job then was to design two channels that emulated the tones of those amps. For the JCM900, I had to get that classic overdrive using valves, as opposed to the solid-state preamp circuitry in the JCM900, but I had much less real estate on the circuit board to work with, as it needed to fit into a fairly small chassis. So, for the 5150 Mk1 sound, I needed to do that with three preamp valves instead of four – there are a total of five 12AX7 valves in the 5150 Mk1 and four in the Kraken but the other 12AX7, in both cases, is the phase splitter for the power amp valves.”

Although very candid about the influences, Martin – himself an innovator of some classic amp designs while chief designer at Cornford Amplification – is keen to point out that The Kraken’s circuit is original and no “borrowing of other people’s work took place!”

The result? A two-channel amp, offering two different but classic gain strictures: Gain 1 (or channel 1) for classic British-style overdrive voicing; channel 2 for tightly focused American-style high-gain tones. On the front panel are separate controls for both gains, and to the right of them are three EQ controls, plus two master volumes and a standby switch with the option for high-output and low-output (50 or 15 watts). The front panel is very compact but in no way cluttered.

The rear panel comprises a main on/off switch, three speaker input options, effects loop send and return, and a Bass Focus switch. There are also two separate footswitch inputs enabling you to use the amp in one of two ways: footswitch 1 allows for switching between Gain I and II and between Master I and II, all independently; footswitch 2 allows for switching between Gain I and II, but with Gain I assigned to master I, and Gain II to Master II (as you would find in many modern channel switching amps). The second footswitch also features an effects loop on/off switch.

The Kraken focuses the low end superbly via the cleverly designed vertical 212 cabinet, which itself plays no mere bit part

Feel & Sounds

With the necessary extended-range tools to put The Kraken through its paces – a Vigier seven-string Excalibur and an eight-string Strandberg Boden, with a low F# at the bottom – we plug into channel 1 with everything set to 12 o’clock. The earlier allusion to the JCM900 seems entirely accurate: authentic-sounding Zeppelin-style classic rock tones are immediately on tap, although slightly less ‘raspy’ than its reference model. The low end is quite loose and sleazy, exactly as you’d hope for in a channel billed as offering “modded classic master-volume British rock sounds”. The lower range notes are handled quite magnificently and, if as Martin Kidd stated, the objective was for the amp to be “very tight





1



2

1. Lunchbox-sized and purposely designed to be categorised as carry-on luggage, The Kraken is ideal for the frequent flyers among us
2. The amp can be switched from 50 watts to a less-monstrous 15 watts output, and down even further to nine and two watts in single-ended mode

and focused at the low end”, then that has been achieved – and in awe-inspiring fashion. Those familiar with chugging away in very low registers will testify that the bass frequency can often be all enveloping: shaking the shelves in your bedroom or sonically brushing the drum-kit in the rehearsal room (much to the annoyance of the drummer!). The Kraken, though, really does focus that low end superbly via the cleverly designed vertical 212 cabinet, which itself plays no mere bit part.

Channel 2, if based on the 5150, promises to be quite the powerhouse. With the gain set to 1 o'clock and the EQ controls set around

midday, we are reminded not of the 5150 but of the Cornford MK50H II, albeit with slightly less warmth and a more aggressive high end. Although voiced for metal and with an almost biting presence (like the MK50H II), we're able to unleash an incredible amount of power and gain while retaining consummate focus and clarity. The accentuation and precision of lower-end riffs are ever present, even with the gain turned up full and with a thumping low F# from the Strandberg thrown at it. No mean feat for such a high-gain amp. Large open-string chords sound expansive and clear with even the most dissonant of intervals entirely



3

audible. Still, the temptation remains simply to strum an open G and hear it roar!

For solo work on channel 2, Paul Gilbert's early high-presence tone comes to min: fast-picking lines sound aggressive yet clear. The sharpness featured on our rhythm settings required a little taming, and rolling down the powerful treble control results in a warmer tone that works well with legato lines. It proves an inspiring and rewarding ride that definitely encourages the more technical elements of your playing to be brought to the forefront.

Activating the Bass Focus switch on both channels changes the negative feedback in the power amp, and supposedly results in a "tighter, more focused low end". To our ears, it feels like the entire bass-end has been scooped out and, in isolation, the discerning metal player may feel a little short changed in terms of grunt and power. In the context of a full band competing for bass frequencies, however, its full value can perhaps be realised.



4



- 3. The age-old dilemma of boosting the volume for solos without drastically altering the tone is addressed with two master volumes
- 4. Gain I mode offers up classic Brit-style crunch, while Gain II provides the tight, aggressive American-style high-gain tones
- 5. The Bass Focus switch changes the negative feedback in the power amp, resulting in a tauter low end

The accentuation of lower-end riffs is ever present, even with the gain turned up full and with a thumping low F# thrown at it

Verdict

For the VX to pack such a powerful punch from such a small package makes it one of, if not *the* best metal amp we've ever played through. Extended-range players have to try this amp. If you're concerned about the lack of a clean channel, roll off the guitar's volume: it cleans up staggeringly well. It may be not the best platform to run heavy gain drive pedals through, but if that's your preferred method for achieving your tone, this isn't the amp for you – it requires no assistance in that regard.

Rabea Massaad actually uses a dual-Kraken stereo rig on the end of a big pedalboard, with Gain I and 2 channels running simultaneously side-by-side, for what we imagine to be a perfect mix of Brit classic rock and American metal sounds. Even that isn't too financially unrealistic when compared to some of its US-made rivals. To all extended-range players: consider yourself well and truly catered for. Unleash The Kraken, indeed! **G**



VICTORY VX THE KRAKEN

PRICE: £829
ORIGIN: UK
TYPE: All-valve head with 2 gain modes
OUTPUT: 50 to 2W RMS
VALVES: 4x 12AX7, 2x 6L6 (can be switched for EL34)
DIMENSIONS: 342 (w) x 185 (h) x 185mm (d)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 8.2/18
CABINET: The V212 VV (w/ Celestion Vintage 30 speakers) costs £499
CHANNELS: 2
CONTROLS: Bass, middle, treble, Master 1, Master 2, gain for channel 1, gain channel 2
FOOTSWITCH: 2, included
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Footswitchable modes Gain I and Gain II; footswitchable master volumes, bass focus switch, series effects loop, high and low power modes, single-ended mode, power valves switchable to 6L6. Padded carry bag included. Gain I/II, Master I/II switch included (Channel I/II and FX loop switch optional)
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: Victory's compact series includes V30, V40 (both £829) and the RD1 (£599)

Victory Amplification
www.victoryamps.com



9/10

PROS Price; portability; few amps deliver such powerful metal tones with as much focus and clarity

CONS No clean channel, but rolling off your guitar's volume more or less delivers one

FIRST PLAY



**DANELECTRO '58
LONGHORN GUITAR**
£499

WHAT IS IT? The missing Link in Danelectro's archives. It lives at last!



**DANELECTRO '58
LONGHORN BASS**
£499

WHAT IS IT? The latest generation of the bass The Who's John Entwistle used in the 60s

Horns of plenty

The latest reissues from retro kings Danelectro include a bass made famous by The Ox and a guitar inspired by one of its weirdest creations

Words Ed Mitchell **Photography** Neil Godwin

Apparently inspired by the profile of an Ancient Greek harp called a lyre, no less, the original '58 Danelectro Longhorn Series was populated by three instruments. The model #4423 Bass, as reissued here, was accompanied by the #4623 Six-string Bass and the #4123 Guitarlin, a curious beast that pitched both guitar and mandolin sounds over its extended-length 31-fret fingerboard.

The Longhorn Guitarlin achieved a measure of cult status when godfather of punk, Link Wray, was pictured with his in the late 50s. Wray devotee Pete Townshend also employed a Guitarlin on stage with The Who in 1965. The relationship came to an abrupt end when he thrust it without mercy through the front of a Marshall cabinet.

So, while the new '58 Longhorn Bass is a reissue of the original short scale model, our







regular-scale guitar version didn't exist at the time. Let's call it a cut-down Guitarlin, then.

Construction of the bass and guitar is identical with Masonite (we know it as hardboard) panels concealing an internal hardwood frame. Similarities persist with the cosmetic vinyl body tape, vintage-style tuners, well-cut aluminium top nut, 'Coke bottle' headstock, lipstick-cased single-coil pickups and concentric or 'stacked' volume and tone controls. The guitar also features a three-way pickup selector toggle switch. The only grumble here is that the volume and pointy tone knobs on the bass occasionally stick together and have to be gently prised apart, which is annoying.

While the guitar and bass share the anchored bridge that we've come to know and love on a classic Dano, only the four-string features the original-spec wood saddle; the guitar is updated with six height and intonation adjustable saddles. In another departure from the original '58 spec sheet, both instruments' maple necks are secured to their bodies with four large screws. Back in the day, you only got three, set in a straight line.



1. In typical Dano fashion, the Longhorns have concentric or 'stacked' volume and tone controls: the volume is the bottom knob; the tone is on top
2. Lipstick pickups are more versatile than you might think. Jimmy Page famously employed them on Led Zeppelin tunes like *Kashmir*. Dano don't just do surf
3. Both of these instruments are topped with vintage-style tuners on the iconic 'Coke Bottle' headstock that Danelectro first unveiled back in 1955
4. The short-scale Longhorn bass shares the same nut width, shallow D profile neck, and fingerboard radius as its six-string brother, making it easy to play
5. These new models add an extra neck screw compared with the 1958 original
6. The classic Dano anchored bridge is present on both models
7. The pointy tone and volume controls (pictured overleaf) are eye-catching, but can end up stuck together



Feel & Sounds

The Longhorn body shape isn't all about show. The extended horns provide decent balance when the instruments are hanging from a strap, while the deep cutaways promote good upper fret access, compromised only slightly by the chunky union between the body and neck. Playability is superb with the guitar and bass sharing a shallow D neck profile and a 355mm (14-inch) fingerboard radius. The frets are described as medium in the sales literature, but in reality feel a mere junk-food binge away from fat, which makes for fluid string bending, particularly on the guitar.

Danelectro versatility was righteously sealed when Jimmy Page used a double-cut 3021 model on Led Zep's *Kashmir*. Digging in, the brash bridge pickup works great with vintage fuzz. Think Link, Stooges, Jack White and *Psychotic Reaction*. As ever, it's the 'in-series, both pickups engaged' position that unleashes a Dano guitar's fattest tone; imagine a humbucker with the clarity of a single coil. It sounds superb with overdrive for old-school hard-rock riffs like Jimmy's yet back off the filth and it sounds a bit like a fat



If you want to hear a Dano at its rockabilly best, listen to the wonderful Rick Miller

Telecaster, just right for pedal-steel licks and rockabilly stuff. If you want to hear a Dano at its rockabilly best, listen to the wonderful Rick Miller of American band Southern Culture On The Skids. Finally, the neck position is sweet run clean but really comes alive with some overdrive and upper neck blues licks.

The Longhorn bass shares the inherent brightness of its six-string brother, enhanced further by its round wound strings. Vintage buffs would be advised to dampen down the brightness with a set of flatwounds. The Longhorn doesn't quite match the bottom end thump of a P-Bass but it'll handle any situation you throw at it. John Entwistle of The Who famously beat his way through three Longhorn basses trying to record his solo on *My Generation*. As it happens, adding some gain to the bridge pickup gets pretty damn close to his later *Quadrophenia* sound.

Verdict

Vintage geeks such as the aforementioned Mr Miller will tell you that the new Danos don't have the mojo of the original US-built pawnshop prizes. But in terms of the Far East-sourced reissue years (circa 1998 to present), Danelectro is producing its best instruments right now. The '58 Longhorn guitar and bass score big points on price, playability and tonal versatility. They're built to last. Just don't loan them to Mr Townshend. **G**



DANELECTRO '58 LONGHORN GUITAR

PRICE: £499
ORIGIN: Korea
TYPE: Twin-cutaway, semi-hollow electric guitar
BODY: Masonite with hardwood frame
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")
NUT/WIDTH: Aluminium/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 355mm (14") radius
FRETS: 21, medium
HARDWARE: Chrome six-saddle hardtail bridge and vintage-style tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 56mm
ELECTRICS: 2x lipstick single-coil pickups, 2x concentric volume and tone controls, 3-way pickup selector toggle switch
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.6/5.7
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: There are plenty of other Dano six-strings including the '63, the '67, the classic '59M and '59MJ, the 12-string '59 and f-holed 12-String (all £499)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Copperburst (as reviewed)

JHS
 01132 865381
 www.jhs.co.uk

8/10

PROS 'WTF looks' wrapped around a seriously great playing neck and an inspiring range of tones. The adventurous will love this thing!

CONS The way it looks will alienate some, but that's about it



DANELECTRO '58 LONGHORN BASS

PRICE: £499
ORIGIN: Korea
TYPE: Twin-cutaway, semi-hollow electric bass
BODY: Masonite with hardwood frame
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 756mm (29.75")
NUT/WIDTH: Aluminium/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 355mm (14") radius
FRETS: 24, medium
HARDWARE: Chrome hardtail bridge with rosewood saddle and vintage-style tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 50.8mm
ELECTRICS: 2x lipstick single-coil pickups, 2x concentric volume and tone controls
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.6/5.7
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: The other current Dano bass is the '56 Single Cut Bass (£499). Also check the '56 Baritone Guitar at the same price
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Black (as reviewed) and Copperburst

8/10


PROS Infectious playability, a tone for every occasion, and the keen pricing make this a real contender for image-conscious bassists

CONS The stacked control knobs have a habit of sticking together

THIS IS THE SOUND

THE WHO



 Facebook.com/fendergbi
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fender.com

PETE TOWNSHEND

The Who – February 6, 2013
Jobing.com Arena, Phoenix, Ariz.

Fender



Merchandise on 14,000 pallets and over 20,000 boxes!
Over £25 Million worth of stock and more than 70,000 products!

Our huge high-tech warehouse



Our huge Shop based in Romford!



View of the 24m high rack warehouse



Our automated small parts warehouse



Several packing stations transporting your goods straight into the haulers



Give us a call or visit us!

The Lineup

Don't miss it! Must-see guitar goings-on for the coming weeks...



Country To Country Festival

11-13 March 2016, London O2 Arena, Glasgow Clyde Auditorium & Dublin 3Arena

The sublime sounds of Tele twang and pedal steel have long been close to America's heart, but country music is now getting so big, its sounds have spread over the Atlantic to us. And the yearly Country To Country festival in the UK and Ireland has been growing in response. Milly Olykan, director of festivals and events at The O2, explains why this year is going to be the biggest yet for the festival that brings Nashville to three different venues over three days in March, and what players *Guitarist* readers should be looking out for.

Country music is becoming increasingly popular in the UK and Ireland, why do you think that might be?

"I think there are a few contributing factors, the main one being the internet – fans being able to find the artists they like. I also think the TV show *Nashville* has helped. And now Country To Country has helped, too, because more country artists are touring, so labels and UK media can get behind them, and as a result we're starting to see country artists get featured on iTunes Festival, on *X Factor* and the Royal Variety Show. I think even two years ago that wouldn't have happened."

What can people expect from the CMA Songwriters series taking place at Country To Country?

"It's about being inspired and moved by the stories behind great songs. The CMA bring a line-up of songwriters over from Nashville – who proceed to talk about how a particular song came together, or who they had in mind when they were writing a song, and then they start singing it and you realise that they wrote that huge Lady Antebellum or Carrie Underwood hit. It's all-acoustic, with a line-up of four or five songwriters on stage each taking turns sharing a story and a song. This year, we not only have some of the current most successful songwriters, but also Charles Esten who plays Deacon in the TV show *Nashville*."

And these shows will be recent Country Music Award winner Chris Stapleton's debut UK appearances...

"Yes, C2C has a very good reputation in Nashville, which is why we are able to book the current hottest country acts. But more than that, we're trying to bring a diverse line-up to the UK every year so that we can offer something for every kind of country

fan. Chris Stapleton is a brilliant artist who has written songs for most of the big Country stars – and Adele has covered one of his, too – so when he won the CMA Award for not only Best New Artist, but Best Album and Best Male Vocalist as well, there was a huge amount of support and celebration for him in Nashville, because so many artists have worked with him."

Nashville is home to many talented players. Are there any performing that you'd recommend guitarists check out?

"I think that's part of why country music is finding a wider audience in the UK, as the musicianship is really something to behold. For C2C in March, I can recommend Colin Linden who will be playing with Charles Esten – he has performed with Bob Dylan, T-Bone Burnett, Colin James, Leon Redbone and Lucinda Williams. And Sarah Zimmermann from Striking Matches – she was born with a guitar in her arms if you ask me – I can't get over watching her play... She's like an old black blues guitarist in a young, skinny white woman's body."

www.c2c-countrytocountry.com

The Lineup

What's Goin' On

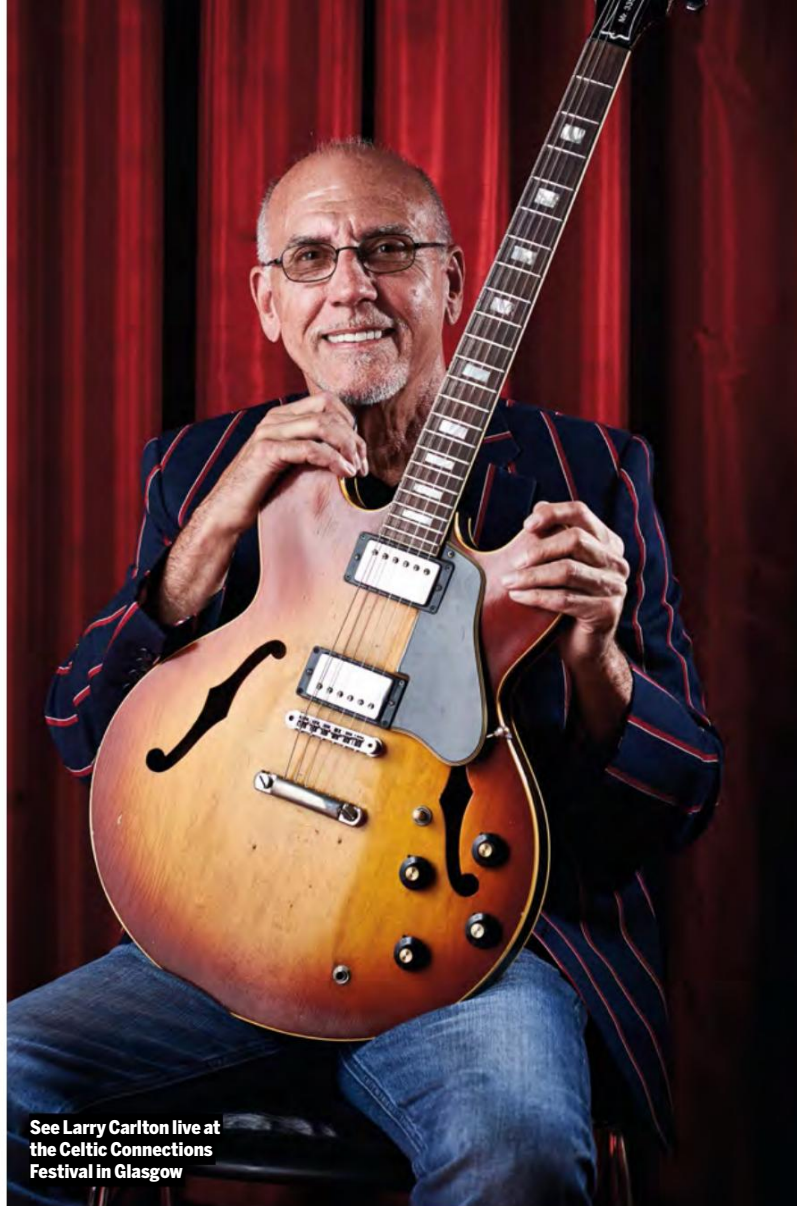
All the best guitar events happening over the next few weeks, in one place

Celtic Connections 14 January to 1 February 2016

Various Glasgow venues

There is nothing to rival the annual Glasgow month of events for the sheer breadth and number of world artists it showcases under the 'Celtic' banner: 2,100 acts playing over 300 events in 20 venues, to be precise. The previously reported tribute shows for Bert Jansch (31 and 1 February) have already caught our eye with Robert Plant, Martin Simpson and Bernard Butler all onboard to pay tribute to the late, great Glasgow native. But there's much more to celebrate through this month, too; Larry Carlton, Kris Kristofferson, Vieux Farka Touré, Jason Isbell and Lau will all play shows. Also, there's Sturgill Simpson (15 January), a Kentucky singer/songwriter drawing repeated and justified comparisons to country outlaw Waylon Jennings, appearing alongside Lera Lynn, whose dark country-noir songs were featured prominently in the second season of HBO's hit series *True Detective* last year.

www.celticconnections.com



See Larry Carlton live at the Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow

The Cadillac Three 28 Jan to 4 February

Various UK venues

Frontman Jaren Johnston and bassist Kelby Ray have both been steadily making their names as writers for other Nashville artists, but they hit the road again to bring their own blend of country and Southern rock charms to the UK for a nine-date tour.

www.thecadillacthree.com

Symphony X 12 to 19 February

Various UK venues

It's been a pretty long wait, but the New Jersey progressive metallers are finally returning to the UK on the back of last year's excellent *Underworld* album. Caparison player Michael Romeo's neoclassical flair and blistering fretwork continues to dazzle. We predict a front row of aspiring lead guitar maestros furiously taking notes.

www.symphonyx.com

Danny Bryant 10 to 28 February

Various UK venues

The hard-touring British bluesman heads out in support of his *Blood Money* album, due 29 January. The record finds Bryant returning to his roots as a player, and we can envision the new material really taking flight on the live stage.

www.dannybryant.com

Martin Carthy & John Kirkpatrick 12 to 28 February

Various UK venues

Don't miss this rare opportunity to see two of traditional English folk music's most respected musicians together on stage. They'll be joined by accordion, concertina virtuoso and vocalist Kirkpatrick (Steeleye Span, Richard Thompson) performing alongside the prolific Carthy across 10 UK dates.

www.johnkirkpatrick.co.uk

Shuggie Otis 18 to 27 February

Various UK and Ireland venues

The enigmatic multi-instrumentalist only made his UK debut a few years ago, but he's making up for lost time. His landmark trio of 70s albums has been long admired for their fusions of blues, soul and psychedelia, making this an eagerly awaited visit for the faithful and intrigued.

www.eventim.co.uk

City And Colour 18 to 27 February

Various UK and Ireland venues

Last year's impressive outing, *If I Should Go Before You*, saw Dallas Green moving from his trademark acoustic tones into more electric textures, with his live backing band joining him in the studio. The mix of brooding slow burners with soulful immediacy is sure to go down even better live.

www.cityandcolour.com

Learn To Play Day 12 to 13 March

Participating venues

The charity Music For All's weekend has one aim: to get more people playing musical instruments. Last year, over 129 venues took part in offering a free taster lesson on an instrument, so check the website to keep up to date on places near you to convert a friend to guitar.

www.musicforall.org.uk

Martin Harley & Daniel Kimbro 11 to 27 March

Various UK venues

This has all the makings of an intimate and mesmerising set. The British lap steel and slide artist teamed with bassist Kimbro for the recent *Live At Southern Ground* release, and the dynamic lays Harley's soulful expression with his voice and instruments bare.

www.martinharley.com

The Players

News and happenings from the world of your favourite guitarists

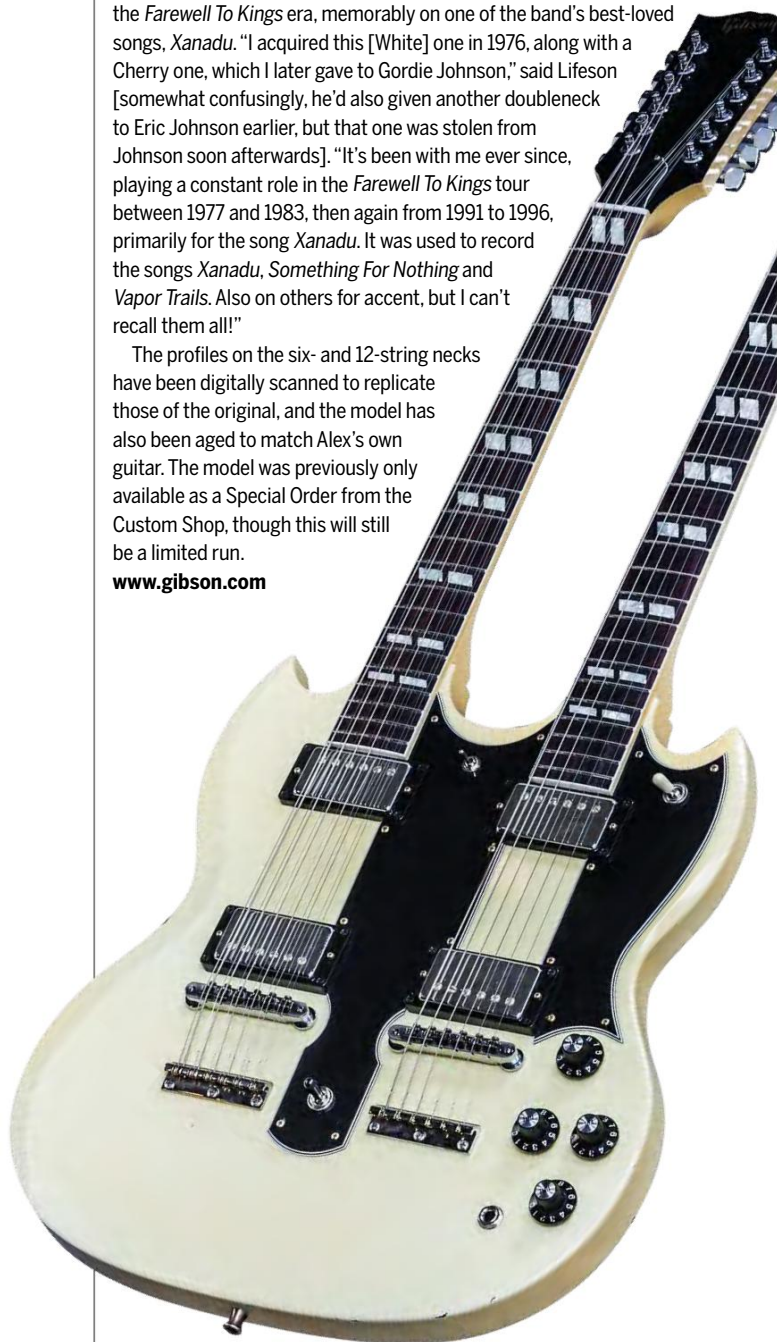
1275 Overture

Gibson Custom Shop releases the Alex Lifeson Double Neck

There may now be doubts over the future of Rush as a touring band, but Gibson has unveiled a welcome blast from the past with the Alex Lifeson Double Neck. This Custom Shop model is a precise recreation of the prog legend's Ivory 1976 EDS-1275 (\$7,299), used extensively in the *Farewell To Kings* era, memorably on one of the band's best-loved songs, *Xanadu*. "I acquired this [White] one in 1976, along with a Cherry one, which I later gave to Gordie Johnson," said Lifeson [somewhat confusingly, he'd also given another doubleneck to Eric Johnson earlier, but that one was stolen from Johnson soon afterwards]. "It's been with me ever since, playing a constant role in the *Farewell To Kings* tour between 1977 and 1983, then again from 1991 to 1996, primarily for the song *Xanadu*. It was used to record the songs *Xanadu*, *Something For Nothing* and *Vapor Trails*. Also on others for accent, but I can't recall them all!"

The profiles on the six- and 12-string necks have been digitally scanned to replicate those of the original, and the model has also been aged to match Alex's own guitar. The model was previously only available as a Special Order from the Custom Shop, though this will still be a limited run.

www.gibson.com



Guthrie Govan's impressive CV is going to be receiving another notable entry with the news he'll be the guitarist for Hans Zimmer's first world tour. He will accompany the film composer as part of his 77-piece orchestra on the first phase of dates beginning at London's Wembley Arena on 6 April.

It seems **Jimmy Page** is finally ready to move on from Zeppelin, with plans for a new band in 2016. "There will be all sorts of material from different eras," Page told *Classic Rock*. "Right across the board – that's the way I'm seeing it. But like I said, there will be surprises. It won't be entirely what people might be expecting." Of course, there's been talk from the guitarist with regards to a new project for the last couple of years, but now his commitment to Led Zeppelin's recently reissued back catalogue has been completed, is the levee finally about to break to bring in Page's next chapter?

Steve Vai is having a clear out and has announced the Vai-tal Used Gear sale to celebrate. He'll put one item per month up on eBay and has kicked proceedings off with a Melcor GME-20 EQ, a rare vintage unit from the 1960s.

In further Vai auction news, he's one of the guitarists who donated instruments in aid of **Tony MacAlpine**. Joe Satriani, Paul Gilbert, Steve Stevens, Steve Lukather, Joe Bonamassa, John Petrucci and Richie Kotzen are just some of the other players who gave personal guitars for the online auction last month to raise funds for the MacAlpine family as they face extremely



challenging times; Tony is battling colon cancer, while his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer last June. Some of those big names also appeared at a benefit concert at LA's Wilmet Theatre on 12 December that saw some of its all-star cast taking turns to solo over *Little Wing*.

Pete Townshend's smashed Rickenbacker, er, smashed its estimated value at last month's Bonham's Entertainment Memorabilia sale when it was sold together with an intact model. The pre-sale estimate for the pair was £10,000 to £15,000, but they ended up going for £52,500. The Who guitarist used them during the band's 25th Anniversary stadium tour in 1989.

Zakk Wylde has announced that his Wylde Audio company has signed a deal with Schecter to distribute its products worldwide. After last year's preview, the company will be officially unveiling its initial run of guitars and amps at this month's NAMM show. Three guitar models are included; the Odin, Warhammer and Viking.

Headroom

*New gear and guitar arcana you need to know about.
This month: Play more guitar in 2016*



1 Blackstar ID:Core BEAM
£229

Being able to play and be inspired at home with your guitar can be an ongoing challenge; amps take up space. Blackstar's BEAM is a do-it-all solution packing functionality for guitar, electro-acoustic and bass into a tabletop combo, which also doubles as a Bluetooth-streaming hi-fi to jam along with your music collection. The Super Wide Stereo function again proves itself as a key feature, taking this 20-watt combo's sound beyond its dimensions. There are six voices for the electric guitar mode alone, with 12 effects and even two acoustic-simulator modes further underlining the BEAM's self-sufficiency as a home playing and recording solution for guitarists who are tired of being unplugged in their lounges.
www.blackstaramps.com

2 IK Multimedia iRig Acoustic
£42.99

This MEMS mic fixes on the soundhole of your acoustic and provides a highly portable and fast way to capture your playing. But the innovators at IK Multimedia didn't stop there; because the iRig Acoustic is designed to be used with iOS devices,

there's an AmpliTube Acoustic app to emulate a condenser mic positioned on your guitar. There are models of two solid-state and one acoustic amp, stompbox effects, compressor, graphic and parametric EQ, even a 12-string emulator and body modeller. A recorder and tuner, plus the option to buy in-app extras, make this a great creative and practice package.
www.ikmultimedia.com

3 DigiTech Trio Band Creator
£149


Having other musicians around to jam with is no longer an issue with the Trio pedal. DigiTech's device is essentially a drummer and a bassist in a stompbox, which enables you to create your own backing tracks with seven genre presets, which have 12 different song styles for each. There are options for 3/4 and 4/4 time signatures (sorry prog rockers and jazz fusioners) and when you switch the Trio on and start playing your chord progression, it begins to track your guitar. Press it again and the bass and drums start to play a created loop to match your progression. It's an innovative tool for practice and developing song ideas that needs to be tried to be believed!
www.digitech.com

4 Laney Ironheart IRT-Pulse
£199

The diminutive size might make it look like an effects pedal, but this versatile tube preamp can be far more. Bask in the red light of its glowing ECC83 valves as you use it on your desktop for your recording tone with zero latency via USB, or use its reamping feature to revive a dry track. Away from the home, the IRT-Pulse is equally happy; place it in your solid-state amp's effects loop to bring valve warmth to proceedings, or add it to your pedalboard with a footswitch.
www.laney.co.uk

5 Positive Grid BIAS Pedal
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THE TWANG!

Talking Loud

This month, Steely Dan guitarist and session legend Elliott Randall discusses the amps that push his buttons...

Amps – I’ve had a few – and here’s my view, of which I’m certain... but most of all, I did it My Way.

So there’s this chain, see? In terms of ‘hardware’, it starts at the guitar, most likely through some pedals, and ends at the amplifier (cables and power supplies are, of course, part of this chain, too). One old adage springs to mind: ‘a chain is only as strong as its weakest link’ – so to obtain the optimum sound, each link had best be doing the job.

So, let’s talk about amplifiers. Over the years, I encountered many that make me smile. I’ve also come across some real dogs, but that’s mostly a personal thing. There are some that I really would not want to use – but these amps are nonetheless esteemed and endeared by many. It’s just about individual taste. (You’ve probably heard me say that before.)

A little about my own history with amps: My first one was very unmemorable; in fact, I don’t remember which (off-brand) it was, but for a 12-year-old, it was fine. One volume and one tone control, an eight-inch speaker, not a lot of power – but so what? It was heaven... for a while.

Next up was a 1960 Fender Concert amp. Four 10-inch Oxford speakers, all of 35 watts, and tone to die for – it was magnificent! I stayed with the 4x10 design for decades. Loved it then, and now. By 1969, I’d moved to the Fender Super Reverb – pretty much the same design, but with the addition of a ‘reverb tank’. Over the years, I had it souped up, and in its current state it sports four JBL speakers, a full 100 watts RMS (with the addition of a second power transformer and extra 6L6 tubes). A gem!

Then, in the 80s, I began a relationship with Marshall amps. But it wasn’t until the

early 90s that they produced one that really caught my ears. It was the first iteration of the ValveState 80. Honestly, the solid-state factor was completely overcome with brilliant design – you’d swear you were listening to an all-valve amp. It’s comparatively lightweight, and delivers everything from warm/clean to overdrive to downright filthy. In fact, it can sound like a herd of 100-watt stacks. Needless to say, I still use these today, and intend to keep using them – forever!

But wait – there are more. Wienbrock Amps, based in West Yorkshire, designed one for me with two 10-inch speakers. It employs some very ‘vintage Fender’ circuitry, but has the ability to morph from an old Fender Bassman to a Vox AC30 in terms of tonal character – both characteristics are most desirable. It sits in my studio, and warms up everything that goes through it.

Then a few years ago I came upon the Hughes & Kettner TubeMeister 18. This head is light (approximately two kilos), and it sounds like a million bucks. Pretty darned perfect for schlepping to studios and producing consistently winning sounds. Again, this one will do every tone from immaculate to roaring grunge.

Finally, the little fellow – my Yamaha THR-10. It looks a little like a boom-box, and holy cow, does it deliver. Its Virtual Circuitry Modeling (VCM) technology – reverbs, effects and hi-fi quality stereo audio playback – make this one a real winner. Heck, I’ve started using it as a recording amp, too, and trust me when I tell you – it won’t disappoint.

But hey, those are my personal choices. Yours may be completely different, and if they give you the sounds that inspire your playing, then ‘nuff said. There are many great amplification products out there. If I had twice the space, I’d continue waxing poetic... **G**

“A chain is only as strong as its weakest link – so to obtain the optimum sound, each link had best be doing the job”

ELLIOTT RANDALL





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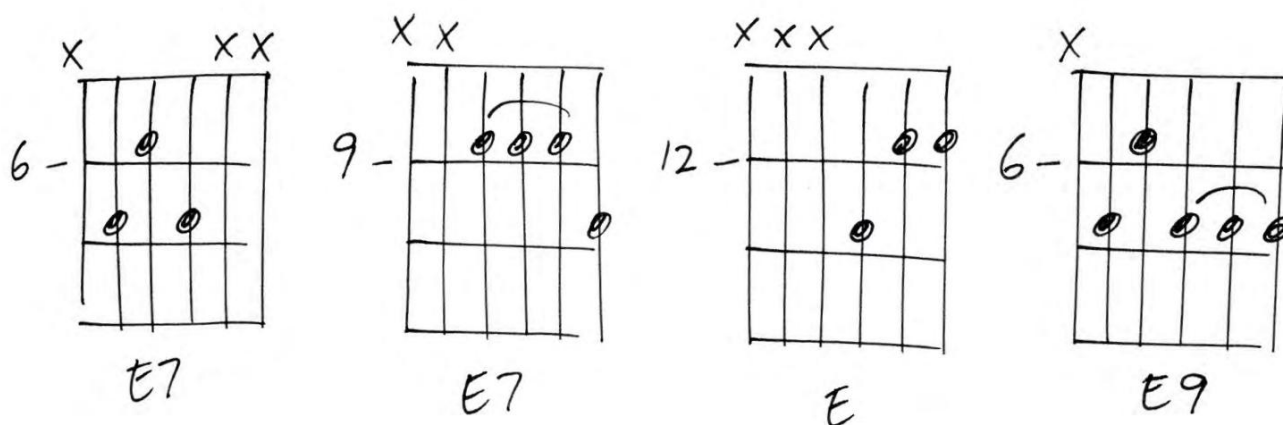
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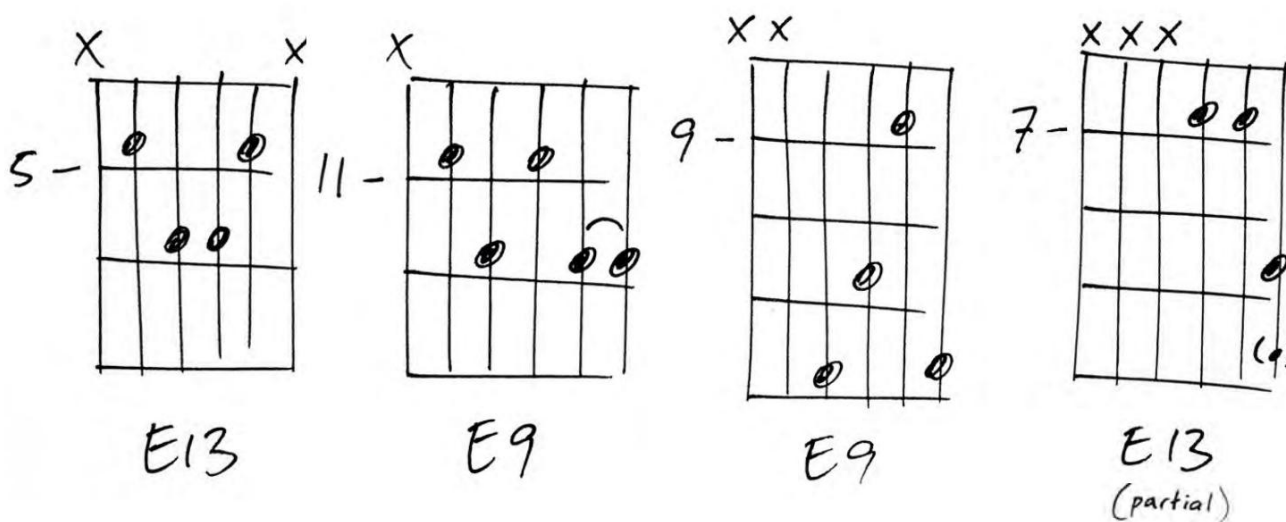
Substitute

This Issue: Funky Extensions

We're going off at a tangent this month, because there's no actual chord progression. Paradoxically, one of the greatest challenges faced by the novice substitutionist is the minimal groove-driven vamp. There might only be a single chord, or perhaps even just the suggestion of a chord, floating over a bass riff. One thing's certain: you can't just pound away on one chord. So, what do we do?



LET'S look at what most people do. This kind of musical scenario is quite common in the stylistic area between funk, soul and old-style R&B, so we'll take an imaginary James Brown groove, suggesting E major or E7 chords. We don't want to clump around with full barre chords, so the options are usually partial chords, like the first three shapes here. Or you could slide into that classic funky E9 shape. But you'll feel empty and unfulfilled, won't you? You're a creative artist, damn it! You might as well be playing *Mustang Sally* or *Wonderwall*. What we need is... new shapes!



STARTING low, this chord has two important features. The sweeter sounding 13th (C#) takes us away from the straight 7th sound. And then the root is the highest note, giving the whole chord a less obviously 'guitar' sound. Strictly speaking, it's E7add6, but it's often called E13.

THE content of this chord isn't all that different from the familiar E9 shape above, but again, we've moved the root note to the top. Simply inverting a familiar shape (that being the technical term for what we've done) can give a chord a new lease of life.

THIS is also an E9, but it has a totally different sound, thanks to the internal arrangement of notes.

LACKING the root or crucial 3rd (E and G#), this is only a suggestion of E13, but the intention is there. The two outer notes form a dissonant major 7th interval, which works great for horn-style stabs. You can easily add the higher D note to create little riffs.

ALTER YOUR AXIS



If he was a



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Benji Kirkpatrick

He's the guitarist and multi-instrumentalist with folk superstars Bellowhead, but how will he fare when we serve up the 10 questions we ask everyone?

1 What was your first guitar and when did you get it?

"It was a fairly cheap classical guitar, a gift from my parents to me and my older brother. We shared it, although I suspect I hogged it. It was well used; I tried putting steel strings on at one point to predictably bad effect. Once it had served its purpose, my brother and I – mostly my brother – covered it with football stickers and it still exists today with that decoration intact."

2 If the building was burning down, what one guitar from your collection would you save?

"The guitar I'd save is my Lowden 025. It's a wonderful thing made in the mid-1990s and was in pretty good nick when I bought it, but I've battered it a bit and it's done a lot of gig mileage, so it looks rather forlorn now. Sounds bloody amazing, though. I play bouzouki as well and, while it isn't a guitar, I'd have to save my Andy Tobin acoustic bouzouki and probably the solidbody he made for me as well as it's one awesome thing. I'm used to carrying a lot of instruments around, so I reckon I could pluck three cases out of a burning building pretty quick!"

3 What's the oldest guitar that you own?

"Most of my instruments are fairly modern luthier-made affairs, so I don't own anything really ancient. My Strat is a 1983 vintage, so it would be that. The oldest instrument I own is my great-grandfather's Windsor five-string banjo, 1920s, I think. It's not really playable any more, but I did use it for a short time about 20 years ago."

4 When was the last time you practised, and what did you play?

"I'm on tour at this point in time, so I last practised before my last gig. I always warm up a bit, usually just finger exercises. If I'm at home, I can be very bad at practising, although I'm trying to get myself out of the habit. If I get an idea, then I'll be inspired to pick an instrument up and play about with it, but if there's no spark, I find it hard to motivate myself to practise. At the moment, I'm playing these acoustic interpretations of Hendrix songs – although not on guitar – so



"I'm used to carrying a lot of instruments around, so I reckon I could pluck three cases out of a burning building pretty quick!"

I enjoy going through those. I was hopeless at practice when I was younger; I just used to play what I wanted to play rather than sitting down and doing proper study. I'm much better now and I try to get my fingers working properly, but wish I'd been better disciplined when I was starting out."

5 When was the last time you changed your own strings?

"I always change my own strings. If I'm out with Bellowhead then sometimes the backline tech changes the odd set, but I'm a bit particular. Most instrument owners are."

6 If you could change one thing about a recording you've been on, what would it be and why?

"I would replace the programmed drums on the title track of my 2008 album, *Boomerang*, with real ones. I always felt that

the track deserved a seriously good drum part, but we were against the clock. I'd replace a whole raft of other things as well, but it's not worth going into them all."

7 What are you doing five minutes before you go on stage and five minutes after?

"Usually warming up the voice or scoffing Vocalzone [soothing throat lozenges highly prized by vocalists and public speakers]. Or dealing with some technical hiccup. Afterwards, I'll either be out at the merch stand or tucking into some kind of booze."

8 What's the worst thing that has happened to you on stage?

"Umm... I've done all sorts of embarrassing things on stage. I don't seem to have much luck when it comes to technical stuff. I remember one time with Bellowhead when the mandolin I was using decided to completely pack up mid-song and make horribly deafening noises that caused the sound engineer to turn everything off entirely, bringing the gig to a bit of an abrupt standstill."

9 What song would you play on acoustic around a campfire?

"*Bob The Plumber*. A mash-up of ripped-off Pink Floyd and Johnny Marks into one legendary, if inconsequential, story of a short and not particularly popular watery bloke who fixes pipes."

10 What's the closest you've come to quitting music?

"I don't think I've ever come that close. When the gigs look like they're drying up, I start worrying and thinking about what else I could do to earn a crust, but then I realise that I can't really do anything else. I've got to this point without really picking up any other useful skill that I could fall back on if I needed to, so I end up just having to stick with it. Which is fine, of course. I used to do a lot of building to bridge the gaps between gigs, but I was only ever a labourer and didn't get round to learning one of the trades." [DM]

Benji Kirkpatrick's album *Hendrix Songs* is out now on EDJ Records

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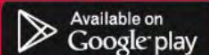
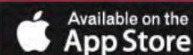
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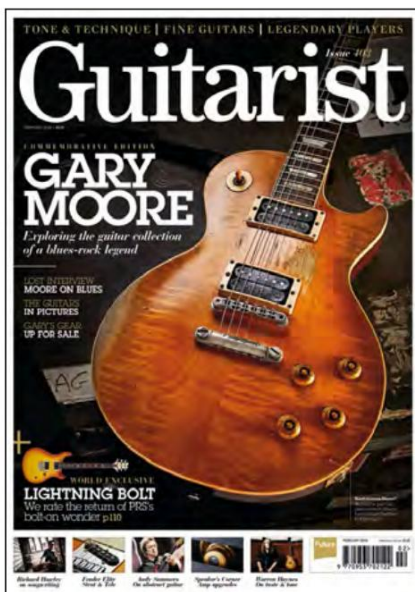
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Your letters to the *Guitarist* editor. Drop us a line at guitarist@futurenet.com

Star Letter



NEVER TOO LATE

The dream of playing guitar has for most of my life been just that: a dream. I saved up and bought a cheap electric as a teenager – then to my eternal regret didn't stick with it, as I swiftly moved from one fad to another. Then before I knew it I had a wife, kids and responsibilities. Fast-forward to my late-30s and I was divorced, remarried and settled. I had more time on my hands, more money and at last the opportunity to learn, and I did for about a year, before a spell of ill health got in the way. A couple of years passed and I started again, but then I was head-hunted into a better, higher pressure job, and I kissed goodbye to all my 'practice' time.

I consoled myself with a new obsession: watches. I built up quite a collection, but my constant longing for another swanky

wristwatch wasn't what you would call creative or productive, and the stress of the 'better' job continued. Recently, with the help of my wonderful wife, I had an epiphany. Ordering me to do something about my stress levels, she suggested I should pick up the guitar again, but actively build some practice time into each and every day without exception. So I sold a watch and bought a beautiful Gibson Les Paul Less+. I know opinion on these 2015 models is divided, but the slimmer body and wider neck suit me down to the ground.

I'm making more and faster progress than I would've thought possible. Even with my complete inability to read music, I'm playing riffs and figuring out solos and songs I never dreamed I would master. Another timepiece has gone on eBay to finance an amp and other bits. The pedalboard is a joyful work in progress (helped in no small part by your wonderful subscriber gift) and I'm having a whale of a time. I'm much less stressed, too.

So I know I'm somewhat late to the party, and perhaps the majority of your readers are those who didn't give up as a teen and whose playing would put mine to shame. But, in spite of that, I feel I'm finally getting there. I'm sure there are others out there like me, and my message to them is... never stop dreaming.

Matt Baker, SW London, via email

In all seriousness, one of the reasons why guitars are such wonderful things is that they aren't just objects of desire – play them and they become vehicles to all kinds of good places in terms of mental and even spiritual wellbeing. And while watches are undoubtedly useful for telling the time, guitars are much better because get into a good playing session and time often seems to disappear completely.



Reader Ron Cunningham picks off our Reader's Tips with some smart chords

STRIKING A CHORD

Like all guitar players, I enjoy learning a new trick or two. There must be many guitarists out there who have picked up tips or 'discovered' techniques or different approaches that make playing easier or just more fun. I suggest you consider a new item for your Feedback pages, entitled 'reader's tips'. These could involve any aspect of playing the guitar, such as playability, technique, chord voicings, etc. In that spirit, I'd like to get the ball rolling with the following suggestions for some alternative chord voicings that I use a lot, as follows:

- A)** For open G, play an open G5 as this has a nice ringing sound. Play as: (E3, Ax, D0, G0, B3, E3) (Ax is the A string damped with the second finger, which also plays the E3, G note.)
- B)** An alternative Am chord that sounds fab is as follows: Ex, A0, D2, G5, B5, E5
- C)** An alternative E chord: E0, A11, D9

Ron Cunningham, aka 'Dr Ron', via email

Thanks, Ron – consider the Reader's Tips idea officially launched. We enjoyed trying your chords in the office and I reckon other readers will at home, too. If any other readers have guitar tips – either musical or for guitar maintenance, recording or performance advice – let us know and we'll print them in these pages for the edification of all...



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Reader David Houghton's dream guitar: the American Longboard Stratocaster

WORTH THE WAIT

Thought I'd share the wee saga of my 52-year journey to owning a Stratocaster. It commenced around 1963. I was 13, enjoying my first record player, a two-tone Dansette Bermuda. The first album played, The Beatles' *Please Please Me*, a mono recording. I wanted a guitar, an electric one, that had to look like a Strat. Dave Berry And The Cruisers had just gigged – my first attendance – at the local town hall. Afterwards, I started 'loitering with intent' at Geoff Gough's, a music shop, in Leamington Spa.

It was a small business, but big enough; they were purveyors of 'Futurama' electric guitars, which were brought into the UK by Selmer amps as an alternative to its Hofner range. So I started pestering my parents – who bought my dream, together with probably the smallest of small Selmer amps on 'hire purchase', where for a year I would dutifully go to the shop, make a payment and get my payment card filled in and initialled. Yes, the guitar was 'Hot Rod Red', quite a lot of buzz from the amp – I didn't care – which wasn't much bigger than and looking similar to the current retro radios. I had an electric guitar and was very happy. Time moved on... my younger brother learned to play and somewhere along the line, the guitar and amp disappeared, brother having no recollection where he last saw it. It might still turn up!

Since then, I've dreamt of having my own American Fender Strat. Consequently, the

fairly recent Fender '10 for 15' event had intrigued me, releasing one limited-edition guitar [500 of each worldwide] a month from March, until December. October's offering was the American Longboard Stratocaster HSS, which promised to evoke 'Fender's mid-20th-century Southern California roots'. At last – this was it, but could I actually find one? Apparently 'like hens teeth' to get hold of, the Longboard had been the most successful release to date, oversubscribed, with lots of pre-orders.

Nonetheless, I started making enquiries. Fender UK couldn't help; all their allocation was out there in the stores. Surfing the net, continually drawing blanks, close to exhausting potential sources I stuck lucky: Merchant City Music in Glasgow. They hadn't got one – but leave it with them. Now that's service, no real gain for them, other than my appreciation and admiration for going the extra mile: thank you, Paul. 10 minutes later, Paul called, telling me Greensleeves Music, in North Yorkshire, might be worth contacting; they were listing one in stock. Just 60 miles away from where I live in Newcastle!

A quick call to Toby and yes, they had one! How lucky was that – and how lucky was I? Greensleeves was an Aladdin's cave, a cornucopia of things musical and amongst it all, 'my' Strat! And great staff to boot. A drive to Northallerton and a conclusion to my decades-long search. Thanks to the helpful and enthusiastic Toby and Richard. Like I said,

worth the wait, as was my current copy of *Guitarist* and your recent bookazine *Legends Of Tone – Fender!*

David Houghton, via email

Thanks, David – great to hear your Strat quest had a happy conclusion. We have to say, you didn't set yourself the easiest of tasks for your first US Strat by picking a limited-edition model of that ilk – but it's testament to the store staff in both Merchant City and Greensleeves that they helped you get your hands on your dream. Let's hear it for the guys and gals behind the counter in the guitar shops everywhere. Your dream began in a local store and reached fulfilment in one, too, with a little help from the pros.

FUSION QUEST

My wife and I are travelling from Australia to the UK next May to July 2016. One of the exciting things we have planned is to see Yes at the Royal Albert Hall in May. We will be in London for four days prior to this. I'm a pro guitarist, and really enjoy fusion guitar. Can anyone tell me where the good fusion/prog venues are in London? Who are the guitarists worth checking out? Who is the latest Holdsworth/Gambale/Henderson? I'm keen to make contacts and meet some good musos. Many thanks for a great magazine.

Clyde Schipke, via email

Send your letters to: guitarist@futurenet.com



London is blessed with plenty of venues to catch fine jazz and fusion players such as Jim Mullen

Hi Clyde, well, there's always a chance of catching players such as Guthrie Govan, Alex Hutchings, Ant Law, John Wheatcroft and so on doing dates in London, so your first port of call is the websites of any players you like the sound of. But your best bet may be to check out the schedules for likely venues such as Club 606, The Vortex, Ronnie Scott's and the Jazz Cafe – that way you stand a chance of catching US and world fusion guitarists as they're passing through during your stay. We remember seeing Jim Mullen at Club 606 a few years ago and loving every minute – and you can digest your jazz along with dinner in a friendly club setting. What could be more convivial? We wish you bon voyage on your fusion odyssey!

LIVE LIVES!

I'm sure I'm like a lot of your readers. I dabbled a bit with guitars when I was a kid but never got round to putting in the hours and effort to get any further than a few 'campfire chords'. Over the years, I tried a few times to improve but work and family always got in the way. Despite the lack of progress, though, I never got over the illusion that one day I would be up on that stage playing live in a band.

About five years ago, as work pressures lessened, I had another go. With a great

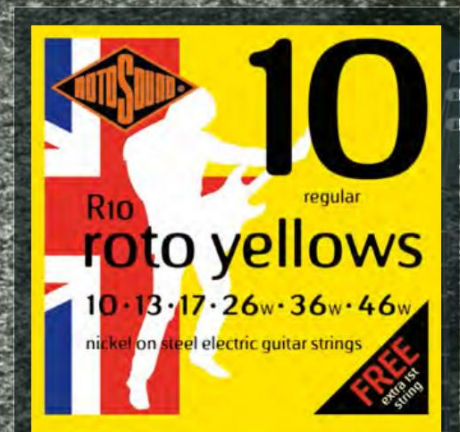
tutor, Angelo Palladino, (and some of the features in *Guitarist!*) my playing began to improve. Through Angelo I got to know a few other players in the same position and we got together a band. After a fair old bit of rehearsal, I finally did it – I played my first live gig a month ago! A wee bit daunting, as it was open air in front of a crowd of several hundred, but what a buzz. The best fun you could have with your clothes on! All in our 50s and 60s, we're never going to blaze a new rock trail but, by God, we enjoy blasting out the old numbers from the 60s, 70s and 80s. The message – never give up, there's no age limit and you're never too old.

Carl Chambers, via email

Nice one, Carl. We've always believed that playing live is the soul of an appreciation of guitar. Not only is it exciting, there's also the camaraderie of practice sessions with bandmates and, yes, it's nice to take a bow in front of an appreciative audience. Unlike standup comedy, where if you ain't funny no-one will laugh, people are surprisingly appreciative of live music at all levels. We've had a few letters such as yours recently, so we're thinking of launching a campaign to help readers get out and gig for the first time or return to gigging after a break. What say you all? Are you with us? If so, we'd love to hear your gigging debut or rediscovering live guitar stories...

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Music

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Bonnie Raitt

Dig In Deep (Redwing Records)

8/10



A majestic mix of gritty, funky blues

Dig In Deep is Bonnie Raitt's 20th album and follows in the wake of the phenomenally successful *Slipstream* from 2012. That particular album won Ms Raitt her 10th Grammy Award – for Best Americana Album – and preceded a triumphant two-year-long world tour, the momentum from which propelled her back into the studio. The second album on her own Redwing label, *Dig In Deep* is, again, self-produced with Bonnie having writing credits on five of the songs – the most since 1998's *Fundamental*.

"Coming off of the *Slipstream* tour, it felt like finishing a winning season," says Raitt. "At that point, I just wanted to build on the band's and my strengths and find something new to dig into – and that's what the next year was all about." As well as the originals on the album, Bonnie covers material from some of her favourite songwriters, including INXS's hit *Need You*

Tonight and Los Lobos' *Shakin' Shakin' Shakes*. But the ballad highlight from this new album is actually fruit from a 2010 session she did with producer Joe Henry; if *You've Changed My Mind* doesn't hit an emotional bulls-eye with you, then it's likely that nothing will!

As for the rest of the album, it's a masterclass in country-infused blues, chock-full of sublime vocals and excellent slide playing. After so long on the road together, the band, comprising George Marinelli on guitar, James Hutchinson on bass, Ricky Fataar on drums and Mike Finnigan on keyboards, are a tight-knit unit who know how to create a groove – there's obviously something of the 'hive mind' going on here – throughout the disc's 12 tracks. With an album as strong as this, we wouldn't be surprised if this year's Grammys bear fruit yet again for the first lady of country blues. **[DM]**

Standout track: *You've Changed My Mind*
For fans of: Alison Krauss, JJ Cale

Bert Jansch

Avocet

Earth Recordings

8/10



The master's touch...

It's refreshing to think that the music of one of the icons of acoustic guitar is being not only preserved but actively re-released. *Avocet* was released over 25 years ago and follows hot on the heels of the re-emergence of Bert's album, *Moonshine*. Not only has *Avocet* been remastered from the original tapes, it's also available as an art edition, complete with lithograph prints. Each of the album's six titles is inspired by a bird's name – *Kingfisher*, *Osprey*, *Bittern* and so on – and begins with an 18-minute track inspired by the traditional song, *Cuckoo*. As a document that illustrates the brilliance of one of the founder members of the UK acoustic scene, *Avocet* is absolutely priceless. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Bittern*

For fans of: Gordon Giltrap, Davey Graham

Damien O'Kane

Areas Of High Traffic

Pure Records

8/10



Traditional folk given a contemporary makeover

Damien O'Kane might be a new name to many, but not only is he Kate Rusby's other half and the guitarist/banjo player in her band, he's also a successful solo artist in his own right. *Areas Of High Traffic* follows on from 2010's *Summer Hill* and represents a significant change of gear for O'Kane. Backed by a selection of guitars, keyboards and percussion, this is folk music as you've possibly never heard it before. Superb arrangements fuse together with traditional songs like *The Blacksmith* and *I Am A Youth* to produce some stunning widescreen sonic imagery. At times unconventional, there's an underlying continuity of purpose throughout the album that's simply enchanting. **[DM]**

Standout track: *The Green Fields Of America*

For fans of: Kate Rusby, Eliza Carthy

All Them Witches

Dying Surfer Meets His Maker

New West Records

8/10



Riding the big wave

Occasionally, an album comes along with such an intriguing title, you just have to take a listen – and when it's combined with an equally enigmatic band name, the plot

somewhat thickens. All Them Witches are described as being a 'Nashville psych crew', which doesn't necessarily give us any more clues as to the music they might produce, but the opening bars of *Dying Surfer...* – acoustic guitar, scant vocals, stark drums, slow-burn vocals – draws you in until you're hooked. Apparently, the band retreated to a remote cabin in the mountains of Tennessee to record their vision, inspired by the unlikely disparate influences like Brian Eno and Sun Ra. The music has that distinctive Southern US rock edge to it, but it's filtered through the band's unique sensibility. It's rough in all the right places and majestically raw and bluesy when it needs to be. This is the band's third album; we think they're set for greater things. **[DM]**

Standout track: *This Is Where It Falls Apart*

For fans of: Chris Whitley, Ry Cooder

Old Dominion
Meat And Candy
Sony Music

7/10



Country goes pop

Debut albums are always a chancy prospect in the current music climate.

Here, the band's name or, for that matter, the album's cover, don't offer much of a clue as to the style of music contained within, but a glance at the credits reveals that Grammy-winning songwriter and producer Shane McAnally had the chair behind the mixing desk and a reminder that the band had a number-one hit on the US Country Chart, gave us the clue we were looking for. This is pure, hook-laden country pop from a band comprising five very tidy songwriters. Lead guitarist Brad Tursi is on hand to shovel six-string grit into the works – and a fine job he does, too! **[DM]**

Standout track: *Wrong Turns*

For fans of: The Flying Burrito Brothers, Eagles

M Ward
More Rain
Bella Union

8/10



Monsoon music?

If the name M Ward is unfamiliar, then be assured that he has played a significant role in the music industry over the past few years, having released a batch of solo albums – this is his eighth – plus five LPs with Zoëy Deschanel under the moniker *She & Him*. He's active on the production front, too, having sat behind the controls for artists like Mavis Staples, Jenny Lewis and Carlos Foster. *More Rain* finds the Portland, Oregon-based Ward in a reflective mood, having made an album with something of a message: "There must be a place in our brains that allows us to take a bird's-eye view of humanity, and I think music is good at helping people – myself included – go to that place," he tells us. The album begins with the sounds of a rainstorm and the musical ideas flow like a torrent from thereon in. It's a fascinating album, well crafted and expertly executed. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Time Won't Wait*

For fans of: Peter Dinklage, k.d. lang

Monster Truck
Sittin' Heavy
Mascot

7/10



Don't f*ck with the truck

This sophomore outing for Canadian hard rockers Monster Truck completely lives up to the excellent bandname: it's juggernaut-heavy, relentless and unstoppable. And from start to finish, it follows a comfortably familiar route through the annals of rock's history, marrying taut, swaggering grooves and muscular soloing with keys, for a retro-leaning sound tinged with Southern-rock influences. Thankfully, there's just enough updating of the formula to power the overall sound beyond the sum of its parts – mainly thanks to guitarist Jeremy Widerman, who yields his SG with boundless energy and finesse, cranking out an endless and varied supply of lithe riffs. **[BW]**

Standout track: *Things Get Better*

For fans of: Guns N' Roses, Grand Funk Railroad

The Warden
The Warden
Idol Records

6/10



Bar-band country from East Texas

This solo debut from The Warden – Texas resident Ward Richmond – is a series of autobiographical hard-luck stories about being a penniless musician touring in a van and getting into scrapes along the way. Backed by a tight, road-worn band (with rhythmic, twangy guitar solos, plus excellent pedal-steel playing from Burton Lee throughout), Richmond's narratives are like growling hungover revelations, shot through with moments of clarity on the one hand ("You're like my punishment for breaking a mirror") and dragged down by repetitive 'drunk 'n' broke' clichés on the other. If stomping, good-time "East Dallas honky tonk" sounds like your thing, though, check it out. **[BW]**

Standout track: *Dark Clouds*

For fans of: Gram Parsons, Hank Williams III

The Temperance Movement
White Bear
Earache

8/10



Brits drawn on the blues and beyond

This British band's heavy touring schedule in Europe and the States since their debut's release has turned their intensity up, but expanded their horizons too here. Phil Campbell still channels the soul power of prime Paul Rodgers and Joe Cocker in *Get Yourself Free* and the smoking blues-rock power of *Battle Lines*, but it's a shame that guitarist Luke Potashnick departed unexpectedly following the recording, as his dynamic with Paul Sayer here has developed significantly from a raw approach into a layered, rich blend that stretches beyond blues into even into 90s indie on occasion without losing their inherent intensity. A potent mix. **[RL]**

Standout track: *Battle Lines*

For fans of: Black Crowes, Free



CLASS ACT
Albums worth cranking all the way up



Sounds of anarchy: Jake Smith is an Americana troubadour to watch

The White Buffalo
Love & The Death
Of Damnation
Earache

8/10



The original son of anarchy?

Jake Smith is now four albums of rich Americana into a career with rare UK

visits but worldwide exposure after several of his songs were featured in the hit TV series *Sons Of Anarchy*. He utilises his dreadnought and rich, cracked baritone to drive home bar-room rousers like *Dark Days*, *Rocky* and *Modern Times* in signature style here on his most upbeat record to date, and while that immediacy is powerful, it's the darkness where Smith actually shines; *Last Call To Heaven* is captivating. Though 2012's *Once Upon A Time In The West* remains his masterwork, this is another strong entry in an impressive discography. **[DH]**

Standout track: *Where Is Your Savior*

For fans of: Johnny Cash, Eddie Vedder

Dylan LeBlanc
Cautionary Tale
Single Lock Records

8/10



A young man far beyond his years

This young US singer songwriter's return finds his early promise blooming into something special. Recording in his base of Muscle Shoals with former Civil Wars man John Paul White and Alabama Shakes' Ben Tanner on production and guest duties, LeBlanc's songs have found ideal collaborators, giving them the relaxed, sensitive orchestration and analogue warmth of 70s country classics. Indeed, comparisons to *Harvest* and *After The Goldrush*-era Neil Young still stand for him, especially on the title track, *Balance Or Fall* and *Easy Way Out*'s intimate rhythm work. *I'm Moving On* even echoes Roy Orbison's timeless melodic touch. LeBlanc's lyrical and compositional maturity is consistently striking throughout the record; from the smoky minimalist tremolo of *Beyond The Veil* to the fingerpicked *Lighting And Thunder*'s melancholic beauty. **[RL]**

Standout track: *Look How Far We've Come*

For fans of: Neil Young, Nick Drake

© MARC LEMOINE



Paul Bielatowicz

The guitarist for Carl Palmer and Neal Morse tells tales of storm-ridden festivals and leaps into the unknown...

Words

David Mead



What was your first ever gig?

"My first ever gig was a local nightclub when I was 16 and it was with my first band called Gallifrey, after Doctor Who's home planet. There were probably about 20 people there. We put the gig on ourselves, but it was pretty uneventful, to be honest. The band was all into Nirvana stuff and I was the shred guitarist. I tried to add some Steve Vai influence to their Nirvana powerchords."

Describe your current stage rig...

"If we do something in Europe, I'll usually end up using borrowed amplifiers – my preference these days is anything from the Peavey Classic series. So, basically, my guitar sounds just come from the amplifier and I don't use a distortion pedal; I don't really like the way that it colours the sound of the amplifier. If I need to push it, I'll use a Dyna Comp for a lead sound."

"With Carl's band, I have to try and emulate keyboard sounds and so a big part of that is the Whammy pedal for the *portamento* and all the different harmonies. I use an Electro-Harmonix POG2, too, which is great for all the keyboard sounds and I have an Eventide H9 in my effects loop that handles all of my reverb and delay settings. I've just got an endorsement with Eggle – they've just built

me a 24-fret LA and so I've been using that on some tunes as well."

What's the nearest you've come to a Spinal Tap moment on tour?

"I broke my heel during a drum solo – that was quite Spinal Tap. I was having sound issues and I had to keep going and speaking to the sound guy. During the drum solo, everyone was at the front of the stage and so I thought, rather than squeezing past this big group that's blocking my access to the backstage, I'll just jump over the barrier. Much to my surprise, the drop on the other side of the barrier was a lot further than I thought and I ended up fracturing my heel and tearing the ligament underneath my foot. I had to get up and play *Hoedown* after that with a fractured heel – and it involves having to do octave sweeps on the Whammy pedal..."

What's on your rider?

"The person who ends up making the rider is the manager, so we usually get everything he wants. He loves peanuts and orange juice and so we turn up and there's a gallon of orange juice and a similar amount of peanuts in the dressing room. The game is to hide the peanuts and orange juice as soon as we get in the dressing room so he can't find them!"

What's the best venue you've played in from a musician's point of view?

"There's a venue in the Netherlands called The Boerderij, it's one of the main venues in The Netherlands. I played there quite a few times with Carl and with Neal, and the other month, I played there on my own with the GB3 Project, which is myself, Dave Bainbridge from Iona and Dave Brons. It felt pretty special to go there and play there with my own project and not as a hired gun."

What is the worst journey you've had either to or from a gig?

"We used to do a lot of fly in/fly out dates. Once, we had this horrific journey of early flights and delays and then, because of the connecting flight, they lost our luggage – pedalboards and everything. We had to drive out to the middle of nowhere where this gig was and basically tried to beg, steal or borrow any gear we could on the way. We turned up at this outdoor festival and there had been a big storm during the night and the stage had just been obliterated, so the gig was cancelled."

Which airline, from a musician's view, do you find easiest to travel on?

"I think the best, in my experience, has been BA, from the point of view that they've



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"I had to get up and play 'Hoedown' with a fractured heel – and it involves having to do octave sweeps on the Whammy pedal"

actually seen me with a soft case and asked me to board first, because I've got a guitar and they want to make sure it gets on okay and because I'll need extra time putting it in the overheads."


What's the best tip for getting the audience on your side?

"I try to have lots of communication with the audience when I'm playing: lots of eye contact, lots of facial expressions. When I taught, I quickly learned the best way to teach a class full of people wasn't to have the attitude 'I'm the teacher, you're the student'; it was more, 'Here we all are, let's work together to do it.' I think it's the same with an audience; we're all here together, I'm not performing at you, we're just enjoying this experience together and you're as much about the experience as I am."

What do you do to warm up?

"Nothing in particular. I noodle around backstage sometimes, but I don't really place much importance on warming up. Sometimes, we'll go on and I've not played at all that day."

What's your favourite live album?

"I think perhaps the one album that had the biggest influence on me was Van Halen's *Right Here, Right Now*. A friend gave me a copy on cassette and it just absolutely blew my mind. I've not actually listened to it for years, but I learned so much from that album. I learned Eddie's solo spot and a lot of the riffs and solos." 

Paul Bielatowicz's solo album *Preludes & Etudes* is available now on Mr Bee Records

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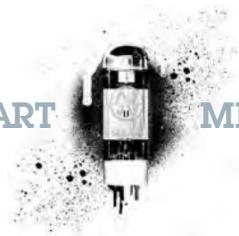
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START ME UP



DECLAN ZAPALA

New and notable guitarists you need to hear

Who Is He?

He's a classically trained nylon-string player with a fiery contemporary edge. Growing up in north London, there was always a guitar lying around the house and so when Declan turned 10, his mother got him lessons at school. From then, a growing fascination with the classical guitar was nurtured at Watford School Of Music, where he worked his way through the grades. But he also played in a few punk bands, too... "In some of them I played drums, some of them electric guitar and in one I played bass. I played in loads of different bands, playing all the different instruments, so I had a bit of each one in my brain somewhere."

Who Has He Listened To?

A friend at university played Declan some Eric Roche CDs and he was instantly drawn towards the percussive style of acoustic playing. A chance accident on a bouncy castle at a friend's birthday party saw him break a finger on his right hand, giving him time to explore the percussive aspect of playing while his finger healed. "In 2010, I started a Masters at The Royal College Of Music and spent two years just studying classical guitar with Gary Ryan. I was really fortunate to start learning with him at the time I did, because he was just getting in to this percussion style as well, and so my lessons became less about exploring the classical guitar and more about looking into this new way of playing the instrument."

What's So Great About His Playing?

Declan's use of percussion in his music is always musical and not just throwaway pyrotechnics. His material ranges from covers of Eric Roche pieces to his own original music, which combines amazing technique with beautiful tone. He says of himself that he works on the fringes of classical but with elements of folk, and the combination is a winning one. "When I did the Edinburgh Fringe the other year, I had the BBC come to my shows, which got me on BBC Four television and showed me playing my own original music, and my shows basically sold out as a result of that."

Why Do You Need To Hear Him?

He's one of the most exciting players on the acoustic guitar scene at present, that's



"I played in loads of different bands, playing all the different instruments so I had a bit of each one in my brain somewhere"

why. Declan's fortune changed when, at the suggestion of fellow player Mike Dawes, he contacted the CandyRat record label and asked them if they'd be interested in hosting one of his videos. "I just made a video, got on the phone to Rob Poland [CandyRat's founder] and said, 'I've got this video here, would you like to put it out on CandyRat?' and they said, 'Definitely!' So that was my avenue into CandyRat."

What Gear Does He Use?

Declan's guitars are made by luthier Stephen Hill. One has a spruce top – his 'fusion' instrument – as well as a 'scoop' for high-fret access rather than a cutaway; the other has a lattice-braced cedar top. He uses an LR Baggs iMix pickup and contact mic, sending his guitar signal out stereo. "All my percussive stuff and the folk stuff, that's all pretty much on the fusion guitar, then all the traditional classical stuff on the latticed cedar-top guitar. It sounds a bit better for the repertoire and it just feels better to play. It's got a solidity to it that the fusion guitar doesn't have, and when it comes to mic'ing it up, it's got a little bit less of a howl-round issue."

Where Should I Start?

As usual, the best place to start your own personal Declan Zapala voyage of discovery is his new album, *Awakenings*, but there is a host of videos available to view, too. It has to be said, however, that the best place to hear his music is in the concert hall. "My style of music has had success in these locations where you've got fringe audiences looking for something different." **[DM]**

Angel: Declan's version of this Eric Roche tune is a masterclass in tone and subtlety

Philomena: A piece that Declan wrote for his mother, which is raising money, too, for The Philomena Project

Prelude in E-Flat: Displaying Declan's classical leanings – JS Bach played wonderfully well!



Declan's new album, *Awakenings*, is out now on CandyRat Records. Keep an eye on his site for more UK gigs

www.declanzapala.com

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WARREN HAYNES

The Southern master tells us about jumping genres, duelling with Derek Trucks, and what it really takes to ride with The Allman Brothers...

Words Henry Yates Photography Danny Clinch

Warren Haynes can give us an hour. Rehearsals are booked. The band are on standby. In short, it's another busy day for the famously prolific Southerner, who has barely stopped since he burst onto the 80s circuit with a head full of genres and a hunger to make his mark. "As an artist," he tells us, "I've always been someone who could never be happy doing the same thing all the time."

Perhaps that helps explain Haynes' light-footed career. To discount the dizzying array of guest-spots and stopovers, the 55-year-old guitarist has lent his soulful firepower to two seminal American bands, in The Allman Brothers and the remnants of The Grateful Dead. Since 1994, he's led a third, Gov't Mule, from jam-band roots through forays into jazz, reggae and prog-rock. In snatched moments, Haynes has even found time for a solo career, with 2015's *Ashes & Dust* airing 13 tracks of acoustic-led Americana backed by the New Jersey folk collective, Railroad Earth. No wonder that an hour in this man's company throws up plenty of wisdom.

Borrow From The Best

"I really stole from everybody, and I think if you're gonna be serious about it, you should check out the best in every genre. The more music you hear, the better chance you're gonna have of finding your own voice. My first three guitar heroes were Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix and Johnny Winter, and that

paved the way for me to discover everything else from that era. I loved Jeff Beck, Peter Green, Billy Gibbons and Steve Howe, who is one of the most unique players I've ever heard. You have to find what moves you. It doesn't have to be impressive to be great. Some of the most amazing guitar playing is not meant to impress, but it's just beautiful."

Burn The Midnight Oil

"There were certain songs on *Ashes & Dust* that I wanted to record around midnight. I didn't want us to be too cerebral in our approach. I wanted it to be a stream of consciousness, to get that late-night feeling when you have less of a filter about the way you play. The first song was *Hallelujah Boulevard*, which has that ethereal intro where you don't really know what's coming. Right before the first take, I said into the microphone, 'Just think *Astral Weeks*,' referring to the Van Morrison record, which was done in a day-and-a-half. We'd do three takes – I like to do things in threes – then we wouldn't even listen back. We'd come back the next day and see what had happened."

Make Your Own Name

"To play guitar in The Allman Brothers, there's the obvious stuff, like having the chops to do it, but it's also having your own voice. When I joined in '89, they were adamant that I needed to be myself, and not feel like I had to play more like Duane Allman. Of course, he was such a big

influence that it comes out in me anyway. At the same time, I always felt like there was this friendly challenge to be myself. That was one of the things that pushed me. Being elevated to a higher status when I joined The Allman Brothers really put pressure on me to figure out who I was. It's been an extremely important part of my quest to find my own voice. That's what I've strived for my entire life."

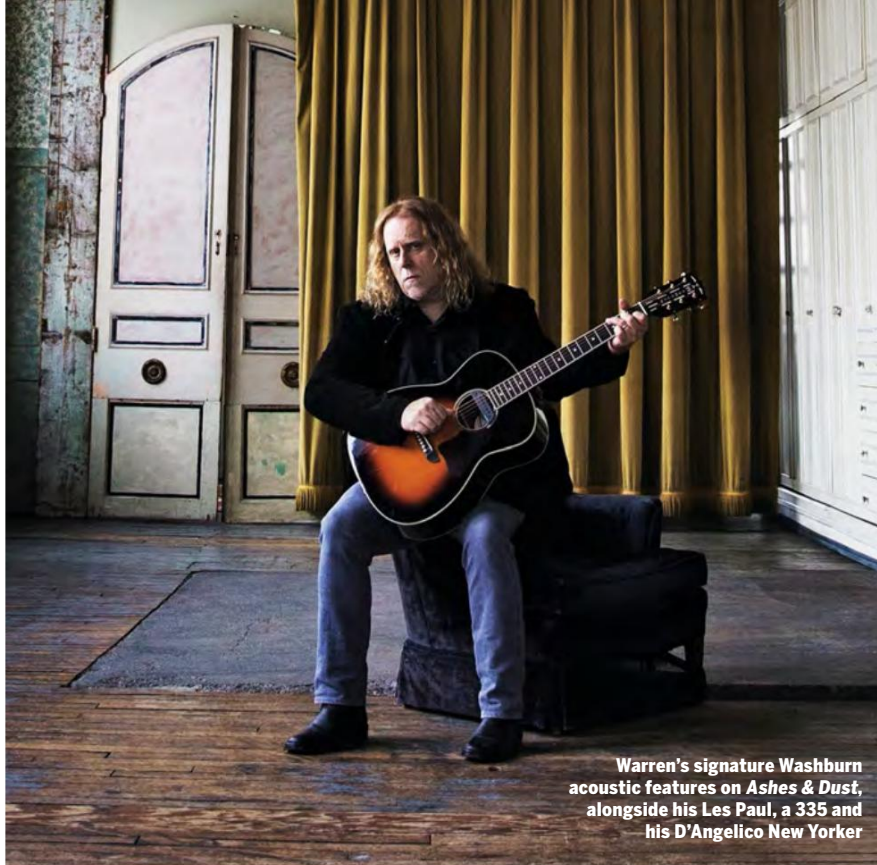
The Blues Ain't 'Easy'

"Maybe it's easy to play the chord structure, the notes and scales. But to play blues the way the masters play it is one of the most unique arts. When you hear Albert King, BB King, Freddie King, Otis Rush, Son House and Howlin' Wolf play the blues – that's the top of the heap. There's such a difference between mediocre blues and great blues. When you hear great blues, it's the most moving thing on Earth."

Bluesmen Improve With Age

"I was 34 when we made the first Gov't Mule record, so I was already a fairly seasoned player, but when I listen back, it sounds like I'm still finding myself. I feel like you can hear my playing change for the better over the next 20 years. But I still have good feelings when I hear those early records. It's when you go way back – when I was 21 or something – that's when you start cringing. Like, 'Why are you in such a hurry? Slow down...!'"

“ You have to find what moves you. It doesn't have to be impressive. Some of the most amazing guitar playing is not meant to impress, but it's just beautiful — ”



Warren's signature Washburn acoustic features on *Ashes & Dust*, alongside his Les Paul, a 335 and his D'Angelico New Yorker

Find The Right Guitar

“[Gibsons] have just always worked better for me. I think my voice sounds better with a Gibson. The Les Paul is my favourite, but I also love the 335 and the Firebird. My former guitar tech, Brian Farmer, who passed away a year ago, was responsible for all the nicknames of my guitars [such as the ‘Sex Machine’ Les Paul and ‘Freeway’ Firebird]. He just did it so he could tell them apart in the dark. I remember Pete Townshend having numbers. So it was an interesting and fun concept.”

Play For The Song

“I'm more of an electric player, but these songs on *Ashes & Dust* were all written on acoustic guitar. What happened a lot of the time was that Andy [Goessling] from Railroad Earth handled the acoustic, and I was thinking, ‘How can I weave myself into these songs?’ I didn't go into the sessions realising how much slide I'd end up playing, but it seemed to fit with so much of the material that I got excited and started playing more and more.”

Wing It

“In a live performance, I think there needs to be a balance between the structured songs and the improvised songs that change drastically, night by night. I try to incorporate that philosophy into the studio as well. It's a nice yin-yang sorta thing. Somewhere along the way, we've built this audience that is not just tolerant of improvisation but very encouraging of that. If we were playing for the Eagles' audience or Elton John's audience, it would

be much more nerve-wracking, because they're listening for a repeat of the original recording. But what we do, for the most part, the audience is very embracing of the possibility of mistakes. And in some cases, they prefer it.”

Shake Up Your Sound

“For *Ashes & Dust*, I wanted a sound that blended in with the acoustic instruments and didn't seem too odd of a match. A sound that let me be myself, but also pushed me to play a little differently. The slide guitar is all played on a Les Paul, usually my signature model. All the jazzy, hollowbody-sounding stuff is a D'Angelico New Yorker [reissue], and I have a 1961 Gibson ES-335 that I played on songs like *Wanderlust*.”

“Originally, I had three amps set up where we could blend them together or use them separately. My 1965 Fender Super Reverb, then this late-50s or early-60s Gibson Falcon that has this really interesting tremolo, so whenever I wanted that, I would just cut to that amp. There was also a Carr Mercury that had a fat, warm sound. When I got into the overdub process, if I didn't play the slide guitar on the initial track, it was overdubbed through these Homestead [BF25] amplifiers, which Peter McMahon makes custom for me. I really didn't need any pedals.”

Deflate Your Ego


“When you're collaborating, there has to be chemistry and an ego-free environment. Derek Trucks and I have played together so much that we've learned each other's vocabulary, to the point we can almost be telepathic onstage. In The Allman Brothers,

it became this whole other zone where anything goes. If I step on him because I'm trying something a little crazy, that's okay – and vice-versa. A lot of times, the things we would play behind the other one's solos would be non-traditional. It might be influenced by Miles Davis or Hendrix. You're merging worlds together, not just playing rhythm and lead. People that love to collaborate tend to be good collaborators. People that don't love it – tend to not be.”

Quit Your Comfort Zone

“The challenge is always pushing myself to not do what I did before. I think playing with John Scofield challenged me the most. When we did that record [*Sco-Mule*] in 1999, we barely knew each other. I was pushing myself to play a bit more jazzy, and I think he was pushing himself to get more aggressive, because he was playing with Gov't Mule. He's constantly playing stuff that I wish I understood!”

Don't Stop Moving

“I still want to do a traditional blues record. I still want to do a jazz-influenced instrumental studio record, and work on a follow-up to *Ashes & Dust*, because we recorded so much material. We'll start doing another Gov't Mule record at some point as well. So there's at least four things, hopefully in the not-so-distant future. As an artist, as a writer, I've always been someone who could never be happy doing the same thing all the time.” 

Ashes & Dust is out now on Mascot/Provogue
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THE LOST INTERVIEW

LOVE THAT BURNS

This February marks the fifth anniversary of Gary Moore's death and in this tribute, we not only get an exclusive close-up look at the gear he used with commentary from his guitar tech, Graham Lilley, we also hear from the man himself in a previously unpublished interview that was originally carried out in 1995, prior to the release of the album *Blues For Greeny*, Gary's blues salute to his mentor and friend, Peter Green

Words David Mead Portrait Jesse Wild

Guitarist deputy editor David Mead remembers the circumstances under which the interview was carried out. "Gary's management contacted me and asked me if I would write the liner notes for the *Blues For Greeny* album and, of course, I immediately said, 'Yes.' I had interviewed Gary in the past and we subsequently enjoyed a sort of nodding acquaintance and so we arranged to meet for lunch in a hotel in London's Holland Park in order to discuss my contribution to the album cover. On the day, Gary was very relaxed – it was far from being a formal interview, more like a conversation. He said that he wanted the liner notes to be autobiographical and tell the story of his love for Peter Green's playing that had started way back when Peter replaced Eric Clapton in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. "As it turned out, there wasn't an enormous amount of space on the album cover and so very little of our exchange that day ended up being used. But I had let the cassette tape roll and we ended up talking for ages, the subject matter veering away from Gary's historical recollections to his overview of the state of the guitar world in the mid-1990s. As such, I believe it represents a fascinating snapshot in time of a legendary player, who was rediscovering his enthusiasm for a purer form of the blues. We begin when Gary was just 14 years old, seeing Peter Green play in a Belfast club..."

The first time I saw Peter Green play was at the Club Rado, which was a very rough club in Belfast,” says Gary, “and at that time he’d just replaced Eric in the Bluesbreakers. I’d gone up there to sort of hang out and see if I could meet this guy Peter Green, because I’d read about him and everything. They were really miserable because they were pissed about the equipment that had been rented for them and nobody was saying anything and I was sitting down beside John Mayall and I tried to sound really cool, I said, ‘Is Greeny here yet?’ and he said, ‘No...’ and I just blushed; my face was burning, I can remember that really well.

“Peter had a rented Selmer amplifier. In those days, Selmer amplifiers were not regarded as being very cool, but he came on and plugged straight into this amp, played the first lick of *All Your Love* and just devastated everybody because he had the most incredible tone. I’d never heard anyone reach down that deep with their guitar tone and really make the thing resonate and I was just blown away. He did *The Stumble, Another Kind Of Love* and all those things from *A Hard Road*.

“The next time I saw him play was in the very early days of Fleetwood Mac with Jeremy Spencer, Mick Fleetwood, John McVie and himself. That was the band and, again, it was the same club. He came out on stage this time – he had a smaller amplifier, Selmer again – and he played absolutely amazingly. He was such a charismatic player, so much larger than life when he played, just pulling all this stuff out. You didn’t know where it was coming from. It was so soulful and so beautiful and, again, that *sound*. It was just so clean, and don’t forget, in those days, they didn’t mic instruments up. That was the sound coming off the stage, but so beautifully balanced.”

After that, Gary moved to Dublin and joined the fabled Skid Row. Still only 15 years of age, he soon caught up with Peter once again.

“I saw Fleetwood Mac play yet again and, by this time, they had Danny Kirwan in the band and had hits with *Albatross* and *Man Of The World*. Peter was using Orange amps and playing a bit differently – a little bit more distorted, a little bit more sustain. He had this great big Orange reverb unit as well. They did *Albatross* and all the stuff and absolutely blew me away. It was the first time I’d heard two guitars play in harmony. That was a big thing as well, because up until then I’d been listening to *Albatross* and I’d figured out how to play the second verse by bending two strings at once. At the time, I could bend them in harmony. I thought that’s what he was doing. I thought, ‘That’s so clever, but it’s really hard to do it, it’s so controlled.’ But, of course, when they came on stage they suddenly split into stereo and I went, ‘Oh fucking hell, they’re both playing it!’

“The following year they came to the National Stadium in Dublin. I was still only 16 and we opened for

them. This guy Pat Egan, he was sort of compering the show, came up to me after our set and said, ‘Peter Green wants to meet you.’ I was totally blown away because I’d always wanted to meet him and I was really nervous. Peter came out of his dressing room and said, ‘I really like your playing, come back to the hotel and let’s have a talk.’ We just jammed for hours and I left really, really late. After that, he spoke to his manager at the time, Clifford Davis, and persuaded him to help get us to England. He signed us into a management contract and got involved with the record deal and everything from thereon. We moved to London – this was 1970, I guess – and one day, I went round Peter’s house and he said, ‘Let’s go for a drive’ and we were driving along and he said, ‘I’m leaving the band, I’ve had enough.’”

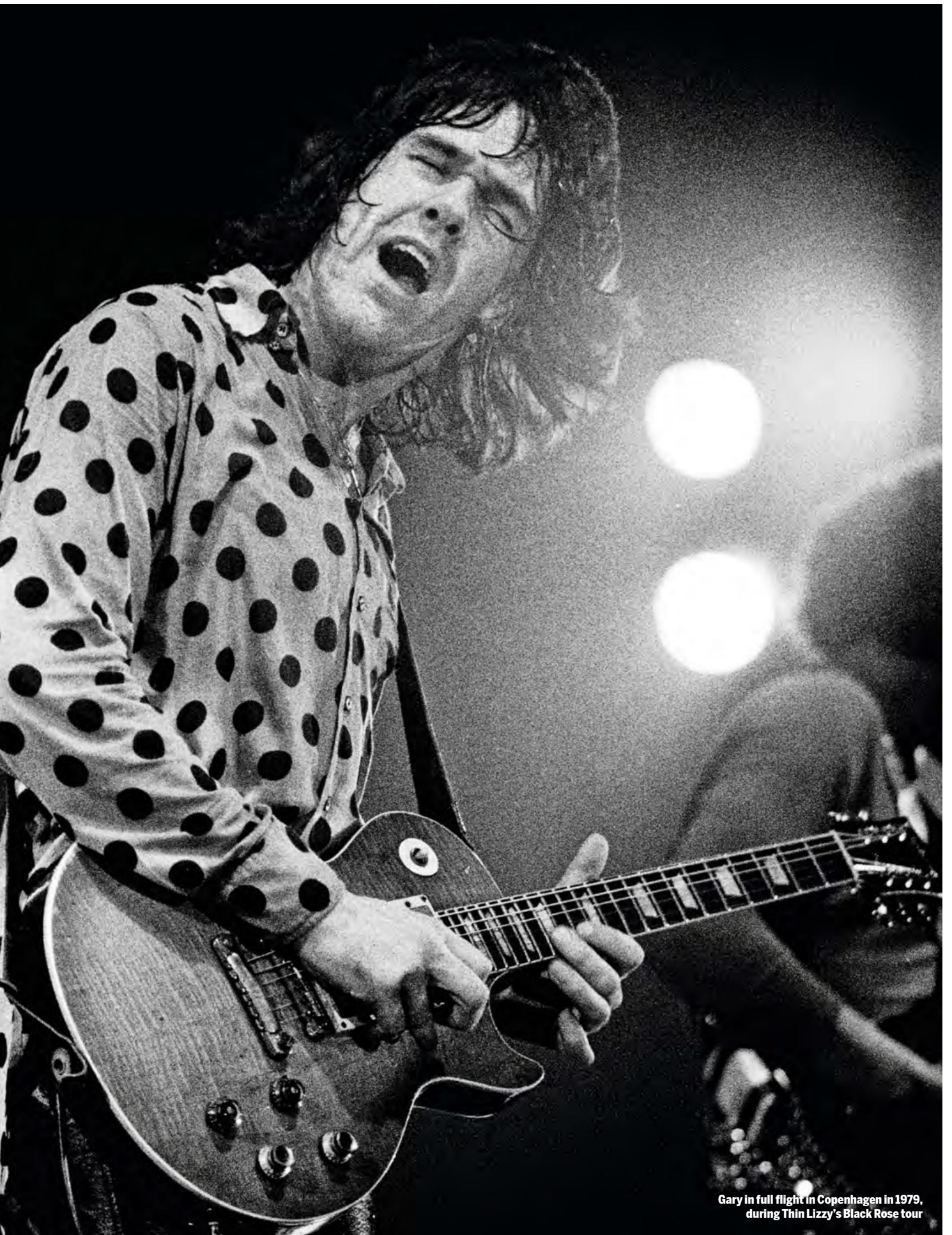
Thus began Peter Green’s well-documented descent into virtual obscurity, but the friendship between the two players had left an indelible mark on Gary.

“An amazing player. I just wish he’d never stopped really, because he was very much one of the people from that era who had something to say. Then you had Eric and Jeff, Jimmy and Peter and not much else, in my eyes, anyway. There were other guitarists from that era who were very highly rated, but, to me, they didn’t have anything compared to someone like Peter. So when he left the scene, he took a big part of that whole thing with him, as far as I’m concerned. There’s a whole dimension that’s been missing from British guitar playing since then. It was approached from a very British point of view, even though he was emulating BB King, Freddie King, people like that, but he did it his own way and he kind of made that his own: his own voice, which is the hardest thing to do, really.

“There were other guitarists, obviously – after that you had Mick Taylor and everything – but Peter had the toughest job: to walk in after that *Blues Breakers* album and to shine the way he did was an amazing achievement and he got a lot of respect for that. When you listen to Peter’s playing – the kind of sound that he went for and everything – it wasn’t in any way fashionable. It wasn’t such a radical departure as Eric’s sound. Eric used a lot more distortion and everything. Peter’s sound has not dated, it’s become a classic in its own right and today, when you listen to it, it’s still as valid as ever. And it teaches people. I think if young guitarists could listen to that, they would learn so much about where they’re going wrong – because he’s the opposite end of the scale to what’s going on today.”

Gary had very strong opinions about the direction that guitar playing was headed in the mid-1990s.

“I think that a lot of people are going so wrong by analysing music too much and learning from a totally different perspective from the way I learned. I mean, I just learned by listening to people. People I learned from learned by listening to people. The generation above me was Eric and Jeff and all those guys, so there wasn’t anything like the information that is available today. These guitar institutes and things like that, I think they take away people’s identity and they’re actually encouraging a lot of people to play who are



Gary in full flight in Copenhagen in 1979, during Thin Lizzy's Black Rose tour



Gary Moore with the 'Peter Green' Les Paul, at his home studio in 1990

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“[Playing the blues involves] a lot more than people realise – you’re constantly refining, taking away all the stuff you don’t need until all that’s left is the bare bones and what’s there is totally necessary, and that’s the hardest way to play”

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not naturally good players anyway, but they’re telling people that anyone can learn to play. And anyone *can* probably learn to play, but that doesn’t make them a good player and, at the end of the day, they’re turning out a generic generation of guitarists who are coming out the other end of this sort of conveyor belt sounding pretty much the same. I mean, I can’t name one of these people who amount to anything special. Who’s actually become a *voice*? Who’s actually had anything of any real depth to say? Who has written good music? To listen to these guys talk, you’d think they were the most amazing musicians on Earth and you hear what they come up with and it just doesn’t follow through for me. In fact, they do kind of play like they talk, because they talk too much and they play too much and they just kind of miss the point. It’s not their fault. You’re just overloaded with information: ‘How shall I learn? Which guitar should I play? Which pedal should I use?’ And everyone’s bombarding you.”

In the years leading up to our interview, there had been an obsession with speed, with technique appearing to obliterate content in some cases.

“I think it’s going away a little bit, but I’m probably not the right person to ask because I was as guilty of that as anybody, in my own way, in the 70s, playing all that fusion stuff. But that’s why I can see it now because I’ve been through that. I can see a lot of these young guys are going nowhere with that whole attitude, it’s so wrong. They’re more interested in impressing each other than playing music. We’re losing the whole point: music is not to impress people, music has to stand up on its own and guitar solos are nothing to do with it. If you hear a great song and you hear a really great guitar solo, that’s a nice embellishment. But they’re just so into the athletic side, the competitive side, and they’re missing the point. But that’s fine, because at least there’s room for people who *do* want to play music.”

Gary was also aware of the influence his return to the blues was having on other players.

“When I made *Still Got The Blues*, you had all these guys who’d never heard of blues going out to promote blues albums – these LA guys. It was quite laughable. From my point of view, it was a complete turnaround because there I was, setting a trend and influencing the wrong people to play the wrong music for them. It was

arrogant for me to think I could go and make a blues album as simply as that, because I hadn’t played that music professionally for so long. It was very successful, but the way I did it was totally wrong: ‘Oh, I’m a rock guitarist and I can play the blues...’ and these guys followed suit and they were even further removed from it because they had no background of the blues. At least I’d grown up with it. I knew something about it, but these guys were like *widdly-widdly* playing that Albert King stuff.

“For me, making this record was like going back and relearning everything that I’d forgotten over the past few years. I know I did a blues album in 1990, but this was going back to where I started off. It’s given me another chance to get back to that point and not fuck it up this time because I think, in many ways, I did fuck it up, musically speaking. I went off on a tangent and got too far away from the whole truth of what we were trying to do. This record sounds like the rehearsals for what *Still Got The Blues* became. That’s what it was like; that’s how we played together and it’s nice to be able to get that sound down on record. It’s given me another chance, really.

“People will disagree and say, ‘No, *After Hours* and *Still Got The Blues* were blues albums,’ but they weren’t really, in all honesty. They were still rock albums because of the sound and the production.

“This, to me, is my first real blues album because it’s a blues record: it’s stripped right down, it’s gone back to what the blues is about for me and I’m playing in a style that I can play. I’m not trying to be anybody that I’m not. I’m not trying to play in a way that is very alien to me. It’s been like a revision course for me. And this music is so fucking hard to play and people don’t realise; they think they have to just pick up a guitar and play three chords and that’s the blues. It’s a lot more than people realise – constantly refining, taking away all the stuff you don’t need until all that’s left is the bare bones and what’s there is totally necessary, and that’s the hardest way to play.

“It’s just very honest. It’s like you’re almost in the room, I feel, anyway. You can hear there’s lots of mistakes and everything – really fucking sloppy playing for me, especially on a couple of tracks, but I didn’t want to change it. I didn’t want to drop things in and fix it, I wanted people to hear it the way it was done. I think it’s a lot more honest to do that. Anybody can fix things in the studio, but if you can you get a performance out in one go, that means something. All the records I like have got mistakes in them, anyway.”

At the end of our conversation, Gary hinted that there might be some unreleased material, which, 20 years later, still hasn’t seen the light of day.

“I also did a sort of unplugged version of about eight songs as well, a whole load of acoustic versions for B-sides and stuff. We did *Need Your Love So Bad* acoustically and *The World Keeps Turning* from the first Fleetwood Mac album. It was the first acoustic one Peter did. So I’ve got a load of stuff and it’s actually gone straight to DAT so you don’t need to mix it or anything. It’s very different from anything I’ve done before, it’s much more a vocal performance, because you’re just sort of strumming most of the time. So we just banged about eight different songs out in a couple of hours and I’ve got all those at home.” **G**

INTERVIEW
GRAHAM LILLEY

RIGHT-HAND MAN

For over two decades, Graham Lilley looked after Gary Moore and his gear, and got to know him better than almost anyone. Neville Marten asked Graham about working with Gary, and the upcoming sale of some of the great man's six-string treasures

Words Neville Marten Photography Joe Branston & Neil Godwin

My first encounter with Gary Moore was during the launch of his 1989 album, *After The War*, around the same time that Graham Lilley took on the role of Gary's tech, a position that grew to personal assistant and so much more in the 20-odd years the two spent together.

I was to interview Gary for a *Guitarist* cover story and we met at a London hotel. Slightly nervous, I arrived at his suite to be met by a man in 'reserved' mood. This isn't so unusual when artists are thrust in front of an unknown journalist's microphone to answer often inane questions; Gary was no different, and there was no reason he should warm to me.

The first 10 minutes or so were something of a struggle, until I proffered: "I noticed a few Peter Green 'out-of-phase' tones here and there," or something to that effect. Gary's expression changed from one of coolness to one of interest – animation even – upon realising that this chap might know at least a bit about guitars. We hit it off from that moment and discovered our mutual love of Clapton, Green, Hendrix, Beck and co happened at exactly the same time and in much the same way. We spent many hours over the years, chatting about his music and that of his heroes: on occasion, we sat around playing guitars together – he showed me the *Hard Day's Night* chord as George Harrison had showed it to him, and I showed him the arpeggio run-down in *Help!*. I even got to play on stage with him (alongside *Guitarist*'s David Mead) and 'almost' had a unique private blues jam (see sidebar on p66).





Neville Marten tries out Les Paul Collector's Choice #1, Artist Proof #3

Graham was always present on such occasions and we also got to know each other. So it was poignant meeting up with him again – the first time since Gary's death and in exactly the same studio where Gary played the infamous 'Fire Alarm Blues' during our interview. But it was also great to pick up where we left off, to find out more about what made their partnership tick and discover exactly how it all started.

"I'd just got back from an American tour with Ronnie James Dio, and got a call to go and have a chat with Gary," Graham begins.



Gary's right-hand man and equipment overseer for over 20 years, Graham Lilley

"This would have been May 1988. I'd been teching on tour with bands, working for backline companies and stuff. Trolling up and down the M1 in Transit vans, as you did in those days."

At first, Graham's role as guitar technician simply involved the day-to-day maintenance of Gary's equipment.

"Yeah, taking it back from the studio, making sure the right stuff went to the studio at the right time – making sure it worked! Obviously, it developed into other things, as you tend to develop a bigger repertoire... or more stuff gets dumped in your lap! It would be, 'Phone so-and-so' or, 'Go and get somebody from the airport' because they're coming in for the session or, 'Organise so-and-so's flight' And so it slowly transforms to being a bit like a tour manager. There was no interview, as such, it wasn't a case of 'strip that' or 're-valve that'. It was taken as read that that was what I had been doing."

Lilley's 'first big thing' with Gary was the *After The War* sessions.

"Gary had already been out to Puk Studios in Denmark to do the initial recording, with Peter Collins producing. They'd had a change of engineer to a new lad, Ian Taylor, on those sessions and returned to the then-new Outside Studios in the UK to continue recordings. So it was a 'first day' for us all in lots of ways. We were about the fourth band in there after Deep Purple – and levelled the

Hear It Here

As part of our fascinating tour through Gary's gear collection, *Guitar Techniques* editor Neville Marten, a *Guitarist* contributor who knew Gary better than most music journalists and shared a stage with him from time to time, plugged in many of the items of gear discussed in this feature, to get a better impression of how Gary used these instruments while he was still with us. With great respect, and a little understandable trepidation – those are some big, big shoes to fill – Nev agreed to step in front of the camera to demonstrate some of the hardware Gary relied on. To hear how some of this delectable hardware sounds today, go to <http://bit.ly/guitaristextra> to view our special Gary Moore gear demo.

"GARY used this Les Paul and reissue JTM45 amp – 1989, serial number R1000011 – on the track *Still Got The Blues*," Graham recalls, through a Marshall Guv'nor pedal, and Alesis Quadverb in the headphone mix. It was a one-take, first-take solo, too

1959 Gibson Les Paul Still Got The Blues

NEVILLE: "I have to confess I felt very small and insignificant when holding this guitar. One of those 'not worthy' moments, especially when I had to play some licks on it for our video presentation. Luckily, Gary liked his guitars set up exactly as I do, and so at least I felt at home with the action. I've played a few '59s and, just like the others, this was very articulate and open sounding. Brighter than a modern Les Paul, I'd say. But kick in the Tube Screamer and it becomes a beast. Most of all, though, it was a privilege and an honour to even hold it"

GRAHAM: "This is a guitar that Gary didn't use much when he first got it, but that changed after the *Still Got The Blues* session and following tours, when it became possibly his most played guitar. It featured on many recordings and live shows across the 1990s and 2000s, only getting a 'rest' from around 2006/'07 onwards. I think we had it on the BB King farewell tour, but not much after that, as it was becoming too valuable to cart around, and as Gary had bought a bunch of newer LPs, Goldtops, plain tops, Sunbursts, aged, and so on, then they were getting used more and more"

"THE Marshall 1960 TV cab was custom-made with that grille cloth at the Marshall factory and is part of an amp-and-cab setup that was made for the 1994 BBM tour," says Graham. "The set comprised SLP1959 heads, some modded into 1992 bass amps, along with 1960TV 4x12 cabs, 1960BX, 1960AX 4x12 cabs, plus the tall 'B' or straight version of the 1960TV angle cabs. It's quite an impressive sight and sound when it's all set out and fired up!"





Bernie Marsden, Gary, David Mead and Neville jam at Bath Pavilion in 2000

IN A JAM (OR NOT!)

Gary often asked for me when it came to interviews, because we knew each other and it would usually mean a less stressful experience. So it was that I trawled up to a massive pile near Reading. After Gary insisted on playing me tracks from the new album, *Close As You Get*, it was time for dinner and I was invited to join Gary, Graham and the studio crew. “Glass of wine, Neville?” Gary asked. “No, I can’t, Gary, I’m driving back to Bath tonight,” I retorted. “Well, stay here then – there are dozens of rooms,” he replied, persuasively. We ate and drank, then retired to another room where two Les Pauls appeared – and more wine. We chatted, did our interview and noodled for a couple of hours until around midnight, when Gary called it a day. “Right,” he exclaimed, “all the guitars and amps are set up in the studio. We’ll come down in the morning, have breakfast and then have a jam. You take the ’59 [Still Got The Blues Les Paul] and I’ll use one of the Reissues.” We were right on deadline with the magazine, so believe it or not I had to say sorry, I can’t (not out of fear, either!). Despite Gary’s protestations I got up early next day and drove back to the office, kicking myself all the way. What an opportunity to have missed.

place! Or at least kicked the pub’s five-a-side team round the park (thank you, Ritchie!). Then we toured *After The War* throughout ’89, just before the blues stuff happened.”

At that time, Gary’s main guitar was the aforementioned Peter Green Les Paul with its notorious out-of-phase tone.

“The Peter Green Les Paul was on a lot of *After The War*. But there was also the red Hamer Chaparral and the white Charvel – which was more of a stage guitar. Gary ended up buying what became the *Still Got The Blues* Les Paul around that time, too. There was also the red ’61 Strat, the ’55 Junior, and a whole myriad of other bits and pieces. But the red Hamer sticks in my mind because I remember him playing *Running Through The Storm*, doing the solo with Don Airey and the pair of them trying to out-do each other. I’m not sure who ‘won’ but Don definitely had a sweat on at the end of it!”

So was Gary always a gear junkie?

“Well, most guitarists are always in search of ‘that’ sound in their head. And there’s always something new – especially in magazines like *Guitarist*. He’d be like ‘Great, we should check that out...’ or, ‘Oh, we’ll have that.’ Because like all these things, if you get a riff, a sound, a tone out of something and it turns into a song, then the thing’s paid for itself. If you want to reproduce that sound live, you need that piece of equipment. You’d get a second, because it’s always handy to have a spare – and sometimes a spare for the spare.”

Much earlier in the 80s, as a guitar repairer, I [Neville] had actually worked on a red and a white Charvel of Gary’s, and recalled the action as being very high and the strings very heavy. In hindsight, this could be because I was using 0.008s at the time!

“It was always 10 to 52 with Gary, which used to be seen as heavy, but now it’s quite common,” explains Graham. “His setup changed, though – he had that bad hand infection in 2004, which caused the cancellation of the *Power Of The Blues* tour. He could hardly hold a fork, let alone a guitar, his hand had swollen up so badly. With not being able to use it, the muscles went a bit, so we had to build them up – and so we started back at nine to 42/46. For the Red Strat at the 50th Anniversary of the Strat show (24 September 2004) I believe it was nine to 46. We went through a batch of stuff and he said, ‘I’ve got these Ernie Ball strings and listen to it – that’s the Clapton sound...’ and he was right: you could hear the difference between the string manufacturers, especially because he’d used Dean Markleys for so long. And then he worked his way up to a custom-gauge 10 to 48. We did that for a long time, but in the last three or four years, he was back up to 10 to 52s on a lot of his guitars...”

Still Got The Blues was a turning point in Gary’s career. But what about Graham’s?

“Career-wise, it was a huge, huge record: he got his first Gold album in America



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1. Gary's '59 also had its neck pickup flipped round. This doesn't put it out-of-phase, but can alter its tone slightly due to the changed position of the main pole pieces

2. Like many vintage Gibsons, the '59 is fitted with Grover tuners, perceived as an improvement over the standard Klusons

3. As always with Gary, this guitar has been refretted with much heavier wire. Notice the side dots busting the top of the binding, due to fingerboard shaving during refrets

4. 50 years of heavy gigging has removed the thin nitro-cellulose finish, and belt buckles and buttons have dented the Honduran mahogany back

5. The nickel plating of the aluminium stopbar tailpiece is flaking away – a combination of wear and tear and the acidity of sweat in the heat of play



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1964 Gibson Firebird #153314

NEVILLE: "Shame I didn't have a bottleneck with me for this, as it still has the action jacked up for when Gary used it for slide. This is just like the guitar Clapton used in the last days of Cream and on the *Blind Faith* album, and clearly why Gary bought it for the BBM (Bruce, Baker, Moore) project. It's a meaty old thing and if you know *Sitting On Top Of The World* from Cream's *Goodbye* album, then that's the tone. These are ace-looking guitars and make a real statement"

GRAHAM: "Although this was bought in 1994 for the BBM project, it was not really featured on the album or live shows in that year. Currently, it has a Seymour Duncan mini-humbucker fitted, but the original pickup and replaced volume pot are included in the case. I should get round to putting it back as it was, and dropping the action to make it more playable!"

MARSHALL '74 Lead And Bass 20 head. "Gary mostly acquired equipment items to use on recording sessions or live shows," Graham Lilley recalls. "His reasoning was that if an amp, pedal or even a second-hand guitar triggered a riff, or different tone that could be developed into a song, then it was worth getting for that initial inspiration"

ONE of the coolest guitars around, the 'reverse' Firebird's headstock was fitted with rear-facing Kluson banjo tuners





Gibson Les Paul Collector's Choice #1 'Artist Proof #3'

NEVILLE: "It was a lovely surprise to discover that this guitar had been wired so it was out of phase in the middle position. In non-aged 'Sunburst' livery and with a beautifully figured top, it looks fabulous and plays like any modern Gibson, with a reasonably fat but not baseball bat-type neck. Due to its bullet-proof provenance, this will excite a lot of interest in the auction"

GRAHAM: "This was one of the prototypes, an 'artist final proof' model of the Gibson Guitar Company Collector's Choice #1 VOS. This is the Melvyn Franks model guitar, the non-aged version, as the aged versions were christened the Gary Moore model. This will be a very rare item, as it's #3 of possibly only three artist's proofs. It's stock from the factory, still with all the tags."

"Unfortunately, this guitar arrived well after the model had been launched and quite possibly after Gary's passing, for some reason, as up until then only the prototype of the aged version #CC1 had arrived, which Gary used on the Summer of Rock tour in 2010. It's fitted with Bare Knuckle PG Blues humbuckers [with an out-of-phase in-between tone], replacing the out-of-phase Gibson pickups."

"The Marshall 1930 2x10 combo dates from 1973-4 and was part of his 'unofficial' Marshall amp collection – a nice piece, which would overdrive nicely as you turned it up. I say 'unofficial' in so far as Gary didn't set out to collect one of most types of Marshall amp, but he did have a few Marshall amps, cabs and combos tucked away, as he got so much use and enjoyment from plugging into one and letting rip, so to speak. Often it would be something he had owned previously, but had been lost in band moves and so on. So no doubt it was a little trip down memory lane for him, also"

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"Coming back from the 'After The War' tour, the black 12-string Takamine got a bit broken. It still is a bit broken. We took it to Japan later that year and the guys at Takamine said, 'Nooooo!!!'. The front was all smashed in"

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for that, which he was very proud of, but he'd had great success in Scandinavia and Germany and he was maybe better known there than in England – even though *Parisienne Walkways* had done well and he'd been on *Top Of The Pops* with Phil Lynott for *Out In The Fields*. But over in Scandinavia, he was playing huge arenas, whereas he'd be doing theatres in England. So *Still Got The Blues* did open a few more doors: the gigs got bigger, so you had to take more PA and more lights, and with *Still Got The Blues* we were touring with bass, drums, guitars and keyboards plus a four-piece brass section. For *After Hours*, we'd have a four-piece brass section and two girl backing singers. But the job doesn't change – Gary's still playing guitar, through a variety of amps, whether it be full-on Marshalls or Soldano and a Marshall cab or different pedals... but it was still, in essence, a guitar, some pedals, amplifiers and cabs."

Les Paul and Marshall is always thought of as Gary's tonal essence – does Graham consider that to be true?

"If you look back across Gary's career, like when he came out of Colosseum II and into *Back On The Streets*, it was the Peter Green Les Paul, which was one of the only guitars he had then. But all that early *Corridors Of Power* and *Victims Of The Future* stuff was pretty much the Red Strat, Marshall and a Boss DS-1, but with still the Peter Green Les Paul in there as well – because *Parisienne Walkways* was always a staple of the live shows. Then it transformed, and like many players, he had the pointy headstock years. There were Ibanez and the Charvels, which obviously came from the G-Force era. Then there was the Jackson Soloist stuff, too. But *Still Got The Blues* did land him straight back into Les Paul and Marshall territory... and it worked very well."

Any catastrophes?

"Yeah, coming back from the *After The War* tour, the black 12-string Takamine got a bit broken. It still is a bit broken. We took it to Japan later that year and the guys at Takamine said, 'Nooooo!!!' The front was all smashed in. But, strangely enough, Greg



Lake had one and had put his in Chandler's for sale. It had a slight crack down the front, which they were repairing, and we ended up with both of them. You'll see Gary's on *Victims Of The Future* for the little acoustic bit at the beginning, then everything would go dark, somebody would come on, take the guitar off... then BOOM! Up goes the pyro and off with the show."

And any heat-of-the-moment panics? "Oh, yes, Gary didn't suffer fools gladly – he'd let you know if something wasn't right [laughs]. At Utrecht in Holland, doing *Still Got The Blues* there was a bit of a panic; I suddenly remembered I hadn't taped the setlist down. The intro had only just started, so I thought I'll just nip on and do it now. I went to tape it down and somehow kicked the jack out of something and it was like [mimics the sound of an angry Gary Moore coming to the boil]. But luckily it didn't affect the show."

Since Gary's death, Graham has been working with another legendary guitarist...

"Yes, Steve Hackett's *Genesis Revisited* world tour. It got extended and went round a couple of times. I also do a thing called The Straits, which is a couple of guys from the Dire Straits band, and they've since transformed themselves into The Dire Straits Experience. That's a great show: everyone knows the songs, and it's really well played. They're all seasoned pros and it's a nice night out."

And finally, although Graham is known for his equipment expertise, he must have got to know Gary's music inside-out. So... does he have a favourite track?

"Hmmm. So many. Well, I heard *Need Your Love So Bad* off *Blues For Greeny* last night.

I hadn't heard it in a while, but as soon as it started I thought, 'Oh, that's Gary's version,' and when he started singing it was like, 'Ah, yeah, that's really good.' He was singing really well and we had such a lot of fun doing that album. But then there are two tracks that Simon Phillips played on, from *After The War: Speak For Yourself* and *Blood Of Emeralds* – monster-sounding drums. And then jump forward to *After Hours* and a lot of stuff we did in America. There's a thing called *Only Fool In Town*, and *Cold Day In Hell* is a great, great sound. We were mixing that with a really solid bottom end, with Will Lee and Anton Fig from the David Letterman Show Band. Incredible players. And obviously the BBM thing again, with Jack and Ginger and the late Tommy Eyre. It's funny when I think of that band... Ginger is the only one left."

Sale Of The Century

Gary had lock-ups full of guitars, amps, cabinets, pedals and more, and his estate has decided to auction much of it off. Graham has been tasked with organising this mammoth undertaking.

"A chunk of it will be retained by the estate for the time being. But there's a lot of stuff left and it's made to be played, to make a noise with, so somebody should make a noise with it. It's just trying to find the best way to do it. Some of it might find its way to auction websites, so anybody can bid on it – fans, for example – and get a little piece of that heritage. But, at the end of the day, a pedal in a box that's not been used for anything – the spare for the spare, if you like – is still a pedal and that's what it should be sold as, regardless of the owner."

6. An early Ibanez ST 9 'Super Tube Screamer'. Notice Gary's own marker-pen settings for Drive, Mid Boost, Level and Tone. "This was used by Gary for much of the second half of the 1980s, initially replacing the battered Boss DS-1, which Gary used in with his 1961 Fiesta Red Stratocaster"

7. On this TS10 Tube Screamer Classic, Gary has drawn two sets of favoured settings: one for louder and cleaner; the other with lower output but higher gain for rockier tones. "Gary used a number

of these, replacing all his TS9, ST 9 variants, as he preferred the sound of this model," Graham recalls

8. Gary was one of the Marshall Guv'nor pedal's greatest champions. "The effects-loop socket was an interesting idea," Graham says. "But it needed a Y-split jack lead, and then the Guv'nor could act as a kind of master switch for your whole effects chain, so a nice touch. This pedal is the one used with the reissue JTM45 previously, and famously on the track *Still Got The Blues*"

Gary had lock-ups full of guitars, amps, cabinets, pedals and more, and his estate has decided to auction much of it off. Graham has been tasked with organising this mammoth undertaking

1959 Gibson Les Paul Junior #929342

NEVILLE: "These are superb guitars, but even those without links to a famous artist are fetching silly money now. The single P-90 at the bridge offers a dark and throaty range of sounds, especially if you are prepared to work the volume and tone controls. To my ears, they sound lighter than the single-cut version and a little heavier than the similarly equipped SG Junior. This one felt great, with a medium-fat neck and total fretboard access"

GRAHAM: "This comes with the Bill Of Sale, and it was also mentioned in an article during the promotion of the *Dark Days In Paradise* album in 1996/7. Gary did fly on Concorde with it, on his way to Miami that year to oversee the mixing. It may also feature here and there on that album"

GUITARS like the 'student' Gibson Les Paul Junior and Fender's Musicmaster were designed to go with similarly 'beginner' amps like these, but all became fully grown in the hands of Gary, Jimmy Page, Leslie West and many others

"**THE** cream-and-brown Fender Champion dates from 1949 and is a very sweet little combo," Graham says. "With just two inputs and a combined on/off volume control, which goes up to 12 – two more! – it's got a vibe that's all of its own"

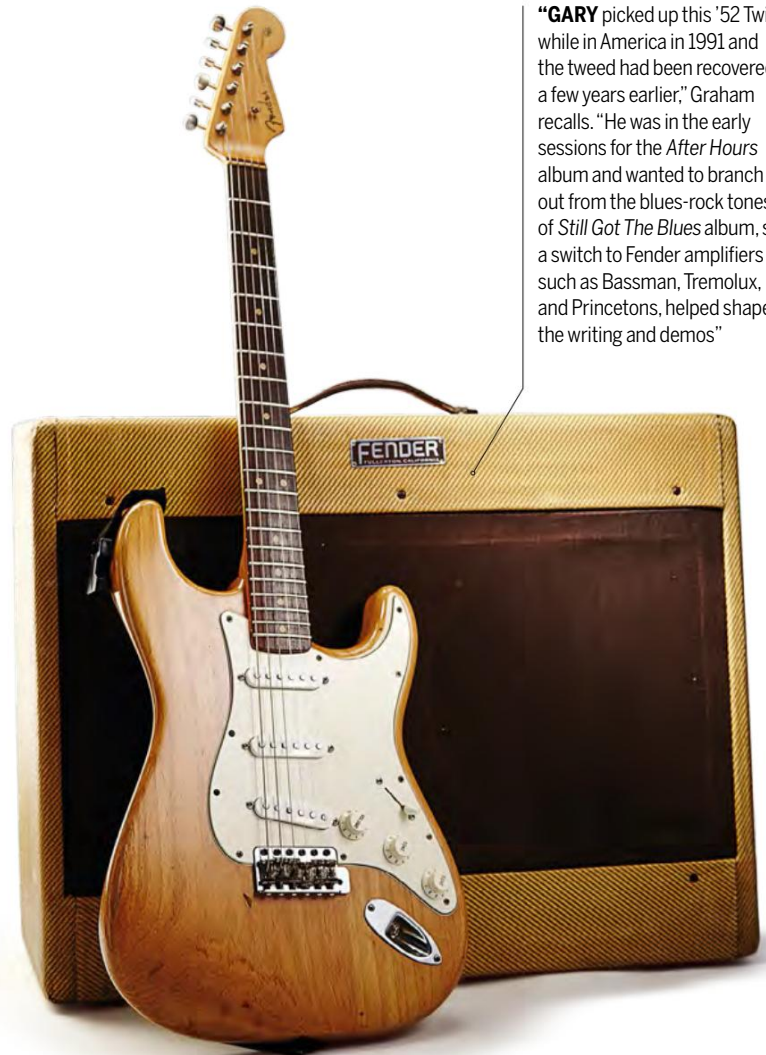
"**THIS** is Gary's 'blackface' 1964 Champ, again with a similar control layout," Graham says. "It's a little bit more robust than the '49, with a solid chassis and slightly more chunkier styling than its older 'brother'. But it works really well with harmonica, P-90 or humbucker-equipped guitars, as it adds a nice, thicker tone than the earlier model"



Refinished '63 Fender Stratocaster #L21725

NEVILLE: "This was a monster! Just as loud as the Les Paul, and almost as fat. Fitted with Kinman pickups, it was hum-free next to the Marshall 1974X I was demoing through, and it played like butter – it had been refretted with big wire but the fingerboard radius had been left at 7.25-inch radius, which made it feel rather special. I'm not a fan of stripped and refinished 'natural' Fenders, but I have to say it made it feel much more like a gigging workhorse and less like a scarily pricey artefact. Hand on heart (and price tickets notwithstanding), this one was my favourite"

GRAHAM: "Originally a gift from the late Claude Nobs, founder of the Montreux Jazz Festival, the guitar required extensive work to return it to playable condition. This included a complete refret, new tremolo block, replacement machineheads, a rewire and the addition of a set of the Kinman AVN noiseless pickups. There is also an alternative complete electronics setup, mounted on a separate scratchplate, with Stratocaster pickups by Seymour Duncan. These were made for Gary, to give an additional set of tones in certain combinations of pickups when using the selector. So, only the body (stripped and clear lacquered), the neck and some hardware are 'original'. As seen on the live footage of the TV broadcast from the Fleadh in Finsbury Park in 2001, and in the *Blues For Jimi* DVD release, from 2007"



"GARY picked up this '52 Twin while in America in 1991 and the tweed had been recovered a few years earlier," Graham recalls. "He was in the early sessions for the *After Hours* album and wanted to branch out from the blues-rock tones of *Still Got The Blues* album, so a switch to Fender amplifiers such as Bassman, Tremolux, and Princetons, helped shape the writing and demos"

The estate is retaining certain of the 'gems' from the collection, though...

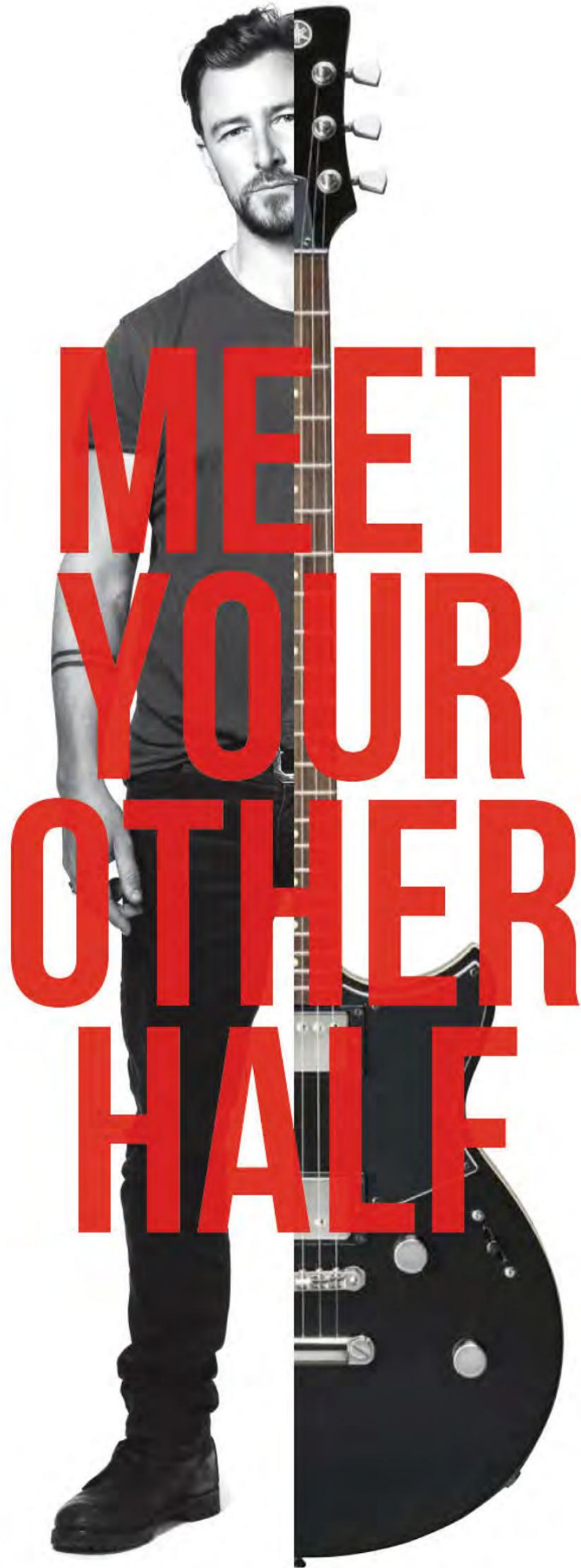
"Yes, but I'm not saying there won't come a day when a certain Les Paul or Red Strat will come up for auction. Nothing can be held onto forever, but in the meantime, why not get some of this other stuff out there, see what interest there is and find homes for it? There's a good, broad selection. There's stuff that's documented as being used by Gary, things he was photographed with in press shots, mentioned in interviews, on albums: there's a Jerry Jones baritone guitar, which is the first sound you hear on *A Different Beat*. There's vintage amps, from the '49 Champ to a reissue Champ, all sorts of stuff right up to the Quad Reverb Fender. Marshalls of various sizes – from 20-watt heads, PA20s, Lead And Bass 20 with matching cabs, a couple of 1930 1x12s... which in themselves are great little things, regardless of who owned them. A lot of the stuff Gary bought second-hand, so they'd had a bit of a life before they came to him. And they should go on to have another life. There's a nice '64 Blackface Super Reverb, and a new one... a '52 Twin, refinished but it's a nice-sounding amp and should go on to do other things. Right up to the last

tribute Les Paul from Gibson; a number of them came over and so we said we should keep some and maybe put one up for sale, where part of the proceeds will go to the British Heart Foundation or to the church where Gary's buried.

"Quite a few of the bits have been viewed by one of the top-end auction houses. What will actually go in the sale is unclear at this moment. A couple of months down the line, we'll know. We may get the stuff that was, say, the third spare for something and just put it out as what it is. And not even mention Gary. And then look at things that have definitely got a definite connection – 'This was used on such-and-such an album' and so on. It's going to take a couple of months just to get it all catalogued.

"We're possibly looking at June, but there's no reason that the less-documented stuff couldn't go out before then. But there'd be different levels – the more sought-after stuff would maybe not be within reach of everyone's pocket, but we'd like to give everybody a fair chance to get something. It's not going to be one of these auctions where only accountants can afford to buy something because 'it might look good on the wall!'" **G**

"I'm not saying there won't come a day when a certain Les Paul or Red Strat will come up for auction. Nothing can be held onto forever, but in the meantime, why not get some of this other stuff out there, see what interest there is and find homes for it?"



THE NEW  REVSTAR

 YAMAHA



ANDY SUMMERS

The former Police man is back with *Metal Dog*, an instrumental album that drags rock 'n' roll to the outer reaches. "There's a fair amount of abuse of the electric guitar going on," he tells us. "I'm trying to create another world..."

Words Henry Yates

Kee it current," says Andy Summers' press officer, in our pre-interview briefing. "Don't mention The Police. Not a word about *Walking On The Moon*. Keep schtum on the spats with Sting. Concentrate wholly and exclusively on his new instrumental solo album, *Metal Dog*..."

Fine by us. Released on Summers' own label, *Metal Dog* is the least commercial and most musically adventurous project in the 73-year-old's back catalogue. Indonesian rhythms break into industrial distortion. Ethereal chimes degrade into eardrum-rupturing white noise. A quicksilver solo darts between ominous slabs of looped harmony guitar. There's nothing to trouble the Radio 1 playlist – but plenty to enthral open-minded fans. Compared to the pipe-and-slippers output of his peers, it's an album that suggests Summers is still questing, regardless of whether you ride along with him. "What I'm looking for," he says, "is a quality of disinterest in the music itself. That it just stands there like a piece of art, and it doesn't really care who's listening to it..."

What was the inspiration for *Metal Dog*?

"I was going to work with a photographer who was connected with the New York modern dance scene. We were going to create an evening of music and video for the dancers. I started into it, and my initial impulse was thinking about dancers

on stage with this esoteric music. What ultimately happened was that I had about four hours of music, and the other guy didn't come up with enough. So I decided to shape some of what I had into a CD."

Journalists will struggle to pigeonhole this album. Was that intentional?

"Yeah. They always want to say, 'Oh, it's R&B' or, 'It's straight-ahead jazz.' No. My point of pride, if you like, is to do stuff that doesn't exist, that sounds like me and not like anybody else. It's not just verse/chorus, it's much more open than that. There's stuff coming in from many different places that I've listened to in my life. Y'know, with *Qualia* or *How Long Is Now*, there's a lot of exotic influences in there, like Balinese music. I've played for a long time, and what I'm looking to do is cutting edge and experimental. Advanced, edgy guitar."

You're trying to avoid guitar-hero clichés?

"Well, it's a bit more complex than that. Some of these textures and sounds, y'know, I couldn't have done this in The Police. It's not some grandstanding shred record, although there are great solos on there. It's always trying to create an atmosphere. I'm trying to build another world."

What's the secret to creating a great guitar instrumental?

"When you say the word 'instrumental', you immediately think of some melodic

thing like The Ventures. This is almost like creating orchestral music with a guitar, so I think the word 'instrumental' is sort of wrong. It's not just knocking out a 16-bar melody and a sweet little bridge and maybe a guitar solo. We're way past that. This music is much more about creating other worlds, and all sorts of bizarre things that I'll do with a guitar. There's a fair amount of abuse of the electric guitar going on."

How did the writing work?

"All of these tracks started from a sonic place. It'd either be a loop or a weird sound that I'd dig out of a couple of boxes. Then, if I can live with it, I keep building it. I literally sit on my couch in my studio, and I've got Pro Tools in front of me, and someone operating it for me, and I have a bunch of pedals on a little table. It's almost like a painter with an easel of paints. I've got a fairly large battery of pedals, including all the weirdest ones I could find. I'm not a complete tech-head, but I pay a bit of attention to that scene. I did a lot with the [Z.Vex Instant] Lo-Fi Junky, which is not that new, but I like the very degraded sound.

"I'm trying to avoid straight-ahead, nice, good, bluesy guitar sounds. I'm trying to break down the sound so it's granular, distorting, stuttering. I like to warp the sound somehow, so the voice becomes unique. So I'll take things like the Lo-Fi Junky and I'll either loop it – or not. I might play against the loop, which could



The Police playing London's Hard Rock Calling Festival in 2008

be reversed, dropped an octave, up an octave. There's the VauxFlores Number 23 – they're great – and I've got the Roland VG-99, but the primary box that I always return to is the original Eventide [Eclipse]. It's never been beaten. I love that thing. And you can't get it any more."

Do you think the guitar needs the occasional shove to keep it interesting?

"I do, actually. And all you've got to do is go to the horror of YouTube to see untold millions doing stuff with a guitar. It's great. Why should it just remain in one place? That's partly what I'm trying to do with this album, is not use any standard sounds if possible. I mean, people will always love the guitar and the great rock solo and the sustain... but we've all been listening to that for many years now. I try to at least change the tone or sound of the guitar, however I can, with whatever any of these amazing new pedals will do."

Do you think you can still identify that it's you playing guitar?

"Time and space... These are the things that make a player, I think. Who has great phrasing? Who fills the time in a really interesting way?"

"I don't know. I hope so. A lot of people obviously associate me with The Police, which is a long time ago. It depends how good the people's ears are. I think one of the things you can tell is the phrasing I have when I'm soloing. It's something to do with initially coming out of a jazz background, and my feelings for time and space. These are the things that make a player, I think. Who has great phrasing? Who fills the time in a really interesting way?"

What guitars were you using?

"In my studio, I have about 15 guitars out on racks, but believe it or not, I mostly played

one Stratocaster for everything. When we did the Police tour in '07/'08, they made me a Telecaster, but they made me two of these Strats, which were copies of my 1963 Strat. Because there's a lot of processing on the signal, I didn't find a lot of need to keep whipping out guitars. Occasionally, I'll pick up a Les Paul if I want to go to a certain place on a solo. If I'm gonna go for a very specific type of pickup sound, I might use an old Gibson 330."

Did you use a traditional amp?

"Occasionally, not all the time. I've got a few vintage Fender amps in the studio,

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and I've also got a Carr, which has a pretty bluesy sound."

Do you care how *Metal Dog* sells?

"Well, not really. We're in a very different place with selling records. I've been lucky in my career: we've sold over 80 million records. I don't need to do this. I do this because I feel very much that I'm a living artist and I need to create. I still want to make CDs and let people know that I'm creating. It's not over yet. And I don't want to do anything old. I want to do very new, very creative music, and if it finds an

audience, that's great. Of course, it matters to me. But I'm not like, 'Oh God, I've got to do every interview in the world to get it [out there]!' No, I'm very picky about what I'll do. There's no commercial pressure on me. And I think you get better music for it."

We're not meant to mention The Police. But do you think you're a different guitarist from the Andy Summers who made 1978's *Outlandos D'Amour*?

"The truth is that Sting and I had a very similar background, musically. We basically came from jazz, but had also been touched

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"We've sold over 80 million records. I don't need to do this. I do this because I feel very much that I'm a living artist and I need to create. I still want to make CDs and let people know that I'm creating. It's not over yet"

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by The Beatles and blues. We liked the music of Brazil and all the rest of it. But we couldn't play that kind of music. We had to be a rock band. In fact, we were a punk band at the beginning, which was laughable. I had been to college in America, I'd studied classical guitar for years, I'd done a lot of playing. I was pretty formed by the time I got to The Police, but that was the framework and this is what we had to do. I've never stopped studying and playing, I've never given it up. I've never felt any need to. So I would say I'm just much more advanced. I've just learnt a lot more shit since I was in The Police [laughs]."

What's your relationship with those Police guitar parts?

"I think they were very different. Again, it comes out of the same sensibility that's operating now. None of us wanted to sound like every other punk band in town. And what emerged, organically, is the sound of The Police. I'm very pleased with those guitar parts and, of course, I'm proud of The Police. Who wouldn't be? But just to set the record straight, I don't get up every morning and think, 'Oh God, I'm proud of The Police.' It was one of the coolest bands of all time, let alone one of the most successful. But you can't just go on living there. That's not interesting to me. I have to move on and make the kind of music I'm making right now." 📺



Andy's new album, *Metal Dog*, is released 15 January on Andy Summers Music/Cargo Records

www.andysummers.com

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HEART OF OAK

Sheffield songwriter Richard Hawley has a lot to be thankful for with the release of his eighth album, *Hollow Meadows*. Arthritis threatened to rob him of his ability to play, but an old J-200 and the ‘genie’ of inspiration helped him complete one of the year’s best records. Here, he shares his vintage-guitar finds and tells us why he’s “lonely without a guitar”

Words Jamie Dickson Photography Joby Sessions

“I broke that knuckle on a drummer’s head, trying to stop him stabbing the singer in a tour bus in Birmingham, Alabama. And continued to do the tour with a broken hand. It’s life, you know.”

Richard Hawley, Sheffield’s poet laureate of the Gretsch, is discussing his guitar style, which has had to adapt to a few hard knocks over the years. As evidence, he holds out a fretting hand that does, let it be said, look like it’s seen some action. On his lap is a 1950 Gibson J-200, on which he’s just finished playing an old Earl Scruggs song called *Jimmy Brown The Newsboy*, which he learned from his father.

“That’s my dad,” Richard says, showing an old family snap that’s now stored on his phone. “That’s a picture I took of him in ’82, with his pint and his fags. He’s playing an Ibanez acoustic there – I don’t know what model it was. That picture was taken during the steel strike, because my dad had this idea where he got all the bored steelworkers to come and learn to play guitar. So he taught them all to play guitar.”

He taught Richard, too, passing on his Travis-picking skills and a store of beautiful old rockabilly licks, evidence of which you can hear in Hawley’s playing on the J-200 today. It’s the kind of style that Eddie Cochran and Cliff Gallup had, and all those

50s rebel-rousers who could sound mean as a flick-knife or tender as a broken heart, as the song required.

“I could never get my head round playing with fingerpicks like my dad did, though,” Richard adds. “So I play with [a combination of] plectrum and fingers, like this. But when I worked with Duane Eddy, I said to him that I couldn’t do it right, but he said, ‘No, Jimmy Burton and Scotty Moore play like that.’”

We’re discussing all this somewhere backstage at Bristol’s Colston Hall, where Richard is performing that evening. He’s currently touring his new album, *Hollow Meadows*, which sees him return – after the heavier, cosmic rock of *Standing At The Sky’s Edge* – to a more introspective mood that long-standing fans will be familiar with. You can hear Scott Walker, Gene Vincent, Duane Eddy and others in its sound – distant echoes from an old jukebox in Hawley’s imagination, perhaps. But, at core, his writing is about the here and now.

“*Hollow Meadows* came about because of the physical state that I was in, because I’d broke my leg and I’d fucked my back up,” he explains, referring to two debilitating injuries sustained in the space of a year, starting with a fall on stone steps in 2013. “And it was to do with trying to write songs and be positive in a very fucking dark place.

Without kind of being ‘woe is me’, there was something I was trying to figure out, positively, about things I loved.

“I wasn’t really sure whether it was going to end – whether I’d be able to walk again,” he recalls. “They told me there was a huge percentage that I would never walk again. That kind of scared the shit out of me – it really was quite terrifying. The reality of that just led me to think, ‘What are you actually about, Hawley?’ And a lot of those songs on there are the essence of what I’m about, I guess.”

Love Thy Neighbour

The result of that soul-searching is an album that is at once intimate and sweeping in scope – its songs a series of open questions concerning the things that matter most in life. There’s also plenty of fine guitar playing on this album, some of it contributed by Richard’s next-door neighbour – who, handily, is none other than folk-guitar virtuoso Martin Simpson. Outside of the studio, the pair get together round the kitchen table to play guitar as often as touring will allow.

“Martin played on *Long Time Down*,” Richard explains. “We tried to get out together on this tour, but he’s doing musical workshops, teaching and he’s got his own gigs as well. It’s no secret I



“I had to weigh up the options of what I wanted to do: play another 10 years of guitar, or sit there in crippling pain”

love the man – as a man, forget the guitar playing, I just mean as a person. And I just think, sometimes, there must be someone watching over me. The people that I’ve met, it always seems to happen at the right time when I need them the most.”

Richard met Martin four years ago, when worsening arthritis in Hawley’s hands threatened to end his playing career. An experimental course of treatment, involving injections that carried their own health risks, was proposed by a specialist doctor, at which point Richard found himself at the crossroads. “I had to weigh up the options of what I wanted to do: play another 10

years of guitar, or sit there in crippling pain,” he says. “And I talked to my wife about it, because it’s a serious life issue. And she just agreed with me that I’d be just so miserable if I couldn’t play guitar. It’s the only thing I’m any good at, and I don’t know if that’s any good, either! But it’s one of those things where you go, ‘I’m prepared to take the risk because I don’t want to be unhappy. And I’m not bothered whether I’m playing in my bedroom or on stage, I don’t care. As long as I’m playing guitar, I’m happy.’ The end.”

Thankfully, the injections worked, combatting the worst effects of the disease and allowing Richard to continue playing, and he kept limber by jamming with Martin Simpson. During their impromptu acoustic sessions, they began talking about a treasured guitar of Richard’s that had been stolen. Simpson, who has many contacts in the vintage-guitar world, kindly decided to help him replace it.

“My dad used to have a 60s Gibson J-200 that he left me when he died, and some cunt nicked it,” Richard explains. “I know I’ll probably never see that guitar again. We lose things, you know? It’s in the nature of the world. But I wanted to get another one to redress the balance. So Martin ended up trying to help me and find me a J-200. And in the process, he discovered these Gibson L-00s and Martin bar-fret guitars and all this mad stuff. And now we’re both addicted to pre-war guitars. You pick them

1. 1957 GRETSCHE ‘G-BRAND’ 6120

“I have a ‘56 as well, which sounds radically different – they were still experimenting to get it right, but there’s some debate over the exact year and month of this one. The book says ‘57 but Deed, Duane Eddy’s wife – who knows her onions – says, ‘No, it’s a ‘56: no G-brand in ‘57”

2. GRETSCHE COUNTRY CLUB 6196CG 2003

“One of the finest guitars I have. It’s beautiful, it’s a big fat sound, the pickups have colossal testicles. I have no qualms or snobbery about playing new or reissue guitars: it’s all about the sound and the feel... and let’s face it, it looks fucking cool as well.”

3. 2006 GIBSON LP-295 LES PAUL GOLDTOP

“I used this loads on *Sky’s Edge*, most notably on the solos for *She Brings The Sunlight*. A great guitar, but a bastard to keep in tune – me and Gordon White, my tech, have tried everything, but it still slips out of tune... and it drives me insane”



Richard's blonde 1958 Gibson ES-225 was a recent find by his guitar tech, featuring "to die for" dog-ear P-90 pickups

Not Just A Phase

Richard's live effects rig has a strong emphasis on vintage modulation and saturated drive. Richard says he's an experimentalist when it comes to pedals for recording, however: "The cabin is stuffed with pedals. But I've got a very anarchic attitude to that. I remember talking to Richard Kirk from Cabaret Voltaire years ago and I asked him a similar question: 'How did you get that sound?' And he said, 'Oh, I don't know, I just plugged loads of pedals in' – and I sort of like that very anarchic approach."



1. Beneath the tape indicating settings is **Artec's RSV-3 Resovibe**, generating a blend of Uni-Vibe-style phasing and tremolo effects

2. **MXR's Custom Badass '78 Distortion** deals the dirt in Hawley's sizeable live effects rig, alongside an EHX Big Muff Pi with Tone Wicker

up, they're so light. They're like balsa wood. There's a voice in them that is unlike any acoustic you'll get today. Time buys that, if you know what I mean."

The blonde '50 J-200 that Richard is now holding was eventually sourced from a vintage-guitar dealer of Martin Simpson's acquaintance. It's beautiful, sonorous and takes a capo very well, balancing its big, big bass with sweet treble. In some sense finding it filled a void, Richard explains – friendship replacing something precious that was stolen. "These are rarer than hen's teeth," he adds, playing more chords. "It's the serial number next to Buddy Holly's."

Glorious Gibsons

But, of course, as Richard and Martin made their forays in search of that J-200, as guitarists will, they couldn't help checking out a lot of other choice vintage gear, some of which Richard bought and which can be heard on *Hollow Meadows*, including a behemoth Gibson GA-90 amp with a formidable array of six 10-inch speakers

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"Pre-war guitars are so light... they're like balsa wood. There's a voice in them that's unlike any acoustic you'll get today. Time buys that, if you know what I mean"
•

and other rarities that were brought into the recording studio built at the bottom of Richard's garden, which he jokingly dubs 'Disgracelands'. Here, he cut many of the album's tracks with long-time musical collaborator, guitarist Shez Sheridan.

"I've got a '63 Gretsch Chet Atkins amp, and it's got this insane tremolo on it that's like nothing else I've ever heard. This one plays in time with what you play," Richard says, admiringly. "I also bought a guitar that I'd been after for many, many years from Norman Mitchell, who runs a fantastic guitar shop called Old Hat Guitars in Horncastle [in Lincolnshire]."

"It's a Gibson ES-295, which is the guitar that Scotty Moore played with Elvis on a lot of the Sun stuff. And Norman had got a 1955 one that was virtually mint. And they're so rare in that condition – because it's got that gold finish on it and on most of those guitars, it gets a kind of verdigris – you get this weird, cracked, green look. But this one was one that escaped that horror. And with it came a Gibson GA-90 amp."



3. Cooper Sonic The Repeater – a very stark tremolo-style effect that is based on a vintage Vox effect built into the Starstream guitar

4. Akai P1 Intelliphase features threshold controls that allow the player to apply phasing only to quieter verse playing, for example, not solos

5. Catalinbread Pareidolia (see review, p127) mimics the harmonic tremolo effect found on some early 60s Fender amps

The Gibson amps of the 50s and 60s are a bit of an enigma, we suggest, in the sense that they should be right up there with vintage Fender combos, but somehow have escaped the notice of many players despite often great tone and innovative features, for the era. “Mate, I really don’t get it,” Richard agrees. “I don’t understand why those amps have escaped history, really. And there’s different ones in the GA Series, different sizes. But the technology of those GA-90s is really interesting, because I think that’s where a lot of bass amps went: there are six tiny little speakers in it, but it’s a motherfucker, it sounds unbelievable. You plug the Gibson into that and you know that they were born to be together. You plug anything into it and it just sounds wonderful. Martin Simpson bought a Magnatone amp from the same place.”

As you’d expect, Richard has also brought a few vintage Gibson guitars out on this tour, some of which he’s relied on for a long time, but also some new additions – new to him, at any rate – such as a blonde ES-225

semi, another almost-forgotten gem from Gibson’s past. “Gordon, my guitar tech, found that for me,” Richard explains. “It’s from a guy from Glossop, whose name I forget for the minute, who deals in vintage Gibsons. And he’d come to Gordon to get it fettled, basically, and Gordon said, ‘Look, this guy’s selling a guitar and I think it’s something that you’d like.’”

“But what I loved about it was firstly that I’d never even heard of those – it’s always the 335 that everybody talks about and I do have a couple of those. And then it’s got those dog-ear P-90 pickups, which are to die for. I’ve got an old Epiphone Casino with similar pickups on it. They are balls-out pickups. They’re just insane and, tonally, it’s a wonderful guitar. The only problem is that somebody at some point has put a Bigsby on it and they’ve done it really wrong. And so we’ve been battling with that to keep it in tune... I mean, I love it, and between me and Gordon we’ve worked it out. But half the time, the reason I change guitars every song is because I cannot bear to play a guitar

that is out of tune. But it’s a really beautiful guitar – the neck is wonderful.”

Avoiding The Genie’s Eye

Given that Richard has such a nice selection of guitars, we ask which he prefers to write on. But outside of an old Slovenian acoustic his wife, Helen, found in a junk shop for £20, he says he doesn’t tend to follow a fixed pattern, or rely on any particular instruments as totems to inspiration.

“Songs just happen,” he reflects, “and the words just come out. I used to think that made it less of a song, if I didn’t think about it. But if you just let it flow through you, literally... It’s the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ synapses of your brain. You just have to keep the ‘yes’ ones going. I guess doing shitloads of acid did that for me [laughs]. It’s like the lyrics of *For Your Lover Give Some Time*,” he adds, more seriously, and sings a bar or two:

“It was your birthday yesterday/I gave a gift that almost took your breath away/ but to be honest, I nearly left it on the train/ for your lover give some time...”



Hawley's live amp arsenal:
Two Fender Deluxes, a Fender
Super Sonic, plus a Blackstar
30-watt Artisan combo

4. BALDWIN DOUBLE SIX XII 1966

"One of my most treasured guitars, my lovely nanna Betty lent me the £100 to buy this in the mid-80s, which was a fortune to a steel worker's boy back then." Richard recalls. "I was massively into the Byrds – still am – and desperately wanted this guitar. I busked and saved so I could give the money back to her, but she refused to take it back in the end. And she said, 'It was good that you tried to pay it back and good you learned the value not just the worth of things.' I smile and think of her every time I play it – she was a lovely woman"

5. FYLDE ALEXANDER
Custom acoustic made by the "wonderful" Roger Bucknall

6. RICKENBACKER WB
A Ricky 360/12 V64 from 1993



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5



6

-Faith®

Artist: Jarrin O'Gorman - Scouting for Girls

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“And that just happened and I wrote it in like, 10 minutes... I think they’re probably my best words I’ve ever written. But I didn’t think about it at all: ‘I’ll give up these cigarettes, stay at home and watch you mend the tear in your dress...’, stuff like that. And I think: who the fuck wrote that? Was that me? Basically, don’t look the genie in the eye. Ever. I have a great horror that the genie, the song fairy, if I ever look her in the eye, then she’ll disappear and leave me. So it’s about hitting the bullseye without aiming for it.


“I know writers like Nick Cave, for example, who goes into his special work place and he works from dawn to dusk on stuff. But I can’t do that. I’ve never had a doubt that an idea will come, though – because anybody who’s a vaguely intelligent person can write a song. It’s possible. The thing is not to over-egg it. And if the reasons why you write a song are all about, ‘I want to be famous, I want to be successful, driving a limo’ and stuff like that, you’ll probably be a songwriter – but I bet all of your songs are going to be fucking shit,” he concludes.

•

“I have a great horror that the song fairy, if I ever look her in the eye, will disappear and leave me. It’s about hitting the bullseye without aiming for it”

•

Still, sometimes some patience with the muse is called for, as with the fine track *Heart Of Oak* from the new album. It has some of the epic character of Bowie’s *Heroes*, but a more tender, humble quality, too. Live, that evening, Richard plays electric on it with a kind of 60s guitar-hero style – taking a wide stance and carving air nice and loud, unhurried. But the track

took some time taking form, initially, he says. “That actually was an older song – something that I wrote, can’t remember how long before,” he recalls. “But it was one of those that pissed me off, because I’d recorded it about three or four times and it was doing my head in because it was like a Rubik’s Cube that I just couldn’t figure out. And it was inspired by [folk singer] Norma Waterson, that song – about something that’s quintessentially English but isn’t like a bad thing. Often English people think if they’re in any way patriotic that it’s this fascist kind of flag-waving thing. But there are a lot of things that are beautiful and wonderful about England that are not anything whatsoever to do with that. And there’s a lot in there that’s about people who unselfishly nurture things, for no reward at all – it’s just the fact that they care.” 



Richard Hawley tours the UK throughout February, and his latest album, *Hollow Meadows*, is out now www.richardhawley.co.uk



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Deluxe Redux





A new year, a new Strat and Telecaster. What can Fender possibly do to refresh its most advanced series? Well, change its name, for starters...

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Neil Godwin



FENDER AMERICAN ELITE STRATOCASTER & AMERICAN ELITE TELECASTER £1,439 & £1,389

CONTACT **Fender GBI** PHONE **01342 331700** WEB **www.fender.com**

What You Need To Know

1 Elites? Weren't they Fenders from the early 80s, with active circuitry?

Yes. Produced between 1983 and 1984, the Elite Telecaster and Stratocaster Elite were unusual beasts, not least the Tele, with its Les Paul-like four-knob controls. The Strat had push-button switches for the pickups, instead of the usual five-way selector.

2 So, nothing to do with these 2016 Elites, then?

Nope. These Elites are a revamp of what we previously knew as the American Deluxe series: 'improved' Strats and Teles with modern features such as compound-radius fingerboards and S-1 switching.

3 Name aside, then, what's new?

They feature the fourth generation of Fender's Noiseless pickups, a new neck shape and truss-rod adjuster. Not radical, but a better tool.

For 2016, Fender's American Deluxe range is no more; they are now Elite. Name aside, the range is trimmed to just four guitars: the Strat and Tele you see here, an HSS Shawbucker Strat and a thinline Tele. So, what's new? Along with cosmetic additions in the form of new colours, a refreshed headstock logo and 'soft touch' rubber control knobs, there's a new neck shape, a new wheel-style truss-rod adjustment (we lose the Micro-Tilt adjustment) and slightly altered-shaped heel geometry. Then we have the latest (fourth) generation of Noiseless pickups controlled, as before, by the S-1 switching, activated by a push/push switch within the top of the volume control's knob that expands the sounds from the five-way or three-way pickup selector switches.

If you've experienced the previous Deluxes, you'll know they're all about subtle upgrades, which are ongoing here. On the Elite Stratocaster, there is slightly deeper contouring, noticeably on the back rig-cage contour, and as before we have a compound-radius fingerboard with jumbo frets. Body wood is colour dependent, but a choice of rosewood or maple 'boards is available on all. The hardware stays the same: the excellent twin-post vibrato, with its six block saddles and pop-in arm, and the sealed, chromed rear-lock tuners (although instead of the previous dual-height string posts, they all have the lower height posts, which subtly increase the back angle behind the nut on the bass strings). A new-design string tree increases that back angle further on the top two strings; another change is the bone nut.

Its Light Blue Metallic finish with darker blue sunbursting might look a little Las Vegas close up, but it makes for a vibrant

stage colour, contrasted by the more vintage-y mint-green laminate scratchplate. Thanks to both 'Fender' and 'Noiseless' silver logos, these clearly aren't vintage pickups. Overall, a very tidy job, a little on the heavy side perhaps, but easy to live with.

Onto the Elite Telecaster 226 with its more classic-looking 'bursted finish and white top-edge binding, there's a classic 60s vibe that allows us to see a finely centre-joined slab of ash and a rib-cage contour round the back, which really works with that mint-green scratchplate. The six-saddle bridge, with chrome-plated brass saddles, is fully adjustable and we have locking tuners – not really necessary without a vibrato, but they do make string changes fast. A classy, well-made piece, slightly lighter in weight, which, before we plug in, edges forward in our favour.

Sounds

Okay, so the new neck shape is nothing too dramatic. The spec's C-to-D shape seems pretty subtle; as you move up the neck, the shoulders of the lower position's C shape seem to fill out slightly, giving a subtle flat back, more of a contemporary feel perhaps, which suits the compound radius and bigger frets. Of the two, the Strat's is slightly deeper, enough to feel a difference, but along with the way the shaping flows into the heel and is tidily shaped into the flat back of the headstock, there's an almost Custom Shop vibe to the detail.

Both are set up low with 0.009s, creating a pretty mainstream feel, but, of course, there's no 'right' way to set up your Fender. The important thing here is that the new truss-rod adjuster – as any Music Man owner will attest to – means neck-relief adjustments are now dead simple.



1. The Strat's vibrato has Fender's two-post design with six-block saddled and pop-in arm
2. The rear-locking tuners are the same as previous models except they no longer have dual height string posts. Even on the Tele, the same tuners are used – not necessary with a hard-tail but great for quick string changes
3. Redesigned for this series, Fender's fourth generation Noiseless pickups are single-coil-sized stacked humbuckers: single-coil tone with virtually zero hum



For 2016, Fender's American Deluxe is no more; they're now Elite, and the range is now four guitars

The Tele is a simple drive. With the S-1 switch out, it's standard bridge or neck pickup and both on in parallel. Depressing the S-1 switch with the selector in the middle position simply links the pickups in series for more output and a thicker tonality. The Strat is more complex: with the S-1 switch out, it's classic Strat; push it down, however, and we have five different selections. Tone control 1 takes care of the neck pickup, while the No-Load Tone 2 looks after the middle and bridge pickups. The Tele's master tone is also a No-Load and fully up, there's a subtle click in the feel

and it's effectively bypassed for maximum treble response.

Plugging in the Strat after a quick play of our reference Roadworn, we're reminded just how a different setup and string gauge can massively influence what we hear. There's a lighter, brighter tonality to the Elite and raising the action and increasing the treble-to-bass stagger on the pickup heights narrows the gap a little, as does pulling back the No-Load tone control. There's obviously a big difference in the pickups – our Roadworn has retro-fitted Custom Shop Texas Specials – and the Elite sounds more classic. But despite a less-pronounced magnet stagger, to our ears, the second-string response is a little 'soft'. The Elite does sound more refined, not quite as 'dirty' or as raw as our Roadworn, but with a touch more output.

It's a similar story with the Tele: immediately brighter and a little more open compared to our original '69, with high-end cut aplenty from the bridge pickup without too much midrange spike.

The Rivals

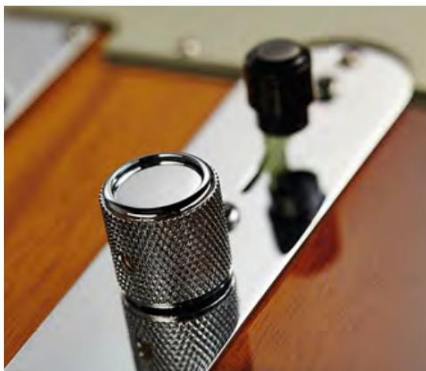
There's no shortage of Fender copies or clones out there from brands as diverse as ESP and Schecter, to Tom Anderson or Suhr, whose Classic Pro in SSS or HSS has a street price of around £1,799. Music Man will be entering the Strat market with the yet-to-be-priced Cutlass, which will be launched at the annual NAMM show in January 2016. Ex-Fender luthier John Page has his Classic Ashburn (£1,199), made in Japan, with numerous tweaks (not least an opposite-to-Fender bridge-pickup slant). The UK's Trev Wilkinson has some smart Fender-style guitars in his Korean-made Fret-King range: the Strat-inspired Corona SP (£539) with P-90 at bridge and the Tele-esque Country Squire Classic (£519) with humbucker at neck



S-1 Switching

The expanded S-1 switching has been with us since 2003 and changes from instrument to instrument. The Tele's system is straightforward but the Strat's is more complex; even armed with an ohm meter and tapping the pickups, two of the Strat's five positions – bridge and bridge and middle – had us foxed. In bridge position, with the S-1 switch depressed, according to Fender's spec sheet, all three pickups are on. However, the middle and neck pickups are linked together in series but added to the bridge pickup in *parallel*, accounting for a DC resistance of approximately 9.43k ohms – slightly lower than the non S-1 bridge selection of 9.63k ohms of the solo pickup. Here, though, the neck and middle pickups are classed as having 'diminished volume'.

In bridge and middle, with S-1, the DC resistance rises from 4.92k to 9.59k and Fender tells us the neck pickup is in parallel with the middle and bridge pickup that are in series; again, the middle and neck pickups have 'diminished volume'. In middle position, the bridge and middle pickups are linked in series; in middle and neck position, the two pickups are linked in series, not parallel; and in neck position, with the S-1 depressed, all three pickups are linked in series. So, there you go...



The surprise is the neck pickup. It's less clouded and soft: more like a good Strat, with plenty of attacking percussion. That makes the parallel mix brighter and more Strat-y, and the series link is a little less rounded in the highs, but still noticeably louder, darker and with plenty of lows.

Switching the S-1 switch down on the Strat really does take us to a different place. Selecting the middle pickup and switching in the S-1, it's as though you've kicked in a thickening boost: more humbucking, with more power and low end, plus there's a little 'cocked wah' to the highs. Moving to the middle-and-neck combination, the change is more dramatic, like you've cocked that wah pedal back further, losing the shimmering highs. At the neck, with the S-1 depressed, we have a similar voice with some of the highs restored. The bridge-and-middle position is less contrasted, sound slightly harder and a little phase-y; the bridge position is the most subtle.

As our test time continues, the neck shape is interesting, because we really didn't notice it; likewise, that compound camber. Both are really comfortable. But it's the added sonic flexibility, especially of the Strat, that commands our time. The series linkages really do add a different voice that loves crunch and gain. Conversely, switch to a clean amp, pull the volume down and select the S-1 neck position and you're good for your jazz gig. Knock it back to middle and neck, wind up your gain and it's a big rock rhythm sound.

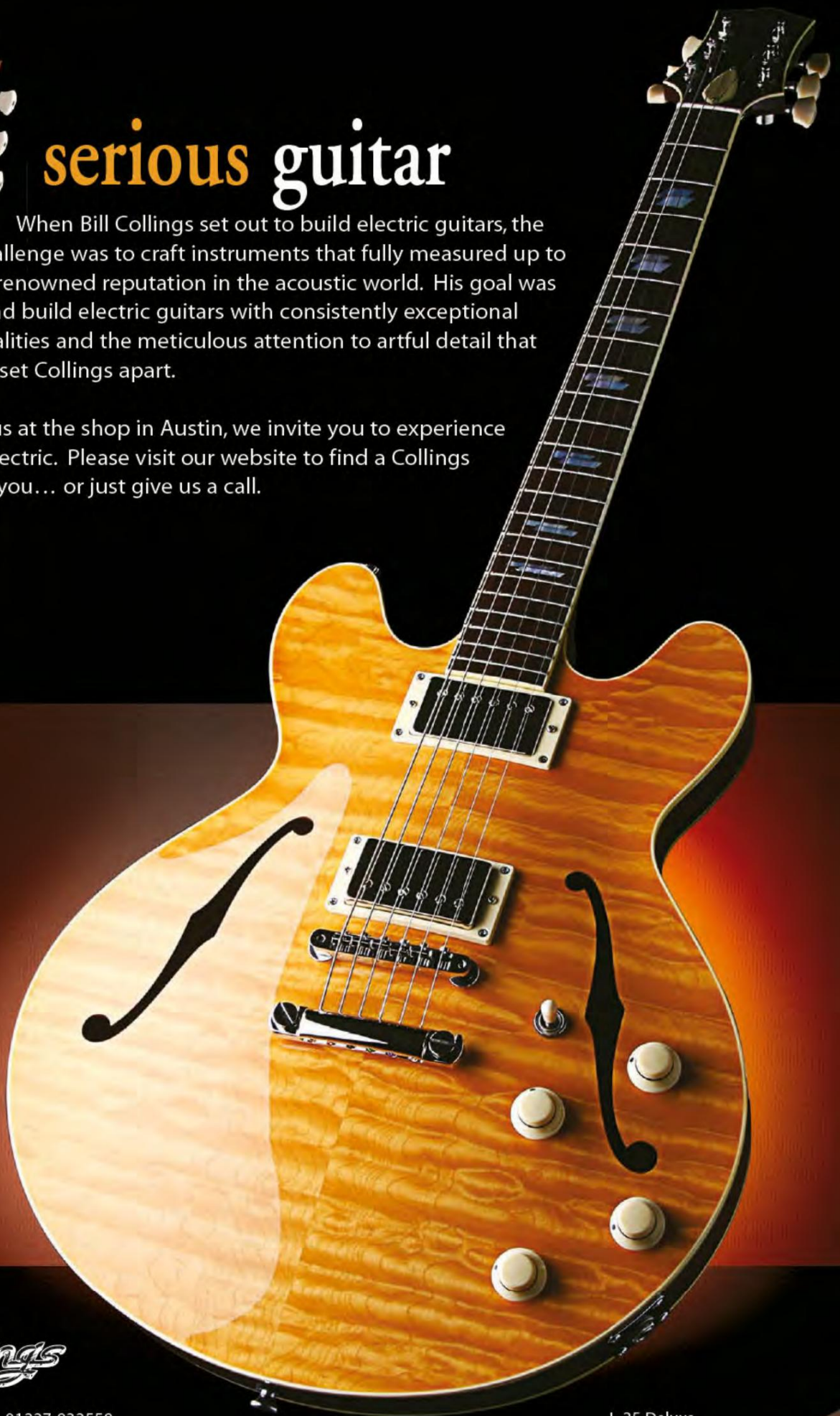
The Noiseless pickups are well named, noticeably quieter compared to any other passive single coils we had on hand. Working in front of our laptop, or stuck close to your amp on a cramped 'stage', there is virtually no hum pickup whatsoever. At higher gains and volumes, however, you will hear some hum pickup, but in every scenario, it is way less than our standard single-coil guitars. Are they really



serious guitar

When Bill Collings set out to build electric guitars, the challenge was to craft instruments that fully measured up to his renowned reputation in the acoustic world. His goal was to design and build electric guitars with consistently exceptional acoustic qualities and the meticulous attention to artful detail that continue to set Collings apart.

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I-35 Deluxe



5

At the price, the Elites cram in a lot of upgrades, and then there's the duality of the S-1 switching

4. The Elite Tele's bridge is the same as the previous Deluxe with six chrome-plated brass saddles instead of the harder-to-intonate three saddles of the classic Tele recipe. Keith Richards, among many pros, has used a similar bridge for years on many of his famous Teles

5. Aside from the 'Fender' and 'Noiseless' logos, the Tele's neck pickup follows the classic aesthetic. Sound-wise, it's definitely more Strat-y, though, and of course, hum-cancelling

humbuckers? Well, they sound like damn good single coils to us.

Verdict

Fender provides choice, right across the price spectrum. If you want vintage spec, it's there; if you want more contemporary, no problem. It's the latter that the Elites aim for and, not least at the price, they cram in a lot of upgrades; and then there's the duality of the S-1 switching. The Tele doesn't have the expansive sonic change of the Strat: the additional series linkage alone is hardly worth upgrading for, especially as you could mod your own Tele, but it's a charming guitar from its weight, look, great neck, improved playability of the compound 'board and frets, even that ribcage cut (not to mention the more Strat-like neck voice, or the intonation and locking tuners). It's a very good guitar that die-hard Tele players could enjoy, too.

Our test Strat is a little heavy, and that slight imbalance of the second string won't work for every player. But its voice is nicely classic: engage the S-1 switch and it's 'game on' for those of us who find a Strat a little hard work. Whereas we'd usually take out our standard-spec Strat along with another (probably humbucking) guitar to cover a wide sonic repertoire, the Elite might just get you home on its own while giving the finger to the pesky hum of the past. Fender is moving forwards... are you? **G**



FENDER AMERICAN ELITE STRATOCASTER

PRICE: £1,439 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody
BODY: Alder
NECK: Maple, modern 'C to D' profile, bolt-on, wheel truss-rod adjustment
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.85mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, white pearloid dot markers, 241-356mm (9.5-14") radius
FRETS: 22, jumbo
HARDWARE: Chrome-plated 2-Point Deluxe vibrato with pop-in arm, 'short post' cast/sealed locking tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 53mm
ELECTRICS: Fender Deluxe Noiseless single-coil-sized humbuckers (bridge, middle & neck), 5-position selector switch, master volume (with S-1 switch), tone 1 (neck), No-Load tone 2 (middle & bridge)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.89/8.6
OPTIONS: Maple fingerboard same price. Ash body on certain colours
RANGE OPTIONS: Elite HSS Shawbucker, same colour-dependent price as reviewed Strat
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, £1,509
FINISHES: Sky Burst Metallic (as reviewed), 3-Color Sunburst, Aged Cherry Burst (ash body), Tobacco Sunburst (ash body), Mystic Black, Olympic Pearl & Autumn Blaze Metallic cost £1,389. Gloss polyurethane body; satin urethane neck with gloss headstock face



PROS Improved Deluxe Stratocaster with exceptional Noiseless pickups and new neck profile, plus an expanded range of sound

CONS Vintage purists won't like it: many, many players will!



FENDER AMERICAN ELITE TELECASTER

PRICE: £1,389 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Single-cutaway solidbody
BODY: Ash
NECK: Maple, modern 'C to D' profile, bolt-on, wheel truss-rod adjustment
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43.28mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, white pearloid dot markers, 241-356mm (9.5-14") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Chrome-plated 6-Saddle American Tele with chromed brass saddles, 'short post' cast/sealed locking tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 53mm
ELECTRICS: Fender Deluxe Noiseless single coil-sized humbuckers (bridge & neck), 3-position selector switch, master volume (with S-1 switch), master No-Load tone
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.66/8
OPTIONS: Maple fingerboard same price. Alder body on certain colours
RANGE OPTIONS: The American Elite Tele Thinline with maple 'board in Natural, Mystic Ice Blue or 3-Color Sunburst costs £1,459
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Aged Cherry Burst and Tobacco Sunburst (as reviewed), Mystic Black, 3-Color Sunburst (£1,439) & Autumn Blaze Metallic (£1,439) on alder body. Gloss polyurethane body; satin urethane neck with gloss headstock face



PROS Hugely likeable modern Telecaster: great playability; those Noiseless pickups; and slightly expanded sounds

CONS Again, not for vintage purists and only one additional sound

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Elite Evolution

What was behind the new Elite guitars? Are they more than a simple refresh? We ask Fender's VP of product development, Justin Norvell

Why did you feel the need to upgrade the Noiseless pickups to a fourth generation?

"We're always chasing that perfect combo of a classic Fender sound with no hum. We believe our Noiseless pickups are the best out there, but we also felt that we could make them even better, so we're always playing with the formula. Recently, we tried some completely new construction methods and designs that yielded fantastic results – and rather than comparing and voicing them off the past three generations of Noiseless pickups, we used our American Vintage series pickups and voiced a more classic tone."

So, how do they differ in terms of the pickup design?

"It's an entirely new design. We spent two years in development and dozens of versions to get the right ones. There's a bit of a secret to the formula, but we used separate-pole magnet sets in the coils – which are also sized differently with a smaller bottom coil – and then experimented with different wire gauges between the coils, different gauss strengths in the magnets, until we achieved the optimal combination. It's all new! New bobbins, new magnets, new everything."

What are your perceptions of the change in sound?

"A much more open and full sound, with less compression. The response to attack dynamics and

rolling off the volume is outstanding – there's less magnetic pull as well, so the sustain is greater. These truly sound like great benchmark Strat/Tele/J Bass pickups, but with no hum! We voiced them to be musical and smooth with high gain. We joke that these are 'cold fusion' pickups, that we've finally cracked what people have been trying to do for 50 years!"


The new neck shape feels really good...

"When we approached this series, we definitely wanted to evolve the ergonomics and feel of the necks: to make a new shape that was effortless – less work, more play! We wanted the well-known Fender C shape down at the nut for chording, but we played around with the shape evolving to a more lead-friendly, flatter shape as you work up the neck. We went through about a dozen shapes and then experimented with blending the shapes together for the best feel... We took the tolerance of the heel volute down to mirror the new neck-joint heel, so at the high fret, you don't have that flattened out part – your hand just can glide all the way up."

And why lose the long-standing Micro-Tilt adjustment?

"The Micro-Tilt works with top-adjust truss rod nuts, so by going to the new easy-action rod with adjustment at the base, it was out. We felt the benefit of the easier access rod was the way to go." **G**

ABOVE One of the refinements of the Elite series is the addition of Fender's fourth generation of Noiseless pickups



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GIBSON J-45 VINTAGE & HUMMINGBIRD VINTAGE

Two models from Gibson's acoustic range have enjoyed a makeover for 2016 – and age is everything!

Words David Mead Photography Joby Sessions

What You Need To Know

- 1 So, what's cookin'?**
The current trend of heat treating guitar tops – commonly known as torrefication – is aimed at reproducing the effects of ageing. Drying the wood in this way is thought to make it more resonant, improving tone, projection and volume.
- 2 New for 2016?**
Gibson has revamped many of the models in its range – both acoustics and electrics – specially for 2016. The acoustics include radius'd tops and improved bracing, all built in the company's specialised facility in Bozeman, Montana.
- 3 Natty Dreads?**
These two are great examples of the two prime differences in dreadnought design. The Hummingbird is a square-shouldered dread, while its stablemate is a round-shoulder model – look at the pictures and you'll see from where this nomenclature is derived!

Gibson's dedicated acoustic facility lies tucked away amidst the mountains of Montana in a place called Bozeman – in fact, its address is very appropriately Orville Way, Bozeman. Here, a small team of expert luthiers oversees production of the company's acoustic range, and they've got a few tricks up their sleeves for 2016. Gibson's success in the field of making guitars is, of course, legendary, but perhaps more of a focus tends to be placed on its electric guitars rather than the arguably more humble acoustics. And yet, players as diverse as James Taylor, Jimmy Page, Donovan and John Lennon have all been seen sporting the odd J-45 or Hummingbird in their time, the distinctive Gibson timbres ringing out in hit after hit over the past few decades.

Generally speaking, you can tell a good instrument by the levels of interest it's given when it finds its way into the *Guitarist* offices and, in the instance of this pair of Gibsons, we played a game of pass the parcel, everybody throwing a few superlatives into the pot as they took their turn. Yes, they really are that good. But before we cut to the final opinions, let's take a look at what's new with these two established dreadnoughts.

To begin with, each model now sports a baked top. Gibson claims that cooking the wood to remove moisture allows it to replicate the ageing process to produce that highly sought after vintage tone. The

company has also installed period-correct tuners, softened the fingerboard edges for a more comfortable playing experience, combined Plek technology with an enhanced level of hand finishing and used special oil on bridges and fingerboards to maximise the wood's natural vibrancy. This all sounds good to us, but we're sure that there's more going on under the hood, too, as we've heard tales of bracing changes and the use of radius'd tops for better projection and volume.

All well and good, of course, but first of all, we'll take a brief look at the constituent parts of both instruments in order to see what kind of recipe has been used in cooking up these guitars.

Both acoustics feature spruce tops, the J-45 bearing Adirondack red spruce and the Hummingbird the equally desirable Sitka variety. In either case, the backs and sides are fashioned from mahogany, the Hummingbird measuring up at a very slightly deeper rim depth, according to the office measuring device – although, to look at them, you'd swear they were just about the same size. Necks, too, are mahogany, with rosewood fingerboards and bone saddles and nuts. As far as headstocks are concerned, the J-45 bears the older Gibson logo with the historically accurate scroll beneath – after all, the J-45 is the older model in the range, having an 18-year-head start over the Hummingbird, which didn't see the light of day until the dawn of the



When you hold one in your hands, you'll agree that these are some of the lightest acoustics on the market

generally wield a Les Paul, it's safe to say that you'll feel immediately at home.

Of course, the most outstanding difference between this pair is the variation in dreadnought style, the Hummingbird having the squared shoulders and the J-45 the more rounded variety. It's pretty much down to taste as to which you'd prefer, although you might notice a difference in general feel between the two, especially when playing sitting down. Opinions around the office were split down the middle as far as which one you'd choose for your Desert Island guitar, but in general, the decision seemed to be based around the overall aesthetics of each guitar as much as it was the slight variation in tone between the two.

One thing we did all agree on, however – and it was usually the first sentence out of everyone's mouth when they picked either guitar up – was how light the instruments are. Saying that they weigh around three-point-something pounds each is fairly meaningless on paper, but when you actually hold one in your hands, you're likely to agree that these are some of the lightest acoustics on the market.

What does 'light' mean from the point of view of construction? Well, thinner woods and lighter bracing, perhaps, but as we all know, the important factor is what they sound like, and, in a word, both guitars sound simply amazing.

1960s. Tuner buttons are different between the two models; both bear a set of aged Kluson-style with darkened buttons, but the J-45 has the smaller, earlier type and the Hummingbird has the more 50s/60s versions that wouldn't look at all out of place on a Gibson electric.

Looking more closely, the neck dimensions are all but identical in both cases and when they do differ, it's really

not by *that* much. As an example of this, the J-45's neck thickness at the 1st fret is 20.4mm, whereas the Hummingbird comes in at 20.7mm and so we'd be very surprised if anyone could detect much of a difference while playing. Both have Gibson's traditional shorter scale length of 628.6mm and so, if your tastes in electric guitars centre upon Fender's catalogue, you may notice a slight change of gear, but if you



2



3

1. Baked to perfection for a sound that is pure vintage chic!

2. The string spacing on the J-45 makes it very fingerstyle friendly

3. Gibson's older style headstock logo, complete with age-correct scroll

4. Both guitars had a perfect playing action fresh out of the box

5. The Hummingbird's beautiful pickguard is one of the guitar's major cosmetic features



4



5

THE RIVALS



MARTIN RETRO DREADNOUGHTS £2,749

Martin's Retro range is getting some very good reports – remember the little 00 we looked at recently? Check out the D-35E Retro or the HD-28E Retro with street prices that clock in around £2,749 for either.

www.martinguitar.com



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If you're thinking of going bespoke, then Kent-based builder Alister Atkin will build you a guitar that reflects your own tastes in that aged look – everything from VOS to seriously roadworn, with a starting price of around £2,649.

www.atkinguitars.com



BOURGEOIS AGED TONE POA

Based in the US, Dana Bourgeois has been building guitars for 40 years and part of his range includes the fully torrefied Aged Tone dreadnoughts. Slightly harder to track down than Gibsons or Martins, but we say it's well worth the effort. The prices vary, depending on woods.

www.bourgeoisguitars.net



TAYLOR 610E £3,018

Taylor has been warming up the ovens to roast its tops for a while now, and offers a number of dreadnoughts to suit. Our choice from the company's range is the maple 610e above, which Taylor says exudes an authentic aged tone, right from the very first strum.

www.taylorguitars.com



Both the J-45 and the Hummingbird certainly have an air of greatness about them



Sounds

We've mentioned before that acoustic guitars are incredibly difficult to describe in terms of tone. A solidbody guitar is virtually neuter until it's plugged through an amplifier – and a lot depends on exactly which type of amplifier you choose. And don't even begin to think about all the sound-altering pedals on the market. But acoustics sound bad, good, very good or great *au naturel* and both the J-45 and the Hummingbird certainly have an air of greatness about them. The consensus was that their main attribute was clarity and separation. Play a chord and you get an almost three dimensional effect, where every note has its individual place in space without any tendency at all to descend into a mush at any point.

A little James Taylor-esque fingerstyle sounds absolutely superb on both guitars, with the overall clarity and definition being at a premium here, too. Accompanying these regal degrees of tone is volume. Neither guitar could be called excessively loud, but there really is an admirable dynamic range on display in both instances. It's balanced, too; on a graph, there'd be virtually a straight line between trebles and basses, because each end of



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8

The changes made, from baking the tops to the bracing, have resulted in improvements that it's possible to hear and feel

- 6. The vintage Cherry Sunburst on the Hummingbird has a superb VOS finish
- 7. The J-45's tuners have that authentic early 1940s Gibson look to them...
- 8. ...while the Hummingbird features the later style of button

the tonal spectrum seems to have its own proportionate, correct weight.

Verdict

Orville Gibson worked by the creed that everything that goes into a guitar that bears his name is there in the name of tone and performance, and this was uppermost in the minds of the team in Montana when they were considering tweaks to two of the company's most established – and desirable – instruments. The changes made, from the baking of the tops to the changes in bracing, top-radiusing and so on, have resulted in improvements that it's possible to hear and feel. The crew at Bozeman can be justly proud that they have taken their company founder's aspirations another step forward. Finally, it has to be said that any guitar – electric or acoustic – that brings the office to an absolute standstill while its incumbents drool and swoon over it, is going to find itself among the high hitters in these pages! **G**



GIBSON J-45 VINTAGE

PRICE: £2,899
ORIGIN: Montana USA
TYPE: Round-shoulder dreadnought
TOP: Adirondack Red spruce
BACK/SIDES: Mahogany
MAX RIM DEPTH: 115mm (4.52")
MAX BODY WIDTH: 450mm (17.71")
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 628.65mm (24.75")
TUNERS: Vintage nickel
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/ 43.8mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 20
BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood, Bone / 55mm
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.65/3.63
RANGE OPTIONS: The J-45 Standard costs £1,599 with the J-45 Historic on the market for £1,315. The Custom model will set you back around £1,999 whereas the 2016 J-45 Acacia is just a tad more at £2,299. If you yearn for something extra, there's the J-45 Progressive (£2,199) with a G Force tuning system and an active PZM bridgeplate pickup
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Nitrocellulose

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9/10

PROS Blues, fingerstyle, chords, arpeggios – all sound great on this new version of Gibson's workhorse

CONS If your ideal dreadnought has 'Martin' on the headstock you might have issues, but apart from that...



GIBSON HUMMINGBIRD VINTAGE

PRICE: £3,099
ORIGIN: Montana USA
TYPE: Square-shoulder dreadnought
TOP: AA Grade Sitka spruce
BACK/SIDES: Mahogany
MAX RIM DEPTH: 117mm (4.60")
MAX BODY WIDTH: 451mm (17.75")
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 628.65mm (24.75")
TUNERS: Gotoh
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43.8mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 20
BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood, Bone / 55mm
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.7/3.75
RANGE OPTIONS: There's a whole slew of different Hummingbird models available from Gibson beginning with the Epiphone Eclub Ebony that sells for around £199 (with the Gibson equivalent coming in at considerably more), right up to the Hummingbird Modern Classic that sits in the range at around £2,199, and the more rarified Hummingbird Custom Koa at around £4,299. See the website for details on the full 2016 range
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Nitrocellulose



9/10

PROS Great levels of tone and playability, not to mention the heritage on offer here

CONS The whole question of artificial ageing is not to everyone's taste



Acoustic Store

Acoustic guitars are a huge part of our business, to such an extent that we now have a completely separate showroom only fifty yards from our electric store... Two floors packed full of acoustic instruments from world famous builders including Martin, Taylor, Lowden, Collings, Bedell, National, Gibson and more, all available for you to play in a quiet and relaxed environment where you will not be disturbed by electric guitar players!

Electric Store

Our electric guitar store has always stocked a huge range of Fender and Gibson guitars, in fact we are one of the largest Fender Custom shop centres in the world and have been enthusiastically selling them since the Custom shop began back in the 1990's. Many other products are stocked in depth, as you would expect from a full line guitar store, including directly imported guitars, amps and FX from around the world that up until now have not been readily available in the UK...





Playing Battleship?

These days, dreadnought acoustic guitars are commonplace in virtually every style of music you can name. Here's how they rose to power...

History reveals that it was the CF Martin Company that first coined the name 'Dreadnought' for an acoustic body size. Named after a British battleship launched in 1906, the original craft was a turning point in naval history, bettering its rivals in terms of armament, speed, size and firepower. A few of those attributes could apply to the big-bodied beast of the unplugged world, too.

Strangely, the first dreadnought acoustics didn't bear the Martin logo, but were made for the Oliver Ditson Company with production beginning in 1916, marketing being centred upon New York and Boston. These models had 12-fret-to-the-body necks, slotted pegheads, no pickguards and with unique inlays and soundhole rosettes. However, in terms of construction, they featured mahogany backs and sides and spruce tops; since becoming pretty much standard with makers of dreadnought-style guitars worldwide.

Alas, the Martin-made Ditsons only lasted four years, as the Ditson company stopped trading in 1920. But in 1931 CF Martin added the D-1 and D-2 models to the range, the D-1 featuring mahogany backs and sides, the D-2, rosewood. Thus the dreadnought was

born, its powerful voice and lower-mid-rich tones finding favour with country artists who at last had an instrument that would sit well with fiddles and banjos as an accompaniment to vocals. Around 1934, Gibson began making its own larger-body acoustics with the Jumbo flat tops including the J-35, so-called because of its \$35 asking price. But it would be another 11 years before they brought out the model that would seriously challenge the might of Martin – the Gibson J-45.

Gibson's J-45 first saw the light of day in 1942, right at the beginning of the USA's involvement in World War II. You might think that this would have been a difficult time to launch a new model to the range, what with restrictions put in place on the use of resources like timber, metal and, more importantly, manpower. In fact, much of the company's staff was involved in war-related projects and reserving spruce for guitar tops was considered secondary to its use in aircraft manufacture. This resulted in the first J-45s having multi-piece tops, with Sunburst the only finish initially available – a great way of disguising the joins in the timber. Another effect that the war had upon manufacture resulted in a few models in 1943 having

ABOVE LEFT Martin's Retro Series HD-28E (right) and D-18E are 2012 recreations of specific pre-war-made specimens, with Fishman 'models' of these prized specimens onboard

MIDDLE These Limited Edition J-45s in Pelham Blue and Goldtop finishes were released in 2013

RIGHT Country star Brad Paisley based this signature model on his own 1963 J-45



maple necks, as opposed to mahogany, and no truss rod, as metal was a precious commodity, most of it being diverted away from domestic use and into the war effort. Wartime J-45s have become sought-after among the collectorati mainly for the variations in build.

It wasn't long before Gibson's 'no frills' dreadnought found its way into players' hearts and it soon became known as 'The Workhorse' because of its ability to suit virtually any style of music. It found particular favour with the blues players of the 40s and 50s, including Gary Davis, Skip James and Mississippi John Hurt. Coming more up to date, players who have been seen with a J-45 in their hands include John Lennon, who reputedly learned his singular fingerpicking style from Donovan on one while attending The Beatles' famous Indian retreat in Rishikesh in 1968. Before then, both Buddy Holly and Bob Dylan made good use of the J-45, its distinctive tone in evidence on much of Dylan's early work. Even today's players are not immune to the J-45's charms, as songsmith James Blunt is often seen wielding his treasured 1966 model.

And Your Bird Can Sing...

The Gibson Hummingbird started its life back at the beginning of the 1960s as the company's answer to the more elaborate dreadnoughts that had started appearing in the Martin catalogue. By this time, the dreadnought body shape had been accepted by players of all styles of music and was starting to become a favourite among the burgeoning array of folk singer-songwriters appearing on the scene. As far as the Gibson catalogue of the time was concerned, it was

the second most ornate acoustic in its stable, playing second fiddle only to the J-200. But that status didn't last for long, because the early 60s saw the introduction of the Dove, which sat in the price list between the Hummingbird and J-200. Like its brother in arms, the J-45, the Hummingbird went through several variations with models such as the Custom, Koa Montana Special and Century appearing on the market in recent years. In terms of actual changes in spec, there have been many over time – some advantageous, some not. An example of the latter category would include a screw-down scratchplate, whose short life on the production line was limited only to 1968 before everyone involved acknowledged that it was a very bad idea, and the infamous adjustable string saddle, which found no favour with players at all because of its apparent handicap to tone, but nonetheless managing to survive in place until 1970.

In terms of popularity, the Hummingbird was no doubt given a leg up by its appearance in the hands of The Byrds' Gram Parsons, but several additional levels of cool were added when Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page appeared on TV in the UK in 1970 playing one on *The Julie Felix Show*. That particular event is possible to check out still in a video of exceedingly questionable quality on YouTube, if you care to click over and take a look. The Hummingbird's charms didn't escape the notice of the early 1970s fusion players, either. Check out John McLaughlin playing with Tony Williams' Lifetime in 1971 – all he needed to do was add a pickup, the rest was down to some phenomenal musicianship and the 'bird's exceptional sonic capabilities. 🐦





PRS CE 24 £1,869

Always a cult favourite, the PRS CE makes a comeback for 2016 in a highly affordable guise. How do they do that? We find out...

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Joby Sessions

What You Need To Know

1 PRS CE? We've seen that before, haven't we?

Indeed, we have. It was originally called the Classic Electric (until Peavey objected to the name and it changed to CE) and first appeared back in 1988 as a more Fender-like alternative, with alder body and bolt-on maple neck, compared to the more Gibson-like construction of the set-neck mahogany/maple Custom and all-mahogany Standard.

2 What happened to that?

There was some confusion in the market, which simply wanted a more affordable PRS guitar. So a black head-face was added, along with rosewood fingerboard, bird inlays and maple top.

3 Then what?

By the mid-90s, the model featured a maple-topped mahogany body, and a 22-fret version was added from '94. It was retired in 2008 when the CE 24 and 22 Alder (re)appeared. By the following year it was gone, again. Why? Read on...

Let's look at the facts. At full retail, the start price of PRS's 'full-fat' USA-made Core-line Custom 24 is £2,939. PRS's more economically made S2 version, constructed in PRS's USA factory, is a lowly £1,375. That's quite a gap, and for many of us the former is out of reach and the latter is, ahem, not quite PRS enough. Enter the all-new 2016 CE 24, which drops in comfortably under the £2k mark.

PRS is purposely *not* calling it an S2 guitar, although some of its features (neck construction-style and hardware) are the same. But unlike the S2 Custom, for example, the CE is loaded with the USA-made, uncovered 85/15 pickups that grace the current Core Custom 24 and the body is a very close cousin to that Core model, too.

Whatever the backstory, pulling the new CE from its gigbag, not hard case, is a little like meeting up with an old friend. On its introduction in 1988, along with it being the cheapest PRS guitar, it was the first to feature a bolt-on maple neck and seemed to signify a more rock 'n' roll workhorse, gigging PRS. So, what's changed?

First, it's the first PRS bolt-on to use a slab-sawn three-piece, as opposed to quarter-sawn one-piece maple neck: a more economical use of more easily available wood with a separate piece for the headstock and heel-piece. As always, the neck here has a nitrocellulose finish; it's slightly toned in colour and has a satin finish that'll quickly burnish up to a glossier sheen with playing. Importantly, it's much faster to apply than a standard gloss finish.

Second, while the body looks like a standard Core Custom, on closer inspection

you see some subtle – and cost-saving – differences compared to the Core body. There are no carved indents under the controls and toggle switch, and there's less rise to the top carve. Also, in overall depth, the CE measures 44mm, pretty much the same as the S2. The mahogany back is around 31mm thick, leaving the maple top at around 13mm thick – a mahogany-to-maple ratio of pretty much 70:30. By comparison, the Core Custom is around 49mm thick with a 28.5mm-to-20.5mm mahogany-to-maple ratio of 60:40. However, the actual rim depths of both are pretty similar: cleverly, to the eye, things appear more similar than they actually are.

PRS's glued-in or bolt-on necks are virtually identical in the way they fit into the body. The neck's heel extends under the neck pickup where it's glued or, as in this case, screwed tight via four machine screws through a metal neck plate. There are no options and that includes neck shape: here it's PRS's Pattern Wide profile – in old money, a Wide Thin – which is new to this S2-style neck. That translates to the same width at the nut and top fret as a Pattern (Wide Fat) of 42.9mm and 57mm, but a slimmer depth: 20.9mm deep at the 1st fret and 23mm at the 12th. Standard size fretwire is used, as opposed to the bigger wire we're seeing more of in the Core line, and the fingerboard edges are subtly rolled to feel like a well-played guitar; fretting and setup are as crisp as ever.

On the un-faced headstock, eagle-eyed PRS fans will notice that the raised Paul Reed Smith logo is smaller than those placed on the head face of the current S2s,



and is chrome, not gold-coloured. The CE logo on the black truss-rod cover seems slightly off-centre on our prototype, but that's been fixed on the production models.

If there's a whiff of economy about the guitar in its USA-designed, Korean-made parts and that top carve, then the USA 85/15s provide a balance. These uncovered versions of the covered 85/15s have distinctly square-edged bobbins, a proprietary design like the low-profile cream pickup rings and the multi-flanged 'lampshade' control knobs. Unlike the Custom's current five-way lever pickup selector, here, we have what's known as the 'McCarty electronics': a Gibson-like three-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume and tone, the latter with a pull/push switch to simultaneously coil split both pickups and voice, primarily, the screw coils of each. Typically, it's PRS's

The Rivals

A bolt-on neck with maple top and twin humbuckers is a rarity. MusicMan's single-cut Axis SuperSport (£2,034), with vintage-style vibrato option, has a basswood back with thin maple top and dual DiMarzio 'buckers, and a great neck. Fender's new American Elite range, previously the Deluxe, doesn't feature a dual 'bucker Strat but the HSS Shawbucker (from £1,389) has broad sounds via that bridge Shawbucker and S-1 switching. The new CE's main competition might be older examples of the PRS CE or the set-neck Custom: they might not match 2016 specs, but they're still great guitars

There's some of the skeletal 'super-model' feel that made early PRS guitars feel so different

modern 'partial tap' circuit that doesn't entirely switch off one coil, leaving some of the 'dumped' coil in play. We also have a small treble-bleed cap on the volume control to retain some highs as the volume is reduced. Incidentally, both plastic rear coverplates, for the control and vibrato spring cavities, sit on top of the wood, S2-style, unlike those on the Core models, which are recessed flush.

Sounds

The 'old friend' appearance we mentioned translates to the feel, too, certainly in comparison with the chunkier McCarty thickness models (pretty much all of the current Core double-cuts with the exception of the Custom) or guitars such as the S2 Standard Singlecut Satin we looked at in our last issue. There's some of that skeletal 'super-model' feel, along with a light weight (as here), that made early PRS guitars feel so different. The neck shape, again compared with the pattern, does feel skinnier, but not in a bad way. Although the 24-fret neck seems to stick out more from the body than, say, a Stratocaster, strapped on, it takes only moments to adjust.

If the drive is familiar, the modern sound of the PRS is getting that way, too. There is a very vintage-y output here that's clean and clear, which results in almost bell-like chime that seems to lack the midrange hump of older PRS pickups. Now, the guitar's voice (its acoustic resonance) is going to be different here compared with the 30th Anniversary Custom, and there's something that the maple neck puts into the stew, a subtle upper-mid attack and percussion, that this writer has always found extremely valid lending a small amount of 'Fender' to the taste combined with plenty of thunk and a *souçon* of clarity from the body.

Along with the excellent in-tune vibrato and the whole way PRS has squeezed every ounce of resonance from its instruments, the ring and clarity for cleans or crunch tones is quite exceptional. Okay, we don't have that huge low-end of a Core Singlecut, but again, that seems to suit the halfway-between-Gibson-and-Fender vibe. There's plenty of classic-rock power from the 'buckers, but no lack of balance, while



1. The 85/15 'buckers are the uncovered versions of PRS's latest USA-made 'date' series pickups. They are apparently based on a humbucker used by a very famous guitar player... but we're not supposed to know that
2. Note the slightly smaller, chrome signature on the unfaced headstock
3. One of the few PRS bolt-on guitars, here the maple neck is three-piece – with separate piece for the headstock and heel. It's also slab-sawn, not quarter-sawn wood, unlike all other PRS bolt-ons
4. Slightly slimmer-deeped than the Core Custom body, the CE body is more carved than the cheaper S2 and uses the standard polyester basecoat (rather than the Core's V12 finish) with the S2's acrylic topcoat



5

5. PRS's vibrato, combined here with top-locking tuners, has been used on thousands of instruments. This version is Korean-made, like those used on the SE and S2 guitars. It works perfectly

Add amp grit and it's power-Fender tone, with a bit more balls, and perfect for modern country

the lower output single-coil voices lend another flavour. It's not a dead-ringer for a Strat or Tele, but simply another texture that really suits older styles along with country or Americana; add a little amp grit and it's power-Fender tone, with a bit more balls, and perfect for modern country styles. There's a very balanced output string-to-string, which is not always the case with traditional single coils with their numerous variants of pole piece heights. Seriously, these split voices aren't to be sneezed at. In trying to listen to as many different sounds as possible during our test time, we were in split mode at least half of the time.

Verdict

Whichever way you look at this new CE – as an up-spec'd S2 or down-spec'd Core model – it's a cracking guitar that distils the essence of PRS, the detailed build, intonation, resonance and style, into simply a very pro-spec instrument.

It might be seen as a much more affordable Core-line Custom 24, but to our ears, it's not just about that: there's a character here that leans just a little towards a good Fender, a percussive edge or subtle flavour that is what attracted many of us to those original CEs over the Custom or Standard. Welcome back, my friend. 🎸



PRS CE 24

PRICE: £1,869 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody

BODY: Mahogany, carved maple cap

NECK: Maple, Pattern Thin profile, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

NUT/WIDTH: 42.9mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, old-style bird inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 24, medium

HARDWARE: PRS-designed vibrato, and locking tuners – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: 2x uncovered PRS 85/15 humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume and tone (with pull/push coil-split)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.45/7.6

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The only other PRS bolt-on is the Brent Mason signature (£2,590). The S2 Custom 24 (£1,375) has S2 HFS & Vintage Bass pickups; the 2016 Core Custom 24 (from £2,939) has 85/15 'buckers

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Vintage Sunburst (as reviewed), Amber, Dark Cherry Sunburst, Grey Black, McCarty Tobacco, Ruby, Trampas Green, Whale Blue

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9/10

PROS Price, build, sound, vibrato, intonation. A cracking workhorse

CONS Limited colours and no options, so you're stuck with one neck profile... and those birds!



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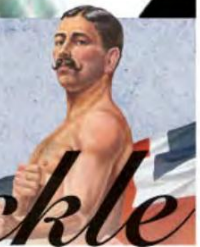
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Behind The CE

It's been a rocky road for the PRS CE from its debut in 1988 to its demise by 2009. What signals its return?

Back in autumn 2015, we got the heads up that PRS was planning a new and very “significant” guitar launch for the start of this year. Expecting, perhaps, a new original design such as the Vela, which had surfaced 12 months before, we were a little surprised when we opened a shipping box and pulled our review model out from its gigbag: a CE, a model that first appeared 27 years ago. “It’s the first pre-production prototype,” explained the head of PRS Europe, Gavin Mortimer. “I stole it from Jack’s office.”

Aside from the fact we were accepting stolen goods from PRS’s president, Jack Higginbotham, whom Paul Reed Smith was later to call the ‘bus driver’ in terms of his role in recreating this guitar, we honestly wondered why PRS had bothered to recreate this blast from the past. The answer, says Paul Reed Smith simply, is “because we’re now capable of making it at a price-point that we weren’t capable of before. We built the new [factory] building so we could make the S2 range and these [CEs]. A building is a tool to do something and all this machinery is [a] tool, too. We have this very cool

[S2] process where the S2 necks are made differently to the Core guitars, but are really straight. We figured out a way to make them in a different way – it simply offers a PRS to someone at a much lower price point.

“You see, CEs always sold well,” he continues. “The problem was that in our old factory in Virginia Avenue – and before we developed the S2 process – it was difficult to be profitable when we made them. But we can do that now. It’s not that I want to use the word ‘profitable’ in a review, but we did build the new factory building so that we had the capability to make instruments at these [S2 and CE] price points, but with that quality we’re known for. That’s why we did it.”

Paul Reed Smith might not want to mention the word profit in a guitar review, but, in reality, it’s crucial to the CE story, and indeed any previous pre-S2 attempt by PRS to build a more affordable guitar in the USA.

Whizz the clock back to the very early 1950s and it was Leo Fender who created the blueprint for the ‘bolt-on guitar’, with what became known as the Telecaster. Essentially two pieces of wood ‘bolted’

ABOVE LEFT The CE story starts with the pictured 1988 Classic Electric, as it was then called. “Bolt-on traditional feel with a sound of its own,” advertised PRS. In the UK, it retailed at £799; a Custom started at £1,299

ABOVE Is it Paul Reed Smith Guitars or PRS Guitars? Well, both. The Classic Electric featured this PRS Electric logo, to confuse us further. Note the original cam-locking tuners and retrofitted ebony tuner buttons



ABOVE The early Classic Electrics featured a plain black-plated metal neck plate, the serial number handwritten on the back of the headstock. Even the truss-rod cover was plain – unlike today's 2016 CE

together with four machine screws, its modular construction was a lot less labour intensive than those 'proper' guitars made by the Gibson factory. And from that point on, a bolt-on guitar was always perceived to be cheaper than a set-neck instrument.

When PRS looked at creating a more affordable version of its maple-topped Custom and all-mahogany Standard, it's little surprise therefore that the company chose a bolt-on design. The first CEs (still at that point called Classic Electrics) had a two-piece alder body that was more cost-effective compared to the Custom's maple/mahogany body, and along with its nitro-finished maple neck and dot-inlaid fingerboard, created a guitar that was around 40 per cent cheaper, at USA cost. The fact that it *sounded* very different, woodier and more 'Fender-y' than a Custom seems to have escaped its target market, which simply wanted a more affordable Custom. So, maple tops, rosewood

For players coming from the modding 'superstrat' generation, the bolt-on platform of the CE, with humbuckers, single coils and vibrato, was 'home'

fingerboards, bird inlays and, eventually, a switch from alder to mahogany for the back wood achieved that, but it also narrowed the price difference between the CE and the Custom closer to 20 per cent, a margin that pretty much defeated the whole original concept.

And it's price over sound that again seems to have kickstarted the new CE – essentially a hybrid of the faster S2-style production and the full-blown Core range – not least with the increasing strength of the USA dollar, and, as Paul Reed Smith observes, a change in the end-user.

"Think about it. A lot of stores are full of Chinese imitations of what we loved as kids. Prices have dropped. We [PRS] were the people that brought it up. We got it over a £1,000, £2,000, £3,000, right? But things are very different now. Young people just aren't spending that kind of money on guitars. They're spending it on hand-held electronics and computers. We're looking at very different times compared to when we first launched the CE. But like I say, that guitar always had merit. People who own CEs love them."

This writer is certainly one of those CE lovers. Yes, it was always a more affordable PRS, but coming from the modding 'superstrat' generation, a bolt-on platform with humbuckers, single coils and vibrato, was 'home'. The CE – old and new – is pretty much exactly that. So, yes, it's a cheaper guitar thanks to its new hybrid construction but it's a guitar that also sounds different enough to a Core Custom to make it a more-than-valid choice. *Vive la différence.* **G**

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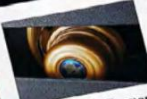
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PEDALBOARD

Righteous reverb, trippy trem and two boutique drives that emulate the legendary sounds of Dumble and Klon...



The phrase 'unobtainium' has passed into common parlance for guitarists these days, as the most sought-after hardware, such as the celebrated but scarce amplifiers made by Alexander Dumble, approach the rarity value of fragments of unicorn horn. One way round the problem is to make a (hopefully) close emulation of that hardware, and that's what we've got in store here in the form of J Rockett Audio Designs' Archer Ikon and The Dude drive pedals, designed to emulate the Gold Klon Centaur and Dumble's Overdrive Special amp respectively. To find out how near to these grails the pedals get, see p122.

Meanwhile, we enjoyed another re-imagining of a classic effect with EarthQuaker Devices' Palisades overdrive,

which offers possibly the most tweakable take on a certain screaming green overdrive that we've seen, while its quirky Rainbow Machine makes off-piste sonic experiments possible, generating pitch-shifted polyphonic harmonies that range from the subtle to the downright strange.

Finally, we've got an interesting little batch of boutique thrills for you thanks to Portland, Oregon-based effects maker Catalinbread. Floyd fans should dig its Echorec tape delay emulator, while we were taken with its sunshine-drenched Topanga reverb pedal, with its Fender-inspired spring reverb tones. Harmonic trem and Marshall-inspired drives complete the line-up, which you can read all about on p127. **G**



J ROCKETT AUDIO DESIGNS ARCHER IKON & THE DUDE

£169 & £169

A pedal and an amp, both the subject of myths and hype, find themselves ripe for resurrection by a Californian boutique stompbox company

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Joby Sessions

If we asked you to name two items of guitar gear that have a massive reputation among tone-fiends but are now out of production and so rare that used prices have escalated to the point where they are out of reach of even the most wealthy, chances are that the original gold Klon Centaur pedal and the Dumble Overdrive Special amp would be mentioned.

Original Klons go for silly money compared with most pedals, and if you could find a Dumble amp on the market... well, you could buy a decent terraced house in certain parts of our fair isle for the same money. Indeed, Alexander 'Howard' Dumble only made around 300 of these amps and is unlikely to make any more, while Klon designer, Bill Finnegan, has said he will never make any more Centaurs.

Not surprisingly, then, plenty of stompbox companies now build pedals that aim to get you close to those elusive tones, not least J Rockett Audio Designs (JRAD) whose new Tour Series pedals, the Archer Ikon and The Dude, respectively promise Klon and Dumble-alike tones. Both are nicely compact and reassuringly heavy pedals that take a nine-volt adaptor, but will also run off batteries, although the four screws for battery access are small so you'll have to be careful with them.

Sounds

When Bill Finnegan decided that he wasn't going to make any more Klon Centaurs, he enlisted the services of JRAD to undertake production of the follow-up KTR pedal. Ultimately, the deal fell through, but

ABOVE Want to add some myth and mojo to your pedalboard? These two J Rockett pedals are significantly cheaper (not to mention more available!) than the gear they're based on



JRAD consequently produced a Klon clone called the Archer. We've featured the silver version of the Archer before but now the company has released this gold version called the Archer Ikon (cough). It's not just that colour scheme that recalls the original Klon, though; this version apparently has the same 'magic' diodes. Although Klon Centaur circuit boards were covered in gloop to disguise the components used, word got out about what the circuit was – all except for a pair of diodes that were not incontrovertibly identified.

Consequently, the many Klon clones that are around use different value diodes. However, US retailer Pro Guitar Shop and JRAD now claim to have identified and acquired some of the 'magic' diodes and developed the Archer Ikon around them as a 100 per cent, part-for-part remake, fine-tuning the circuit along the way to be indistinguishable from an original gold Klon.

Rockett's take on the Ikon is that it has a tad more compression in the midrange, plus less high-end presence than the silver version, which would translate to being smoother with a little less bite. We didn't have a silver version on hand to compare it to, and are aware anyway that any differences would be subtle and translated by each player in their own terms. What we can say, though, is that it does exactly what you would expect a Klon-style pedal to do. With the gain down and the output up you get a lovely open-sounding boost for your amp – something to kick in or to leave on all the time, with a treble knob fine tuning it to taste. Turning up the Gain knob dials in nicely smooth and transparent low-level overdrive that should complement any amp.

With a Dumble Overdrive Special probably the world's most desirable amp, it's no surprise that

manufacturers are keen to distil some of that magic into a pedal, and there are already quite a few out there. JRAD's The Dude is the latest of these and was designed after close inspection of an original ODS. The pedal's Level knob ups the output, introducing clean boost from about 10 o'clock, and if you want some dirtier sounds, the Ratio knob starts to blend in some gain to the clean boost until the sound is fully overdriven with some great blends along the way. All this while retaining string clarity with tweaks available via a Treble knob and a Deep knob that operates around the lower mid frequencies and can put in a bit of a scoop or dial in a bit of 4x12 thump. Playing through The Dude, you are aware of its sensitivity to touch and the rich harmonic content of the sound, both attributes of a Dumble amp. If you're into lyrical lead playing with plenty of fat sustain, there's definitely something for you here. Regardless of any amp comparisons, though, it's a thoroughly versatile overdrive pedal.

Verdict

The Archer Ikon is an ideal adjunct to a good valve amp, and The Dude is an excellent sounding overdrive that can endow any amp with overdrives right across the range to higher gain while offering some of that elusive D-flavour and mojo. [TC]

PROS Solid build; quality sound; provision of some elusive tones and functionality that players want

CONS Tiny screws if you want to change a battery; black knobs against a black background is tricky on a dark stage

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Drive pedals
FEATURES: Buffered bypass (Archer Ikon); True bypass (The Dude)
CONTROLS: Output, Gain, Treble, bypass footswitch (Archer Ikon); Level, Ratio, Treble, Deep, bypass footswitch (The Dude)
CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output
POWER: 9V battery or 9V adaptor (not supplied)
DIMENSIONS: 59 (w) x 104 (d) x 45 mm (h)

Zoom UK Distribution
08432 080 999
rockettpedals.com

8/10

1



2



1 EARTHQUAKER PALISADES £229

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Overdrive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Boost, volume, tone, Gain A & B, voice, bandwidth, normal/bright switch, input buffer switch, boost footswitch, gain B footswitch, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 144 (w) x 122 (d) x 56mm (h)

Rocky Road

01494 535333

www.earthquakerdevices.com



Just about every boutique pedal maker turns out some sort of Tube Screamer clone, but EarthQuaker has taken a radical approach to the task. While the company may have based its Palisades on the classic TS808, it's built into it a larger array of options than we've so far seen in any overdrive pedal. There's a choice of six clipping voices and five different bandwidth settings (via a pair of rotary switches): 30 variations on the character of the effect before you even start to tweak!

Pedals that change the clipping diodes for different distortion voices are not uncommon, but some do the job with set-and-forget internal DIP switches. Not so the Palisades, with instantly accessible options of no diodes, LED clipping, MOSFET clipping, asymmetrical Silicon clipping, symmetrical Silicon

clipping and Schottky Diode clipping, each offering a change in the nature of the distortion. Further changes are made with bandwidth settings, which go from thin-sounding with the least amount of gain to the fattest setting with the heaviest gain. You also get a tone knob and a normal/bright switch. The result is a pedal that lets you dial in a massive range of overdrive tones – not just good impersonations of TS pedals, but much gainier drives verging on distortion and fuzz, as well as transparent boost/overdrive. If you like boost and dirt pedals, you'll find something to suit you here, and the Palisades shines in its switching capability.

While there's a knob for the overall output volume, the

Palisades is actually a two-channel pedal with separate gain knobs for channel A and the higher-gain channel B; you can set one up to be dirtier than the other and switch between them with the Gain B footswitch. More variation is provided by a third footswitch, which brings in a boost set by the boost knob: instant access to four different gain levels.

Tube Screamers (and their associated clones) can be a bit of a one-trick pony – something that the Palisades is most definitely not. What this pedal is all about is options: options in dialling exactly the overdrive sound you want, and then options in using that sound live with different degrees of footswitchable gain. Cool. [TC]

VERDICT *Overdrive sounds to suit many tastes, delivered in a pedal with real practicality for live work*

9/10

2 EARTHQUAKER RAINBOW MACHINE £199

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Pitch shifter pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Secondary, pitch, primary, magic, tone, tracking, magic footswitch, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, expression pedal input

POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied) 60mA current draw

DIMENSIONS: 93 (w) x 121 (d) x 54mm (h)

Described as a 'polyphonic harmonizing modulation machine', the Rainbow Machine uses digital oscillators to deliver polyphonic harmonies from a 4th down to a 3rd up – plus all the pitches in between if an atonal vibe grabs you. All this is delivered via a Pitch knob that you have to tune by ear: unison is at the 12 o'clock position, but there are no notches on the knob. You can also add in an upper octave to the harmony, the volumes of the harmony and octave relative to the dry sound (and to each other) are set with Primary and Secondary knobs. The Tone knob can soften the high end, while a Tracking knob determines the time lag between the harmony/octave and the dry signal. Further adjustment comes via the Magic function, basically a regeneration control, which

gets its own footswitch and is designed to add weirdness.

Without even getting into any actual pitch shifting, the pedal does some cool things with the Pitch control set to unity. Bringing up the level of the primary harmony gives you a direct copy of the original signal for a nice doubling effect, and you can then use the Tracking knob to put distance between the two for instant delay up to a cool slapback effect. If you add the secondary harmony in you get more delays, so there's a signal like a multi-head tape echo. A slight movement of the Pitch knob reveals some lovely detuning and chorus-like effects. Of course, you can move the Pitch knob further to tune into standard

pitched harmonies, such as the musical 3rd up, and tracking is excellent all over the neck. If you don't want to grab the Pitch knob to dial in your pitches, there's provision to connect an expression pedal, which, of course, opens up the possibility of sweeping the pitch, although not like a Whammy, because the original pitch stays intact while the harmonies move alongside it. Freaky, but some will like it.

Even more intriguing though is the Magic function, which adds a ramping up or down to your selected pitch creating 'spaceship taking off' sounds among other things. There's truly a rainbow variety of sounds here – some extremely musical, others extremely odd, but always interesting. [TC]

VERDICT *A colourful spectrum of sounds: a pedal for both prominent effects or just something a little off-kilter behind your standard sound*

8/10

1



2



3



4



1 CATALINBREAD DIRTY LITTLE SECRET £137

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Drive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Treble, Middle, Bass, Master, Preamp, internal mode switch, internal Presence trimpot, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard

input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V-18V DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 112 (d) x 47mm (h)

Andertons

01483 456777

www.catalinbread.com

One of the Portland, Oregon-based company's most popular pedals, the Dirty Little Secret is now in its third incarnation and delivers Marshall-like tone, whatever amp you're using. An internal switch sets the pedal to either Super Lead or Super Bass mode: the first, based on a later 'plexi' model having more gain and a different tonestack with more upper mids; the second more akin to early Marshalls or the Bassman it was based on, with less prominent midrange and lower gain.

Internally, a presence pot dials in the top end to suit your rig. The tone knobs offer the sort of organic control you'd get with an amp and both modes sound excellent, providing a range of drive with familiar British tonal signature. The Super Lead mode offers enough gain to take you into JCM territory, while the Super Bass takes a fuzz pedal really well for some classic 60s rock sounds. [TC]

VERDICT A versatile tone-building dirt box with two distinct M-style flavours

8/10

2 CATALINBREAD TOPANGA £159

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Spring reverb pedal

FEATURES: Switchable true or buffered bypass, secret modulation mode, full wet capability

CONTROLS: Dwell, Tone, Mix, Volume, internal gain pot, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard

input, standard output

POWER: 9V-18V DC

adaptor (not supplied)
DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 112 (d) x 47mm (h)

From the early 1960s, Fender's 6G15 outboard spring reverb unit set the standard for the effect, in particular defining the sound of surf guitar, and is still available if you have £800-plus and don't mind the large enclosure on top of your amp. For a cheaper, more streamlined rig, Catalinbread has released the Topanga, which is designed to replicate those 6G15 sounds with similar Dwell, Tone and Mix knobs plus a volume knob that can add a flavour of the original's valves to boost your amp's front end. There's also a modulation mode, awkwardly entered by powering up with the tone knob at minimum, plus full wet capability at the extreme of the Mix knob.

You can get Fender amp-style reverb from this, but it's the channelling of the crazed splashiness and presence boost of an outboard spring tank that make this stand out among reverb pedals. [TC]

VERDICT Many pedals simulate spring reverb, but few get this close to a Fender outboard unit

9/10



3 CATALINBREAD PAREIDOLIA £153

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Harmonic tremolo pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Depth, Speed, Volume, bypass

footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard

input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V-18V DC adaptor

(not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 112 (d) x 47mm (h)

Over the years, Fender had three basic designs of tremolo circuit built into its amps and the most aurally intriguing is the 'harmonic tremolo' (based around a dual-band filtering effect) once briefly found in early-60s 'Brownface' amps. The Pareidolia offers a re-creation, delivered via standard tremolo depth and rate knobs, coupled with a volume knob that hits unity gain at about midway, so can give your amp a nice kick (turn the depth down and you can use it as a pure boost). An LED pulses in time with rate and intensifies its colour change as depth is increased.

Sound-wise, what you get is tremolo-based but it's not just amplitude (volume) modulation that's going on here – there are elements of both phasing and pitch modulation, somewhat akin to a Uni-Vibe or rotary speaker, casting a gorgeous otherworldly haze over the tremolo. [TC]

VERDICT Vintage tremolo with a distinctive voice revisited. And, yes, you'll be mesmerised by it

8/10

4 CATALINBREAD ECHOREC £185

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Multitap echo pedal

FEATURES: Switchable true or buffered bypass

CONTROLS: Swell, Tone, Delay Time, Mix, Program

Select switch, internal gain

trimpot, internal

modulation trimpot,

bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard

input, standard output

POWER: 9V-18V DC

adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 112 (d) x 47mm (h)

This Catalinbread pedal is more niche than the recent Hall And Collins Signature Echo, and concentrates on the sound of that most revered of drum echos, the Binson Echorec, as used by David Gilmour, among others. The pedal features a 12-mode selector dial that offers different combinations of the four heads to produce the rhythmic patterns of the original plus a few extra, offering them with a wider range of delay times (a max of 1,000ms compared to the original's 300ms). There's an excellent tone control for darkening/fattening or brightening/thinning the repeats, while an internal modulation trim-pot can add a bit of wobble if desired, simulating an ageing drum. There's also an internal gain pot that has a secret full-on fuzz setting at its extreme! Overall, you're getting a pretty close approximation to the sound of a real Echorec but with extra capability. [TC]

VERDICT A viable substitute for the real thing at a fraction of the size and price, with no maintenance

8/10



|||||

Audition

We test the best of the rest
of the month's new gear

Photography Neil Godwin & Adam Gasson



NEAT BEECASTER & BUMBLEBEE

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CONTACT **Neat Microphones** PHONE **N/A** WEB www.neatmic.com

If you want to record into your computer or tablet device, you'll need an audio interface and if it's acoustic sounds that you are after – voice, acoustic guitar, and so on – you'll need a microphone to plug into that interface. However, while there are many microphones and interfaces at differing quality and price levels to choose from, probably the most convenient and uncomplicated way to go about things is via the genre of the desktop USB mic, which can stay permanently plugged into your computer and sit right next to it ready for action when inspiration strikes. Now, we've looked at some of this type of mic before, but new company Neat Microphones, a Gibson brand, has just brought out a pair of mics that seem to offer a whole new level of practicality.

The Beecaster and Bumblebee are both very stylish but robust constructions featuring a weighty metal base with four rubber feet keeping the whole shebang sitting solidly wherever you place it on your desk or tabletop without any danger of knocking it off or pulling it over with an attached cable. The only leads you attach to the mics anyway are, firstly, the USB cable straight to your computer, and then any headphones that are plugged into the mini-jack socket on the front of the base, keeping everything neat and manageable. Both mics have a knob for headphone volume, while the Beecaster also adds a mute switch.

With both products, the actual microphone is at the end of a metal arm that has loads of swivelling and angling adjustment, but also incorporates just the right degree of resistance to keep everything firmly in position.

In Use

The Bumblebee is the most basic of the two, sporting an internally shock-mounted, large-diaphragm condenser mic capsule with a cardioid polar pattern making it a good choice for vocals. To that end, it comes with a pop shield that simply and securely slots over the circular mic grille. Mic gain is set with a rotary knob, but you can record in one of three modes – Music, Neutral and Voice – that each apply different digital signal processing, in the form of compression and EQ. All three provide decent results.

The Beecaster is a more sophisticated mic that offers stereo recording as well as mono. There's an array of four large-diameter condenser capsules inside a large rectangular housing and a four-way switch selects the polar patterns that can be delivered by this arrangement. You're given mono recording with a cardioid pattern like in the Bumblebee, but there are also three types of stereo – normal (XY), wide (Blumlein) and focused (M/S). The result of all this is that you can do all the standard cardioid recording tasks but have more options for recording several people playing in the room, for example, or capturing your acoustic guitar with stereo ambience. Good stuff.

Verdict

For sheer plug-in-and-play convenience and the ease with which you can set about recording, these are excellent. But there's quality of sound, too, and in the Beecaster, real versatility. **[TC]**

8/10



FRYETTE POWER STATION £499

CONTACT **GuitarGuitar** PHONE 0800 456 1959 WEB www.fryette.com

The fascination with vintage amps is as strong as ever, so an attenuator is often a vital part of the rig for players who want to use classic non-master-volume products at modern volume levels. But what if your amp is a small, single-ended five-watt combo? You love the sound it makes, and you can use it at home without anyone complaining, but it's not powerful enough to use live without a going through a PA with heavy-duty monitoring.

Enter the Fryette Power Station, from Fryette Amplification. It's a reactive load attenuator that behaves like a loudspeaker, but with the interesting addition of a 50-watt valve power stage. This means that in addition to taming high power amps, the Power Station can also beef up smaller low-output valve amps, giving them more than enough clout to be heard on any stage.

The Power Station is built to a very high standard with real attention to detail. A heavy-duty steel chassis encloses the electronics, which are mostly mounted on very high-grade printed circuit boards. A large fan-cooled heat sink takes care of power dissipation.

It has a simple front panel, with power and on/bypass switches, rotary controls for volume, presence and depth, and a pair of EQ toggle switches that affect the primary amp output signal, each with two Hi and Low EQ choices as well as a flat/bypass option. On the rear panel, the Power Station has a pair of speaker outs and a single amp-in socket, both with selectable impedance. There's also an effects loop with switchable levels, and separate line in and out sockets, together with a ground lift switch. The two 6L6 output valves and a single 12AX7 driver are mounted horizontally behind a removable access panel, helping keep the Power Station's dimensions compact and portable. All in, the Power Station looks and feels like a very solid pro-grade piece of equipment.

In Use

We tried the Power Station out with an old non-master volume 100-watt valve head, and a five-watt tweed Champ clone combo. In both cases, the Power Station's simple incoming EQ switches let us dial in the right top and bottom frequencies, while the

volume, presence and depth controls were easily tweaked for just the right amount of depth and bite needed to preserve the Champ's vintage midrange growl.

The Power Station's transparency and low noise floor is very impressive. We're accustomed to losing some top end and dynamic response with an attenuator, but that simply doesn't happen with the Power Station: it stays authentic, right down to whisper levels.

Verdict

It's not the cheapest attenuator out there, but the Power Station's big plus is that it has a reverse gear, not only making big amps quieter, but making small ones louder, too. That makes it pretty much unique, and when you add in the extra features, the price starts to look more like a bargain. Possibly the only attenuator you'll ever need? We certainly think so. **[NG]**



9/10



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THE TONE DOCTOR
PART TWO

SPEAKERS CORNER

Can I really improve my guitar tone with a better cable? Will a different speaker really change the character and tone of my amplifier? Well, the simple answer is yes, says resident Tone Doctor Simon Law, tech to some of the biggest names in guitar...

Words Simon Law Photography Olly Curtis

If you make a few simple improvements along your tonal chain, then this can add up to a huge improvement in overall tone. It can also mean you may not have to change your amp just because you don't like the sound of it. A simple service and speaker change may be all it needs to bring it back to life.

1990 was a fairly life-changing year for me, in terms of tone. That year saw the release of two of the greatest guitar albums from that period: Eric Johnson's *Ah Via Musicom* and Stevie Ray Vaughan's *In Step* [1989]. Both these albums were an overload in tonal beauty. From the opening notes on both albums, I was knocked sideways. I swear after listening to these albums, the term 'WTF' was created! Of course, this type of music is my thing anyway, but almost every great guitar player from all musical backgrounds has worked on their own sounds at some point or another.

Whether you like them or not, what is instantly apparent about both these guys is firstly, of course, that they are hugely talented guitarists – but you also realise how much time they must have spent tweaking

and honing the gear they use to obtain the tone they heard in their heads. Some people may argue it's just not important to sound that great and, in fact, 'crappy' and 'unrefined' tones are just as important. Sure, but in my opinion, the answer to that would be: if you are a guitarist, nobody is going to remember you if you sound bad.

On those two classic albums, the huge thing that hit me was: how could you possibly get those complex guitar tones? Now, remember this was pre-internet and this was when guitar magazines still came with flexi disks. VHS videos were the big thing and, luckily, Eric Johnson released his video, *Total Electric Guitar*, so I could finally get the information I needed about his tone and amplifier setup. 'Holy crap!' was my immediate thought when watching for the first time. This guy was using every amp imaginable: Fender, Marshall, and the Holy Grail... a Dumble. But even when he was only using one Fender amp, he still sounded epic: clean yet dirty, treble without too much treble, smooth mids and a fat bottom end without being overwhelming. Yes, this was a guy who had 'Honed His Tone'.

As you may have guessed, I love guitar tone. In fact, I love all tone very much. I can spend hours tweaking an amp or a guitar just to squeeze another one per cent of goodness out of it. It really is worth the effort, I swear.

+ Credible Cable

In the first instalment of Tone Doctor, I discussed fairly basic guitar adjustments to improve playability and subsequently tone. So, let's move onto cables and amp tweaks. Both these things had major impacts for both Mr Johnson and Mr Vaughan, and I'm quite sure a whole host of others.

A guitar cable is your tonal umbilical cord. It's your first connection to the amplifier and yet it still amazes me how many players disregard this critical piece of equipment. These days (trying not to sound like a grumpy old git), the selection of cables is astounding. Low capacitance, high-bass, low-bass, silver, gold, copper and maybe even platinum are all used in cables, making the choice overwhelming. What is most important is that we don't use the cheap-looking skinny black moulded cables that



1



sometimes come free with budget guitars. These are quite frankly the work of the devil, and even keeping one as a spare is just plain daft. Bin them as soon as you can.

Of course, you can spend a lot of time (and money) experimenting with different cables and plugs. But, for me, what is most important is that we use good-quality cables and not just plain rubbish. Just imagine you're doing a gig and there in the audience is the one guy or girl that needs to hear you play, an agent, a hero or maybe just your next partner in crime. It's solo time, you click your boost pedal, step forward and... 'GURGGH, CRACKLE, FIZZZZZZ, CRACK BANG, POOP.' A classic case of 'CCS' (Crappy Cable Syndrome). Really there are no excuses for it.

Brands to look out for that are generally available at most good guitar shops are: Klotz, Planet Waves, Evidence Audio, Van Damme, Providence, and so on. Even guitar makers such as Gibson and Fender are selling great cables these days. You can spend from £20 up to many hundreds, but don't get carried away; a £20 or £30 guitar cable treated well and looked after will serve you for a good many years. Remember, a cable isn't just for Christmas... George L's were the first solderless cables back in the day and you could actually custom-make your own lengths in a matter of minutes. Solderless cables are still popular today

and are well worth looking at. Lava Cable and Evidence Audio both make decent solderless solutions.

Don't overlook the small cables on your pedalboard, either, because these are just as important as your main cables. Don't be tempted to buy a pack of those multi-coloured mini cables to hook up your pedals, it's just not worth the grief of ending up on your hands and knees at a gig only to find your £1 patch cable has failed mid-solo... Eek!

One thing never to forget is not to use a guitar cable as a speaker cable, or vice-versa. A guitar cable is a shielded cable with an inner core and an outer screen layer. This is to help stop unwanted interference from entering the cable. Speaker cables are unshielded and comprise two cores of the same size. This is usually fatter than a guitar cable so as to handle the high wattage of a guitar amp, and also so the amp can 'see' the same impedance to and from the amp and speaker. You can really risk damaging your amp by using a shielded guitar cable as a speaker cable, as it can get hot. Or you risk a noisy, buzzy sound if you use a speaker cable from your guitar to your amp.

⊕ Socket To Them

Silver plugs, gold plugs, high silver content, low capacitance – these are all terms that mean very little to most folk.

“It's solo time, you click your boost pedal, step forward and... 'GURGGH, CRACKLE, FIZZZZZZ, CRACK BANG, POOP.' A classic case of 'CCS' (Crappy Cable Syndrome)”



1 Never underestimate the importance of your guitar cable – it's your tonal umbilical cord

2 Jack plugs come in a variety of different materials and styles... the good Doctor recommends classic nickel-silver plugs

3 Spray all your sockets with Servisol or Deoxit every once in a while, and don't forget to do your guitar and amp sockets, either

Experimentation is important. Really tune your ears in to what you're listening to. Is it more bassy? Too toppy? All these things become quite apparent when you really get into it. The one thing I've never been a fan of are gold-plated jack plugs. The sockets in your guitars and amps are never gold-plated and the solder holding everything together is not gold-plated. So, for me, the best plugs are the ones made from the same stuff as the sockets, good old-fashioned nickel-silver plugs.

This talk of sockets leads me on to the next step. Quite often, the sockets on our pedals and amplifiers are totally overlooked. These little round silver things are so important to our 'Flow Of Tone'. Dust and moisture can get into the sockets causing crackles and pops and sometimes loss of signal altogether. A fairly common problem is with the effects send and return sockets on amplifiers. These are sometimes called pre-amp out and power-amp input sockets. Even when not used they get dusty and damp, which causes capacitance to build up within the socket, and then you lose signal. Not good.

The simple way to treat all these sockets is to buy yourself a can of Servisol or Deoxit spray from Maplin or any other electrical retailer. You then spray a little onto a jack plug and work it in and out of the sockets. You should do this to all your sockets once

in a while, not forgetting the guitar socket and all the sockets on your pedals – and let's not forget the speaker output socket on your amp, if you have one. Once again, a few quid spent here can reap huge rewards, both tonally and through reliability. Your amp and nerves will both be grateful.

The Right Speaker

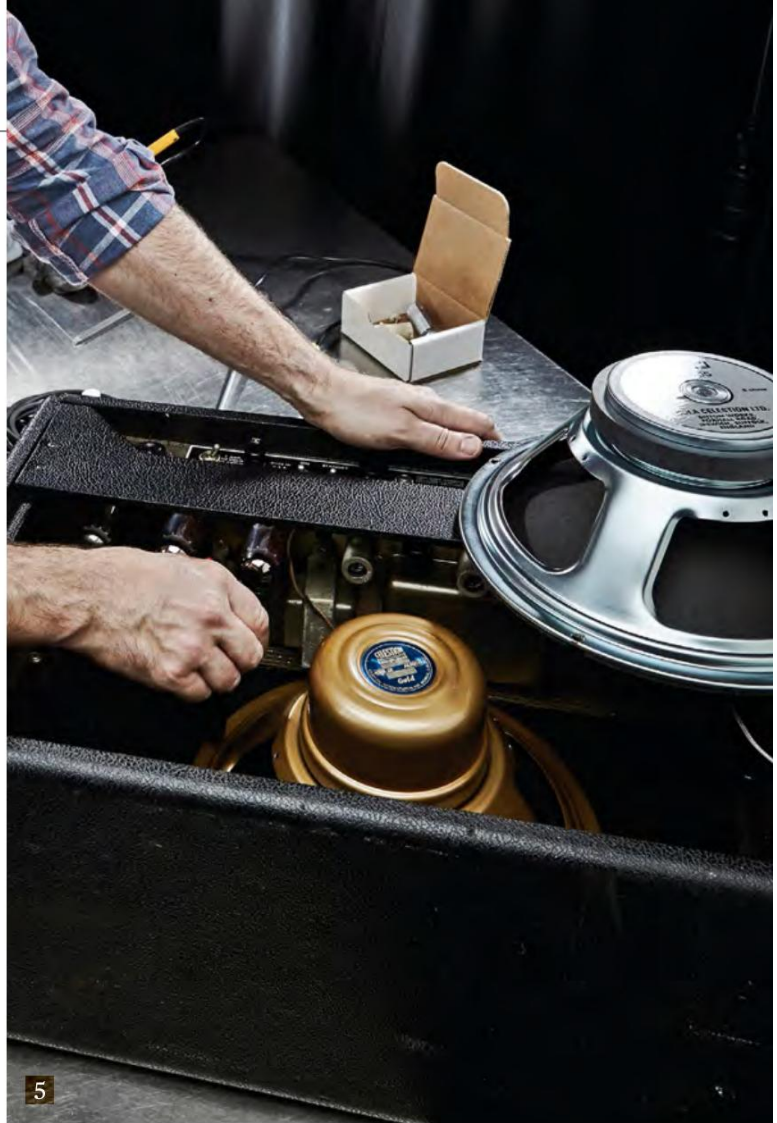
Going back to those two great guitarists, Eric Johnson and Stevie Ray Vaughan, it became apparent that a lot of their tonal tweaks were due to speaker preferences. Imagine setting a Fender Vibroverb or a Marshall Super Lead on 10 and then playing a low E chord through a flabby sounding old speaker. 'FARTTTTTT'. Not cool. But change that speaker for a tight and efficient sounding JBL, Electro-Voice, Celestion or Eminence and you could have 'The Tone'. Even back in the days of Jimi Hendrix, he was choosing speakers that were right for him. No lightweight 'M' magnet 20- or 25-watt speakers for Jimi, no. He used the more efficient heavy 'H' magnet 30-watt speakers of the time. This led to fatter bottom end, less speaker breakup and better reliability, especially when hit hard with a Fuzz Face or wah pedal flat out. This didn't help when Jimi actually hit the speaker with a guitar, though...

So, what we have here is a very easy and fairly inexpensive way of improving



4 Changing your speaker is a relatively straightforward operation...

5 ...but please, be sure to exercise caution. Don't over-tighten your bolts, or do an 'accidental Link Wray' and slash them with a Stanley knife



your amp or cabinet's sound dramatically and, again, the choice of speakers on the market these days is huge. Most speaker manufacturers have online sound clips and comparison charts. Why not get all geeky and really analyse what it is you want to hear? Do you want to hit a chord hard and hear the note go 'BONG' like the low note on a piano? Then you need a heavier magnet, higher wattage speaker. Do you want to hit a chord hard and hear the speaker break up like an old blues song? Then you need a low-wattage, lightweight magnet speaker. It's all relative and simple to achieve. If you are relying on guitar pedals for overdrive or distortion, then perhaps you need a tighter-sounding, more efficient speaker for your amp. These can also be really nice for cleaner funkier playing, often used by country players and jazz guitarists.

A very interesting approach that can be used in multiple speaker cabinets, such as 2x12s and 4x12s, is to use mis-matched speakers to create complex tones. I first saw this in Matchless speaker cabinets. They would use a pair of Celestion speakers, an 'M' magnet 25-watt speaker along with an 'H' magnet 30-watt speaker. This would create a cab that had great bass response from the 'H' and a little breakup from the 'M' rated speaker.

Changing speakers is a straightforward job, usually just removing the back-plate

of an amp or cabinet and then four bolts or screws per speaker. But please remember this: do not over-tighten the speaker fixing bolts or screws. It can be very easy to distort and damage the speaker chassis, especially on pressed-steel speakers such as Celestion and Eminence. Tighten to finger-tight first and then go about half a turn from there. The best way is to tighten opposite bolts first. Imagine the bolts are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4. Tighten 1 and 3 then 2 and 4, and so on; that way, the speaker is pulled down evenly like the cylinder head on a car engine.

Once again, a basic knowledge of soldering is required, unless your speaker uses push connectors. I would still prefer a good old-fashioned solder connection. Try and keep the tip of the iron away from the speaker cone, along with any sharp knives and screwdrivers. This is a voice of experience. Many years ago, when refitting a vintage Alnico Blue speaker back into a Vox AC30, I stood up and dropped a Stanley knife. It went straight through the cone and out the other side! I have never done it again. My mistake can be your lesson.

You are now well on the way to becoming a tone junkie. You're in fine company, along with some of the biggest names in guitar tone. They've all stressed and tweaked, fettled and fiddled to emerge with an improved tone and improved reliability. Next time, we'll talk about tone myths. **E**

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Longtermers

A few months' gigging, recording and everything that goes with it – welcome to *Guitarist's* longterm test reports



Victory VX The Kraken
with Darran Charles



Writer

DARRAN CHARLES
Godsticks; *Guitarist* contributor



Godsticks vocalist and guitarist, Darran, faces his fear of the necessity of a second guitarist and its associated challenges, and finds himself blown away this diminutive lunchbox amp – which he reviews in full on p16 of this issue...

"Gavin brought the Kraken into a band rehearsal – accompanied by a smug grin on his face"



I've never really been a fan of two guitar line-ups, or at least not a fan of performing in them. There are a few reasons for this: 1) the other guitarist always causes me to feel inferior in some way; 2) I've yet to meet a guitarist that isn't offended by silence in the rehearsal room and views it as an invitation to incessantly widdle; and – perhaps the most relevant to this column – 3) everything begins to sound like an undifferentiated 'mush' as each player competes for the same frequencies.

Unfortunately for me, the newer Godsticks material has dictated that, in spite of the aforementioned prejudices, a second guitar player is absolutely necessary. But we have at least managed to recruit another guitarist, Gavin Bushell, who, despite possessing all the above qualities, is actually a great player, and – however trite a platitude it is – actually plays for the song. With that said, problem number 3 is still relevant, and something we were conscious of from the very beginning.

One of the first issues for us to address was to ensure that both Gavin and I had similar

heavy guitar sounds, but with contrasting tonal properties. For quite some time, I'd been playing through a Marshall 410H which has a EL34-based power section, so I figured that one way to achieve a tonal contrast was for the second guitar amp to be 6L6-based. That way, we'd have the warmer, slightly sagging, all-enveloping bottom end of the Marshall, punctuated by the tighter, punchier bottom end of a heavy 6L6 amp. So, enter the Victory Kraken – the chief protagonist in this feature.

I'd been sent the Kraken and its vertical 2x12 cab a few weeks before I was due to review it for this issue. I'd read the brief and also heard anecdotal evidence of its metal credentials, so thought it a perfect opportunity to pull off a coup that would depose Gavin's H&K Switchblade head, which, with its EL34 power valves, had already proved not to be an ideal companion when paired with the Marshall.

As I'd long ago fallen out of love with 6L6 amps, I secretly thought that I was getting the better deal from this proposed new setup. However, after spending a few days with the

amp at home, Gavin brought it into a band rehearsal – accompanied by a smug grin on his face. "Tidy amp then, Gav?" I asked (sounding exactly like Nessa from *Gavin And Stacy*). "Oh, yes!" came his reply. And, from the moment he plugged in his DiMarzio-loaded Music Man JP and hit an open G chord, I'd realised that I may have made a mistake...

It's not very often that I'm immediately blown away by an amp, but the taut, powerful, and focused distortion that this cute-looking lunchbox-sized head punched through the equally physically unassuming 2x12 cab, stopped me in my tracks. I even stopped widdling (the aforementioned guitar crime number 2 applies to me also, of course!) and just sat and listened. The fizziness and scooped mids (something I'd come to associate with heavy 6L6 amps) were not to be heard, and yet it still occupied different sonic territory to the Marshall.

These were immediately very promising signs. Whether it proves to permanently integrate itself into our current setup, we will find out over the coming weeks... **G**

Reviewed 403 **Price** £829 (head); £499 (cab) **On Test** Nov 2015 **Studio Sessions** Not yet **Gigged** Yes **Mods** n/a www.victoryamps.com



TheGigRig G2 with Jamie Dickson

Writer

JAMIE DICKSON
Editor, *Guitarist*



Guitarist's editor, Jamie Dickson, has had enough of tap-dancing, and TheGigRig's G2 switching system promises to bring one-touch control to a whole slew of effects pedals at once. As the operator of a medium-sized pedalboard, that means adopting what I'll term the 'Heron Stance'. It's like a yoga move, if you will – but for fuddled musicians, not gym bunnies.

It's a First World problem, I know, but here it is: I've been gigging with a band that requires a lot of rapid changes of guitar sounds during a set. As the operator of a medium-sized pedalboard, that means adopting what I'll term the 'Heron Stance'. It's like a yoga move, if you will – but for fuddled musicians, not gym bunnies.

As we approach a big change in a song – say a transition from verse to chorus where four or more effects need to be engaged at once – my 'pedal foot' lifts off the floor slightly in anticipation. For a few seconds, I am balancing on one leg, still trying to look casual, and one good puff of wind could have me over. But the risk is worth it, because that raised foot is now poised to dart forward like an angry cobra to switch pedals on and off in rapid sequence, just in time. That's

the idea, anyway. But let me be frank: that cobra is a bit slow off the mark sometimes. It gets confused. Sometimes when there should be serene silence, with just a waft of gentle tremolo and reverb sending a chord sailing out into the audience, out comes a rude blast of fuzz instead. This confuses the audience and reddens the very cheek of the guitarist who made the unwonted noise. And all because it's a distracting and sequentially tricky task to switch a lot of pedals on and off in a short space of time.

What is really called for is a system that lets you go straight to your favourite combinations of pedal sounds at the press of a single switch. And that, in essence, is what TheGigRig's G2 switching unit is for. Readers of issue 401's *Ultimate Overdrives* supplement will already be familiar with its designer, Dan Steinhardt, who kindly offered to provide a G2 at *Guitarist's* request for this longterm test. However, he added that he'd be willing to rebuild my 'board around it himself. Since Dan builds 'boards for Steve Vai and Radiohead, among others – and quite a bit of neat cabling and power management is required to integrate my eight stompboxes with G2 – this is an offer too good to refuse.

I duly surrender my existing 'board, lashed together with gaffer tape and cable ties, to Dan – who regards it with a sympathetic,

professional eye, rather like a vet who is presented with a horse that may have to be shot if it cannot be saved by radical treatment.

A few weeks later, it returns, transformed. You know the kind of re-engineering they do to family saloon cars so they can compete in rally championships? In sonic terms, that's what Dan has done for my pedalboard. Custom-made lengths of solderless Lava cabling connect the pedals, their round terminals gleaming like piston heads. Every pedal is sipping its correct voltage via neatly routed, isolated cables. G2 glows like a dashboard. Juha Kankkunen would be proud to drive this 'board over a blind crest at 120mph. The initial line-up includes three drive pedals, including ThorpyFX's Gunshot OD, chorus, tremolo, a vintage Ibanez Phase Tone II that I haven't quite made my mind up about yet, a Free The Tone Flight Time digital delay (ditto) and an MXR compressor. Over the next few issues, I'm going to gig the 'board, mod it, chop and change pedals and maybe put it up against Boss's recent challenger to G2's crown, the ES-8, which weighs in £250 cheaper. As I have a feeling this test may turn into a longterm review of the pedals involved, too, if there's enough interest we may just keep it going a bit longer than usual, maybe try some unusual stuff up against some old favourites... **G**

Reviewed 392 Price £749 (G2 unit only) On Test Since Nov 2015 Studio Sessions Not yet Gigged Not yet Mods None www.thegigrig.com

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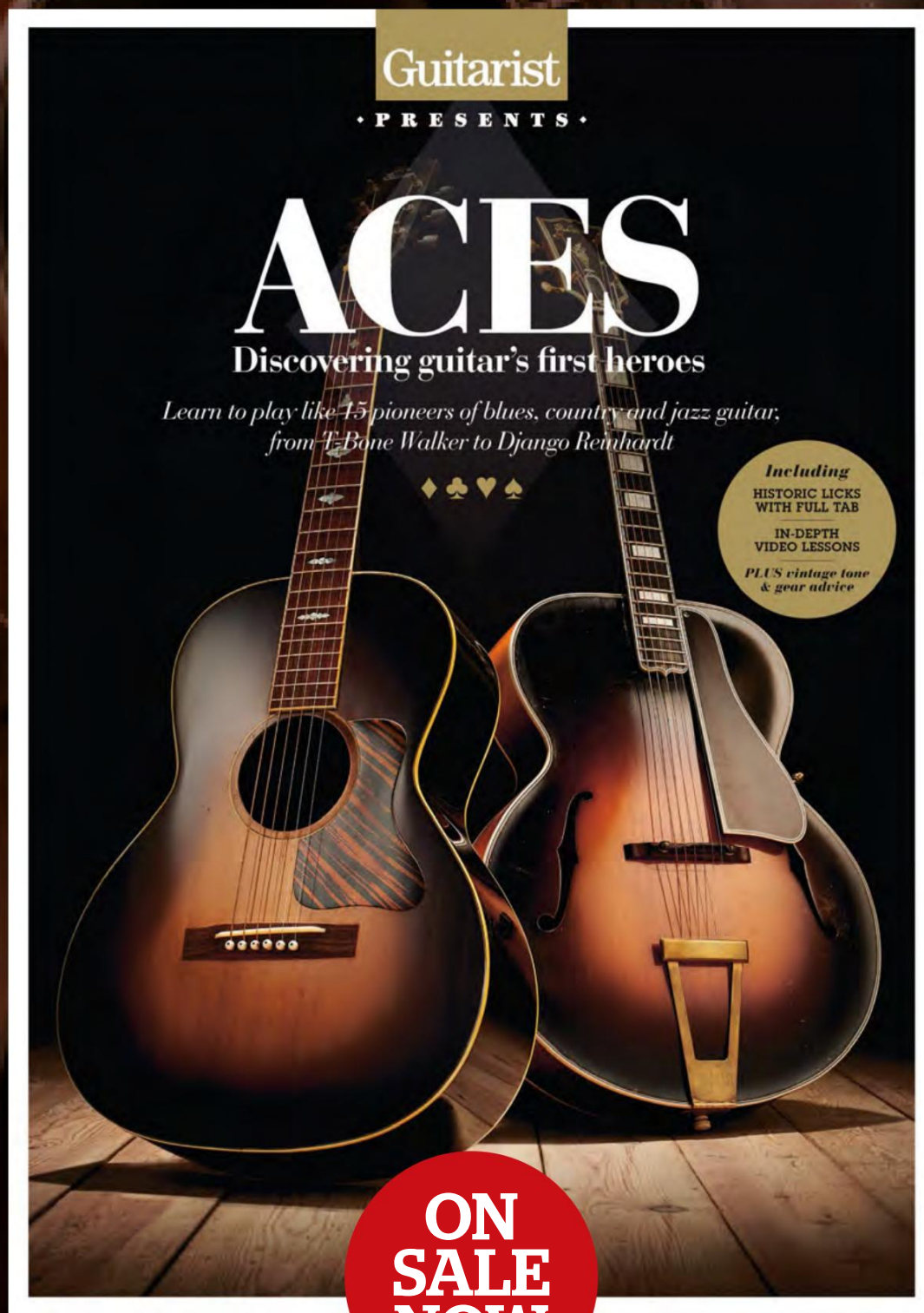
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Q&A

This issue: Problematic Palomas, palavers and pains on the pads

Expert Panel



Jamie Dickson

Guitarist editor Jamie is as happy with steel wool in his hand as he is with Steely Dan in his headphones, and loves vintage-gear restoration and ambitious signal chains.



Dave Burruck

Guitarist's assiduous reviews editor is also the author of numerous guitar books. Very handy with a fret file and indeed any aspect of a finely fiddled six-string.



Mick Taylor

Ex-editor of *Guitarist*, Mick has wielded Allen keys, screwdrivers and sandpaper from an early age; he also has a worrying obsession with pedalboards.



Neville Marten

Edited *Guitarist* for 13 years, after working for both Fender and Gibson as a repairer. From desirable Les Pauls to dream Strats, he's owned and worked on the lot.



Nick Guppy

Guitarist's amplifier specialist has built up a wealth of experience gained from collecting, repairing and restoring all kinds of guitar-related audio.

Email us your questions: guitarist@futurenet.com or write in to *Guitarist*, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

PALOMA'S FATE

I have a problem that I can't seem to fix! I have a superb Guild Paloma electro-classical with a faulty pickup. Fishman produced the pickup, but it is now obsolete. Which means I have a stunning guitar heading for the junkyard unless someone can help. Are there any bespoke-pickup makers you can recommend?

Adrian Lole, via email

An unusual and very cool guitar, Adrian. For anyone not au fait with the Paloma, it was the nylon-string brother of the Peregrine, both chambered-body electrics in a similar vein to the Gibson Chet Atkins model that we remember being around in the 1990s/early 2000s. In fact, Mr Sting was playing it in the image in the Fender Frontline catalogue... next to Mr Slash and his doubleneck, no less. Wasted childhoods, us? Ahem.

The pickup system was a Fishman Matrix Transducer, which, as far as we're aware, is an underside piezo – it should be easy to tell. Remove the strings and pull the bridge saddle out of the slot, if it'll come out. You should see a piezo transducer in there, that should come loose with a little encouragement. It might be that the pickup is integral to the bridge (ie, in the bridge itself rather than the saddle slot), in which case, you're going to need some specialist help.

Now, there are three other cavities in the guitar: one for a battery, the other for what we assume is some circuitry, and the last one for the side-mounted control panel. Carefully having a look inside all of them should confirm what else is going on, for example, if



Max is suffering with noise from his '68 Custom Deluxe Reverb. Why?

there are other pickups or body sensors. We don't think there are. As you rightly say, Fishman no longer makes that particular system, but anyone experienced with acoustic pickups should be able to diagnose the problem pretty quickly and offer a potential solutionette or two. If it's a piezo-and-preamp job, it is fairly easily repairable for certain. Google is your friend in finding a good repair person in your locale.

NOISE DELUXE

I've had a subscription to your beautiful magazine for quite a while now, lots of great stories, lots of great advice. Thank you so far! Yet I have one question concerning a piece of equipment that seems to come up and up again on the internet, and nobody ever has a good answer, so I figured you might be the ones to find one.

You recommend the Fender '68 Custom Deluxe Reverb; I have one and, yes, I do love the tone. But why is that thing so noisy? All sorts of hiss and white noise as soon as it's switched on. No guitar plugged in, no reverb or vibrato dialled in. Just the basic hiss: absurdly loud. I even sent

my amp back to Fender for repair, they checked it and said, that's as low as it gets, the amp just is like this.

As for comparison, I have an Orange TH30: silent as a Sunday afternoon. And for bedroom practice, a Marshall one-watt amp (one of those Jubilee specials from three years ago): absolutely no hiss either. So, how can I reduce the noise, please?

Max Fellmann, Munich

Annoying, eh, Max? We'll start with 'global negative feedback'; a bit of circuit design that's used in the vast majority of valve amps to help reduce excess noise and hum among other things. It's achieved in different ways, but the classic approach is to take some signal from later in the amp circuit and 'feed it back' to an earlier part of the circuit. It typically extends the frequency response and, for want of a better word, 'smooths' things out across the board. Less distortion, fewer spikes, less noise in the output section.

Now, the '68 Deluxe Reverb makes much of having 'reduced negative feedback' in order to make it more 'touch sensitive' and dynamic, and it would also explain why it tips into

Email us your questions: guitarist@futurenet.com

What Should I Buy?

Humble Dumble Request

Q Help! There is a perfect overdrive pedal out there for me somewhere. I've had [Ibanez] Tube Screamers, 808s and TS-9s and I need more bass and less compression. I liked the [Fulltone] OCD, but it's a bit too harsh. I've tried the 'transparent' pedals – boosts and a [Boss] BD-2 – and they're too transparent! So I'm left wanting a thick, mid-rich overdrive and I've ended up at Dumble. I don't have a suitcase full of money, so a pedal will have to do. What's your favourite – is the [J Rockett] The Dude worth a look?

John Humble (really!), via email

A Thanks for the tin opener and this lovely looking can of worms, John. There are lots out there. Shall we start with 'What is the Dumble tone anyway?' because SRV's 'Dumble sound' was very different from Lowell George's... from Larry Carlton's... from John Mayer's. But we think you're talking about the fabled Overdrive Special sound that we can generalise as being very mid-thick, yet still clear with loads of note articulation, sustain and headroom. We're going to take the Hermida/Lovepedal Zendrive as read as it was the original in many respects. After that...



1. Van Weelden Royal Overdrive £499

The headroom and dynamic sensitivity in this pedal/preamp is a step or three on from The Dude. A little more fiddly to set up, it's also way more versatile and designed to be used with any clean amp to get you tuneful noises at almost any gain level you like. Serious.

Also try: Kingsley Page and/or Squire (from \$269)



2. Wampler Euphoria Overdrive £159

Formerly the 'Ecstasy', this has a great reputation for emulating the ODS tone, but goes beyond that with three distinct modes of overdrive that offer a wider sound palette than some of the darker sounding Dumble pedals. More of an all-rounder, but again, very different from the TS/OCD/BD-2.

Also try: Amplified Nation Big Bloom (from \$299)



3. J Rockett Audio Designs The Dude £169

JRAD's latest is modelled after a specific, genuine Overdrive Special amplifier. The four knobs need careful balancing with your amp and guitar, but it has that thick, clear-yet-driven thing and is a different experience from the TS/OCD/BD-2. Read the full review on p122.

Also try: Mad Professor Simble (£174.95)

Email us your questions: guitarist@futurenet.com



overdrive earlier than the '65 Deluxe Reverb, for example. That said, there are low- and no-negative-feedback amps that run pretty quietly.

So, we'll move on to that shared reverb and tremolo on both channels (more gain stages and a total of six preamp valves), which means the potential for more noise. So it is worth trying some preamp valve swaps, because some can be noisier than others. Also, make sure the power valves are biased correctly. If you're not confident doing this yourself, find a decent amp tech and let him/her at it. At the end of the day, it might just be too noisy for you if you're playing at home. At gig volumes it doesn't matter, but it's still annoying.

GAUGE GOUGE

I've been wanting to increase my string gauge for a while now (from nines to 10s) as I believe it will help my guitar sound a bit more 'full' and perhaps increase tuning stability. I play a Fender Classic Series 60s Telecaster, but each time I try, I find it very tough on the fingers and revert back to nines. Do you have any tips on what I might do to ease the transition because I really do prefer the sound with the thicker strings. I have played many brands of strings; I tend to buy Ernie Ball Slinkys, but I'm not wedded to them.

Graham Hart, via email

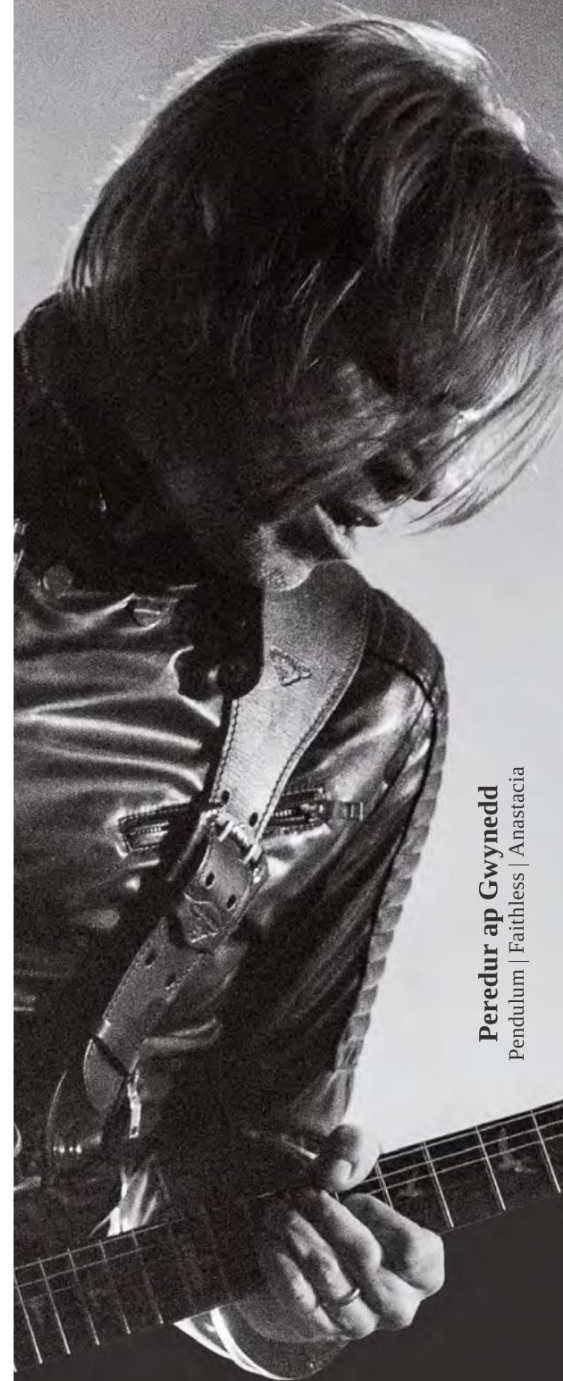
Two things to try, Graham. First and most obvious, D'Addario does half-gauges – that's to say 0.0095 on the top string rather than 0.009; 0.0115 instead of 0.011... We thought it was a bit of marketing hype until we measured a few sets with a micrometer. Yep, they're bang on! You shouldn't need to alter the Tele too much, but a quick intonation and truss-rod check is always advisable when changing string gauge. The nut should be fine for anything up to 10s.

Secondly, different materials can feel slightly higher or lower tension under the fingers. For example, D'Addario NYXLs can feel a bit stiffer, whereas the various brands' pure-nickel offerings can feel slightly less stiff under the fingers, even at the same gauges. Ernie Ball makes pure nickels – most of the brands do – so give them a try, too.

Our penultimate suggestion is to do with frets, which might seem a bit drastic, but if you get the chance, go and play some guitars with bigger, taller frets that are very well polished. You might be surprised at how much it eases the amount of work you have to do for string bending. If you like it, and not before, you might think it's worthwhile having the Telecaster refretted.

Finally, just play as much and as often as you can. No downside there.

Check your intonation and give it a tweak if necessary when changing between string gauges



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Board Games

Pedalboard problems solved

The background

Paul Price, via email: I've just built a new pedalboard based around a One Control OC10, loaded with my most used pedals. The OC10 has made my life a lot easier, not having to tap-dance to get to the sounds I need with no noticeable change in tone, so all is good so far.

Connecting the Strymon Big Sky to the One Control switcher with a MIDI cable looks to be straightforward, but I can't find any info on how to program the OC10 to change the Big Sky settings. I'm still having to use the Strymon extension three-switch controller to change patches, so at the moment I'm still having to do a bit of switch tapping to get to where I need to be. I have watched demos on what the OC10 can do, but I can't find anything about how to make the two units talk to each other. The user manual is falling short, so please help!

The questions

1. Could you please 'in simple terms' explain what MIDI is, and what the 'in' and 'out/thru' sockets mean?

2. I have never used MIDI before and I'm just learning how to use it, so how do I connect the OC10 with the Big Sky to change patches?



The answers

1. Right then, Paul, as you're probably aware MIDI is a digital communication 'language' that enables devices to communicate various things. Those things include changes in pitch, duration, velocity, volume, vibrato, etc, etc. It can also communicate basic stuff like on/off commands, or in the case of MIDI-equipped effects pedals, tell the pedal to change patches or parameters when given the correct command... from something like your OC10.

'MIDI in' is the port you'd need to use if you want the OC10 to be controlled by another MIDI device, while 'MIDI out/thru' sends information to other devices. So, we're going to start by connecting the OC10's 'MIDI out/thru' to the Big Sky's 'MIDI in'.

You don't need this next paragraph for your situation, but others might do, so... If you were using another MIDI pedal in addition to the Big Sky – a Strymon Timeline, for example – then you'd go out of one Strymon's 'MIDI' out/thru' and into the 'MIDI in' of the next. In the first pedal's 'GLBLS' menu, you'd also need to turn on 'MIDI thru' to enable it to send MIDI information.

2. This is how we'd do it. First up, MIDI functionality doesn't work when you're in 'DIRECT' mode on the OC10. You need to be in 'PGM' mode, by holding down the 'program' button, top left. In 'PGM' mode, the display should have a number in it, which is your currently active bank of presets. Bank up and down using the two buttons top right. Each of the lower row of knobs selects a different preset within that bank.

Now make sure 'TX' is active on the OC10's MIDI on/off button. This means it's transmitting MIDI program change information via its MIDI out port (RX configures it to accept MIDI program changes from another device – you don't want that).

So – you have the OC10's MIDI out connected to the Big Sky's MIDI in, you're in program mode on the OC10 and you have MIDI selected on, in TX mode. (And the Big Sky is wired into one of the OC10's loops!) This is where it gets potentially confusing. Starting from its own Bank 1/Presets 1 setting, the OC10 will transmit incremental MIDI program changes to the Big Sky, starting with MIDI program #00. If you check the Big Sky's manual, you'll see that a MIDI program #00 command will call up Preset 00A. It's sequential from there, so OC10 Bank 1/Presets

(MIDI program #01) will call up Big Sky 00B. OC10 Bank 1/Presets 3 (MIDI program #02) is Big Sky 00C; OC10 Bank 1/Presets 4 (MIDI program #03) is Big Sky 01A and so on. It's worth writing a list of what maps to what. To see what's actually mapping to what for real, select a patch on the OC10, then push the 'type' button once on the Big Sky so it shows you the active preset.

You now know which banks/patches on the OC10 select which banks/patches on the Big Sky. Now copy your required Big Sky presets to the corresponding preset positions accessed by OC10. Let's say you like the Strymon's factory preset 'Bloomin Onion' that resides in 29C, and you want it in the OC10's Bank 1 Preset 6 position – that sends MIDI program change #05 – you need to copy 'Bloomin Onion' to the corresponding Strymon patch accessed by MIDI program change #05. If you've written your list as described above, you'll know it's 1C on the Big Sky. We'll say that again: you need to copy the Strymon patch you want to the corresponding Strymon patch position accessed by the required OC10 bank/preset.

Once you understand what's telling what to do what, and where it'll find it, it all gets much easier. Good luck! 🍀

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Old Gold

1961 Gibson ES-330

Photography by Joby Sessions

Gibson's ES-330 stands apart from the rest of the ES series like the 335, 345 or 355. Introduced in 1959, the 330 is a full hollowbody guitar, as opposed to its companion models that feature a solid centre block. But the differences don't end there, as the 330's neck joins the body at the 16th fret, as opposed to the 335, which joins at the 19th – at least, it did until 1969, when Gibson bowed to the weight of opinion among 330 players who felt that their upper fretboard access was impeded and put matters right by rejigging the neck joint to bring it in line with the rest of the range. The 330 also featured two P-90 pickups, as opposed to the 335's humbuckers. As rock 'n' roll took its hold on music's landscape and volume levels increased significantly, the 330's tendency to feed back became apparent. When *Guitarist* spoke to Jethro Tull's Martin Barre recently, he recalled buying a 330 in 1961 or '62 for the princely sum of £175: "As soon as the blues started rearing its head and people turned their amps up, it just didn't work. It howled!"

However, the 330 has had its admirers. Among the players who have succumbed to its charms are jazzers Grant Green and Emily Remler, as well as Radiohead's Thom Yorke and The Smiths' Johnny Marr. The model was discontinued in 1972, but has enjoyed the occasional reappearance in the Gibson Custom Shop's catalogue since. Our model here is from 1961, a year before the P-90s' plastic covers were replaced by the chrome variety. Judging by the obvious wear to the fretboard, this particular model has been well played during its 55-year lifetime – but, looking at the practically unmarked body, it's possible to assume that it has been well loved, too. (Guitar courtesy of Vintage Guitar Boutique, London.)

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Beck's Blues

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THERE ARE guitar players, there are excellent guitar players – and there is Jeff Beck. Since blazing to the forefront of the British Invasion in the mid-60s with The Yardbirds, Jeff hasn't particularly courted publicity or fame, although he is deservedly renowned for his consistent invention and reinvention of electric-guitar playing through psychedelic rock, blues, fusion, rockabilly, dance and world music. Though he has a phenomenal facility in the traditional sense, Jeff is far more interested in the expressive 'non-guitaristic'

qualities he can coax from the instrument using a relatively simple rig, but a variety of unusual techniques, such as tapping a bottleneck on the strings over the pickups in *Angel Footsteps*, or shaping a single harmonic into a complex melody using the vibrato bar, as featured in *Where Were You*. This also stretches to his choice of material – *Adagietto* from Mahler's *Symphony No 5* and The Beatles' *A Day In The Life* are hardly obvious choices for guitar instrumentals, after all!

Nowadays, he's most often seen playing a Fender Strat, though he has famously used

Gibson Les Pauls, Tele/Esquires, Charvels and a Gretsch Duo Jet – like one of his early heroes, Cliff Gallup.

With so many stylistic areas to choose from, I've opted for pretty definitive 'Beck' territory here, playing a solo with my fingers, which borrows ideas from Jeff's guest solo in Jon Bon Jovi's *Blaze Of Glory*, using the vibrato bar to emulate bluesy slide playing, with a feel reminiscent of *The Pump*, from 1980's *There & Back*. Of course, there are four licks taken from the solo, but the whole take is included as well to give a sense of context.

Example 1

PLAYED with a swung feel, this phrase attempts to emulate some of Jeff's eccentricity and exploit the different tones that using thumb or finger on the strings can give. A little restraint may be required; unless you're using hefty strings, it's easy to 'ping' them back against the 'board. A great technique, but not what we want here. The presence of an F natural gives what we might call a 'Mixolydian' feel.

Example 2

CONTINUING in the same vein, the vibrato bar comes into play for a series of 'swoops' and 'scoops' similar to the way Jeff emulates bluesy bottleneck licks. Expect to spend some time getting the desired result, but don't get too caught up in the desire to duplicate this type of phrasing with 100-percent consistency. That's not really the spirit here...

Example 3

THE opening notes are played with alternating thumb and finger – a technique often used by Jeff to articulate rapid 'trill' type effects. Moving on, here is a useful pentatonic style pattern with more of that 'psychedelic' Mixolydian feel, pulling up as well as down on the bar to shape the melody. Starting out with short bursts, it's possible to build dexterity for some of these unusual bar techniques.

Example 4

TIME for a modulation! Jumping straight in on the 9th from the underlying B \flat min9 chord (C), there is more whammy trickery, raising an already bent string briefly by a further semitone, then releasing the bar to its original position, followed by releasing the bend. Not as complicated as it sounds, though you may find it sounds different each and every time you play it. I feel sure Jeff would approve!

Swung

B \flat m9

B \flat m

BU

w/bar -¹

BD

w/bar

1/4

E

B

G

D

A

E

1

8

11 (13)

(14)(13)(11) 9

10 11 9

10 8 6 8 (9) (8)

6 8 6

7 6 4

6

Hear It Here

The Yardbirds

The Yardbirds (Roger The Engineer)



This 1966 album shows how far ahead Jeff was of many of his contemporaries, particularly on *Over Under Sideways Down* and *Jeff's Boogie*. He's clearly carrying a torch for the rockabilly style, but adding so much of his own invention along the way – a facet he retained throughout his career, particularly when it comes to inventive lead licks.

Jeff Beck

Blow By Blow



From 1975, this album served as a milestone in Jeff's career – the first under his own name – and features his peerless version of *Cause We've Ended As Lovers*. Jeff was still using a pick and/or hybrid picking for much of this album, making it interesting to trace his journey. It was also his first fully instrumental album, and was produced by George Martin.

Jeff Beck

Live At Ronnie Scott's



Recorded in 2008, this album contains many definitive versions from Jeff's back catalogue, including *Where Were You* from 1989's seminal *Guitar Shop*. I would recommend the DVD particularly, as it gives a close-up view of the master at work. Surely live guitar playing doesn't get much better than this.

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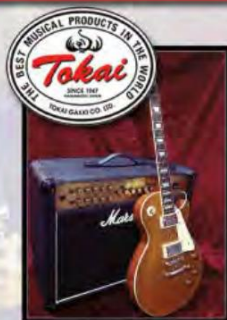
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Yamaha THR10C acoustic modelling tabletop amp. Many sounds and effects. New unwanted gift. £120 ONO. douglaspond142@sky.com. 01492 532391

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Fender Jazz Bass, Standard series, USA pickups, Olympic White with rosewood 'board, pro setup, mint condition, £525. call Giles 01453 885630

Gibson SG Reissue bass and hard case. Heritage Cherry, immaculate, never gigged, £849. Mr. Pullen. 07810 493863, colin. pullen606@btinternet.com

Music Man Stingray five-string bass – mint, Black, two pickups, three-band active EQ. Offers circa £1,195 Call Bob on 07851 050707 Nottingham

Warwick Corvette Standard four-string bass

with active pickups, Nat Oil finish, £550. Chris 07545 330053, Northampton cjbtrek@btinternet.com

Effects

Analog Man King Of Tone version 4, hi-gain on yellow channel. Mint condition, boxed, bag, stickers etc. £350 plus p&p. Call 02392 468532 or email keithwpurnell@btinternet.com for photo

Fender Tube Reverb, original '65 'blackface', definitive spring reverb sounds, great vintage look. Pictures available. £800 ono. Call 07748 813813

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Kieran, North Devon

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Misc

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Fender USA Strat neck, 1995, with maple 'board and original tuners, in good condition, £80. Pictures available. For more info, email japfriend@hotmail.com or call Peter on 0034966 789612

Freelance transcriber offering note-for note custom guitar transcriptions. Website: www.guitarscribe.uk Email: paulnhunter1961@outlook.com

All Guitarist mag back issues since August 1986 (except 308), including discs. Offers to Barry 07963 080418 or email barryhairsine@msn.com Manchester

Free to collector – *Guitarist* mags Jan 2003 to Dec 2014, most CDs. Collection only, Milton Keynes, Bucks valerie@vacha.fsnet.co.uk or call 01908 666825

Pickup clearout, Gibson 57 Classic set and hardware, £65. Gibson Burstbucker #2 (bridge) and surrounds, £35. Also various other Fralin, Lollar etc. Call Ian on 01904 270079. Email janderson.jnr@gmail.com.

Left-handed

ESP LTD KH202 guitar. Left handed. EMG pickups. Skull-and-crossbones inlays. Home-use only. Inc hard case. £200ono. Call James on 01335 360 701 or 07807 969412.

Gibson Flying V, left-handed 1985 Black Beauty with hard case. £700, Paul, Manchester 0161 4911383

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