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unpublished interview pt 2

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*I'm not sayin'
I couldn't do better....*

Los Angeles-based journalist **Steven Rosen** was a regular at the Whisky in the 1970s. In '78 he was introduced to a kid called Edward Van Halen - whose eponymous band was just about to release a record. No one could have foreseen how Rock guitar was just about to change forever. Filed away in a drawer ever since, Rosen's interview sheds new light on one of the great mysteries of guitar history: just how did Eddie get that sound?

Downstairs on the Whisky stage, Eddie Money is singing about paradise and holding on to something. Upstairs, at the end of a hallway reeking of burned-out butts, I'm standing in one of the dressing rooms with guitarist Edward Van Halen. He is holding on to a cigarette and talking as if we'd been friends forever. We've just been introduced by club booker Michelle Myers. Somehow, though I'd been attending shows at the Whisky and the Starwood for the last four years, I've never heard him play. I knew about Ed - everyone in Hollywood knew about Van Halen. He smokes and philosophizes about Eric Clapton (loves Cream), Jeff Beck (not a huge fan) and Detective's Michael Monarch (sounds too much like Beck). Their first album is due out in a couple of weeks. It is the beginning of 1978 and the record is scheduled for February/March.

[...>]

"I think it's good," he says, the assessment offered up with equal doses enthusiasm and aw shucks humility. "I hope it does OK," confesses the guitarist, almost embarrassed by the admission. Cue: the grin.

Two weeks later and the newest shipment of Warner Bros. records arrive. There is the Rutles' debut, Manfred Mann's Watch, Little Feat's Waiting For Columbus, and Van Halen. I drop the needle down on Runnin' With the Devil and realize instantly that the parameters of electric guitar will forever be changed. Those opening power chords are, at once, semi-classic in nature, harkening back to shades of Blackmore's Purple. And yet the very depth of expression and profound character here makes the sound as unique as any ever created.

An Eddie Money lyric comes back to me: "The future is ours to see." I have now seen that future and his name is Edward.

Van Halen changed the very tools, techniques, and tones that were the scaffolding upon which modern guitar would be built. Considered separately, the pieces are considerable; taken in concert and the album is forever frozen in legend. Amongst these innovations:

- 1] Hot rodding guitars (single pickup/single tone control) and amplifiers (beefing up transformers/different tubes).
- 2] Tapping (yes, Harvey Mandel and Brian May have done it but not like this); flutter picking.
- 3] Massive rhythms/sweeping and articulated lead sounds (not since the signature sonics of Hendrix and Beck and Clapton will a guitar tone be so imitated).

Several months after listening to the album, I conduct my first phone interview with that modest man from the Whisky. He is the same low-key character and at this early stage in the game, even he isn't aware of what Ed hath wrought.

The album would eventually climb to Number 19 on the Billboard charts. Not a stunning achievement but some 28 years after its release, Van Halen would go on to sell over 10 million copies. Ten more records would follow and while 1984 provided them with their first Number one single (Jump) and 5150 and OU812 maneuvered themselves into number one slots on the charts, none of these releases would carry the impact of this classic. Edward would grace the cover of every guitar mag known to man and in pursuit of the infamous brown sound, an entire cottage industry of custom guitar builders, amplifier modifiers, and vintage instrument collectors would be born. As debuts go, the Pasadena quartet's eponymous first step registered as important as Hendrix's Are You Experienced? Zeppelin's first, and Beck's Truth.

Was your father a musician?

Yeah; he got us into music very early. He got Al and me practicing piano for concert stuff, classical piano, at like seven and eight years old.

You were that young?

Oh, yeah; my brother was six, I think, when he started and I started when I was about seven. Well, then we decided to come to the land of opportunity in southern California and just started getting into rock and roll a little bit. The Dave Clark Five, the real early stuff. And went out and got myself a paper route and bought a drum set.

Originally I played drums and my brother played guitar.

Is that right?

While I was out throwin' my papers, he was practicing my drums. He got better than I did and I said, "OK, you play my drums and I'll pick up your guitar." It went on from there. I'd say I really didn't start playing guitar and getting into lead guitar and stuff like that until Cream came out and stuff like that. When the heavy guitar thing started to happen.

Do you remember the first guitar you had?

Oh, yeah [laughs.] A Sears Teisco Del Rey; a three pickup job. I thought the more pickups it had, the better guitar it was; the more switches and everything. Nowadays I've got kind of a homemade copy of a Strat with just one pickup and one volume knob on it. Really simple.

Can you describe your guitar a little more?

It looks like a Strat but there's a place in San Dimas, California called Charvel Guitars and they custom make 'em. Mine wasn't really custom made; it was like a junk neck and a hacked-up body that was just laying around and I wanted to experiment building my own guitar. So I could get the sound I wanted. See, I always wanted a Strat for the vibrato bar because I love that effect. So I just bought it from them for \$50 and the neck for \$90 and slapped it together. Put an old humbucking pickup in it and one volume knob and painted it up the way I wanted it to look and it screams.

My main guitar up until right now.

Is that the black and white striped guitar?

Yeah; it's the one that's on the cover of the album. Just one pickup and one volume; no tone or fancy out of phase switches or nothin' like that.

You used to use a Fender Strat?

Yeah, I did; I couldn't get the sound I wanted out of a regular Strat. Somebody told me about the Charvel place; about their wood. Their bodies get much better tone and stuff like that and I checked it out. It's true.

You only need the one volume control and the single pickup to get all the tone you need?

Uh, yeah; you know I use a couple of effects like an MXR phase shifter, a flanger and two Echoplexes which change the sound a bit, you know. And I use two Univox echo boxes also for the end of my solo on Eruption. That's not an Echoplex; it's a Univox. Everything I use is MXR; it's about all I can afford. Mounted on a piece of wood. I use a pretty long cord on stage about a 25-footer or a 30-footer and after it goes through the pedals I use an equalizer to boost the line back up. But tone-wise I just crank everything all the way up and depending on how you pick, you get different tones and stuff. My amp setup is pretty tricked though.

[...>]

Tell me about your rig.

OK; I've got six old Marshalls which have been rebuilt. They have bigger tubes in 'em and bigger transformers to make 'em a lot louder. I use six heads hooked to six cabinets. The cabinets are pretty much stock except I changed the way they look a little bit. And I use these things called voltage generators. What this box does is it enables me to put 150 or 160 watts; it enables me to crank up the voltage higher than the amp is supposed to take.

That sounds amazing.

It really makes the tubes red-hot, you know; it really makes the amp overload so much that it gets the sound I like.

Does this actually plug into the amp somehow?

It's a box that you plug into the wall and it has a big knob on it that goes up to 160 and you plug your amp into it. It's a voltage box or something like that; yeah, a voltage generator.

Any special settings you use on the Marshalls?

I just crank 'em all the way up; everything all the way up. Presence; middle; bass ...

Do you use the same setup in the studio?

I use the exact same thing.

You actually crank up six Marshall stacks in the studio?

Oh, no, no no [much laughter.] OK, see the thing is I get the exact same sound out of one or out of six. All the difference in numbers just means how loud it's gonna be. And each amp sounds the same. I use two actually 'cause I like to feel it too while I'm playing.

It must be pretty loud in the studio.

Oh, yeah; we play stage volume. We recorded at Sunset Sound; I like that room. It's just a big room; it's like our basement actually. The guys who run the studio and maintain the place, they walk in after we're done, boy, and there are beer cans all over the floor and Pink's hot dog smears all over the place. But in order for us to be comfortable we just do what we want. We just set up in a big room (Sunset Sound) and I used almost everything I use on stage. Only I used my old Marshalls as opposed to brand new ones that I use live. The sound of my guitar and the solos were cool (though) I'm not sayin' I couldn't do better. For the first album, it took us just a week to do the music; four or five days. Everything was basically done in first and second take. Our concept was to just do what we came up with as opposed to forcing ourselves to write something commercial

How do you manage to keep your puitar in tune with so much whammy bar stuff going on in your playing?

That is a very tricky question. So far I haven't told or showed anybody. I dicked around with a Strat for years learning how to do that

and there's about four or five different things that you have to do including knowing the technique of playing it. A lot of people just grab the bar and go wahwahwahwahwah [mimics the sound of a bar going up and down] and expect it to stay in tune. There's little things that you have to do like after you hit the bar after you bring the note down usually one of the strings goes sharp.

That is exactly what happens.

So what you do is before you come back in with a full chord, you have to stretch with your left hand to pop it back. Without picking the string, you just grab the string and jerk it up real quick and then it pops right back to where it was before you hit the bar. And then on top of that, you know the little metal jobs at the top? What part of the guitar is that? I don't even know. Where the tuning pegs are, Fender always has these little metal things that hold the strings down. String retainers or whatever they're called. If you have those too tight, the string will get caught up on that and it won't pop back the way it's supposed to. Also, it's the way you wind your strings.

How do you wind your strings?

Hey, I don't know if I want to tell you! It's basically simple and the kind of strings you use is important. I don't know if I should be putting down certain strings but I use Fender strings; they're very good and I like 'em.

What gauges do you use?

They're pretty light really: .040; .032; .024; .015; .011; and .009. So far for that Strat those are the best gauges for keeping it in tune. I used to think that the heavier strings

I used, the better it would stay in tune but that ain't true either.

Have you done anything to the tuning pegs themselves?

I use Schallers; they're not regular Fenders.

Have you played with the bridge?

The spring setup; they come with five springs and I only use four. It's hard to explain everything because it also depends on the guitar. I could tell you exactly what to do and you could do it to your Strat and it wouldn't work. And also there's a thing in the back where the strings hook up; there are two long screws and how tight you got that set, it changes the tension of the springs. So it's that; how you wind your strings; how many springs you got; the string retainers at the top; and the way you play it. It took me a while to figure it out.

Do you think you'll stick with these Strat-styled puitars?

When we were in New Orleans, I just bought a Les Paul. I needed another guitar because I tend to bend the hell out of the strings a lot; usually after my solo live, I change guitars. So I needed another guitar and when we were in New Orleans I just picked up a Paul. It's a real nice white one; it looks cool.

Do you play any acoustic puitar?

I have never in my life owned an acoustic

[...>]

guitar; I really haven't. I've written songs on electric guitar that would sound real nice on an acoustic but I've never owned an acoustic guitar. I guess one of these days I'll buy one. I don't know nothin' about acoustics; I know what I like in electric guitars but acoustic I'm lost. I don't know what's good; I really don't.

Do you play any slide guitar?

A little bit; there's nothing on the record. There's no slide on the record. But who knows what lurks in the future? Me and my brother both play keyboards, too; I've been thinking about getting a synthesizer. I know there's a lot of people starting to get into guitar synthesizer but like Roland you have to play one of their guitars but I don't dig 'em. So I think maybe I might get a synthesizer and play keyboards. But who knows? I might not.

Do you use any special tunings?

Sometimes I bring the low E down to a D for like some acoustic stuff; it sounds real deep.

What about picks?

Fender mediums. What I used to do was use a metal pick. A friend of mine always used to make me metal picks; he used to work in a machine shop. And they were really cool but when you start sweatin' I couldn't hold onto 'em. They'd fly out of my hand and I'd be bummed out.

Can you talk about how you developed that fast fluttering pick attack?

Just practice, I guess. I've been playing eight to 10 years; that's quite a while. I kind of pick at an angle; a downward angle. And I started early, which is good. A lot of people start late and play for 10 years and they don't get quite as far. You've got a lot more hang-ups or whatever when you get older and shit. I enjoy playing; that's the main thing. It's not like I was forcing myself because I wanted to be a rock and roll star. I started out playing because I really liked to.

Do you still practice?

Sure; I mean I've got a guitar right here in my hands right now. I change the strings before a gig; I play for half-an-hour, an hour, just to break in the strings and loosen up my fingers. And at night sometimes I come home and write a tune.

You change the strings before every gig?

Oh, yeah, every day especially on the Strat; they wear out so quick with that bar.

Talking about the album, it really sounds like there isn't a lot of overdubbing going on?

Oh, no, no. I hate overdubbing 'cause it's just not the same as playing with the guys; there's no feeling there for me to work off of. I've got to feed off of them to play good, too. Are you familiar with the album?

Pretty familiar.

Like Runnin' With the Devil is a melodic solo so I put a rhythm underneath it. Songs that have a spontaneous solo like I'm the

[...>]

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One, Ice Cream Man and most of the songs on the album, Ted, our producer felt and us also, that it was good enough on its own without fattening it up. Also when we play it live it sounds the same. I hate people - without namin' names - they over-produce in the studio and then when they walk out on stage people go, "Wow! Is that the same band?" It doesn't sound the same. With us it sounds exactly the same and maybe even better because you get to see it us doin' it at the same time. It's very energetic; we'll get you up and shake your ass.

Ted was important as far as finding a direction on the first album and bringing out the best in you?

Oh, sure. What he managed to do was put our live sound on a record. I mean a lot of people have to do a bunch of overdubs to make it sound full. It's a lot easier to make a lot of instruments sound full than a guitar, bass and drums. That's where Ted comes in; he knows his shit. He's the man. He's doing our next one, too. Van Halen is three instruments and voices with very few overdubs; very live sounding. Ted Templeman, the producer and Donn Landee, the engineer, they weren't quite sure of what we wanted; they weren't too familiar with our sound. We sifted through all the songs with Ted and we picked out what we wanted to do. And one out of the four might say, "Hey, let's do this one" and the other guys are going, "Nah, why don't we try this one?"

You were pleased with your solos and the sound of your guitar on Van Halen?

It was cool. I'm not sayin' I couldn't do better but for a first album it only took us a week just to do the music; four or five days. Everything was basically done in a first or second take.

Any solos that stand out for you?

Umm, I don't know; I like all the songs and I like all the solos. I guess it takes someone from the outside to pick which one they like best. Spontaneous-wise, I like I'm the One, the boogie.

That's the real fast one?

Yeah, the fast boogie. I like soloing to quick stuff. That one was pretty much spontaneous; like Runnin' With the Devil and On Fire and some of the other ones were set solos. But that one gave me a chance to space off a little bit and noodle around. Which I do a lot live; we all get crazy live. I mean nobody spaces off to the point where it falls apart; we just add a little bit visually and sound wise but keep it interesting.

Are there certain scales and things that you work from in putting together your solos?

OK, I don't really know what scales they are [laughs.] I really don't. I know music theory and I know how to write music on paper and how to read for piano but on guitar it's a different story. I don't know nothin' about what a scale is; I know basic notes. I can play what sounds good; what I think is good anyway.

It sounds like there are Ritchie Blackmore influences in your playing?

Since the last five or six years, I really haven't been into any one guitarist; I like everybody. I've listened to Blackmore and Beck; especially Wired, I like some of that stuff. Before that I just never really got into him. I didn't like him with Beck, Bogert & Appice. But the main guitarist I'd say that influenced me to play the most was Clapton. I used to love the way he played; he was real smooth and a lot of feeling. Every review I ever read of the album or my playing it's always Blackmore, Beck, and Page influence. But I never really sat down and copped their licks like I did Clapton. I guess a lot of people think I sound like Beck or Blackmore because I do use the bar and they do also so it kinda gets the same kinda sound. The only thing Blackmore got me hooked on was the whammy bar. Because I never really liked the way he played that weird staccato stuff. But I feel a lot of my licks are different than theirs. Like the wide stretch things I do I try and make it sound a little bit different.

You do that one thing during Eruption where you're hitting a note and

Right, right; it's like having a sixth finger on your left hand. Instead of picking you're hitting a note on the fretboard.

Was this a technique that you developed or was it just something you stumbled across?

I really don't know how to explain that, man. I was just sittin' in my room at the pad at

home, drinkin' a beer, and I remembered seeing people stretching one note and hitting the note once. They popped the finger on there to hit one note. I said, "Well, fuck, nobody is really capitalizing on that. Nobody was really doing more than just one stretch and one note real quick." So I started dickin' around and said, "Fuck! This is a totally nother technique that nobody really does." Which it is. I haven't really seen anyone get into that as far as they could because it is a totally different sound. A lot of people listen to that and they don't even think it's a guitar. "Is that a synthesizer? A piano? What is that?"

The way you hit harmonics at the beginning of some of the songs from the album also sound different than the way other guitarists hit them.

I just liked the sound of it and I just kept workin' at it until I got the notes I wanted. You can almost do a complete scale with all the harmonics. Just gotta know where to hit 'em. I guess I could be funny and say I take a lot of pills but that ain't true.

Did you have any idea that the band would have such success? You're out touring with Montrose and Journey and you're going to Japan in March. That must feel amazing.

Umm, we're all trippin' on that it happened quick. We've been together for four years as a band. I talk to these guys in Journey and they go, "Wow, man, you guys are lucky because you guys happened so quick." But what they

[...>]

don't understand is we'd been together for four years before the album got out.

How were you able to promote Van Halen in the early days?

A lot of bands make a demo tape; we did that also. We went to New York with Gene Simmons from Kiss I'd say about two years ago. He saw us in a club and asked us, "Are you guys on a label or anything? Do you have a manager?" and we said, "No." So he said, "Wow, you guys are a hot band, I'd like to work with you guys." And we're going, "What do you mean?" And what it boiled down to was he wanted to take a shot at producing a rock band so we said, "Sure" because he was payin' for it all. We didn't have any money and I guess basically that's why we did the tape. But then again we went to New York, made the world's most expensive demo tape, and never ended up using it. On top of not having a tape, we didn't know where in the hell to take it; we didn't know anyone. Bands take it to a record company and there will be some clown sittin' on a couch, smokin' a joint, listens to your tape, and nothing will ever happen that way. So what we basically did is we just kept playing the L.A. area everywhere. We used to put on our own shows at the Pasadena Civic, our hometown, and draw like 3,000 people on a \$4 ticket. This was way before Warner Bros. So we just developed such a following that a sister of a friend at the record company, the word got around about the band.

Then you had some people from Warner Bros. come down and see the band?

Finally Ted Templeman and Mo Ostin came

down to the Starwood in Hollywood which was really always just kind of a bad place for us because we weren't a Hollywood band. When we're out in the Midwest and they ask where are you from and you go, "L.A.," immediately they think Hollywood. They're wrong. Hollywood is like New York; they're islands. Pasadena is really where we're from and that's like San Bernardino; that's like Bumfuck, Iowa. That's what people are like out in Hollywood.

Did you know that they were in the audience?

It really tripped me out because when we were playin' and Mo Ostin and Ted Templeman walked in, we really didn't know. Somebody just said, "There's somebody real important out there so play good." There were no people there; it was some rainy Monday night without any people at all. And still they came backstage and they loved it. They said, "If you don't negotiate with anyone else, you've got what you want right here." We were happy; we tripped out. Warner Bros., man, that was always the company I wanted to be with. On top of that, we got Ted Templeman to produce the record. I talked to a lot of people who we've played with and they say, "Wow, man, we're trying to get Ted Templeman to produce our record." He's in demand and here we are; we get picked up by him.

Have you written any songs for the next album?

Oh, yeah; we write all the time. That's a good thing about the band and everybody contributes. I'm the guitarist so I write all the riffs and shit but Dave writes lyrics and Al and Mike really help arrange; every song is a

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group effort. There's not one song that one person wrote totally.

Who's idea was it to release "You Really Got Me" as the first single?

Uh, it was a joint effort; it was a joint thing between us and Ted. The night he saw us play we played that song and he got off on it. He's going, "Hey, man, that might be a good song to put on the record." And I thought, "Yeah, shit" because we've all been waiting to do that song anyways since we were four years old. I mean it sounds different than the original; it's kind of updated; it's been Van Halenized like a jet plane.

How has the record been selling?

Pretty good; we've sold about 350,000. We're like 29 with a bullet next week in Billboard. So we're kickin' some ass. We started out, no ... I better not talk about that.

It's cool.

When we started out with Journey and Montrose, we were brand new; I think our album was only out a week at the start of the tour. And now we're almost passing up Journey on the charts and stuff. So they're freakin' out; I think they might be happy to get rid of us. We're very energetic and we get up there and blaze on the people for half-an-hour; that's all we're allowed to play with them. They won't let us use any effects. For my solo, "Eruption," I do that every night live and I have this old World War II bomb, which is about six, or seven feet tall and I put some echo boxes in it. Usually the thing blows up at the end of my solo with all the smoke bombs but they won't let me use it. We don't get soundchecks; we don't get shit. But we're still blazin' on the people, man; we're getting a good strong encore every night. All we're tryin' to do is put some excitement back into rock and roll. It seems like a lot of people are old enough to be our daddies and they sound like it or they act like it; they seem energy-less. It seems like they forget what rock and roll is all about.



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Then along came Eddie.....

Eddie Van Halen - the most important guitarist who ever lived? It's a claim that has been made for a handful of players from Django to Jimi, but Levi Clay argues the case for EVH.

*When we discovered Steven Rosen's 'lost interview' with the (then) young upstart Edward Van Halen and decided it was time to build an issue around the great man (EVH, that is, not Rosen), talk turned to what else we could do. Jamie Humphries, naturally, took the driving seat on technique - but was there anything left to say beyond the man's own words and Jamie's fabulous 'how to' tutorial? Then someone asked **Levi Clay** if he felt he knew enough about EVH to pen a piece: "Know enough? I think he's the most important electric guitarist who ever lived!" Before the fight could really get started, it was decided to let Levi make his case for: Eddie Van Halen, the most important electric guitarist ever.*

Born January 26th, 1955 in the Netherlands, Eddie and his family relocated to California in 1962. After learning piano and violin in his youth Eddie switched to drums while his brother Alex (Van Halen's drummer) played guitar. This was the way it stayed for quite some time until Eddie realised that Alex had somehow overtaken him on the drums too so, frustrated, Eddie switched to electric guitar. That first instrument was a cheap Teisco Del Ray which had 4 pickups, Eddie was convinced more pickups were better (ironic right?).

The band Van Halen really came to life when Michael Anthony and David Lee Roth joined Eddie and Alex's band, Mammoth. After a brief stint under the name Genesis, the band had had to change it as they heard



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That's what Eddie is - a spontaneous player who is happy to showcase his chops at any point.

there was some English band with the same name... so "Van Halen" was born. Over the next few years the four piece began to build a major following on the LA scene with a real guerilla roots promotional attitude, handing out hundreds of flyers by hand at local high schools. This paid off in 1977, when Gene Simmons of KISS came to see the band play, then recorded a demo for the group to try and launch them to the big time. Gene's management didn't go for the idea in the end, but it was a straw in the wind. By mid '77 representatives of Warner had been to see Van Halen play and a week later a record deal was on the table, and so begun the recording of Van Halen.

This whole feature is really about that record and just what impact it made in 1978 on the music loving public, and the guitar scene. When you listen to the album, the first thing you really should notice is just how stripped-down it is, Eddie doesn't rely on tracking four guitars to sound huge, for the most part of the album it's just one guitar playing rhythm guitar and fills, then soloing over

just bass and drums. This is really important when you think about Eddie's playing style. These songs were effectively just played live in the studio and many of the solos (Like Ice Cream Man and You Really Got Me) are one takes. That's what Eddie is - a spontaneous player who is happy to showcase his chops at any point. Learning a Van Halen song is simple, learning to play Eddie's fills is a task.

That's the feeling I get when I listen to this record. It's the sound of excitement, the sound of a guitar player who had more to offer than anyone before him, being completely unleashed. This was the mid-70s and during that period there were two big things happening on the music scene. On one side you have the lavish arrangements of prog rock bands like Yes, Rush, Gentle Giant and, of course, Pink Floyd. Then at the same time you have all of the pent up social aggression, and primitive musical forces of punk bands like The Ramones, The Clash and The Sex Pistols. When you really put Eddie in line with his guitar peers, he stood out like a

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There were some other things that really happened around this time that allow Eddie to play the way he did, and actually, if Eddie had been born 10 years previously, he may not have been who he turned out to be.

man walking on water. Remember, we're not talking greatest here, we're looking at the most important, and although pioneers like Malmsteen and Vai would come a few years later, it really didn't shock you quite as much as Van Halen would have in '78.

Don't just think of Eddie as a crazy lead guitarist though, as a great shredder isn't automatically a great guitarist. Van Halen is just as cool if you mute all of the solos on the record. As a rhythm guitarist Eddie had some great things going on, and more than just the attitude he added to riffs like You Really Got Me (The Kinks cover).

One thing that seems to set Eddie apart from many of the mindless Rock virtuosos that came after him was his command of triads for riffs. If you look at the album opener, Running with the Devil, Anthony lays down a static E pedal note while Eddie plays C, D, G, A and E triads over the top to create interest. When you really try and name these chords you have a C/E, E7sus, Em7, E13sus, Emaj, but I'm almost certain that's not how it was conceptualized. We could call this a modal approach, where Eddie shifts from E mixolydian (Amaj), to E dorian (Dmaj) then resolving to E ionian (Emaj). This modal interplay became a Van Halen trait that would be used to great effect on later albums on tracks like Jump and Panama.

It's very easy when listening to Eddie to wonder exactly who he was influenced by. I know from chatting with people that Eddie is always known for his flamboyant

techniques such as tapping, whammy bar tricks and harmonics, not really the common techniques of players growing up in the late '60s. Eddie's hero growing up was Eric Clapton, "I learned his solos to Crossroads and Sitting on Top of the World note for note by slowing them down to 16 RPM on my dad's turntable" recalls Eddie. Not really a guy you think of when listening to someone like Van Halen, but just check out 0:55 on Feel Your Love Tonight (Van Halen I), it's a lick straight from old Slowhand's arsenal. Aside from Eric, Eddie has many influences from Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck to Allan Holdsworth and John McLaughlin. You can hear those crazy stretch licks ala Holdsworth on tunes like Ice Cream Man, but if you take away the few crazy tapping or legato licks and remove the tremolo from the equation, Eddie just sounds a lot like one of the great British Blues guitarists on steroids.

There were some other things that really happened around this time that allow Eddie to play the way he did, and actually, if Eddie had been born 10 years previously, he may not have been who he turned out to be. The first innovation was the amplifier and its ability to really break-up (Eddie was using a modded Marshall). In the '70s the music world started to be exposed to more and more gain and a side effect of this was that it was no longer difficult to get sustain out of an amp, so thinner strings became the norm, and the guitar's action began to come down. It really is evident when you play a vintage Fender from the '60s and then a

Jackson from the '80s. Those '60s guitars were not easy to play, they were a lot of work but suddenly guitarists were being treated to guitars that didn't fight you when you tried to play them. The last real big innovation which was a big part of Eddie and his sound was the invention of the Floyd Rose locking tremolo. Suddenly, the guitar was capable of doing all of these crazy sounds, we could drop our strings down until they were slack, we could wiggle, gargle, scream and any other sound you could imagine - this was all pretty new when Van Halen came out and it was a big part of Eddie's sound.

Then of course you have Eddie's guitar - the Frankenstein. When Eddie burst onto the scene in '78 he was playing the first incarnation of this guitar. It was basically a Strat copy which Eddie put together himself. This is such a cool thing when you think about it, Eddie got the body then took it home before taking a hammer and chisel to it to rout out space for a humbucker in the bridge. He then sourced a scratch plate for his little DIY project and wired the guitar with one volume knob. He then painted the guitar black before masking taping it in random places then painting it white so when the masking tape was removed you end up with that iconic guitar on the cover of Van Halen I. This guitar was tweaked and tweaked over the years, picking up a Floyd Rose along the way, a neck pickup (that didn't work) and eventually that additional coat of red that we all came to know and love.

Ultimately this all comes down to impact and just how far forward you've taken

things with your playing. For me, as a teacher, electric guitar technique is taught as either pre, or post-Van Halen. Eddie is the benchmark for what the electric guitar was capable of. During the 10 year period after Van Halen, you had guys come in and really hone the picking, legato and bring sweep picking to the table, but to me Eddie was the father of it all. What I find with most advanced players is that they're all influenced by Vai, Satriani, Gilbert etc, but they've all missed out on Eddie, and that seems crazy to me, especially as Eddie seems to get a lot of the rap for the modern day shredder. I don't want you to think that I'm trying to put down the important players that came prior to Van Halen, the impact that players like Charlie Christian, T-Bone Walker, Les Paul and Jimi Hendrix had. It's just that, in my opinion, none of them took what came before and took it so far forward. Eddie Van Halen took what was happening before and pushed it so far ahead that it directly influenced almost every guitarist that followed.

It's over 30 years since Van Halen I. Eddie hasn't felt the need to change who he is and he's still making great records. If you're yet to dig into the legend of Eddie Van Halen, or if it's been many years since you've checked him out, it would be worth heading out and picking up a copy of this year's A Different Kind of Truth. This is the album we've all hoped for, let's just hope Eddie keeps making them.





Life After Death Metal

Sweden's Opeth have been on a long journey since the band's beginning in Stockholm in 1990. Guitarist, singer and songwriter Mikael Åkerfeldt has welded together influences as diverse as Death Metal, Progressive, Jazz and even Folk to produce one of the broader palettes in Rock. He and second guitarist Fredrik Åkesson speak with **Jason Constantine**, while **Levi Clay** considers the band's impressive history.

It was way back in 1990 that guitarist and composer Mikael Åkerfeldt formed Opeth in Stockholm, Sweden. The line-up in those first few years was unstable to say the least but by '93 things had sorted themselves out and the guitar duo of Åkerfeldt (who also handled vocals) and Peter Lindgren was well established. This partnership continued until 2007, when Lindgren was replaced by Fredrik Åkesson.

The band's first effort, '95's *Orchid*, really set them aside from the rest of the metal scene in that the tunes showed a rich variety of influences and although it's certainly rooted in the death/black metal genre, the dual guitar approach, piano, acoustic guitars, clean vocals and dynamic contrasts meant this record was something new and exciting for the music fans of the day. Three more albums followed before the band really

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started to make a big dent on the scene, '96's Morningrise, '98's My Arms, Your Hearse and then '99's Still Life.

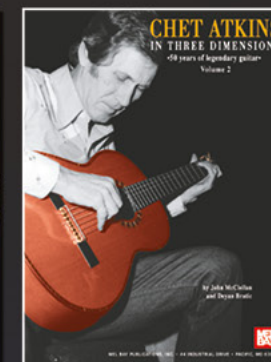
Opeth has always been about Åkerfeldt and his writing which has developed a strong blend of Death Metal, Folk and classic Progressive Rock. The influences from bands like Death, Celtic Frost and Carcass are obvious when listening to Åkerfeldt's riff style, but when you dig a little deeper you realize that bands like Pink Floyd, Yes, Grand Funk Railroad and even fusion bands like Weather Report play such a prominent role in Mikael's writing that it would be impossible for Opeth to be just another Death Metal band. Mikael recently went on record saying that "I haven't been listening to death metal since the early

'90s." So it's no wonder that in recent years Opeth have become more and more like a band right out of the '70s.

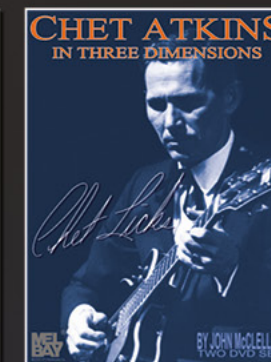
These ideas are evident when you look at the band's first few albums from the noughties, 2001's Blackwater Park is often considered the perfect introduction to Opeth's writing style. 2002 saw the release of Deliverance, which was Opeth's heaviest outing to date. Five months later and they released possibly one of the most artistically bold statements ever, as Damnation featured no heavy riffs, no death growls and no fast tempos. It paid-off perfectly and a live album followed (Lamentations).



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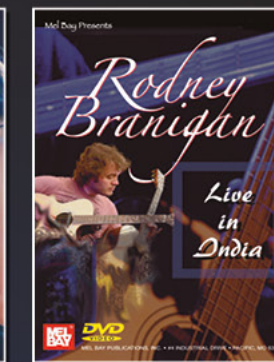
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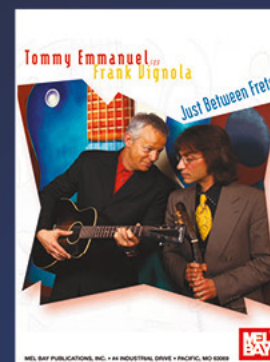


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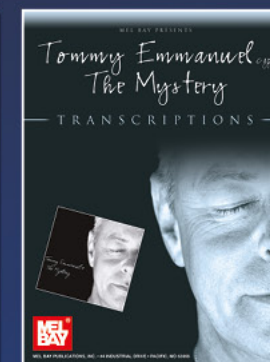


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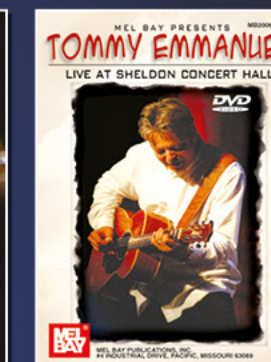
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From a playing perspective, it's no secret that Mikael is very much a 'play now ask questions later' kind of guy.

In 2005 Opeth released their first album with Metal mega label, Roadrunner. Ghost Reveries was a huge turning point in Opeth's career as they had made it into the Metal mainstream. This doesn't mean that their sound was compromised, in fact Ghost Reveries feels like the perfect balance between Deliverance and Damnation and, for me, to this day the album opener Ghost of Perdition is one of the band's best songs from their best album. The tuning on this album is also a relatively hotly debated topic with many fans sure that it's played in open Dm tuning (DADFAD) but I can say with complete confidence that it's actually in open Dmadd9 tuning (DADFAD#) which is a beautiful tuning to play around with.

From a playing perspective, it's no secret that Mikael is very much a 'play now ask questions later' kind of guy. His compositions are only limited by his ear, and never his theoretical knowledge. There are videos out there where Mikael walks through songs like The Lotus Eater and will play a chord and then say "I have no idea what this is called" when talking about a diminished chord. There are some

beautiful moments in his compositions where simple devices like a series of chromatically ascending minor9 chords and you don't find that when you sit and worry about writing what is correct. In fact, when writing one of my own tunes a few years ago, when it came to the intro the only way I could get something I liked was to stop thinking and just play "something like Opeth might play" I've taken a great deal of pleasure in never analysing that chord!

2008 saw the release of Watershed, which delved deeper into Åkerfeldt's Folk influences. This is when Åkesson joined the fold and he couldn't have made a better statement as this album seemed so far removed from the heavy almost gothic quality of Ghost Reveries. Metal Edge magazine gave this disc its album of the year title.

It's only fitting that we take a look at Åkesson, too, to get a grip of just the sort of guy it takes to back up a fiendish mastermind like Mikael. Åkesson first came to my attention when Chris Amott took a break from Swedish melodic Death Metal band, Arch Enemy. During that period Fredrik filled in, and anyone who knows Arch Enemy's music, knows that Fredrik had some big shoes to fill! He features on 2006's Live Apocalypse alongside Mike Amott, where he kicks all kinds of ass. Aside from this, Åkesson is probably most well known for his tenure in Talisman, with whom he put out seven studio albums over a period of 13 years. Fredrik is a solid lead guitarist and one look at his live solos reveals influences from Zakk Wylde to Shawn Lane. Fred is currently a PRS endorser and has his own signature SE model available.

[...>]





Gearwise Mikael has also had a long running relationship with PRS guitars, of which he has played a wide variety of models. There is an SE signature model single cut available and, in Mikael's hands, they are usually always tuned to standard tuning or drop D. Ampwise, Åkerfeldt recently signed a deal with Marshall (after a long time with Laney) and he's opting for the Vintage Modern range.

This brings us to late 2011 and *Heritage* which couldn't really be much further from what you might be expecting from one of the absolute kings of progressive metal. We're back to the *Damnation* sound in that a lot of the extreme metal features are gone, most notably the death growls. The album opens with a beautiful piano track before moving onto *The Devil's Orchard* which has a lot of Åkerfeldt's diminished sounding harmonic devices and riff style, but the timbres used include sounds like you might expect to find on a Kansas or Deep Purple record. For me it's the heavily keyboard (Mellotron in particular) driven sound that gives it that real '70s vibe. So far the record has been a smash hit and the band are currently out on tour with metal giants Mastodon.

Opeth are genuinely one of the most exciting bands to have your eye on because there really is no telling just what direction they will find themselves heading next. Mikael summarises it perfectly: "Right now I have a hard time seeing that I'm going to go back to writing Progressive Death Metal. I've done that for my whole life and I want to discover new ways for this band, and *Heritage* is a good start for us to collectively do that." The only thing that is certain is that there will be a hoard of adoring fans eager to follow them on their journey as they know it's going to be a good one.



GOING SOLO

Mark Tremonti has been showered with praise. Guitar World's 'Guitarist of the Year' for three consecutive years, one magazine even claimed his solo on Blackbird was 'the greatest solo of all time'. Which is one guaranteed way to start a bar room fight! From Creed to Alter Bridge, Tremonti has conquered all. Now he's poised to launch his first ever solo album. **Stuart Bull** meets one of guitar's hottest properties, while **Levi Clay** considers his stellar career so far.

This couldn't be a better time to feature Mark Tremonti. In just a few weeks time, he will put out his first ever solo record and it's fair to say that there's almost unprecedented anticipation for it in guitar circles - especially since a YouTube preview was carefully timed to whet our appetites!

Tremonti really is one of the icons of the post-grunge guitar scene and if he hasn't popped onto your radar before now, you're at the perfect place in time to find yourself a new hero.

Born in Detroit, 1974, it was just 11 years before Mark picked up the guitar. He's very open about his influences, citing Metallica's Master of Puppets as major game-changer for him. He was also into much heavier bands like Slayer, Tesla, Celtic Frost and Morbid Angel - this was a major driving force behind his music for a long time but spent many years on the back burner while he was with Creed. There was no escaping these influences from his early years though and Mark became

quite the speed metal connoisseur. Although it wasn't long before grunge came along and temporarily killed-off the guitar solo, Mark never stopped loving to solo and had built up a high level of chops.

In the mid '90s Tremonti met Scott Stapp (vocals) and formed Creed with Brian Marshall and Scott Phillips. The band started due to Tremonti and Stapp's shared love of writing music and performing, but there was a little more to Creed. In Mark's own words: "Creed existed to be as successful as possible", and this shows in the band's writing style. It would be a real expert on Mark who could listen to Creed and say "oh yeah, this guy's really into thrash metal!" This direction paid off and when their first album My Own Prison (originally a self funded release) was picked up by Wind-Up Records, the four singles released all reached number one on the Billboard rock charts. The record shifted six million copies. Ladies and gentlemen, Creed had arrived!

[...>]



Over the next seven years Creed hit the stadium circuit and became one of the biggest selling Rock bands of the era - 1999's Human Clay shifting over 11 million copies in the US alone. This album spawned hit singles such as Higher and With Arms Wide Open (which won the Grammy for best Rock song). There seemed to be no stopping Creed and even though 2001's follow-up album Weathered didn't meet with the same success, it still went multi-platinum and contained the hot singles My Sacrifice, and One Last Breath.

What I remember personally from being in my early teens and listening to Creed was, they were NOT cool: they were the band that everyone's mum loved. Sadly, because they were not cool, then Mark Tremonti wasn't cool either, and that was tough because back in 2001 every magazine on the market had

a huge add for the PRS Tremonti SE, and it didn't matter how uncool Creed were, this guitar certainly *was* cool: a black singlecut with a pointy headstock. It was tough not having one. Fortunately lots of magazines were featuring Mark as a player and I was serious enough about guitar to read them, so it was from Mark that I got a lot of my warm-up exercises, and an introduction to legato technique. I just couldn't get my head around why he didn't play like that in Creed!

When Creed imploded in 2002 (I remember reading that two fans had filed a lawsuit against the band as Stapp was unable to sing a single song) I thought that may be the last I'd hear of Tremonti, but I was wrong - and I'm pretty glad I was, because his next band was the mighty Alter Bridge.



Mark Tremonti Interview

[...>]



A World Of Tone

From the liquid single-coil sweetness of Little Wing to the raunch of Back In Black, there are certain landmark tones that every guitarist visits.

It's a lot of ground to cover, but the PRS Studio is more than capable of going the distance. With a pair of PRS 57/08 Narrowfield pickups and a 57/08 humbucker teamed with a five-way selector and push-pull tone control, the Studio reaches every tonal destination with ease.

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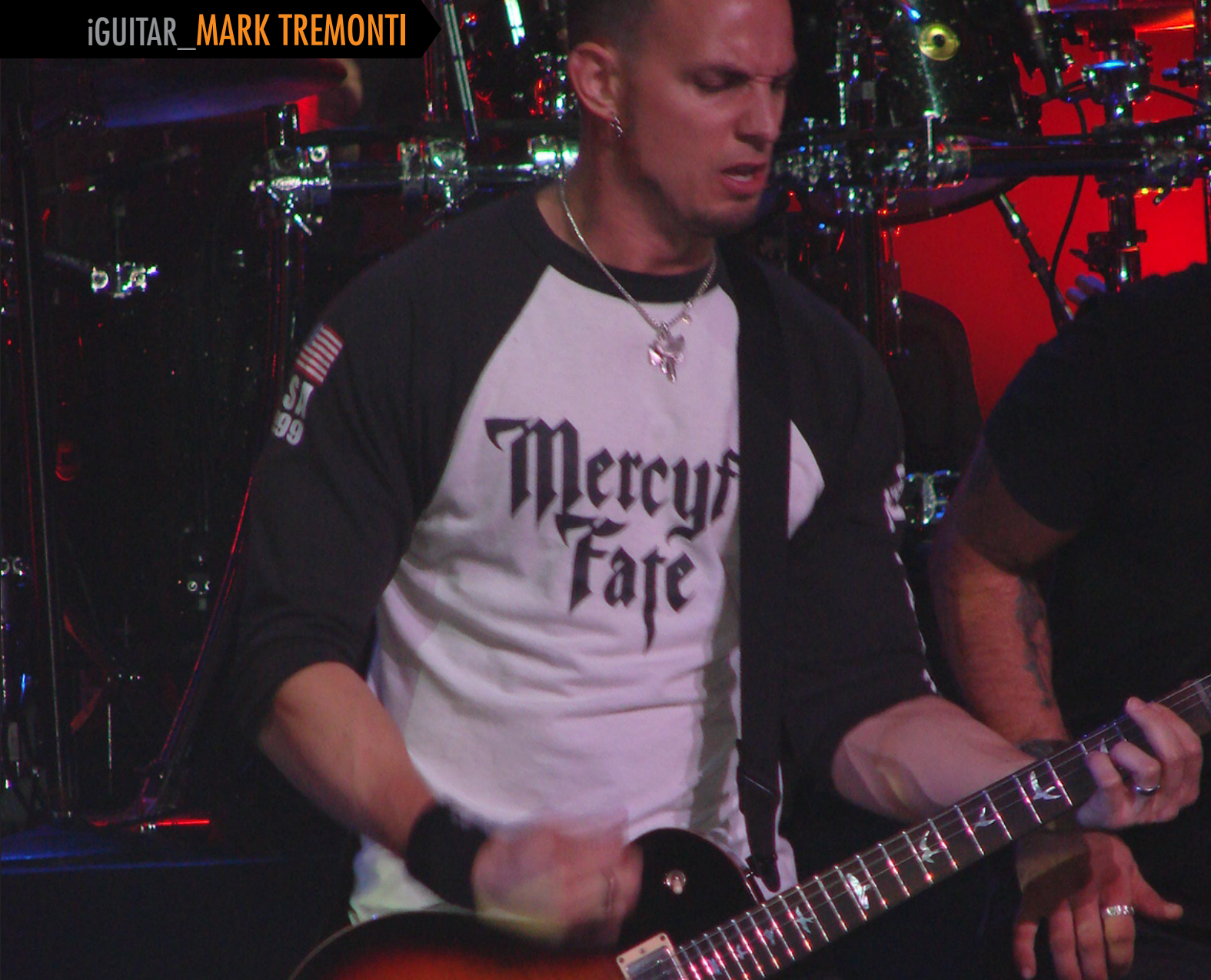
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Named after Alter Bridge in Detroit, a bridge which symbolically separated the social classes where Mark grew up, the idea of crossing Alter Bridge meant heading into the unknown. The line-up was Creed but with Myles Kennedy on lead vocals. No one knew what to expect but hopes were pretty high. Skip forward to June 2004 and a vivid memory of heading round my friend Tom's place to hang out and write music, and there on Kerrang! was the first Alter Bridge single Open Your Eyes. I was blown away by the song, it just felt epic in all aspects and Myles was on fire, then the solo kicked in (3:03) and I can say that my world changed a little bit. After some slow, melodic phrasing

[...>]

Mark exploded with a series of rapid fire legato ideas with the wah and I'd honestly not heard anything quite like it at the time (least of all from an ex-Creed member!) Alter Bridge's first album One Day Remains came out in August 2004. It's just a great album featuring some amazing songs such as Burn it Down and metal anthem Metalingus. The album was received really well by critics but the music industry had changed. Although the record shifted 750,000 copies (tiny compared to Creed) it was still considered a success.

MARK TREMONTI



Debut solo record "All I Was" available July 2012. Visit Fret12.com for more on the Tremonti Project

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In the last eight years Alter Bridge have been going strong, releasing two more albums, 2007's *Blackbird* and 2010's *AB III*. During this period we've really had the chance to get to know Tremonti as a metal-influenced writer and a 21st century guitar icon. Just take a listen to the title track from *Blackbird*, it opens like a Creed tune, with some melodic clean fingerpicking, but after a melodic intro we're introduced to a ball-breaking metal riff before Myles soars like the proverbial blackbird over the chorus. The song just builds and

builds until the guitar solo enters at the 4:40 mark; this is one of Tremonti's best moments committed to record containing everything from melodic bends, fluid legato licks and an alternate picking run at the solo's climax.

When it comes to gear, Tremonti is famed for his vast collection of Paul Reed Smith guitars which he's been playing since the first major Creed tour. He has both a signature top line PRS which features his own pattern thin neck profile, and the budget SE model. He tunes

them in various tunings including drop B, open D and open G. Ampwise Tremonti has used many things over the years but I'm led to believe that his current rig consists of Mesa Boogie and Bogner amplifiers. If you look closely though you see Fuchs, Two Rock, and Fender amps too, so he really mixes it up.

From 2009 onward Tremonti has bounced between Creed and Alter Bridge, recording albums with Creed (2009's *Full Circle*) and live DVDs with Alter Bridge (2009's *Live from*

Amsterdam and this year's *Live at Wembley*). His schedule from here is to put out his solo record, then to write and record a new album with Creed. At the time of writing, all we know about this solo record is that Mark has gone back to his classic Metal roots as shown in the first single, *You Waste Your Time*. This gives us a good idea of what we can expect from our resident stadium guitar hero, and I'm sure we're going to love it!



PART 2

A Rare Interview With The Unrevealed Randy Rhoads

In 1981, just a year before the guitarist's tragic death, Randy Rhoads gave two long, revealing, interviews to the US journalist, **Jon Stix**. In issue 9 we brought you part one of this remarkable historic testament. Part Two is just as remarkable and includes a unique audio track from the guitarist's interview.

JS: Let's talk guitars.

RR: I've got a '64 cream Les Paul and a 1957 black Les Paul with three pickups. The Flying V was made by Carl Sandoval. He used to work at Charvel and he went off on his own. He made it for me. It has a DiMarzio Distortion Plus on the treble position and a DiMarzio PAF in the bass pickup. The only one of the three I wasn't playing was the Charvel. That one he made for me after I joined Ozzy. The Charvel has the Seymour Duncan Distortion pickup.

JS: What's the switch on the Charvel?

RR: That's just a toggle-switch for the pickups. The Charvel has Charvel everything. The Flying V has all Fender parts. The Gibson, everything's stock, but the machine heads are Schaller. I have a Les

Paul in the SG shape with gold pickups and a Bigsby tremolo. Charvel just made me three new guitars. One is my own design plus Charvel's, which hopefully might turn out to be one of my main guitars. There's no tremolo on that one. He's making one as an experiment with a Floyd Rose. I found this guy in England who sets up tremolo arms. You don't need Floyd Rose. I just stumbled upon him. It's so close to a Floyd Rose. The tuning is real good on it. If the guitar is set up right in the first place, Doug Chandler can do wonders with it. I was so amazed about how good it stays in tune. He did it to my white Charvel. Tremolo to me is so old now that I'm trying to not get too into it. The first thing a kid does now when he wants to learn guitar is go get a guitar with a tremolo arm and go back and forth. Used properly, it's great, but I don't want to get it too much into my style. I'd rather use a tremolo as an addition to what I'm doing than make noises with it.

JS: What do you look for in a guitar?

RR: Small frets. I can't play the big frets. Every other guitar player I know has big frets. Every time I have a guitar made or buy a guitar, I have really small frets put on, almost acoustic wire.

JS: You like the double-coil sound?

RR: Yeah, but I love the Strat sound. I'm looking for an old Strat now, but not for live. In a trio, for what I need to hear, it's not fat enough.

JS: Strings and picks?

RR: I use regular GHS strings. In England I use Picato. I don't use light gauge. It's .010 or .011 and medium picks. I like GHS strings because they have a real metallic sound, to me.

JS: Boxes?

RR: MXR Distortion Plus, MXR Equalizer, Crybaby Wah, MXR Chorus, MXR Flanger, Korg Echo.

JS: Do you practice playing with the gadgets?

RR: No, because I don't use them that much. I use the distortion a lot. I used to use them more, because I had time to learn what I

[...>]



wanted to do with them. But I don't need them much with this band. It's really pretty much down the plane.

JS: Do you use a wireless?

RR: I tried it once, didn't like it and haven't tried it again since. It was a Schaffer. I'm not against it. Because I didn't like it, it was no big deal. I've never been bothered by a guitar chord. I've used them so long, I could never think, I do need to get rid of this chord."

JS: Do you ever feel you overplay because it's a trio?

RR: No, in fact, I think I could do more. I'm still learning my way on the big stage.

JS: You don't feel a big burden because you're the only harmonic instrument?

RR: No. Not at all. We do have keyboards, on the side, that fill little bits, but it's only on three numbers. I like the sound of two guitars in other bands, but I couldn't play with two guitars. It's just too confining. I like to have the freedom.

JS: Does it seem strange that all of a sudden people say you're great? You've gone from teaching at \$8 a half hour, to Quiet Riot, to the big stage with Ozzy.

RR: It's totally strange. It still hasn't hit me yet. I've still got my past in me. I guess I'm trying to mature into it, but I don't have my feet on the ground at all. I don't even know who I am, what I am. People say this will go to your head and make you egotistical. That's a bag of shit. What it does is make you totally frightened and humble, because you don't understand it because everything comes at you so fast.

JS: Does it seem out of proportion?

RR: Not yet. First of all, I've got a long way to go. How can I put it? Because Ozzy's so big, and such a humble guy, I think it helps me a lot. He always says this will happen, and it does. He sort of educates me.

JS: Like what?

RR: Everything. He'll tell me about the record companies, and about the kids in the audience. He's just predicted everything along the way.

JS: What did he teach you about performing onstage?

RR: I learned a lot from him about posing. My old band was really into trying to get the crowd, and the only way we knew how to was by going over the top. I learned from Ozzy that you don't need to do that if you're good. Now I move when I want to, not because I

think I have to do it. I didn't come out doing it with him, but I learned straight-away from his personality that it doesn't take that.

JS: What about guitar playing? Did you ever overplay? Most people overplay and learn what they need to drop. You seem to be edging in very cautiously, starting at low tide.

RR: I don't want to be a ham and throw in the kitchen sink, but I still want to get my mark in.

JS: I guess you don't feel that you're up there with the people that you admire?

RR: Oh no. You're only as good as you are.

JS: What's your strength and what's your weakness?

RR: Great question. I've never been asked that. My weakness is insecurity. I don't go up there every night with a lot of confidence. That's a weakness. If the sound is not right, I'll get paranoid. My weakness is my sound. I rely on it 100 per cent. I don't know how to put it, but I'm still learning about what to feel onstage, which is probably totally different than a small level. If the sound isn't right, it could totally blow you away. My strength is that I just want to keep getting better. I want people to know me as a guitar player, like I knew other people. My strength is my determination. I don't want to be satisfied

with myself. Once you are, where are you going to go? You're gonna stay the same level. I want people to know me as a guitar player the way I knew other people. I've got to be honest: you asked, "What's your weakness?" My girlfriend distracts me. That's the real truth. I don't know if you should put that. Maybe you should say I get distracted easily. But it can totally blow it for me.

JS: Do you have a plan to get better?

RR: To be honest, I want to start getting back to practicing. Obviously, now, it's just go, go, there's no breaks. When I do have a break, I want to go back to teaching and learning myself, taking lessons. In England, I had a lot of time, and I took classical again. If I have a month off, I'll go back and take classical lessons. I want to keep bettering myself.

JS: Fantasize five years ahead.

RR: Five years ahead? I would love to have people know me as a guitar hero. I'd like to be able to do something more instrumental. Some day maybe put out a solo album where I can dig into a lot of instrumentals. I like a lot of different kinds of music.

JS: Let me shoot you some names for a reaction: John McLaughlin?

[...>]

RR: Technically brilliant, but it's not one of my favorite styles.

JS: Allan Holdsworth?

RR: He's great. I love his playing. He's got a lot of great jazz scales. He's got scales where you don't know what they are.

JS: Andy Summers of the Police?

RR: Definitely unique. It's hard for me because I really don't listen.

JS: Pat Metheny?

RR: I like him. He does some great acoustic stuff.

JS: Who was important to you?

RR: Leslie West. Great feel, really moody and powerful. He was one of my favorites. Beck because he can do anything. He can play one note and it's great. I rarely hear him play fast. Blackmore was great. I loved his expression. I loved B.B. King. I like Michael Schenker's playing a lot. I liked Ronnie Montrose with Edgar Winter a lot. I liked the way he bends. I could never bend like he could. His vibrato. I like Earl Klugh a lot. I quite like Steve Lukather's playing. I liked all the English

players in the '70s. They had a lot of vibrato. That sound influenced me a lot. Kids always say, 'You know when so-and-so does this?' I say, 'Yeah, it's great,' but I don't know. I don't have any rock player's albums.

JS: Diary was recorded how far after Blizzard?

RR: It was recorded eight months later. Diary is a year old now.

JS: The guitar playing on Diary felt a bit rushed.

RR: It did. To be honest, that album, to me, was a bit rushed. In other words, we didn't have as much time to write it. The material came out shining, but I was a bit lost for licks, what to do on it. I didn't have enough time to think what I wanted to do. I didn't have time to think of ideas. It all happened so quickly. We did the first album, went on tour, came back and did the second one. It couldn't have been a whole year, now that I think about it. I think it was within six months, actually.

JS: Do you go home with the basic tracks and play along?

RR: No, we just jam a lot. We played to the first album a lot. I had time to sit back and say, "I don't like that lead, that's not what I'm looking for. For Diary, I sort of had to put the leads together in the studio. That's it. Be

happy with it or else. For how I did it, I'm happy with it. Still, I didn't have enough time to search for what I wanted to play. Possibly if we had more time to write it, it would have been different. We could have played the songs more. What happened was we got a basic form for it, and went right into the studio. What I was trying to say was I had just gotten off a tour for the first album. I hadn't a break yet. I didn't have time to sit back and think, now, what do I want to do? What do I want to accomplish on the next record? Therefore, I was really short for ideas that I was actually interested in.

JS: Do you cringe a little because it's not as original as you would like it?

RR: Some songs I really cringe. One song, "Little Dolls," I never got to put a solo on. It's actually a guide track. I was playing along with the record where I was gonna put a solo down. I never got to do it. The one that is there is a guide solo. We were so rushed for time in the studio because we had to get to America to start the tour.

JS: Will you have a better grasp for the next one?

RR: I don't want to go in so rushed. I want to be prepared for the studio.

JS: Being aware of where you want to go is one thing. Are you taking steps toward that direction?

RR: I personally feel a lot of my style is leaning toward more melodic playing. I feel, when I was taking classical, it gave me a lot of ideas to turn things into leads. The thing I keep thinking is if I could only study again, I could have all this new input for ideas. I could stumble upon things again. What's happening now is I feel like I need some totally new scales or something. Sources. I find I play the same thing and I sort of get bored with it. I knew when I was studying that I got a lot from it. I think it would help. I'm on the road all the time, so I don't really know. I was thinking of trying to teach myself again, but you know how that is. You do everything wrong.

JS: Ozzy said you mentioned having a tutor on the road.

RR: I was wondering if it's been done. I was thinking the only way I could keep myself together on the road, and keep practicing and keep playing, is to have a teacher sort of thing every day. Besides the fact that the cost would be ridiculous, I was wondering if someday it would be possible to do. What I'm finding now is, I go on the road, and aside from gigging, I'm not really sure what I want to do. I don't know if I want to stay in and practice or go out. I need something to keep me there, some responsibility. I'm sort of bored with my own. I'll pick up a guitar and it seems like it's the same thing now. I need total stimulation from somewhere.

JS: Eddie Van Halen locks himself in the closet and plays for hours.

[...>]

RR: I do that. That's the best way. Sometimes I'll go down to the gig way early and sit in the tune-up room all day. But I'm finding that I'm losing my control on that right now. So what I'm saying is that, if I had a tutor, it would sort of like be a responsibility. I'm paying this guy and it's my commitment to keep at it. This is all new to me and now I'm in my second year and going through the biz changes, how to stay on top of yourself.

JS: Has the spotlight made it harder for you as a player?

RR: No, it's not, but what has happened, though, is I feel like it's brought to my attention that I've really got to start getting a hold on it now. I'm totally shocked that it happened, and it changes your whole thing. Now I've got to get it together. It's no longer just 'Try your best.' You've got to be great now. It's a weird thing. All of a sudden you're put under a different kind of pressure. It's a pressure that you've always got to be better than yourself, which is a difficult thing to be. What do they do on the road? Eddie is great. I don't want to get near competing with people like that.

JS: Neither did he. Has thinking of a solo album been approached?

RR: Believe it or not, I haven't met many people in the biz yet. I'm not at that level where I meet people all the time. I would love to do a solo album. All along I put it to timing. The right time for the right thing. I really haven't been able to think. I've just

been trying to hang onto myself, to keep up with everything.

JS: What do you do for musical stimulation?

RR: I'm locked into something right now, and it's not my own pace. Therefore, it's kind of stifling sometimes. I was thinking one of the greatest things would be to play on other people's records. That could build up a lot for me. I could do a different sort of playing and be known for that as well. It would also spread my name in different areas. Now it's very limited. Ozzy Osbourne is about as heavy metal as you can get, and a lot of people don't even know about it because of that. It's almost like being Kiss. That's why I'm thinking I want to study classical. It's totally different for me. I was used to taking lessons and teaching all day long. I had constant input with music. New ideas were going in and out of my brain all day. It's a combination of stopped ideas and touring, because this band tours a lot. It's trying to find something. It's all in my head. I've got to put it together. I would like to play more of a lot of light jazz things, like Earl Klugh or Jean Luc Ponty. I was never into heavy fusion. Things I had written were on the melodic side. I used to play a lot of things like that on acoustic. It's just what you're doing at the time. The main thing I'm going through is how to get more back to being a musician than being a big band. That's my biggest problem. To get back to being a player and get away from---I don't want to say rock star, because I'm not. But I do want to get away from the distractions of success.



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Win a fabulous Peavey Delta Blues 115 tube combo in our free entry competition!

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Peavey's Delta Blues 115 all-tube combo looks like becoming one of the all-time classics of guitar amplification. In iGuitar 9, Michael Casswell described how it was a Peavey Delta Blues that had saved the day when he was trying to get the perfect sound for his new John Mayer DVD for our sister company, Licklibrary. "Seriously impressed with its amazing sound," said the great man!

Even Casswell nods occasionally, though, and one mistake in our review was to say it was made by some of this Peavey's 15" speakers. We said it had an Eminence 15" speaker, but when it actually features one of Peavey's very own US-made 15" speakers, it's a bit of a letdown for folks! Either way, the Delta Blues 115 delivers the sort of gutsy, bluesy sound that sends shivers down your spine!

The Delta Blues' four EL84 valves/tubes also deliver prodigious power into the speaker, making a package ideal for smaller-sized gigs and recording, or miked-up on larger stages. For the player good enough to appreciate the touch-responsive magic of a finely-voiced

tube amp, this is a fantastic choice - and one that we're sure you'll love. It's a US-made high-quality product from one of the great brands with a reputation for roadworthy reliability. If you have to enter for competition, you'll have to answer the following three questions by e-mail. But remember - you must be a registered iGuitar reader (it's completely free!) so if you haven't, sign-up today! Just send us an email with your answers. One entrant with the correct answers will be chosen at random and will receive this fabulous prize!

TO ENTER

Email your answers (e.g. Q1 - C) along with your name, email address and daytime phone number, marked 'Peavey Delta Blues Competition' to competitions@iguitarmag.com



questions

Q1. Peavey Electronics is based in which US town?

A/ Medway, Mississippi B/ Detroit, Michigan C/ Meridian, Mississippi

Q2. Peavey's Delta Blues 115 combo's output is rated at...?

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1/ All entries must be received by 1st August 2012. 2/ No cash alternative is offered instead of the stated prize. 3/ All entries must be submitted via e-mail. 4/ Employees of iGuitar/Guitar Interactive, Licklibrary or Peavey Electronics and their immediate families are ineligible for this competition. 5/ The winner will be chosen, at random, from registered readers of iGuitar/Guitar Interactive who provide the correct answers. 6/ The judges' decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into regarding this competition. 7/ Winning entrants must respond to email notification of having won within 10 days, otherwise prizes may be forfeited and alternative winners chosen. 8/ Winners may be responsible for import duty when levied. Where possible prizes will be despatched from the winner's own country, but this will not always be possible. 9/ Winners must provide a contact telephone number and valid email address. 8/ Prizewinners must consent to having their name and city/country (e.g. 'Andres Segovia, Madrid, Spain') published in a future issue.

THE LISTENING ROOM

John Stix listens as top players discuss their influences.

Steve Morse discusses Phase Dance by Pat Metheny



Pat Metheny Group - "Phase Dance" (1977)

"I usually attack the guitar and try to build to screaming climaxes."



"That's classic Metheny, and the reason he's won over so many people as fans. It's that perfect combination of subtle, insistent rhythm and a nice blend of the piano and guitar. Not to mention that the chord changes at the beginning of this song are perfect. Whenever I pick up a 12-string guitar I almost always hear that kind of thing go through my mind. He's been such a great inspiration to me. He sat down and said, here's what I do, period. He never marketed himself as anything else but what

he was. I think he is the jazz success story of the decade. He's the model citizen to me. I freaked out when I first heard this. It's so silky and smooth. I've always been intrigued by Pat as a soloist. He's 180 degrees from me. I usually attack the guitar and try to build to screaming climaxes. Pat just kind of cruises. He can play soft and fast but he's always smooth. He dances around the guitar."

STEVE MORSE



John Stix was the Founding Editor-In-Chief of Guitar For the Practicing Musician Magazine and a principal architect for the creation of Guitar World and Guitar One Magazines. He started Guitar Recordings where he signed Blues Saraceno, Mike Keneally, Mark Bonilla, Randy Coven, and Brad Gillis. Currently he runs the print dept. at Cherry Lane Music.

[...>]

VIDEO GEMS

Tom Petty, Harrison's son, and Prince -
Guitar pently weeps



Tom Petty, Harrison's son, and Prince

John Stix searches the web for choice guitar gems that you may have overlooked in the vast universe of Internet videos.

Sittin' in....

The odds are not good. How many times have you been to a show where guest artists come out, join the band and make better music than photos? It doesn't happen that often. I was listening to Santana playing with the Grateful Dead. "All Along the Watchtower" may be great for jamming because of its iconic past and simple chord progression but I have yet to hear any killer playing when guests sit in on a version. It's the same with "Johnny Be Goode". It's almost like guitarists figure it's so easy they don't have to commit to the changes or to their own passion on the instrument.

It's fine to get caught up in the excitement of the moment. For weeks after the show, I was telling friends how I saw Clapton, Page and Beck play together at the Ronnie Lane benefit concert in New York. The promise of the music was never actually met, but the moment still remains vivid in my memory. It was the same for me when Steve Howe sat in with Steve Morse on a rendition of "Freeway Jam" at My Father's Place in Roslyn, Long Island. I got a photo of the two together on

stage and put it in my magazine, *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*. It wasn't inspired playing but it was a pretty cool picture.

Of course it doesn't have to be this way and there are many examples of great playing from guest musicians. But the conditions have to be right. The band has to know the song well, and not be calling out changes or having musicians sneak into the next part a few moments late. It helps tremendously if you play on a real song, not just a repeated progression for jamming. And the musicians have to be committed to the performance, not just phoning it in. You also have to be willing to inspire your band mates as well as support them. Have you heard Clapton play with B.B. King? There is so much admiration there from son to father that Clapton doesn't step up or out. It makes for a good photo and less than inspired music.

It doesn't have to be that way. I've chosen two great sittin' in situations to share with you. The first one is a rare musical highlight at a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction

[...>]

Stevie Ray Vaughan & Jeff Healey



later be, as Jeff's career took off. Clocking in at around four minutes, the song is a medium shuffle and both guitarists take two volcanic choruses each. Jeff was playing like an artist on the way up. At this time no one could blow up Stevie Ray Vaughan, but Healey sure ignited him. The bigger surprise is that it happened on television, the least friendly and coolest medium for live music. This is the first time I've ever jumped up and applauded the television screen. Stevie ray Vaughan and Jeff Healey, that's some sittin' in!



Ceremony. This is consistently one of those photo over music events. In this first video the inductee was George Harrison. The band featured Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne, Steve Winwood, Dhani Harrison and Prince. So we've got our "wow" photo. The song, "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" is played spot on, and lovingly. Marc Mann plays the Clapton parts and solo note for note. Prince comes in for the coda guitar solo halfway into the song and true to the song title he is crying. He plays with energy and passion.

Prince is actually playing the song, the intent of the title and thus wailin' at the same time. This all-star performance makes me wish I was there to both hear it and to see it.

And just to prove the blues progression can be fertile ground for guest guitarists, let's look in on Stevie Ray Vaughan, playing on Canadian Television. He's playing "Little Sister", a radio track from *Soul to Soul*. The word is that he and Albert Collins found Jeff Healey playing at Albert's Hall in Toronto and were as blown away as the rest of would

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TC DREAMSCAPE THE RESULTS!



In iGuitar 8, we had just the single competition prize - but what a prize! TC Electronic said we could keep the review sample of the fabulous John Petrucci Dreamscape pedal, reviewed in that issue by [Jamie Humphries](#) and give it away to the lucky winner of our competition.

Your response was unprecedented - so it looks like TC has another winner on its hands with this latest addition to its unique TonePrint FX range.

AND THE WINNER IS....



Bruce Sloan of Edinburgh, Scotland

Congratulations to Bruce and our thanks to TC Electronic!



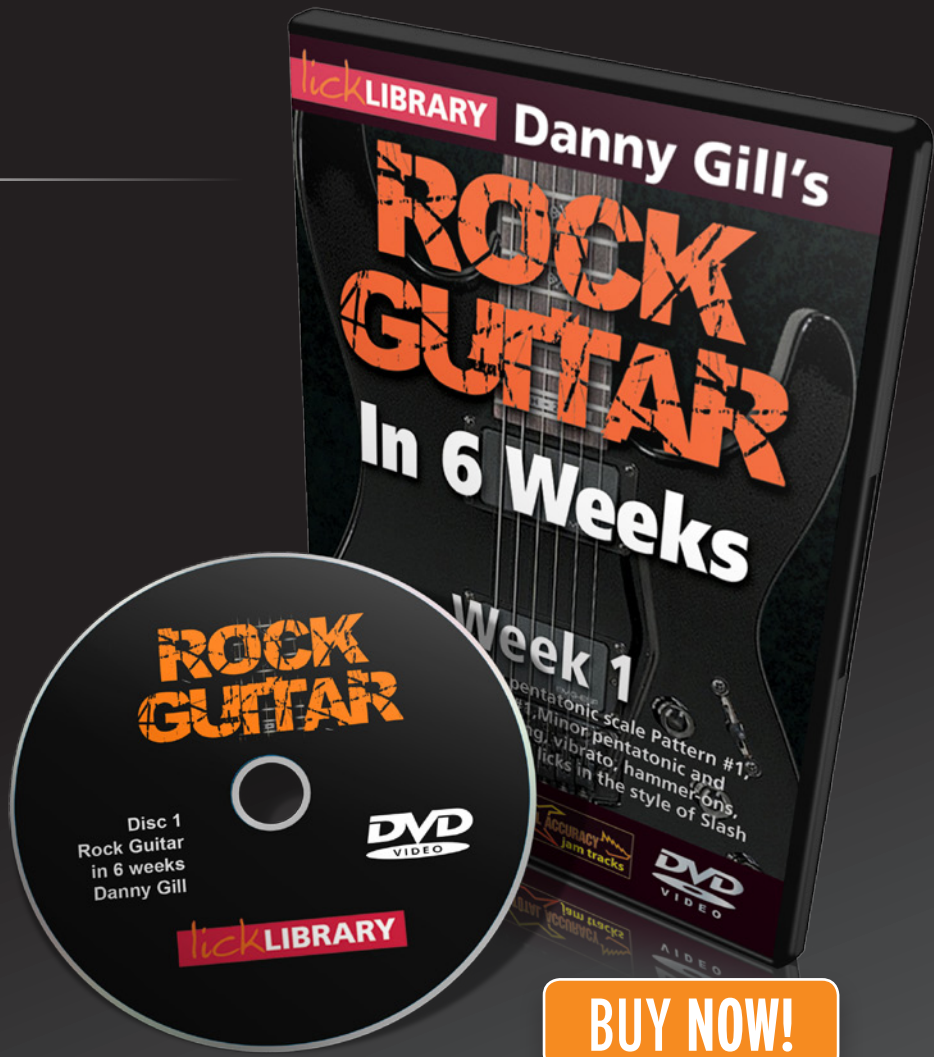
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Paul Brett's

VINTAGE GUITAR HEAVEN

iGuitar is honoured to welcome the guitar collector and historian **Paul Brett** to the team with a unique take on vintage guitars. Just what's left that is affordable and – most importantly fun to play?

THIS ISSUE –

1956 Gibson Melody Maker (selling May 2012 for \$1,250 to \$1,800*)

1962 Jupiter/Stratotone 1423L (selling May 2012 for \$750 to \$1,000*)

Any form of collecting is a risky business. Before the international financial fiasco and inflated company share values that brought the banks to their knees, electric guitars were

selling for way above their real value and those who paid such prices were either ill-advised, had more money than sense, or were just plain stupid. They paid the price dearly as electrics that sold then for anywhere up to a million dollars, came tumbling down to a quarter of the price paid ...Ouch!

Those were the heady days of lofty gains for dealers and ignorance from buyers with little or no knowledge of what they were buying. There was even a hedge fund company set up on the Stock Exchange which encouraged

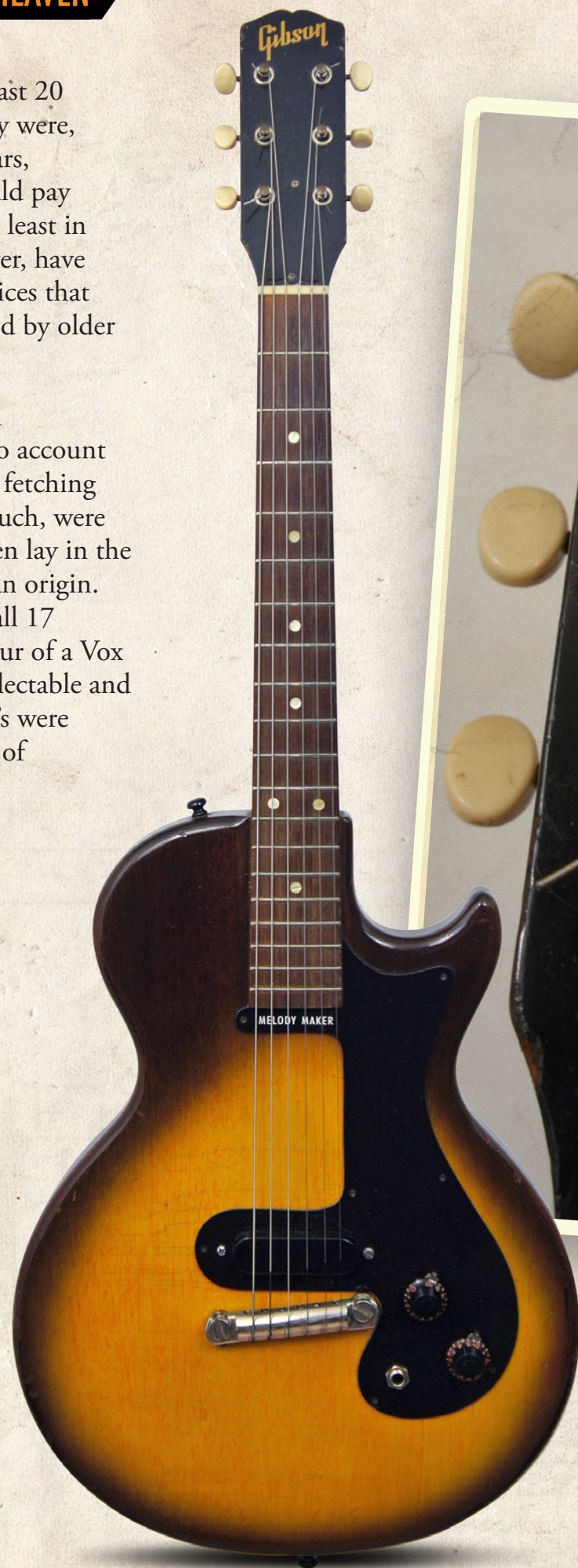


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investors to leave their investments in for at least 20 years to maximise climbs in guitar values. They were, according to their ads, buying top priced guitars, Fender and Gibsons. No serious collector would pay top prices when the market is at its peak, or at least in 'runaway train' mode. Acoustic guitars, however, have never experienced the peaks and troughs in prices that electrics have, mainly because they are collected by older and more experienced buyers.

I started collecting guitars and related stringed instruments in the 1960s. You have to take into account that in the '60s, the guitars that these days are fetching many thousands, were new back then and as such, were not collectable. The collectors market back then lay in the early classical and flamenco guitars of European origin. My first amplifier was a Watkins Dominator, all 17 Watts of it! I couldn't wait to change it in favour of a Vox AC30. Yet these days, the Watkins is more collectable and valuable than the Vox, even though the AC30's were the iconic amp of the British Pop phenomena of the '60s. The main lesson here is that no one knows what the value of things will be in the future, if we did, we could all be sitting on our butts on our own islands by now. What determines the value of instruments for future generation is a mystery. What we can determine are factors that may add to future values, what musical styles were created on such instruments and who played them, these will be considerations if past trends are an indication.

I never buy guitars at the top of their price, the attraction for me is in brands that are not currently trendy, but are reasonably priced with room to rise if the trend pendulum swings their way. If it doesn't, I am not at risk for substantial losses and I still have the pleasure of recording them in my historical timeline. Fortunately, I haven't lost any serious cash to date!



In my first article for iGuitar, I want to highlight an early Gibson that is still very affordable and hasn't as yet scaled the heady heights of early Les Pauls, plus a 1962 Silvertone Jupiter. Silvertones over the past few years have become very collectable and have risen in price quite steadily. There were many different models made but it's the electrics that are creating the demand among collectors at present. Originally played by the great Blues icons like Muddy Waters, many Rock

THEY NOT ONLY REFLECT THE SOUND AND MUSIC OF THEIR ERA IN THEIR FUNDAMENTAL USAGE, BUT ALSO HOLD THEIR GROUND TODAY..

[...>]

My collecting tips are: never buy a guitar at the top of its price range and always check out the originality and condition.



giants too strummed their first chords on a Silvertone, with the likes of Jimi Hendrix among them.

They were the affordable options to higher priced brands and as such, were the first steps for many players into the world of electric guitar. Originally distributed by Sears, they not only reflect the sound and music of their era in their fundamental usage, but also hold their ground today with the help of modern amplification and effects as you can hear from my video sample.

Silvertones have clearly risen steadily in value and are still on the up, as they are truly an iconic guitar of the '50s and '60s.

The model featured in the video clip is the Jupiter/Stratotone 1423L with its black sparkle finish. This particular guitar is in mint condition and condition plus originality is paramount when collecting for investment; not so much for purely playing. It formed a thrust in the Harmony company's guitar drive of the '60s and with its semi hollow body, DeArmond pick ups, Tone Blender control, which affects the bridge and neck pickups, is a great addition to any collection, both from a playing point of view and a collectors one.

The original specs are: spruce top and back, maple sides, pearl inlays, adjustable bridge,

black sparkle finish and the measurements are: 38 x 13 x 2 inches. Originally retailing for around the \$80 dollar mark, with an extra option of a 10 buck chipboard case!

Next one up is a 1956 Gibson Melody Maker: a three quarter size slab that is one of my favourite electrics. I love these little guitars as they are really easy to play and kick out a tremendous noise. The 1959 model in the video was the first year that Gibson introduced them to the market. It's basically a Les Paul Junior in shape but smaller in size. It's approximately 3/8" thinner. Its 3/4 size has a scale length of 22 3/4" and a very playable 12 fret to body



[...>]

action (19 frets total). The body and neck are mahogany and the fingerboard is Brazilian rosewood with pearl dot inlays, Grover machine heads / plastic knobs. Some may have frayed over time so check them out if you are thinking of buying one. There's a black wrap around pick-guard that holds the controls and the model name is sited under the neck's end. The pickup is a killer little 7/8" "fat" (Gibson changed them in 1960 to 5/8" and they were not as good) that will scream out solos all day and night. These are steady risers in value and a joy to

play, that are still affordable to the serious collector who was not trawled in by the feeding frenzy of a few years ago.

My collecting tips are: never buy a guitar at the top of its price range and always check out the originality and condition. There are lots of very informative sites on the net where you can get detailed information about early vintage guitars and it's well worth the effort as it could save you a lot of time and money. Also, it's not as easy to fake acoustics as it is electrics!

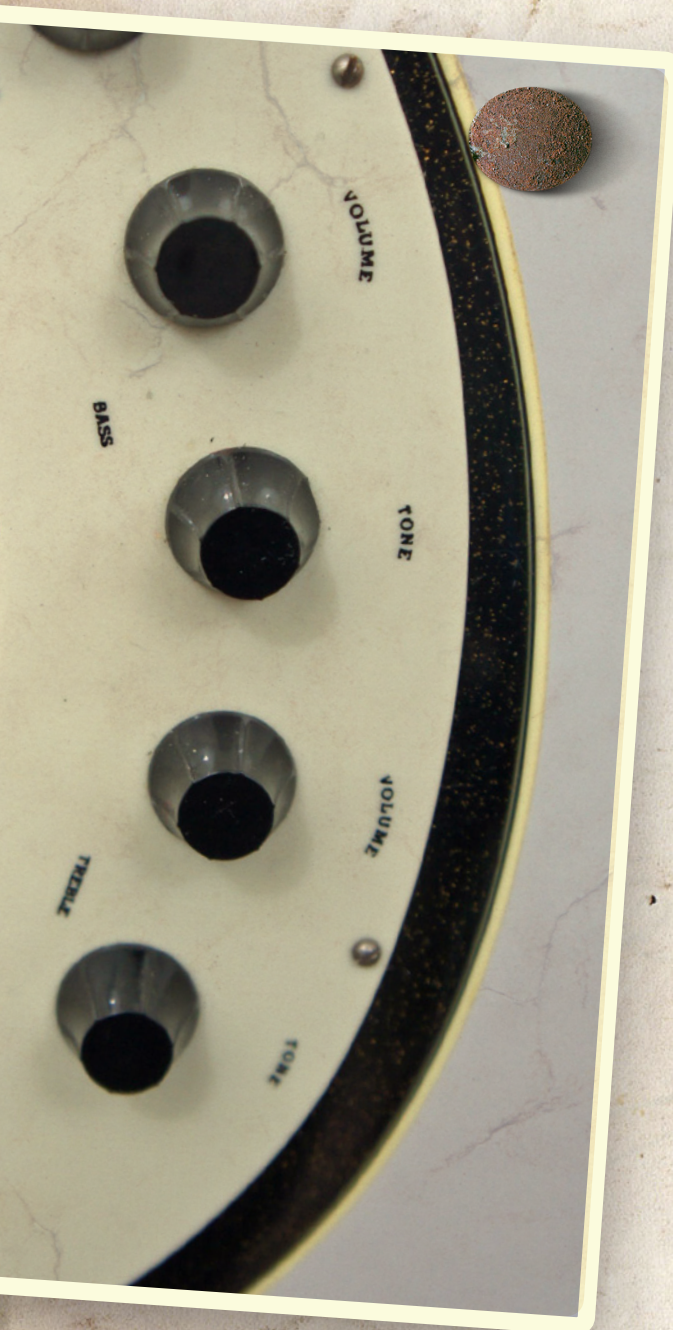
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* Important note about our guide prices:

The prices quoted are US-based (prices in the EU tend to be higher) and represent a spread between private and dealer figures at the time the article was written, as shown in the text. They are not meant to be any more than a very approximate guide and are subject to change on a weekly basis!

Caveat emptor!



SQUIER ELECTRICS THE WINNERS!



Back in Issue 8 we reviewed Tony Bacon's definitive account of the story behind Fender's Squier guitar brand: Squier Electrics - 30 Years of Fender's Budget Guitar Brand (Backbeat Books/Hal Leonard ISBN: 978-1-61713-022-9)

As our review said: "Squier owners and collectors will find a treasure chest in this well produced paperback, packed with memorabilia and guitar porn photography. With extensive material for model dating and chronology, candid inside information from Fender employees, this is probably the only book Squier will need until another 30 years have passed."

Courtesy of the publishers, Backbeat Books, we had four copies to give away as prizes and here are the lucky winners!

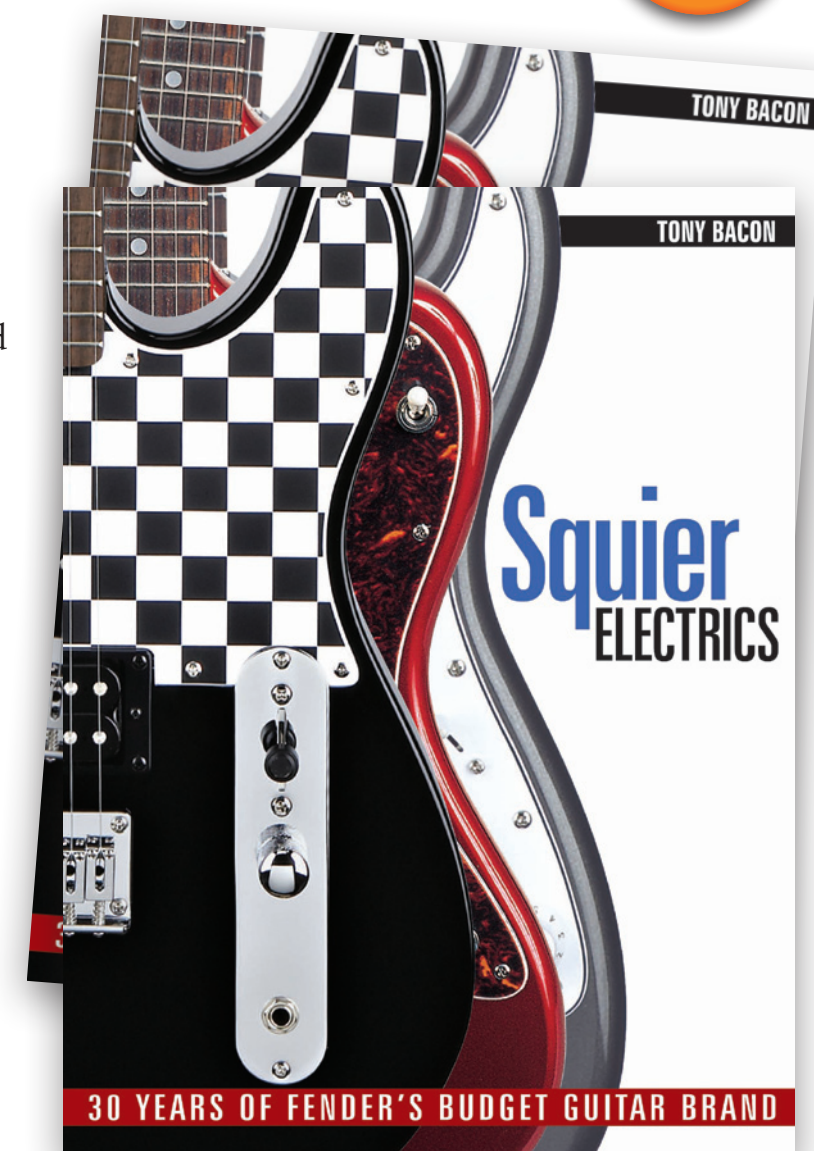
Douglas Cotton, from Westfield, MA, USA

Alan McGain from Great Wakering, Essex, UK

David Abrahams from Raamsdonksveer, the Netherlands

Brad Rosentritt from Bewdley, Worcestershire, UK

Congratulations to all our winners and our thanks to Backbeat books!



JUST LIKE EDDIE THE STYLE



Jamie Humphries digs into Eddie Van Halen's encyclopedia of licks and tricks, and shares some of the soloing secrets of one of the greatest Rock guitarists of all time..

Eddie Van Halen has been hailed as the godfather of heavy metal and a post-Hendrix pioneer of modern Rock guitar. His contributions, influence and impact on guitar playing have been immeasurable, and not just because of his technical abilities. Eddie was a pioneer with the actual instrument too, being (arguably) first person to use a Floyd Rose system. When you look at most modern Rock guitars, there will be a certain element of how that instrument is built, or configured that you can trace back to Eddie Van Halen. Van Halen also brought Rock to the masses, composing catchy hard rock tunes, and pioneered a genre that was a lifestyle in the USA during the 80's; hard Rock music you could party too!

[...>]

This tech session is a little teaser for you, as the licks and track are taken from my new Lick Library DVD Quick Licks Van Halen, which shall be available soon from www.licklibrary.com. In this lesson we are giving you eight Eddie-style licks to get your teeth into, but if you want to delve deeper into Eddie's unique and innovative playing style then be sure to grab a copy of my new DVD!

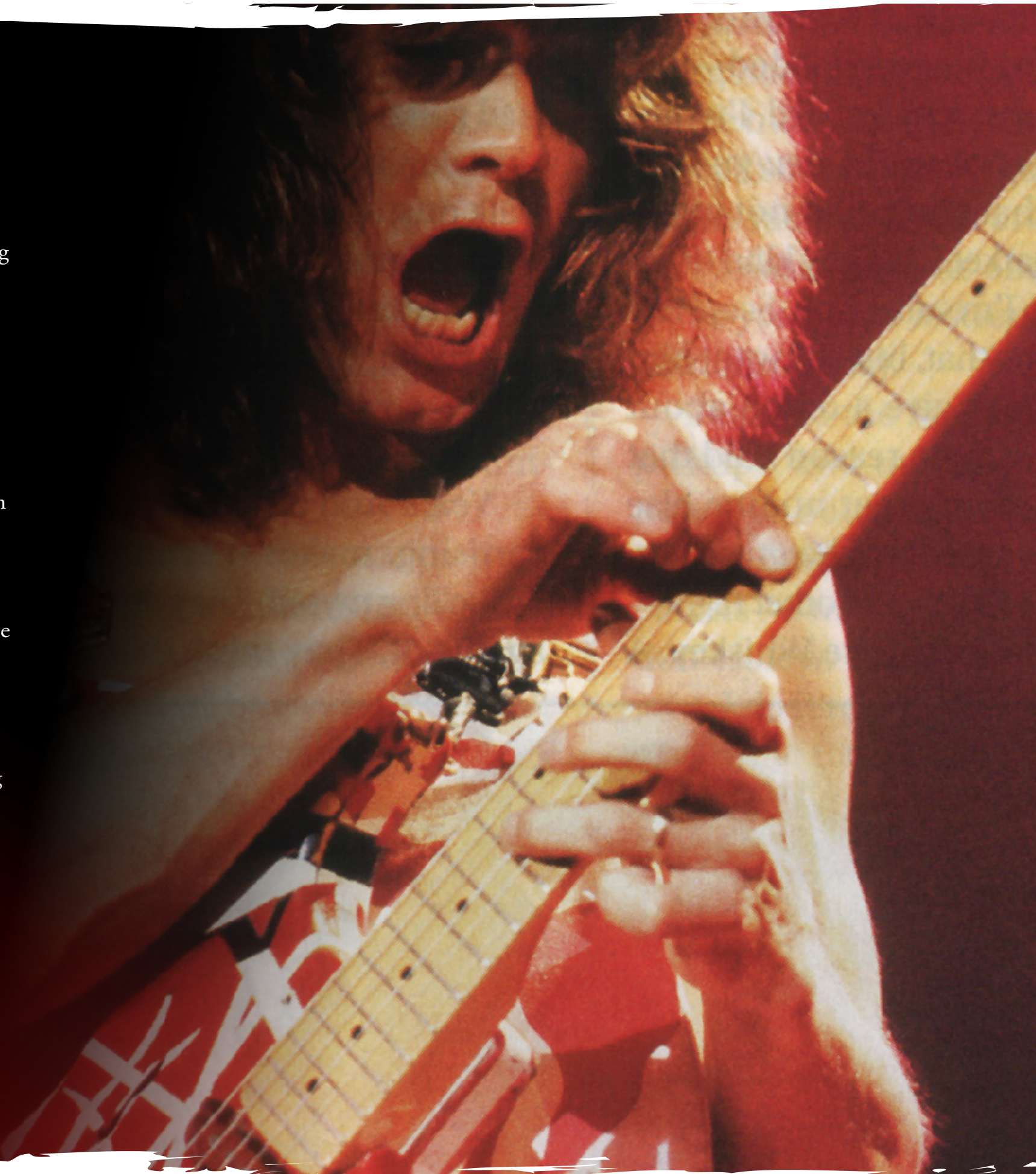
There are obvious eras to look at with Van Halen; the late '70s and early to mid-80s David Lee Roth period, the Sammy Hagar period, with a more processed guitar sound, and in many cases more radio friendly hard Rock, that lacked the tongue in cheek lyrics and showmanship of Roth, but which to many boasted more a more mature sound and writing style. For our Tech Session, and the Quick Licks DVD, I've chosen to focus on the Hagar period, with a riff that is based on a similar progression to Pound Cake. All of the licks covered in this lesson are based around the key of E minor. For those of you that prefer the David Lee Roth era, be sure to check out my Quick Licks Van Halen Vol I, which is based more on the band's early sound.

Lick 1 is our opening lick, performed over the drum intro. This is an interesting lick which involves tapping two notes with two fingers of your picking hand on the B and G strings and pulling-off to two fretted notes. This lick is pretty tricky as you have to shift both hands up the neck chromatically, as it outlines shifting dominant chords.

Lick 2 features a similar lick to the intro lick in from the Michael Jackson track "Beat It". This lick includes string bends and slides, with artificial harmonics being performed by tapping directly over the fret wire. This lick will take a little practice to be sure that the harmonics are achieved cleanly and clearly.

Lick 3 is another Beat It style lick, and includes a three note per string figure that also includes some tapping on the 1st and 2nd strings. This lick concludes with a bluesy bending figure.

Lick 4 is a whammy bar lick that includes a legato figure that pedals off of the open 2nd string. As the lick is performed, you should dip the



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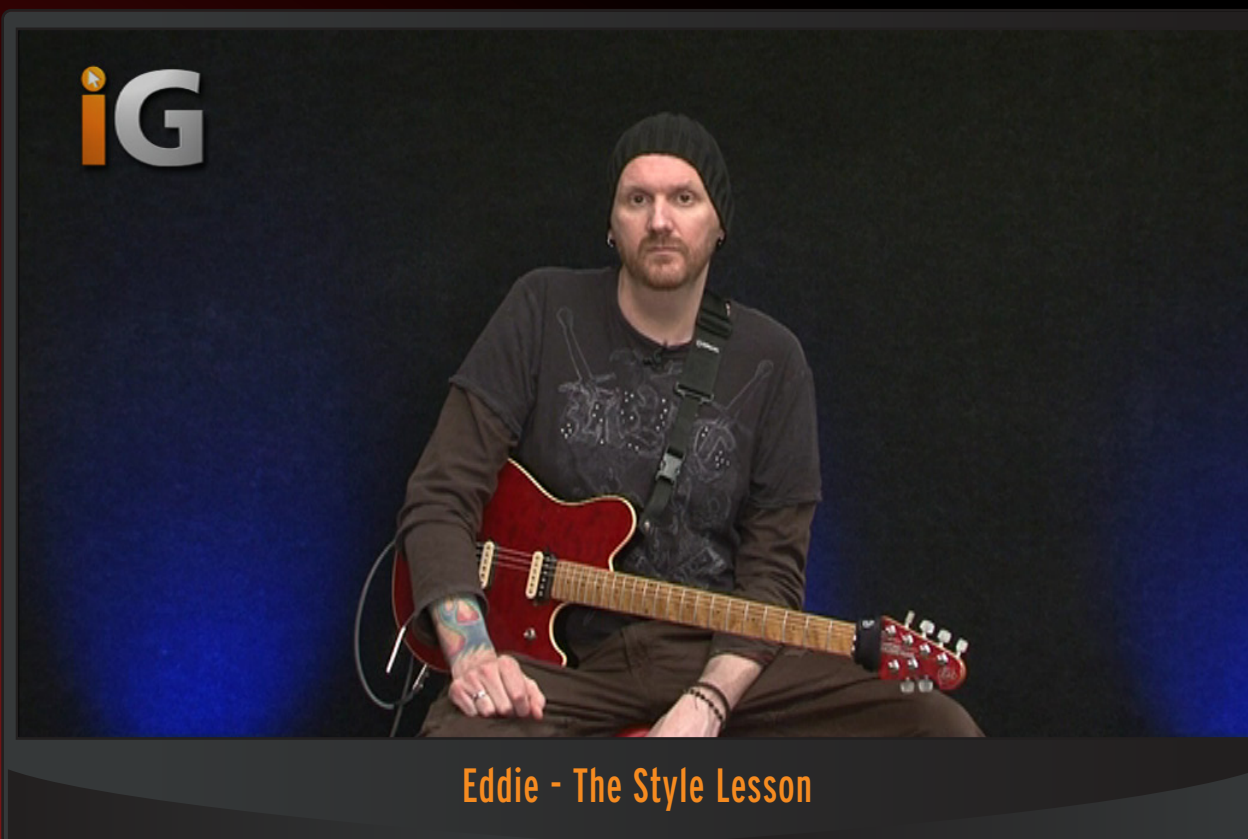
bar, scooping into the notes. This lick concludes with a Blues-based bending figure and a whammy bar dive.

Lick 5 and it's time to get your picking hand moving. Eddie has a very unorthodox approach to picking, where he holds the pick with his middle finger and thumb, and arches his wrist, affectively flicking the string with the pick. I would suggest using whatever approach you find comfortable when tackling fast picking. The lick features a climbing figure based

around E minor that is performed with fast tremolo picking.

Lick 6 features one of Eddie's bluesier sounding licks and mixes up notes found in the E minor pentatonic scale, with big bends and plenty of vibrato. Make sure you select the neck pickup for a warm and creamy tone.

Lick 7 is another blues based lick which is pretty straightforward, but makes use of some pretty big bends. Don't be deceived by this lick, and be accurate with your bending pitch,



Eddie - The Style Lesson

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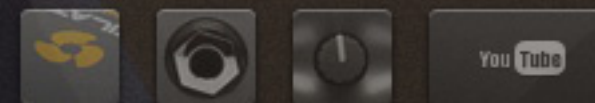


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and again pay attention to your vibrato technique.

Lick 8 is our final teaser lick, and features a descending pentatonic phrase that makes use of an interesting rhythmic figure. This is a great lick, as it is so rhythmically interesting, and has a great groove against the solid driving rhythm section of the band.

So there you have it, a selection of tapping, picking and bluesy EVH

licks. I hope I've whetted your appetite enough with these few licks for you to check out the new Quick Lick's Vol II DVD, for the full solo, and in-depth analysis. Make sure you check out the video in the magazine for a close up look of the licks being broken down, and also performed, as well as tips on tone. Good Luck!



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JUST LIKE EDDIE THE SOUND



So you've mastered the licks and riffs, but still that secret ingredient is missing. It doesn't quite sound like Eddie Van Halen. **Jamie Humphries** looks at the gear used by the great man over his long career - and then shows you how to achieve the tones on a budget-priced rig!

Tone is the Holy Grail for many a guitar player. As well as wood-shedding your chops and nailing your favourite riffs, getting the right tone and sound is equally as important. But let's face it, most often we're listening to millionaire Rock stars who can afford the gear that many of us only dream of. So in this feature I am first going to look at Eddie's ever-changing gear over the years, and then suggest some ways you can approach that legendary tone, using the more budget-friendly gear that most of us use.

The Guitars

After Jimi Hendrix, Eddie Van Halen is without a doubt one of the most important figures in the development of Rock guitar. Not only did Eddie turn the guitar community on its head with his blistering style, but also with his equipment. Like everything he did, he didn't conform to what was considered the norm and his guitar is a great example of that. Even the man himself is surprised by the impact

[...>]

that his homemade guitar has had, and continues to have, on guitar companies and guitarists alike.

The story starts with our hero wanting the best of both worlds - a guitar that was comfortable and fast like a Fender Strat, but had a thick, warm, full tone like a Gibson. So Eddie decided to morph the two, have a Fender style guitar but have the pickups of a Gibson (*see this issue's lost interview for the story from the horse's mouth - Ed*). The 'Frankenstrat', as it is affectionately named, started life on the "seconds" pile. The body was made of ash and Eddie also bought a Strat-style maple neck. He fitted a Fender Vintage tremolo and wired in a single Gibson PAF pickup, which he dipped in paraffin wax to reduce microphonic feedback. He painted the guitar with the now famous black and

white stripes and cut out a black pick guard from some plastic using a soldering iron to smooth the edges. This is the guitar that started it all, and is the one seen on the cover of Van Halen I.

Due to the number of imitators, Eddie started using a different guitar for Van Halen II, one that featured the famous black and yellow stripes, but Eddie was frustrated with this one and soon the original guitar was back in action. An original Floyd Rose bridge was fitted, replacing the vintage Fender bridge and he also screwed a 1971 Quarter coin to the body that was used to keep the bridge flush to the body and stable. With more and more companies trying to cash in on his guitar, and also countless imitators, Eddie fitted a single coil in the neck that didn't work, and fixed a five-way selector

switch into the routing where you would normally find the middle single coil, just to confuse people and keep them guessing about his secrets! Although this guitar was retired in the mid-80s, recently Fender released a limited run of replicas of the Frankenstrat, which featured every dent, scratch and cigarette burn and was so accurate Eddie himself found it hard to spot the difference!

Eddie has used lots of other guitars in his career, including Les Pauls and an Ibanez Explorer-style Destroyer, which had a huge lump of the body cut out and was known as The Shark. Eddie stopped using this guitar following its cosmetic surgery, as it altered the tone too much. He has also used Steinberger headless guitars with the Transtrem, also finished in his signature stripes.

During the '80s Eddie switched to Kramer guitars, the New Jersey company building him a newer version of the Frankenstrat, featuring a prototype Pacer body and with the instantly recognisable trademark hockey-stick headstock. Eddie used various versions of this guitar, including the Hot for Teacher guitar and the legendary 5150.

By the end of the '80s Eddie surprised the guitar community by designing a guitar with the Ernie Ball Musicman guitar company, that was totally unlike its various stripy predecessors. The Musicman EVH guitar was a single cut guitar, almost a cross between a Les Paul and a Tele, with a slab body with no contouring. It featured a flame top, two humbuckers, with the neck pickup functioning this time, and a single volume

control that said "tone" on it! The neck was created by scanning the profile of Eddie's most favourite guitar neck into a computer, and had an instantly played-in feel. These instruments were produced in small quantities and are now very collectible.

Eddie then moved camp again - this time to Peavey. It made sense, Peavey at the time producing his signature 5150 head. The Peavey Wolfgang proved to be a very popular guitar, slightly resembling the Musicman, but featuring an extended top horn.

Eddie finished his relationship with Peavey and moved next to Fender, first producing and using the Charvel Art Series, and then the Frankenstrat. Now with the help of Fender, Eddie has his own brand, EVH Gear, and produces the newest Wolfgang guitar, of which you can read a full review in this issue.

Amps and Effects

For years Eddie used a mid '60s 100 Watt Marshall Super Lead, which is rumoured to have been modified by Jose Arrendo. As we've seen elsewhere in this issue, Eddie would get that elusive tone by basically running the amp flat-out, and controlling the output level with a Variac, which allowed him to run the amp at a lower voltage. He would also run a dummy load box after the Marshall and send the output of the box to his effects and then to a power amp, effectively using the Marshall head as just a pre-amp. This allowed him to run the amp very hot, so it would saturate more, but leave control



[...>]

of the output level with the power amp. Eddie has also used Soldano heads, which were the basis for his Peavey 5150s. Today he uses the Fender-built 5150 MK III, reviewed in this issue. The best of them? Many feel the Peavey 5150 MK I was the best of the bunch.

Over the years, Eddie has used various stomp boxes, mainly MXR phasers and flangers, with MXR now selling a range of signature pedals. In the early days he also used an Echoplex tape echo unit but I should point out that he never uses any form of distortion pedal, with all the crunch being amp-generated. He would also sometimes use an MXR EQ to boost his mids, and also uses a Crybaby wah.

Later, Eddie used a Bob Bradshaw system, integrating pedals and rack processors controlled by a switching and routing system. His sound became more processed and he used a heavy detune for chorus. He also ran a wet, dry, wet system. The outer cabs were all effect, with a different delay time in each side, while the middle cab was dry and totally unaffected.

The sound on a budget

There's no easy definition of what 'budget priced' means, because it varies from person to person, but for our video I've chosen a selection of gear that many players can either afford, will already have, or can get close to with similar products, without the need to own a personal oil well in the back garden!

Any humbucker equipped guitar will work fine, but I have chosen to use a Sterling by Musicman, which is obviously based on the original design EVH signature model, but costs around the \$500/£500 mark. For an amp I used a Peavey Vyper, one of the best



modelling amps, with a valve power amp section, and not too expensive. This amp also includes effects and stomp effects, making it a very affordable and versatile piece of kit. I also put the EVH Signature flanger, phaser and wah pedals to the test, and, as expected, they produced a very authentic tone. You can see and hear it all in action on our video!

Eddie's tone is not a scooped modern Metal tone - in fact it's pretty clean, and is really more of a heavy overdrive. I backed-off some of the low end and boosted the mids and the upper frequencies. I also added a room reverb, courtesy of the Peavey's onboard effects. You could experiment further, with either tape echo or digital delay depending on the era of Van Halen you are trying to recreate, but ultimately a warm crunch, or 'Brown Sound' as Eddie calls it, with some flanger or phaser, will be a pretty close approximation of his hallowed tone. Be sure to watch the video, and good luck on your sonic quest!



[...>]



Van Halen: She's The Woman!

VIDEO LESSON

As part of our celebration of all things Eddie Van Halen, iGuitar brings you an exclusive **FREE** LickLibrary session with **Jamie Humphries** showing you how to master Van Halen's **She's The Woman!**

The world of Rock guitar waited with baited breath to hear A Different Kind Of Truth - the first new album from Van Halen for far too many years. There was so much to anticipate and wonder about. It had David Lee Roth back with the band, it had long standing Van Halen bassist Michael Anthony replaced by Eddie's son Wolfgang Van Halen but for guitarists especially, many wondered how

well Eddie would perform, following his much publicised ill-health and addiction issues. But it turned out well. EVH is back and firing on all cylinders and She's The Woman showcases some of Eddie's best playing to date.

This track has been around for a number of years, and was first featured on the original demos from around 1976. Interestingly, the original version featured a different bridge section prior to the solo, which ended up being the bridge on the track Mean Street.

The track kicks-off with some bluesy based licks based around the A minor pentatonic scale, and includes unison bends. It should be performed with a healthy amount of crunch and a wah pedal. Following our intro solo section we launch into the

[...>]

main riff, which features a figure based simply around the notes of A and G, and the diad chords of C5/G and D5/A performed against a pumping muted open A note. The intro riff concludes with a chromatic figure that is performed in unison with the bass.

The riff continues for the verse, but during the verse Eddie breaks things up with some tasteful and well placed licks. The verse concludes with a guitar and bass unison figure that pedals off of the open A string, which then leads us to the chorus.

The chorus is pretty straightforward and uses the chords of D5, Eb5 and E5, plus another guitar and bass unison figure, before heading back to the verse riff for the remainder of the chorus. We then head into the second verse, which is similar to the first verse, with the inclusion of some more tasty licks. We then head into another chorus, which is the same as the previous chorus but concludes with a guitar and bass unison run based around the A minor pentatonic scale.

Now it's time for the middle section and as I mentioned earlier, the original demo featured the middle section that ended up on Mean Street from the album Fair Warning. The new middle section features a twin guitar part, and although I have included the additional guitar parts on the backing track, I have arranged the

part for you to play based on how Eddie plays it live. The middle section kicks off with a shifting power chord figure, plus more open string pedal tone line idea. Following this figure, Eddie kicks in the wah pedal, and plays a funky 1/16 note octave figure with a waker-waker Shaft-style wah part.

The solo section is quite intricate and modulates through various chord changes, with Eddie outlining them with various arpeggio ideas and scale based lines that follow the accompanying chords. The solo concludes with a three note per string arpeggio lick that is similar to something heard in the classic track Jump. Take care with the end of the solo as the timing of the legato run, followed by the A minor pentatonic is vital in making sure the licks fit! So practice this section slowly to start with if you're unsure of the rhythmic values.

Following the solo, we head back to our final verse, with Eddie ripping a classic tapping lick at the half way point. The track concludes with a final chorus and the climbing unison figure repeats with Eddie performing a phrase with pinched harmonics, before concluding with the final A5 power chords.

This track was recorded with Eddie's latest squeeze, his Fender-built EVH Wolfgang guitar played through the EVH 5150 MKIII head (see our reviews

in this issue). There is also a healthy dose of delay and the sound is pretty saturated. Let's also not forget his signature Dunlop wah! The tone is pretty crunchy, but remember to add plenty of mid and try to dial in a little top end presence. I hope you enjoy working through this classic track, and be sure to watch the lesson videos for a more detailed breakdown.



Click to watch the Lessons from LickLibrary



THE PART 8 RHYTHM METHOD

Chord arpeggios Eddie Van Halen style!

Over the last few issues of iGuitar we've been looking at various approaches to using chord arpeggios when coming up with rhythm parts. To round-up our look at the subject, we're going to look at a slightly more Rock approach. So far we've looked at progressive ideas and also Blues, both of which used alternate picking. This lesson we are going to look at using all down strokes, designed to give a more aggressive and driving feel, and also include some palm muting, derived from the great Eddie Van Halen.

Eddie Van Halen is not just a virtuoso when it comes to lead playing, but he is also one of the most revered and inventive Rock rhythm guitarists. Such classic tracks as Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love and Unchained demonstrate Eddie's inventive use of the chord arpeggio approach. Another approach he also favours is the use of triads, that give melodic and harmonic movement to his parts, and these are also often performed as arpeggios.

Our study piece is constructed around four different sections, a verse, chorus, bridge and a middle eight. I have also included a solo in this issue's track, as I felt we couldn't look at Van Halen without laying down a few tapping licks!

The track kicks-off with our chorus section, with a driving aggressive riff that makes use of two note diad chords, performed against a drive palm muted open A root note. Harmonic movement is implied by the triads of C/E, G/D, D and F/C triads that are also performed against the driving A root note. The chorus concludes with the chords of E5, Eb5, D5 and C5 that are performed with heavy accents with the drums and bass.

Next is the verse, and this is our chord arpeggio section, including the chords of Am, Asus2, Gsus2 and Fsus2, all of which are performed against a solid driving A root performed by the bass. When performing these chords as arpeggios I would use

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strict down strokes throughout, as well as tight palm muting. Make sure you keep the picking hand relaxed and the constant eighth note rhythm tight and accurate. The progression also includes a short melodic fill that is performed in unison with the bass guitar. This section is followed by the bridge, where we see the dynamic of the track lift. This section uses the triads of D/Dsus4, F/Fsus4 and G/Gsus4, all performed against a palm muted open D string. Really try and keep the palm muted root tight, so that the triads sound strong and accented. This section also includes the chords of G5, F5 and C5, and concludes with the same descending power chords found in the chorus. We then head back to another chorus section before we introduce the middle eight.

The middle eight features some partial chords performed with the picking hand fingers. Make sure that you back-off the gain for this section, and don't be too aggressive when performing the partial chords. This section also includes some natural harmonics and concludes with the descending power chord.

Now it's the solo, and this is performed over our verse progression. The solo is based mainly around the A minor pentatonic,

A Blues and A Dorian mode, and kicks off with a bending tapping phrase. As you bend the note up we then play a moving melodic line with tapped notes, whilst still holding the bend. This is followed by a signature EVH lick that can be heard on the classic cover of You Really Got Me from Van Halen I. We then see another tapping lick that crosses the strings and uses three notes with the fretting hand as well as the tapping note, and is similar to the tapping runs heard in Hot For Teacher. Following some whammy bar dives and bluesy bends we have an ascending tremolo picked line, with the solo concluding with some unison bends that follow the descending power chord stabs.

As regards to tone I would suggest not using too much gain, as Eddie's sound is surprisingly clean. Aim to dial in some extra mids and some top end presence, and also experiment with modulation such as phaser or a flanger.

Good luck!!



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GUITAR ROADMAPS

Hybrid Picking

In this issue I'd like to talk about my specific approach to using and practising hybrid picking technique. If you aren't familiar with hybrid picking don't worry, it's a simple concept

whereby we use a combination of the pick and fingers of the right hand to play different notes or chords. Chances are you'll be holding the pick with the thumb and index finger of your right hand. This leaves the middle, ring and little fingers available to use to play other strings.



Rick Graham - Hybrid Picking





This technique can be remarkably useful and I personally use this technique in lots of ways, including arpeggiating chords and playing wider interval licks when soloing.

For the purposes of this tutorial, I'm going to show you three very useful ways of applying this technique which will not only help you to improve your hybrid picking skills but will hopefully also give you some ideas in the application of the technique to further your study.

The first example is taken from a set of Classical guitar studies written by the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa Lobos. Some of these studies adapt particularly well to the electric guitar and study

#1 is perfect for hybrid picking technique. All we need is the first chord in the study which is a simple open E minor chord. The right hand will be playing the following sequence of strings: 6, 4, 5, 3, 4, 2, 3, 1, 2, 1 3, 2, 4, 3, 5, 4 alternating between the pick and middle finger. Once you have that pattern down then you can apply it to any chords you like.

For the next example we will be using a triplet pattern which uses the following right hand sequence; down, down, m, a, m, up. We'll be using this with a D minor chord at the 5th fret with the root on the A string. This pattern is a little bit more challenging than the previous pattern but stick with it and you'll be fine.

Remember to change to different chords when you feel ready to do so. The final example is even more challenging particularly to get up to speed! The right hand pattern is as follows: down, m, up. I love this particular pattern and try to use it whenever the opportunity presents itself but it does require quite a lot of practice and quite a lot of patience. When you get it down you'll find that it will work with a variety of string combinations, making for some really creative sounding stuff.

Feel free to download the tabs on the downloads page and get your hybrid picking into shape. Thanks for checking in, see you next issue!



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THE Tom Quayle

COLUMN

Harmonising a Melody Note

In the previous few issues of the magazine we've looked at using our knowledge of modal formulae to develop our knowledge of chords and create modal chord progressions. We're going to change tack slightly now and look at things from another angle. This issue's lesson is certainly more complex and involved than the previous ones but will serve as a great exercise for both advanced and intermediate chord work and can be tailored to different ability levels as I'll explain shortly.

The idea of this exercise is to take a given melody note (the highest note of a chord) and harmonise (create a chord) it using all 12 possible bass or root notes. For the purpose of the accompanying video I used the melody note G# on the B-string and harmonised it using bass notes from F at the 8th fret of the A-string, moving down an octave until I reached F at the 1st fret of the low E-string. The idea is to look at the intervallic relationship between the melody note and each of the 12 bass notes and try to come up with a viable chord that fits that relationship. So, for example, if the melody note is G# and my bass note is F, we have a relationship of a minor 3rd interval from F to G#. Therefore, I can use any chord type that

contains that relationship giving me lots of scope to use anything from a minor triad to a minor 7, 9 or 11, minor 7b5, 7#9 or any other voicing that fits the bill. There are many possibilities on offer for each bass note, some being more restrictive than others. Feel free to move the melody note to higher or lower string to allow sensible left hand stretches but the melody note must stay in the same octave for the exercise to be effective.

Once you have worked out a chord that fits with each bass note, write them down and try to figure out the best scale to play over each one. Now, repeat the exercise playing first each chord, followed by its relevant scale. By doing this you'll be hearing the harmony in both a chordal and linear, scale fashion.

This exercise will give you a great ability to harmonise any given melody note with any root note or, when given a chord symbol, be able to find any scale tone as the melody note.

In the video example I end up with the following chords as I descend through each bass note combination with my G# melody note. You can find the TAB/notation for these chords in standard tuning later in the magazine.

[...>]

Fm11, Emaj7#11, Eb7sus4, D9#11, Dbm7, Cm7b6, Bm13, Bbm7, Amaj7, Abm7, G7#5b9, Gb13, F7#5#9.

If you find all of this rather overwhelming then the exercise can be scaled down and used not as a fretboard visualisation one but as an ear-training exercise instead. Simply use your ears to fill-in some of the notes between the bass and melody notes. Once you find something you like, don't worry about naming it but simply write it down and remember it for future use in a song or chord progression. Many of the greatest musicians and compositions were founded on this principle of listening and

not over-thinking everything, so feel free to abandon the theoretical approach and work on this exercise using your ears as a guide. If you're anything like me you'll gradually become obsessed with the puzzle-like nature of harmony on the guitar and find your fretboard and chord knowledge coming on in leaps and bounds.

I wish you luck and I'll see you in the next issue! Take care.

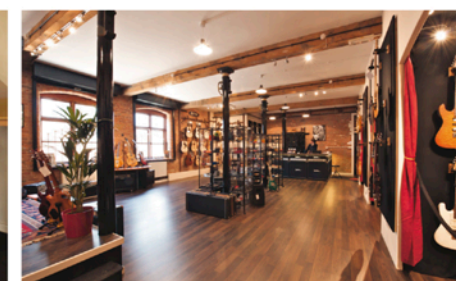


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MICHAEL CASSWELL



PRO CONCEPTS10

SHIFTING PITCH

This issue I want to introduce a favourite technique of mine, which mainly concerns shifting the pitch of notes, chords and general lines we all know and love. Little microtonal string bends as you phrase lines and licks give real big colour to your playing. It is a real hard technique to get sounding good, because you are in the realms of possibly sounding out of tune and it's a real fine line you walk when you are sending notes sharp or flat in the name of musical expression.

This also means you might have to start using that curious thing on your guitar called a tremolo (or as its affectionately known, 'the whammy bar'). Just so that you all don't go into shock, I have kept it fairly simple to begin with, restricting the use to some simple 'shimmering' and some controlled downward movement, thereby shifting the pitch. I have also crept in some interesting sounding double stop bends that only involve the whammy bar for a little shimmer at the end of the idea. Its all revolving around the key of G, mixing major and minor pentatonics and a tiny bit of mixolydian here and there.

A lot of you may already be familiar with how much I use the whammy bar and I have always loved the possibilities it gives you. I guess over the years I have honed it to the point where I don't really have to think about it as I play, to the point where it is as second nature as vibrato and string bends. I was working on this style from my early days as a player, long before I really noticed how other players such as Scott Henderson, Michael Lee Firkins, and the genius that is Jeff Beck were really doing it.

Where I really stole a lot of my swoops, dips and shimmers is from a couple of unlikely sources that I

[...>]



Michael Casswell - Shifting Pitch Part 1



Michael Casswell - Shifting Pitch Part 2

insist you guys check out. The first player that really made me pay hard attention to whammy bar possibilities was a fantastic session guy from the 80's called Alan Murphy. Unfortunately he is no longer with us, but if you haven't heard of him or heard his playing, I strongly suggest you Google and research his style. He was just fantastic! The other player I learnt a lot from, not just about the whammy bar, but about tone, sound, phrasing, and general versatility, was a fantastic player called Steve Farris, who at the same time I was signed to RCA records, was one quarter of a band called Mr Mister, who were signed to the same label and having hit after hit. We became good friends and used to hang out in that strange town called Los Angeles. He used to beat the crap out of a Floyd Rose, but in a real musical way, not a hideous '80s cheese way, and coincidentally, his big whammy bar influence was Alan Murphy! I urge you to check out Steve's playing on the two big Mr Mister albums, *Welcome to the Real World* and *Go On* (ignore the now dated drum sounds and just try to take in what the guitar is doing).

Jeff Beck has obviously taken this whole whammy bar philosophy and made it his own. Scott Henderson will twist your understanding of what a guitar should be able to do. Michael Lee Firkins has the whole 'sounding like a slide' thing down to the point where if he was to use a slide, he would sound like he is using a whammy bar. So although in this lesson we only

introduce some simpler whammy bar technique, it might set you off thinking about the possibilities, and open yet another colour or creative concept you might want to explore. If you haven't heard of anyone I have mentioned, then to be honest, you are probably not that into using a whammy bar, and are more of an old school Les Paul kinda guy, and Jeff Beck is just that guy that sang *Hi Ho Silver Lining!*

Next issue I will take the microtonal string bends and the whammy bar madness a step further. If you cannot wait that long, I do have the *Ultimate Tremolo Techniques* DVD out on Licklibrary, which explores everything whammy bar in depth. Please bear in mind that although I have talked a lot about trem usage, it is also a lot about those microtonal string bends and more demanding double stop ideas. We have explored some cool string bends in previous pro concept columns, but I have given you some more in this tutorial.

Hope you enjoy the demos which were all pretty much done in one take, so some of it will be more 'out' of tune than it should be, but I wanted to keep it real, and even when things are slightly out, it can still sound cool and vibey. Or, it can just be out of tune!!



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METAL EDGE

By Andy James

12 BAR TAPPING

Hello and welcome to this lesson on tapping and string skipping over a 12 bar Blues pattern. In this issue we're going to take a look at some pretty advanced tapping concepts where we'll need to master wide stretches, fast position shifting, left and right hand tapping and string skipping in the style of modern shredders like Michael Romeo of Symphony X and Greg Howe.

This idea is arpeggio based, and when working on arpeggios it's not uncommon to practice them over a chord progression like Pachelbel's canon to give you some harmonic interest. In this example we're going to outline a minor Blues in Em (Em, Am, Bm). So before playing through this actual lick it might be worth familiarising yourself with the sound of these chords.

There are a lot of notes here and it would be easy to become confused over the shapes we're using, so take a look at the fretboard diagrams and get your head around each shape before you try to play the correct pattern.

We start with a right hand tap on the A string (14th fret) before rolling down and then up to the tap again. From here we have the toughest mechanic of this lick, the left hand tap. We need to play the 14th fret with a right hand tap, then strike the 7th fret of the G string with a left hand tap. This note needs to be clean and at the same volume as all of the other

notes to keep the smooth legato sound going. It's also important to make sure that the right hand tap doesn't ring into the left hand tap, but you can't just lift it up or that open string will ring out. The idea is that as the left hand taps, the right hand releases pressure but without leaving the string (silencing the note) you can then lift up creating minimal string noise; as you can see from my video, I use a hair tie just to keep things extra clean, but you should never rely on this.

So this pattern begins by moving up the first shape then sliding up the G string to the second shape before sliding up (again on the 1st finger) to the 3rd shape. When we're here I move into a pattern I'm very fond of which involves playing the position 1 minor pentatonic in the left hand and adding taps 4 frets higher (on the 19th fret in this case). We move down this shape leading with the left hand and ending on the root.

It's really important that you practice this shape and learn it so you know the pattern cold because our next step is to play the exact same thing but now five frets higher to outline an Am sound. Care needs to be taken here though as we're right up the high end of the neck and have to tap on the 24th fret. If you're playing on a 22 fret guitar, try tapping on 22, 22, 21, 22 and then 22, this will give you notes contained in the Am pentatonic scale.

[...>]

CHECK OUT THE DVDs



Gi**Andy James - 12 Bar Tapping**

Now we need to outline a Bm, Am to Em so we take the basic pattern we started with (shape 1) and play a one bar idea (bar 5), this differs from the original pattern because we don't slide up into the next two shapes. Instead we play the same lick starting on the 14, 12 and finally the 7th fret.

To finish this little exercise off we're actually going to outline a B7 sound. If you look at the diagrams you may recognise the last shape as coming from the three note per string mixolydian shape. We're playing the same pattern as we did in bar 2, but now just outlining a different sound. The mechanics are exactly the same as before, we still need to

pay careful attention to the the left hand taps and the distance between our two hands.

These ideas are something you should experiment with and try to use to outline your own chord professions. There really is no substitute for taking these concepts and trying to implement them in your own compositions then try them out with your band, or just write a tune where you get to use them.

Until the next issue, stay metal!

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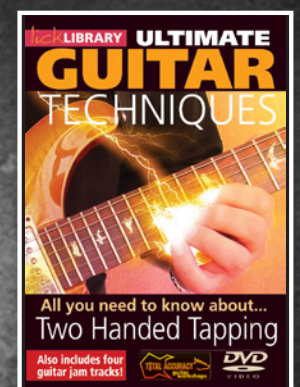
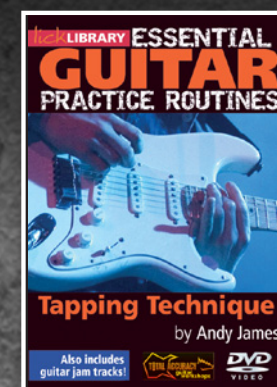
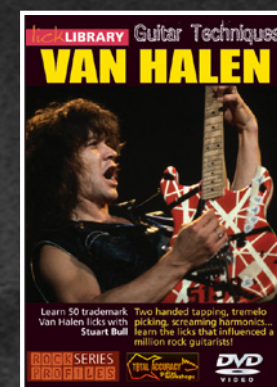
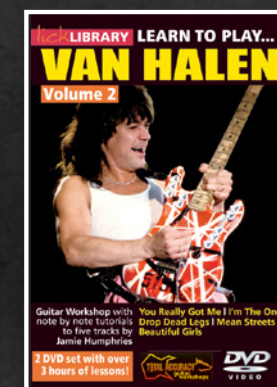
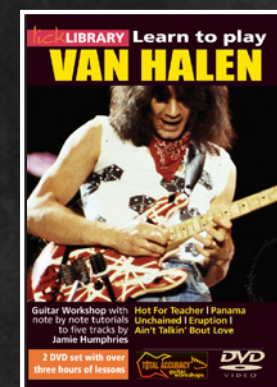
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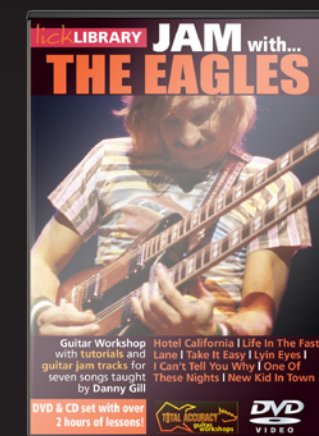
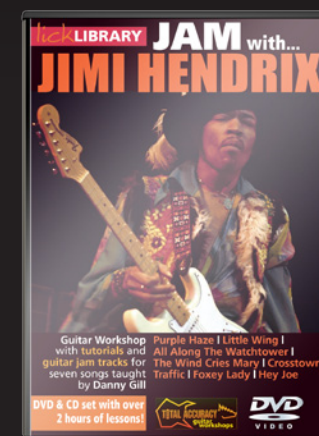
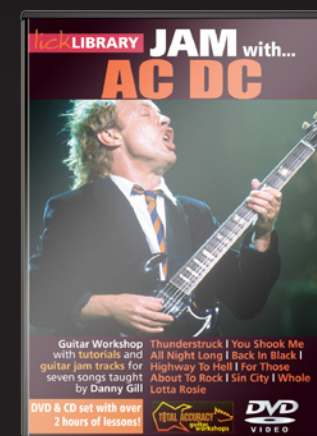
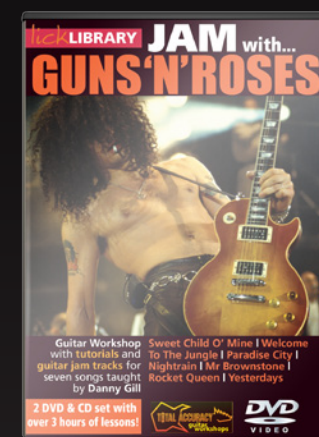
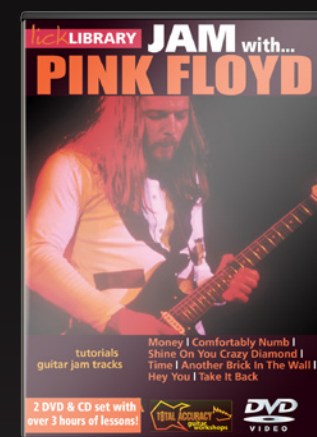
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Reviews

We've pretty much OD'd on Eddie Van Halen in this issue with three EVH Wolfgang guitars and one of the latest incarnations of EVH amps. But life's not all whammy bar madness because we've also got the latest in traditional electrics from Collings - the master of classic guitar building skills. Speaking of masters, Grover Jackson is back with the GJ2 project and we've got his flagship model on test. Add a Jerry Donahue signature from Fret-King, plus another newcomer in Yamaha's red hot Pacifica series and we think that's a strong line-up - especially with the addition of an exclusive demo of Musicman's astonishing Game Changer pickup switching system!

Our amp selection is wide-ranging too, from Peavey's new Butcher head, through Two Rock's exotic EXO, a handwired valve combo from JMI, and the Fractal Audio FX system plus a fabulous power amp from Matrix. Blackstar is represented with a 100 Watt valve head and for all you iPhone fans there's a look at the iRiff Port.

Is there something you'd like to see the iGuitar team review? Why not email and tell us what you'd like us to look at? Just email gary@iguitarmag.com



P118 Collings SoCo 16 LC

P124 EVH 5150 MK III

P128 Wolfgang Guitars

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P150 Matrix GT1000FX Power Amp

P154 Fret King Black Label Jerry Donahue



P158 GJ2 Arete 5 Star

P162 JMI 10

P166 Fractal Audio AXE FX II

P170 Ernie Ball Musicman Reflex Game Changer

P176 Peavey Butcher 100w Head

P180 PocketLab Works iRiffport

P182 Blackstar Series One 104 6L6 100watt Head

Collings SoCo16LC

It may be the prettiest guitar we've ever reviewed, but how does the Collings SoCo 16LC play and sound? Who do we know who really appreciates fine, grown-up guitars? Time for **Michael Casswell!**

Back in issue five I had the pleasure of playing, and giving my thoughts on, the Collings I-35. I loved it. It was as good as guitar production gets. To be honest, it was the only Collings electric guitar I'd played, but I have played enough guitars in my time, and personally own quite a few vintage and modern high-end guitars, to know when a guitar isn't just good, but when it's extremely good - and the I-35 was indeed extremely good. Which gave this SoCo 16LC a lot to live up to.

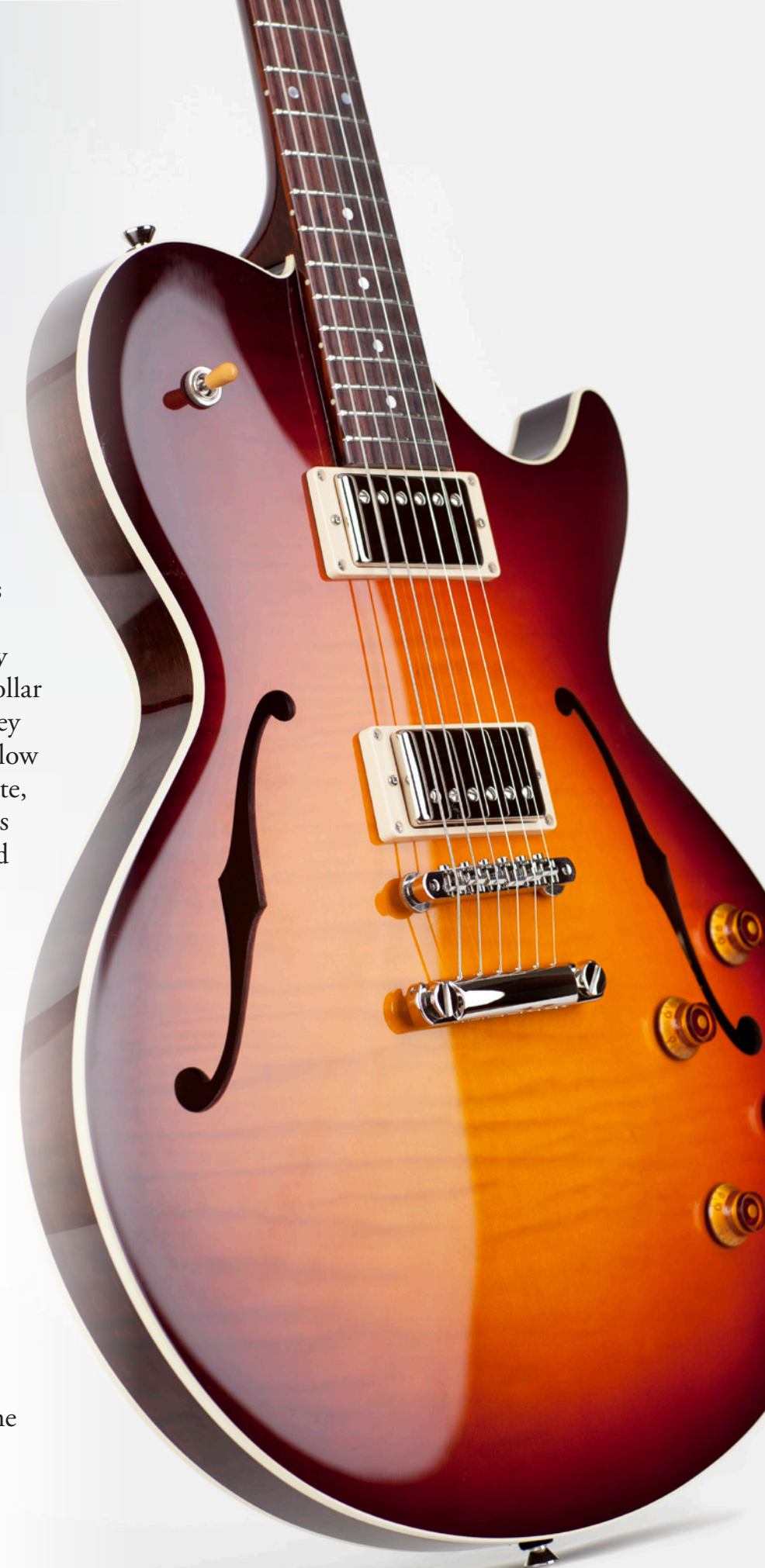
The name SoCo is named after "South Congress Avenue" which is in Austin Texas. A colourful, happening place apparently, and the home of Bill Collings and his team. Maybe an English guitar builder could make a guitar and call it the "North Circular"? No, it doesn't work, does it? Somehow the USA always seems so much cooler.

As I lifted the lid, the look and finish of the guitar really made an impact, to the point where both myself and the camera guys just stopped and took a moment to simply admire the thing in its case. One of the spotlights happened to be in the right position to illuminate the colour and the flame maple top. Very pretty, very cool and glowing from the nitrocellulose finish which

is so traditional, and, some say, so important to the eventual tone of a properly made guitar. I don't know what the burst finish is called but I call it a fireburst. More orange than a cherry burst but darker than a lemon burst. In my books, that's a 'fireburst'. The beautiful laminated flame maple wasn't just on the top. It carried on round the back and sides, making this an all maple semi-hollow body, with a solid maple centre block, cream binding, and a subtle arch to the top and the back. Quite a slim depth to it, maybe a bit slimmer than a Les Paul, but the visuals exudes class, and it is a very 'grown up' looking guitar indeed.

For wood fetishists (*he means me – Ed.*) the SoCo is made from Collings' own maple laminate, as was the I-35. Not satisfied with the quality of what he could buy, Bill Collings apparently just decided to make his own laminates. That's the kind of company you are dealing with here. The traditional set neck is mahogany with a rosewood fingerboard and the hardware is of a matching quality throughout, from the custom engraved Gotoh machine heads to the TonePros bridge. I know I keep saying it but it can't be said too often - this is as good as it gets.

Within seconds of strumming a few chords acoustically, I could immediately tell it was great, which is a top tip for any of you guys when buying an electric guitar. Play the thing first unamplified. If a guitar rings, resonates, and acoustically has a large sound, then when you plug it in, even if the pickups are average, chances are the guitar will sound fab. And the pickups on this SoCo certainly are not average! In fact they are Lollar Imperials Alnico humbuckers. They are voiced perfectly for a semi-hollow body like this, giving very articulate, sweet sounding humbucking tones that I have only really encountered on genuine '59 Les Pauls. Yes, really. This guitar could handle many styles - probably more than the average player could play! The Lollar pick ups just sound great with the semi-hollow body, and the maple, which is a bright but sweet sounding wood. The SoCo would easily be at home playing warm Jazz, rooty Blues, Funk and Country. The bridge pick up is wound and voiced specifically for this guitar and even the volume pots are graded and tailored by their value, to achieve the optimum tone from each individual instrument.



[...>]

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



[...>]



Collings SoCo16LC Review



At volume, with a good valve amp, the volume pots will act as tone and gain control, because they tell the Lollars to be darker, brighter, sweeter or dirtier as you turn them up and down. Work the tone pots as well, and you have a whole range of possibilities for great humbucking sound. A technique often overlooked by less experienced players.

The frets and neck were fantastic. Some of the best fretwork and nicest feeling frets I have played in a long time. The neck has a nice played-in feel with some rounded edges, which gives the feel of a neck that has done thousands of gigs over many years, but on a brand new guitar. The actual neck feels quite old school in size. Not small, but not too big and with a nice C-shape that fills your palm. The whole thing reminded me of my James Tyler neck which I love, but I'm not one of those players that has to have a certain size neck. I just pick up and play. But this neck suits this guitar and feels fantastic. The strings feel like 10's or 11's, so I opted to demo the guitar with a bit of smoooooth Jazzzzz, mainly because I wanted to try and appear as cool as this guitar is! I tried...I failed!

The SoCo 16LC works on all levels. The whole thing works in harmony. The wood is chosen specifically for the sonic imprint it makes. The pickups are wound and voiced to work with the wood. The pots are chosen for the pick ups. The semi-hollow chambers add a lovely warmth and grain to the overall amplified sound. All the components work as one, such is the quality and care put into this guitar. Collings only produces three or four guitars a day, when the more money driven companies churn out 50,60,70 guitars per day. That's the difference. That's what you are paying for when you buy a guitar like this.

If your playing deserves the best, and you can afford it, then you should definitely try this Collings. It comes in quite a range of finishes and you can even have a Bigsby factory-fitted if you choose. Even more troubling is that the 16LC has a big brother - the outrageously beautiful DeLuxe model, which oozes even more quality. If you go to the Collings website you'll see a Deluxe version in quilted maple, but be careful - you may suddenly find yourself compelled to mortgage your house and buy one. Our Editor says it's possibly the best-looking guitar he's seen in a decade and editors are never wrong, are they?



The EVH 5150 MK III

Eddie Van Halen doesn't just have a signature guitar - as befits one of the world's most influential guitarists, he has an entire brand all to himself called, of course, EVH! In his quest for the perfect Eddie sound, **Jamie Humphries** assess the mighty three-channel EVH 100 Watt head.

Eddie Van Halen has long been renowned for his exquisite Rock tone. From the early days of Van Halen 1, with his hot rodded Marshall's running with a Variac, to his more modern Soldano tones on F.U.C.K, to the development of the signature Peavey 5150 100 Watt head, he has been restless in pursuit of tone. To many Eddie followers, the original "block logo" 5150 was the best sounding amp, with its stripped down features, and now hailed as a collectable modern classic. But fast-forward more than 20 years and an alliance between Fender and Eddie has resulted in the launch of an entire musical instrument brand - EVH. Under that umbrella are various versions of Eddie's new Wolfgang guitar, plus his "Frankenstein" guitar, as well as 50 Watt and 100 Watt versions of the new 5150 head. We borrowed the meatier model for this review.

Compared to previous version of the 5150, this head is packed with extra features. We were given a stunning Ivory 100 watt version, which features three channels, eight 12AX7 preamp tubes, and four 6L6 power amp tubes. The amp head is pretty big in size - nearly 30" across from left to right, and pretty weighty too. That said,

the design team at EVH Gear have thought of everything because as well as having the regular handle on the top of the head, the amp also features handles on both ends of the head, enabling it to be carried with both hands - genius! The front of the amp features a black powder coated grill, for both cosmetic reasons, exposing the valves, and also, importantly, for cooling. As well as this, the grill is decorated with black metal EVH stripe motif, a really stunning tie-in to Eddie's stripes, subtle yet stylish. The control's of the amp feature the very nice and retro 'chicken head' knobs.

One of the first things you notice on the control panel is that the power and standby switches are located on the rear of the amplifier, freeing up space on the front. The power light features a red jewel for bright power on indication on a dark stage. The three channels included are Clean, Crunch and Lead, but are labelled One, Two and Three. Each channel includes gain, low, mid, high and volume, enabling independent EQ, as well as crunch and volume control of each channel. The amp doesn't feature an over all master volume, though, which is quite surprising as it is good to be able



The EVH 5150 MK III Review



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

[...>]

So what did we think of it? It is undoubtedly a very well built and great sounding amp

to balance the level of each channel and then control that globally depending on the situation. Not having a master volume would mean that each channel would have to be rebalanced. But then this is Eddie's signature amp, and like all signature equipment it's artist specific - and who am I to argue with Eddie's choices? The amp does include three independent presence controls, however, which enable you to tailor the top-end frequencies of the power amp. As already mentioned the rear of the amp houses the power and standby switches, as well as the effects loop and speaker outputs.

Having got the details out of the way, I need to say, as we always do, best watch the video to get an idea of how this mighty amp really sounds. Suffice it to say that the clean tone was full and rich, and the EQ controls were very usable and effective, allowing me to dial in a variety of tones. Another great application was that by pushing the gain control I was able to "crunch up" the clean channel, for some old school '60s/'70s style crunch; quite old Marshall like.

Moving onto channel two, things start to get a little hotter, as you might expect! This is the Crunch channel, but to be honest it produces enough gain to be a Lead channel. Once again, the EQ controls operate very effectively, enabling vintage/modern Rock tones, to Blues and scooped hard Rock sounds. Now we kick in channel three, and

here we are able to get some very high levels of gain and saturation! Once again, the very well tuned EQ controls enabled me to get a wide variety of tones, as you can hear. Personally, I enjoyed the mid-range control, as it is tuned and voiced in such a way that achieves the Eddie "Brown Sound" perfectly. Eddie's sound uses a surprising amount of mid-range, and that band on this amp is very sweet. Another great thing about the amp is how well it cleans up when the guitar volume is backed off; a technique used by Eddie to achieve cleaner tones.

So what did we think of it? It is undoubtedly a very well built and great sounding amp that is capable of producing a wide variety of modern and vintage, clean, crunch and saturated tones. The styling is classy, yet captures the feel of something bearing the EVH brand. My only one question mark is the lack of master volume control, which strikes me as odd. Maybe, too, it could have done with a deep or resonance control. Then again, this is Eddie's choice, and when you buy into signature gear you are buying into the ideas and preferences of the player whose signature is on the front of the piece of gear. That's something you need to bear in mind when you are considering buying any signature piece of gear.

All in all this is great amplifier. True, it is at the upper end of the price scale, but if you compare it with other professional class 100 Watt tube heads it's far from the most expensive and in fact way below the price of some of the boutique equivalents. In fact, I'd go so far as to say it would be well worth checking out if you are in the market place for a new amplifier, even if you aren't a devoted Eddie fan.




pinnaCLe distortion

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the Straight Truth About Pickups by Jason Lollar



This was more like the dragon chasing us—over the years it's been one of our most requested pickup designs. Of course, we had to add our own twists, including sizing it to drop into a standard humbucker route. A2 magnets, custom covers, lot's of attitude.

Starting with a '60s Country Gentleman as a benchmark, we went after the classic rock-a-billy 'bucker tone, adding some "Lollar" along the way. The neck pickup is warm and buttery, with a clear, present top end. The bridge pickup is fat and honky, with a rich, defined low end. Combined, they sparkle and spank with clarity and punch. They'll cover everything from "OZ" rock to "Nashville Super Pickers" to "Hot Rods and Hot Babes..." Go Man, Go!

I've personally design over a hundred different pickup models, including most of the vintage classics, some obscure works of art from steel guitars to clavichords, and even a few of my own designs that have never existed in the past.

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EVH Wolfgang Guitars

Eddie Van Halen doesn't just have a signature guitar - as befits one of the world's most influential guitarists, he has an entire brand all to himself called, of course, EVH! We couldn't let our Van Halen special pass by without looking in some detail at the latest incarnations of Eddie's own Wolfgang guitars - these days made in close association with Fender. **Jamie Humphries** got the gig. It's a tough life, but someone has to do it!

Eddie has always set trends with his guitars, from his home constructed "Frankenstein", featuring his signature striped finish, single humbucker and Floyd Rose vibrato system, to his "Hockey Stick" headstock Kramer guitars from the mid-80s.

The original "Wolfgang" style guitar - or at least where the body design started - was with the Ernie Ball Musicman EVH signature guitar that Eddie co-designed and used exclusively from the late 80's to mid 90's. Following his departure from Musicman, Eddie turned next to Peavey to produce his "Wolfgang" guitar. The version was similar in many respects, but featured a slightly extended top horn. Then, after Eddie ended his agreement with Peavey, he turned to Fender for a limited run of Charvel guitars featuring various striped finishes marking different eras in Eddie's career. This relationship proved fruitful and Eddie next set-up his own EVH brand under the Fender banner, and during the highly successful 2007-2008 US tour, the band once more reunited with David Lee Roth, plus the addition of Wolfgang Van Halen on bass,

Eddie rigorously and brutally road tested various prototypes of the new Wolfgangs. He would have new prototypes brought out on tour and if you look at pictures from the tour you can see different ones with the prototype numbers sprayed on the front.

The story goes that the guitars were pushed to the max - beaten and broken and parts replaced until they didn't break and could stand up to the torture and stress that Eddie puts his guitars through - and that's not to mention the ability to produce exquisite tone!

All of which bodes well for the guitars we were sent to review by Fender UK: the USA-built "carved top" Wolfgang, the USA-built "set neck" USA Custom, and the Japanese-built "Flat top" Special. Sadly, all of the models sent to us were hard tail versions, and seeing as Eddie is renowned for his whammy bar skills I have to say it would have been nice to have tried out the EVH version of the Floyd. Still, saying that, I was lucky enough to be able to test and compare all three of the models, which was quite a treat!

EVH Wolfgang Special



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

[...>]



[...>]

The first guitar up for 'the treatment' was the Japanese-built Wolfgang Special. This instrument boasts many of the features of its bigger USA brother, but at a more affordable price. The guitar features the familiar Wolfgang style body shape, although in this version comes with a flat top. The wood is basswood, with a maple veneer top. The neck features the same compound radius as the other Wolfgang models and is made from AA bird's eye maple, with an oiled finish. The frets are vintage style made from stainless steel and the nut is a Floyd Rose locking nut, which is quite unusual for a fixed bridge guitar. Moving onto the headstock, we have EVH branded machines, plus a string retainer for straight string pull, and a maple veneer. At the body end of the neck there is

a wheel for easy adjustment of the truss rod, something all the EVH guitars share.

Now for the body and controls, where we have two zebra stripe EVH Wolfgang humbucking pickups. There is a single volume and tone arrangement that uses low friction pots for a very smooth action, with MXR style knobs. On the top horn we have a three way selector, which works in the opposite way to a Les Paul, with the down position being the neck, and the up position the bridge, with both pickups selected when in the middle position. The bridge is a TonePro's model that has fine tune adjusters, to adjust the tuning if it slips slightly while locked with the Floyd Locking nut.

In use, the guitar is very well balanced and sat perfectly on my knee or on the strap, without the neck heading towards the floor. The body shape is also very comfortable, and the neck joint allows access to the higher frets. The controls feel great, the low friction volume is a great addition, although the pickup selector takes a little getting use to. The guitar produces great cleans, rich crunch and warm, sustaining leads, and when the volume is backed off, the guitar cleans up well. Also the tone control is very effective, and produces great pseudo wah tone effects, when backed off and both pickups engaged. How good is it? We've put all that together at the end of this feature in a single conclusion.

Wolfgang USA HT

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★
CHECK THE SPEC ⚙️

Now let's look at the USA Wolfgang, which is Eddie's personal choice. To my mind this is what the Wolfgang guitar is all about. It's sleek, sexy and functional, and although the finishes are impressive and exquisite, you won't mind a few battle scars over time, and loving wear marks.



EVH Wolfgang USA HT



[...>]



The body shape is the Wolfgang body design, although as I said this model has a carved top, with the middle of the body where the pickups are situated being quite a thick piece of wood. The trem cavity is unfinished inside, to allow the wood to breathe and mature, according to Eddie. The controls are the same as the Japanese model; we have low friction pots, a 500k volume pot and a 250k tone pot with MXR style knobs. The pickup switching is the same as before. The bridge is a Gotoh bridge with fine tuners.

Once again this guitar sits very well, and is very well balanced. The additional thickness to the body makes you really feel like you are holding something substantial. The tone of this guitar is noticeably fuller, better sustain, and a much thicker crunchy tone, and warm leads when the neck pickup is selected. This guitar cleans up great with the 500k volume pot. When using a clean tone I was able to go from bright, spanky Country inspired cleans to warm rich Jazz like tones. To my mind you can really see, feel and hear why this is Eddie's main squeeze, and to me this really is a great workhorse and the flagship of the brand.

Wolfgang USA Custom



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

So to the top of the range, set-neck Wolfgang. This guitar boasts exquisite styling, woods and features and looks that, I must say, seem to me to be anything but Van Halen-like! In fact it reminds me more of the type of instrument a rich collector would add to his collection of Private Stock PRS models proudly hanging on the wall, as opposed to the beaten-up, stripy, cigarette burnt and battle scared axe that we have become to know and love in Eddie's hands.

The body is the same Wolfgang design, but is made from mahogany with a 1/2" solid maple flame top and seven-ply body edge binding. It's a thick body, with the pickups mounted into some seriously meaty wood, although they are in surrounds and not direct mounted. The neck is a vintage style set (i.e. glued) neck, made from mahogany, with a bound ebony board, and custom trapezoid fret markers.



[...>]



The neck includes 22 stainless steel vintage frets and it also features graphite stabilising rods, and also has the now familiar EVH wheel for truss rod adjustment.

The headstock also features seven-ply binding, and thanks to its angle, no string retainer is required. The machine heads are conventional style with pearl buttons and this guitar also features a standard non-locking nut, although the stop tail bridge still has fine tuners.

The look and styling of this guitar is quite different to the other Wolfgangs. The pickups are not direct mount, with the EVH custom design humbuckers with nickel covers mounted with pickup surrounds. It also features two low friction 500k volume pots, and two 500k tone pots. The knobs are the more traditional

'top hat' style knobs as opposed to the more functional MXR style used on the rest of the range.

Once again the guitar sits and balances perfectly, and the body feels noticeably thicker than the USA Wolfgang. Plugged in, it sounds...well... exceptional: very thick and full, and quite different in sound to the USA Wolfgang. Cleans are rich and thick and when the gain is kicked-in, the crunch is very dark - almost Les Paul like. This is a very big sounding guitar.

I couldn't help feeling that although this unique instrument it is to Eddie's spec, it doesn't sound like you would expect an Eddie guitar to sound. Maybe he's mellowing in his old age!?



EVH Wolfgang USA HT

[...>]



Conclusion

These are three great guitars and all of them are quite distinctively different, tonally and spec wise, despite sharing the EVH styling.

I'll say again that it would have been nice to have been sent at least one of them with a Floyd as, although the Custom only comes with a fixed bridge, the Special and USA Wolfgang both come with Floyd Rose systems with a D tuner. I think any Eddie fan would be keen to find out how good the Floyd sounds and feels - particularly as Eddie was the pioneer of the Floyd and was possibly the first person to use one!

That said, all of these guitars performed extremely well. The Special, although not that cheap, is cheaper than you might expect give its prestigious pedigree. You sacrifice the thicker carved top body, which alters the sound quite a bit. Then again, if money is short, it does give you the feel, styling and sound of an EVH for a slightly lower price. It's as well built as you would expect a Japanese guitar to be and at the street price competes pretty well with the obvious 'signature' rivals.

As for the custom; well it's a stunning guitar, but to me it isn't a *Van Halen* guitar, and I say with no disrespect to Fender or EVH. Eddie was never about a guitar that was so flash looking that you would be scared to play it, and with this finish and price this guitar is up there with things like the collectable PRS models. I've seen pictures of Eddie playing a Gibson Les Paul Gold Top with the neck humbucker pulled out, and bare wires hanging out, like the Frankenstein! That's what Eddie's guitars were to me - there to be abused and pushed to the max. But - and it's a big but - the Custom is a fine instrument in its own right and for the right player could be great to own, so hats-off to Eddie for pushing his brand into other territories. It is a beautiful guitar, well built and sounded killer. It is expensive, though, so not quite up there in the value stakes with the other two.

If I had to pick one of the three, my choice would be the USA Wolfgang. I love this guitar. It's lean, it's mean, it barks like a rabid Rottweiler, and sings like an angel. It's got EVH written all over it. It's not cheap but it's a professional quality, American-made guitar which delivers what it sets out to do in real style.



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Yamaha Pacifica PAC510V

Tom Quayle was so impressed by the two Yamaha Pacificas he reviewed in iGuitar 9 that he went back for another - the fascinating stripped-down, single pickup PAC510V. Does less mean more? We think it just might.

In issue nine I had the great pleasure of checking out Yamaha's Pacifica series PAC611 and PAC311 models and was extremely impressed with the quality, playability and tones on offer. For this issue I wanted to look at the other high-end model in the range, the PAC510V, which, although it shares many features of its two siblings, is really quite a different beast in some important ways.

The general premise of the guitar is the same as the flagship 611 model in that we have an alder body, maple neck and 22 nickel fret rosewood fretboard with bolt-on construction. The scale length (25 ½") and radius (13 ¾") are also the same, allowing for identical levels of playability and a traditional Strat-like feel. The main differences occur in the choice of hardware that Yamaha has gone for in the 510V. As opposed to the fixed bridge of the 311 and 611 we have a floating Wilkinson VS50-6 bridge, featuring stainless saddles and a vintage six-screw attachment to the body. The single pickup is a Seymour Duncan Trembucker P-Rails in the bridge position, matched with a three-way switch, allowing for true humbucker, p-90 and single coil tones from one pickup. Grover locking

tuners and chrome volume and tone knobs complete the picture and add up to a high quality, professional-level hardware package that impresses from the outset.

The construction of the 510V certainly lives-up to my experiences of the previous two Pacificas. The body, neck and hardware all feel very well put together with no signs of cracks, gaps or creaking. The opaque finish, available in a choice of five colours, is flawless and the neck finish isn't sticky and feels fast in the hands. With a 13 ¾" radius, the neck is comfortable for chordal playing and created no issues for bends in the higher register. Lead work is fast and precise (depending on your technique!) without providing you with an anorexic neck profile and I'd imagine even those with smaller hands will find this guitar very approachable.

The alder body isn't overly heavy and, thanks to that classic shape, is very well balanced both in a seated and standing position. The floating bridge works well for both gentle vibrato and more aggressive, modern techniques, remaining in tune thanks to the locking tuners and high quality saddles.



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

OK, so that's the basics dealt with - now things start to get really interesting!

An uneducated look at the 510V might lead you to believe that it is a one-trick pony in the 'San-Dimas' shred style - but you'd be wrong. The Seymour Duncan Trembucker P-Rails (TBPR-1b model) is a more versatile beast, only limited by the fact that there are no neck or middle position pickups for more tonal variations, so you are limited to bridge position tones only. The three-way switch will wire the pickup coils for humbucker, p-90 or single coil tones with no digital fakery going on - these are real, authentic sounds and give the 510V a versatility that belies its simplicity.

Unplugged, the 510V is resonant throughout the body and neck and exhibits a warm tone

without any of the plastic tonal qualities of cheaper guitars - and bear in mind that this is not an expensive instrument, particularly considering the pro-quality hardware on offer.

Plugged in, we began with clean tones that sounded great for a bridge pickup in all three modes but are not really what a guitar like this is all about. This is obviously an evolution of '80s style single pickup Rock and Metal guitars so we began to pile-on the gain and checked out what was on offer.

The p-rails pickups are pretty high output and with the gain cranked, the pickup screams for lead work and is supremely chunky on riffs and chordal material. For a high output unit, things cleaned up very well using the volume control too, allowing



[...>]



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Love Squeeze



The PAC510V is definitely a superb instrument.

for authentic Blues tones with very little loss of top-end and clarity. My favourite setting was the p-90, having a throaty mid-range that would cut through in a band really well. Tonally you're firmly in Rock territory but more vintage tones can be coaxed out of the instrument with some considered tweaking of the volume and tone controls, especially in the p-90 and single coil modes.

The PAC510V is definitely a superb instrument, especially considering its price point. There's no denying the tonal limitations of a single pickup design, even with the ability to switch between humbucker, p-90 and single coil sounds, but Yamaha has that covered with the 611 and 311 models. If you're after a great, straight-ahead Rock guitar that really screams but you also need a bit more versatility in your bridge pickup tones, then the 510V is a superb choice with pro-level hardware at a price that won't give you a heart attack - but which might seriously disturb some of Yamaha's competitors!



Two-Rock Exo 15

Most boutique amps look like they were designed by Rock-Ola or RCA's radio division in 1938. Two-Rock's Exo 15 looks like it fell from UFO. We asked our resident space alien, **Michael Casswell**, to investigate...

The 'low wattage with a massive sound' concept seems to have just about taken over the amp market in the past few years. They are all doing it and it's no bad thing, because amps that can deliver big tones at sensible volumes are perfect for home practice or studios. Some of them are even loud enough to gig with and providing you have good monitoring and a decent sound system, the actual Wattage of an amp doesn't really come into the equation.

Two-Rock, as a brand, has been on my list of amps to investigate for while. Some big names have been using them. Both John Mayer and Joe Bonamassa use Two Rocks as part of their multi-amp live rigs and those guys get great tones, could choose to use any brand of amp they wish and opt for Two-Rock. So I was pleased when a Two-Rock came in for review, courtesy of our good friends at Manchester's Toneworld, here in the UK.

It does look cool. I'm guessing it's called 'EXO' because it does look like it has an exoskeleton. If you don't know what that is, it means you have your hard protective bits

on the outside, and your soft squishy bits on the inside, making you harder to eat in the food chain. So it looks tough, rugged, and I guarantee you wouldn't be able to eat it! It's obviously well designed and comes in predominantly black, blue and our version, which was sort of brown.

In case you don't know of them, and have just heard the name, Two-Rock is a Californian company, formed in 1999 by Bill Krinard and Joe Mloganoski. Both have decades of experience behind them with guitar and Hi-Fi amps (in Bill Krinard's case) and in 2010, having established a rapid rise to boutique guitar amp stardom, the company was acquired by Premier Builders Guild, a particularly interesting boutique guitar and amplifier company, "comprised of elite master builders supported by proven management, marketing, and dealer service teams," it says here.

And so to the amp itself! The Exo 15 is a 6V6, tube rectified, class AB, single channel, 15 Watt head. On the front it has the usual pre-amp, gain and volume, which will give you more crunch as you wind it up, as well

as the usual bass, mid, treble, master volume, and a contour control pot, which basically fine tunes how up front you want the amp to sound (a bit like a really effective presence control). Round the back, it is great to see an effects send and return for your delays, reverbs, and modulation effects. Some boutique amp manufacturers want to keep things 'pure' and sometimes do not include an effects loop, which really irritates me, because I like to have the choice of using my time-based effects where they sound best, which is in a loop! It's also great to see

speaker cab outputs catering for 4, 8 and 16 Ohm cabs, which covers all the possibilities.

Soundwise, all Two-Rock amps are said to have been designed to let you hear the detail in your guitar. They are also designed to interact with your favourite stomp boxes to expand the sounds you can get from an already nicely voiced amp. You don't get bags of fizzy gain with the Exo. What you do get is a nice broad crunch, or a bluesy clean, that lets you create your own sonic canvas on top. So if you want more gain, kick in your favourite overdrive to push the front end, or back down the pre-amp gain for cleaner tones that will take compressors well, and again push the front end of the amp with a dirt box for more gain.



[...>]

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

This is how I generally run my Marshalls and how a lot of players do it. So although the EXO 15 is single channel, all the sounds are there if you know how to work your guitar volume knob, and get the best from your pedals. As for it delivering just 15 Watts, well, in the room this amp seems loud. With a good cab, it could probably handle more civilized volume gigs, but it obviously will not have the headroom of larger wattage amps. Incidentally, Two-Rock also offers a specially designed cab to match this head, which we didn't get to try.

There's no doubt this is a superbly made amp - it's all hand-wiring inside - and it has been designed to do a versatile job of delivering classic tones and to do it exceptionally well.

It's there to function as a fantastic sonic canvas for you to stamp your own idea of good tone onto. It isn't an amp that you plug-in and press a few buttons to get a pre-set killer tone - it's an unashamedly professional, expensive, exceptionally well made amp that would be ideal for a session player whose work calls for versatile, classic sounds from a reliable, portable, package.

Our thanks to Toneworld for the loan of this review sample. www.toneworld.co.uk



Matrix GT1000FX Power Amp

After a few years in the doldrums, rack-mounted pre and power amps are starting to make a comeback - especially with players using rack-mounted effects and processing systems. UK-based Matrix are one of the brightest stars in the guitar-friendly power amp market. But can a solid state power amp really sound like a guitar amp? We asked **Tom Quayle** to test drive at GT1000FX

Made by Matrix Amplification in the UK, and designed by Andy Hunt, the GT1000FX is a stereo, 1u rack mountable solid-state power amp offering up to 500 Watts per channel. The GT1000FX is designed to work with a wide range of guitar products, from digital modellers to valve pre-amps, pre-amp pedals, 'slaving' traditional amplifiers and newer mini-amps with line outputs and can power either full-range or guitar cab speaker systems. Matrix has designed a flat-response amplifier that essentially responds like a valve amp in terms of its 'loose, open feel' and I have to say that I was extremely impressed with both the sound and performance of their design.

As soon as you see the GT1000FX you appreciate the rugged construction and high quality components both internally and externally. The unit is housed in a rock-solid metal chassis and features high-spec combi-Neutrik ins and outs for XLR, Speakon and jack cables. This flexibility allows you to connect to all manner of pre-amps and speakers, giving you peace of mind that you'll always be able to sound great in any

situation. Power options are also flexible, allowing for stereo, mono/parallel or bridged mode at 4 Ohms or above. You can also run mismatched loads for even greater flexibility, giving you options such as an 2x12 cab with 8 Ohm and 16 Ohm speakers in mono mode, or a 4 Ohm cab and 16 Ohm cab in stereo mode.

In bridged mode, a total of 1,000 Watts is available using 8 Ohms and 650 Watts at 16 Ohms. That amount of power should suffice for even the loudest gig and it remains pristine, with very low noise levels all the way up. Two internal fans keep things cool and run quietly in the background. If you're going to be using the unit in a studio it's worth considering that Matrix also make a 2u version that runs so quietly that the fans are barely audible at all and sells for the same price. The GT1000FX also features power-on protection circuitry ensuring that there are no deafening pops or thuds as you switch on, even at full power, and ensures the amplifier is protected from loudspeaker short circuits and mis-wiring.

Independent level controls are included for each channel and a four row LED panel ensures that you can see which mode you're in, from the front of the unit. At only 3.7kg the weight to power ratio is fantastic, giving you an eminently portable package that will fit in a small rack case or hand luggage if flying. Paired with the Axe FX II preamp that we used for our video review, you could house both units in a 3u rack, which is easily transportable by one person.

To test the GT1000FX we paired it with a Fractal Audio Axe FX II modelling pre-amp and used it in stereo 325 Watt mode with a pair of passive, full-range 8 Ohm wedges. The Axe FX II is a very high spec pre-amp with professional ins and outs and superb modelled tones



Matrix GT1000FX Power Amp

[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

so would prove a good test for the Matrix technology.

I must admit I was blown away by both the tone on offer and the feel and response of this combination. The GT1000FX matched the Axe FX II perfectly and in a blindfold test I'd never have known I was using a digital and solid-state pairing. Matrix has managed to achieve a very impressive level of dynamic response and clarity in the GT1000FX whilst retaining a valve-like warmth of character and punch that never reveals the downsides that many feel exist in solid-state circuitry. To have such superb amplification available that doesn't over-colour or diminish the tone of your preamp at this weight and price point is fantastic for guitarists at all levels. Those not requiring quite so much power can opt for the lower powered and even more budget friendly GT800FX, which features the same high specs but at a lower power rating.

If you're after a power amp that is built like a tank and will give you a true representation of your beloved pre-amp set-up, without the hassle and cost of valve based systems, you'd be unwise to ignore the Matrix GT1000FX. The only hassle (if you can call it that) is that you have to buy them direct from the manufacturer at www.matrixguitaramplification.com. There are two upsides to this, however. The first is that somehow Matrix seems to have found a magic carpet shipping service because their prices for international delivery are very reasonable and the second is that the amps themselves don't incur extra margins for retailers and distributors, so they seem very well priced for the high quality on offer.

The Matrix GT1000FX was a real find for us - a great product at a great price - and we are looking forward to trying more Matrix products in the future.



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THE IMPERIAL
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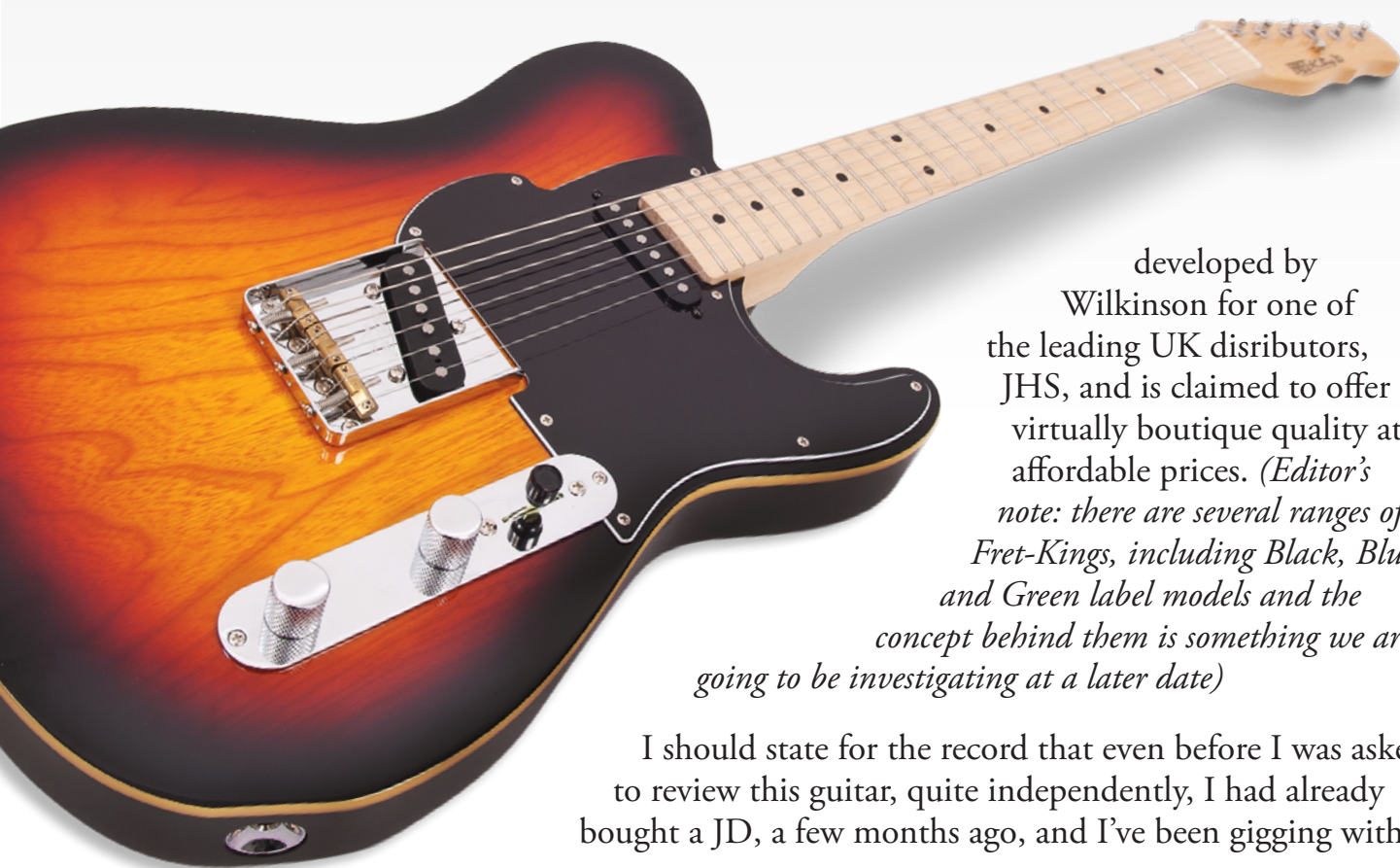


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Fret King Black Label Jerry Donahue

What happens when top US Telecaster wielder Jerry Donahue gets together with top UK guitar designer Trev Wilkinson? The answer is the Fret-King Black Label JD. We asked our own Country Boy, **Lee Hodgson**, to investigate. Only to find out he'd beaten us to it...

The Fret-King Black Label JD is the culmination of a project between American mind-bending string bender Jerry Donahue and renowned British guitar guru Trev Wilkinson. Jerry's objective was to somehow combine the best aspects of three of the most iconic guitars in a single instrument. This has been achieved, quite successfully I can confirm, thanks to Jerry's well-known obsession with tone, allied to Trev's enviable know-how. The JD has the honour of being the first model in Fret-King's Black Label range - a line of guitars



developed by
Wilkinson for one of
the leading UK distributors,
JHS, and is claimed to offer
virtually boutique quality at
affordable prices. *(Editor's
note: there are several ranges of
Fret-Kings, including Black, Blue
and Green label models and the
concept behind them is something we are
going to be investigating at a later date)*

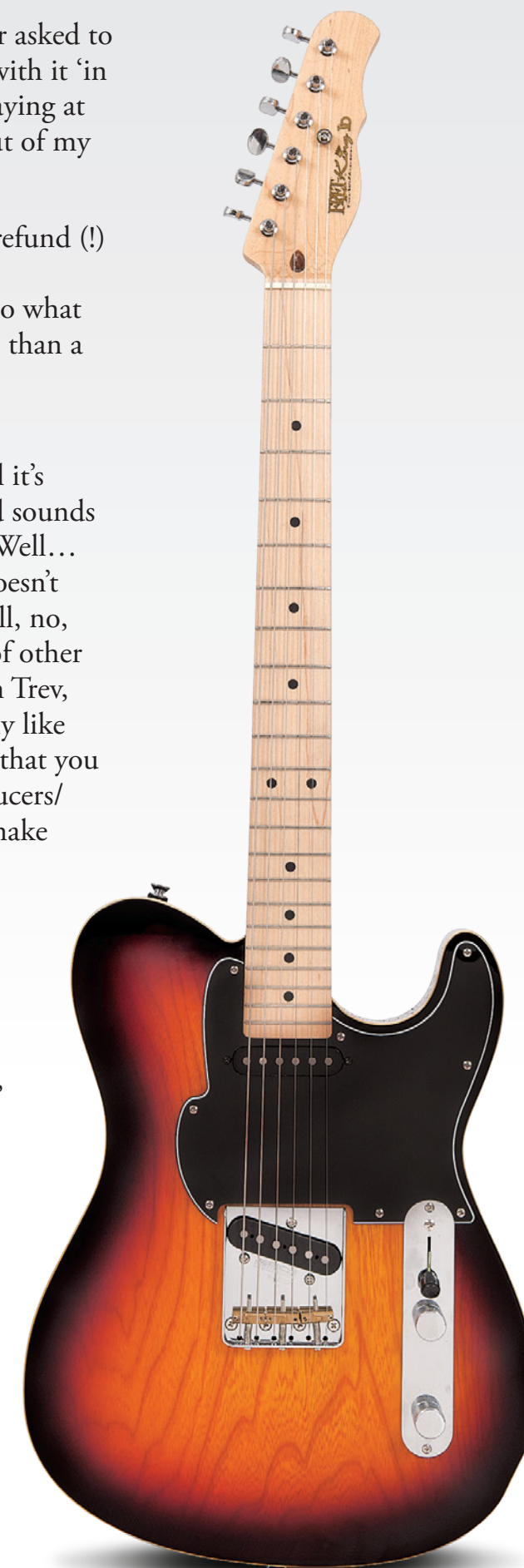
I should state for the record that even before I was asked to review this guitar, quite independently, I had already bought a JD, a few months ago, and I've been gigging with

it ever since. It was an amusing coincidence that I was later asked to review one - but at least I had some hard won experience with it 'in action'! To be clear, the natural finish guitar you see me playing at first in the video demo is my own instrument - paid for out of my own pocket of course!

As I already have one and didn't rush to take it back for a refund (!) you can guess that I'm not going to give this a bad review. It's a fabulous guitar, designed for real gigging musicians, so what follows is more of a tour round how it performs in real life than a traditional 'is it good or bad?' review.

I must start by saying that I've never gone for a signature instrument before. So why the change of heart/mind? Well it's simply that this is a very versatile guitar that plays well and sounds great in a wide variety of applications. Review over? Er... Well... Um... OK, I wanted something different. But hang on, doesn't the JD claim to sound like all other guitars combined? Well, no, that would be ridiculous, but what it does do is remind you of other guitars and in a rather unique way. I'm sure Jerry, and even Trev, wouldn't be offended if I stated that it doesn't sound exactly like guitars X, Y and Z but that it gets close enough to sounds that you may be fond of and, more importantly perhaps, that producers/bandleaders expect; and, in a creative sense, it will surely make you play a certain way. Imagine Steve Cropper playing some in-the-pocket double stops and the JD will take you there. Then again, imagine Clapton or Hendrix playing the Blues or whatever and the JD will send you in that direction. Thinking along those lines, adding overdrive or distortion is your prerogative and the JD works well in this respect - it's not just a country picker's axe! Mind you, I can feel some hybrid-picking coming on...

Of course you'd expect a guitar such as the JD to twang with the best of them and it sure does! The bridge pickup in particular has been carefully designed to produce a gutsy, sustaining sound - using a compressor helps but is not an absolute requirement I can assure you (see my later comments about using a compressor with the JD.) Note that Jerry specified symmetrically staggered pole pieces for the bridge pickup. Then there's the "special" circuit that the Trev added for the mixed pickup combination, which is a little brighter than you'd expect and apparently exactly what Jerry wanted.



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

There's also that unusual choice of pickup in the neck position: Jerry loves a Tele-style guitar but has always preferred the neck pickup of a Strat.

The really cool – or should I say warm? – thing about the JD is that, with the five-way switch in position two (one notch down from fully up according to Fret-King nomenclature), the guitar instantly produces a full-bodied Jazz guitar tone! As I say on the video, I really do appreciate being able to twang away in a Country hoe-down one moment (using the bridge pickup), or a Duane Eddy-style low note run (using the neck pickup, position one, whilst picking near the bridge), then quickly having to deal with a Western swing-style tune that needs a more rounded, less sharp sound, and finding the JD delivers just that in an instant! Still, I have to be honest and say that

the 'in between' 'quack' tone (position four on the five-way) is an acquired taste. To be fair though, it does suit some songs or parts perfectly. Moreover, Jerry is adamant that positions two and four of a "standard three-pickup guitar" (*he means a Strat - Ed*) often get lost in the mix: he knows from experience that this is the case. On a professional level it's also good to know that using position three, i.e. both pickups combined, in phase, the guitar operates in humbucking mode with all the noise-rejection you'd accordingly expect. Sometimes that really does matter. So why doesn't Jerry specify humbuckers in the first place? If you have to ask...

While on technical matters, I should also report that, what with the volume pot having a treble-bleed capacitor across it - and I'm certain that it does - then you have to accept that if you choose to use a compressor, and if



the compression ratio is set high (especially with a low threshold setting) then turning the guitar's volume down, even a long way, still produces a quite loud, bright sound. This is not a design fault. It's merely a technical issue that I've encountered myself and bothering me as it does occasionally, I would simply not use a compressor. (I gig and record variously with a modern modelling device that offers, amongst other things, compression, as well as a valve/tube amp, which I prefer to use 'pure', although I do sometimes add studio quality FX in parallel). Still talking tone, I can imagine that Jerry and Trev probably did their sound designing and auditioning using a high quality valve/tube amp, which likely has wonderful sustaining properties of its own.

I used my JD guitar with 9's on it for a term of teaching and it was good: it plunked and popped nicely and was easy to play. But when I gigged with it, with a live drummer (*bashus extinctus*), it did not project at all well. So I changed to 10's for the video review and used the guitar for a few gigs soon thereafter and I can report that projection was resumed! (I use 11-58 on my Fret-King Corona but I know Jerry doesn't like heavy strings).

So what about a compromise? I'd never tried a .0095 gauge set before so I was curious as to how it'd work out on the JD.

Well then, I've just done a couple of gigs using this particular "half gauge" and I can report that things are just as you'd expect: there's a little more firmness and power than you get when using 9s, without losing much in the way of pliability. This might appeal to you in terms of player comfort (string bending, especially behind the nut, is a delight!). Still, if you are working with a live drummer then I'd say 10s are the way to go. I'm even going to try hybrid 10-52 for some rockier gigs that I have coming up, where a solid bottom end is desirable - I should add that the .044 on the bottom of that 9.5 set goes noticeably sharp when you hit it hard (yes, I know the physics but still...). So, tone being important of course, you'll need to consider how hard you play and in what style and band context. I'll say it one last time: the 11-58's that I use on another Fret-King guitar are extra solid and help me punch through the mix for sure.

In conclusion? Having already said that I bought one and I love it, I'm not going to do anything other than say it's a great guitar, am I? So what I've tried to do is discuss some of the features and aspects that you may find if/when you buy one for yourself. Only you can decide that but you'd be missing the chance of owning a fabulous, versatile, guitar at a great price if you don't try one!



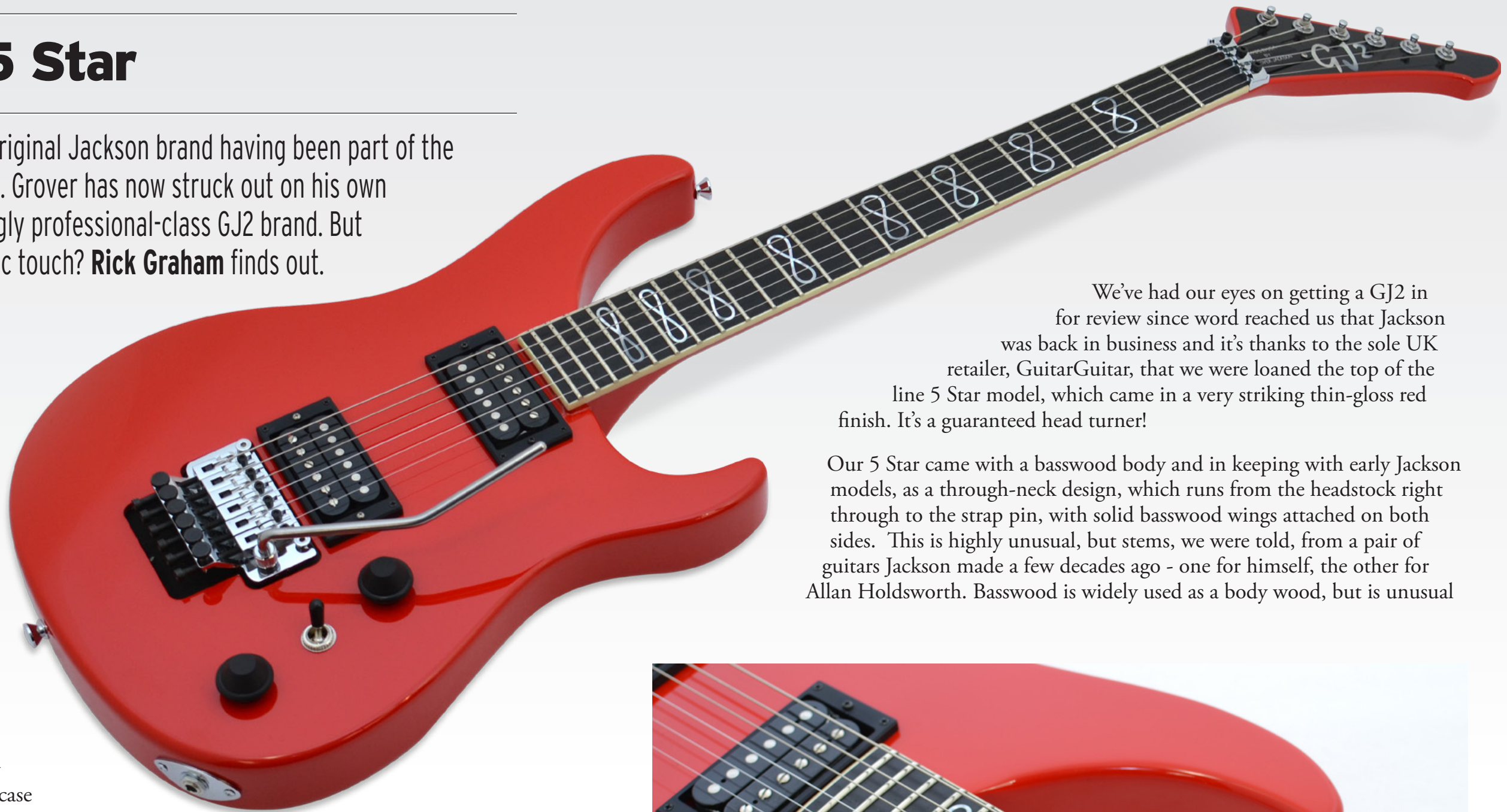
Fret King Review

GJ2 Arete 5 Star

Grover Jackson is back! The original Jackson brand having been part of the Fender empire for some years. Grover has now struck out on his own once more with the reassuringly professional-class GJ2 brand. But does he still possess the magic touch? **Rick Graham** finds out.

GJ2 guitars is a new brand which has none other than the mighty Grover Jackson at the helm. Grover achieved considerable success during the '80s with his innovative designs for his own brands, Charvel and a little later, Jackson guitars. His designs were so popular that they found their way into the hands of some of the biggest name players of the time including Jeff Beck, Steve Vai, Allan Holdsworth and Randy Rhoads. Not a bad list, is it?

The première GJ2 model currently in production is the 'Arete' and in case you're wondering where that name comes from, apparently it's a word of Greek origin that can be translated as 'excellence in all things'. The Arete model comes in two forms; the 4 Star and the 5 Star, both of which are available with a choice of options ranging from different body woods right through to fret sizes and inlays. A premium hard shell case in a stunning light blue colour along with a strap and a certificate of authenticity complete the rather impressive GJ2 package.



We've had our eyes on getting a GJ2 in for review since word reached us that Jackson was back in business and it's thanks to the sole UK retailer, GuitarGuitar, that we were loaned the top of the line 5 Star model, which came in a very striking thin-gloss red finish. It's a guaranteed head turner!

Our 5 Star came with a basswood body and in keeping with early Jackson models, as a through-neck design, which runs from the headstock right through to the strap pin, with solid basswood wings attached on both sides. This is highly unusual, but stems, we were told, from a pair of guitars Jackson made a few decades ago - one for himself, the other for Allan Holdsworth. Basswood is widely used as a body wood, but is unusual



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



for a neck. However, despite not being prettily figured (which is why it is usually painted) it is incredibly stable and Jackson said the neck on his basswood sample didn't move at all over many years. Hence the decision to put an all-basswood model into production.

This Arete is fitted with dual humbuckers as standard - GJ's own 'Habanaro' pickups. These vintage voiced pickups are controllable via a three-way toggle switch. The bridge comes in the form of an all original, genuine top-spec Floyd Rose with a locking nut.

It is worth noting that almost all of the parts for the guitar are made in house at the GJ2 factory in California and even that includes the pickup rings and the ergonomically designed volume and tone controls. This is anything but a 'parts bin' guitar and that sort of attention to detail really shows.

Ebony is the wood of choice for the fingerboard which has a gorgeous ivoroid binding and on our review model we had the beautifully designed infinity logo fret markers which is an optional extra and looks fantastic.

The headstock, although very similar to the iconic Jackson headstock, is a classy design and with the addition of the ebony cap and the beautifully finished mother of pearl GJ2 logo, again cut in-house at the GJ2 factory, finishing-off what is a truly stunning-looking guitar.

Unamplified, which, for me, is always a simple but very effective test for electric guitars, the Arete 5 Star sounded bright and responsive not to mention, extremely resonant. It's a very light instrument too, thanks to the all basswood construction.

Amplified, the guitar sounded even more impressive! Even though the pickups weren't

as high output as I was expecting, they were certainly capable of producing some stunning tones and made a formidable match with the guitar's basswood body. Words simply can't do justice to the quality of this instrument, so watch the video and hear for yourself how good it is!

Whether going for a more cutting Rock sound with the bridge, or a smooth creamy lead tone with the neck pickup, the GJ2 performed with class. The only little niggle for me was the position of the pickup selector switch. I did find it a little awkward to access at times.

Playability wise, this guitar would be very hard to beat and to be honest it's not surprising as that was a hugely important aspect of GJ's early custom builds, especially as these guitars were geared toward the shredder.

Perhaps surprisingly, we frequently come across set-up issues with review guitars but this was perfectly set-up with perfect intonation. Very impressive indeed!

To sum-up, this guitar comes at quite a price and there is some pretty stiff competition out there among high-end brands. However, there's no doubt that the GJ2 is a superb instrument and for the right player who realises you have to pay for this sort of exquisite quality, then price really isn't the issue. A top-end guitar built by a master will always be expensive and what you have to do is decide which of them is the one for you. If this is your style of instrument, then a GJ2 simply has to be on your shortlist.

Our thanks to GuitarGuitar for the loan of this instrument - www.guitarguitar.co.uk



JMI 10

What connects Billy Gibbons, Noel Gallagher and the Beatles? And when is a classic British valve amp a lot more than it seems? All this and more is revealed as **Rick Graham** unwraps the enigmatic JMI 10.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that the subject of this review is missing a familiar name on its grille cloth. JMI? Who are JMI? And doesn't this look an awful lot like a Vox? Let me enlighten you.

JMI amplification was set up in 1997 by the team that these days owns the venerable HiWatt brand. Well versed in the vintage market, they knew there was a tremendous demand for old-school effects pedals (notably of the original Vox Tonebender type, in all its many incarnations) as well and genuine hand-wired amps of the original Vox style. Vox, owned after many ups and downs in a tortured business history, by Korg, had gone off in its own direction, so the idea was hatched to buy the defunct JMI brand name and make amps that accurately replicated the original Dartford-built amps created by the fabled Tom Jennings and his even more fabled engineer, Dick Denney. JMI had originally folded in 1968 but we're not going to go too deeply into the history here as this is neither the time nor the place. Also, because our editor says he doesn't like having to deal with lawyers!

Suffice it to say, that JMI amps are

exclusively handbuilt in Yorkshire, available around the world, and with the exception of not having that famous name on the logo, are more or less what you would have played through if you were a young John Lennon or George Harrison in the early 1960s - not to mention Noel Gallagher and Billy Gibbons all these many years later!

For this review JMI provided us with a JMI 10 model, which is based on the original AC10. This amp is essentially a 10 Watt, two channel combo loaded with twin Celestion Vintage 10 Speakers. As you would expect it is a valve/tube amp and has three bottles in the front: an ECF82, an EF86 and an ECC83, and two EL84s in the power amp.

The control layout is nice and simple and consists of: Tone, Normal volume, Volume, Speed and Amplitude (the latter three controlling the vibrato channel section) as well as two inputs per channel, each of which provides low and high impedance. These channels can be bridged, enabling you to gain access to both channels which can then be changed using the supplied footswitch, which is hardwired. The amp's vinyl covering comes in a choice of two colours Black or



Fawn but our pictures show it in a stunning green, which is one of many custom options.

In action, the first noticeable thing is that it is very loud indeed. Don't let the size of this amp put you off, it really can push some air. The clean sound is superb. Even at low volume it is always very big and with the use of the tone control can take you from a very bright jangly clean tone right through to a robust, thick Jazz type tone without breaking a sweat. Turn up the volume and you'll be hitting classic Rock territory in no time. To be honest, it's hard to crank a classic amp like

this and bash-out opening chords to Free's Alright Now without feeling some sort of nostalgia, even if it you weren't around then! The Vibrato channel of the amp is equally impressive, offering a wide variety of settings for you to explore and delivering it with a sonic quality just like the original it was inspired by.

In short, this is a superb amplifier with a superb sound. It is clear that JMI is a company that is thriving on the inspiration left behind by Dick Denney and Tom Jennings and there's no doubt that JMI

[...>]

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

enthusiasts will find lots to revel in here. A player wedded to the modern style, wanting channel gains, effects loops and the rest could find himself wondering what all the fuss is about but the key is in your ears. If pure tone is what you are after, then this has it in spades. There is just no questioning the quality of sound that the JMI 10 can produce.



JMI 10

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Fractal Audio AXE FX II

Fractal Audio's original Axe FX modelling pre-amp and processor was so groundbreaking that it created its own cultural following that included high-profile users from Steve Vai to John Petrucci. It became the desirable product that everyone aspired to own. With the Axe FX II, Fractal claims to have bettered their original design. Can they have achieved the seemingly impossible? **Tom Quayle** finds out. And loses his mind in the process...!

If you've never heard of Fractal Audio and the Axe FX pre-amp/processor then where have you been over the last few years? One of the most successful product releases in recent memory, the Axe FX was originally released in two forms: the Standard and Ultra models. Used by many famous players, these two models have now been superseded by the new Axe FX II model, claimed to be far more powerful, with a whole new set of features and sounding better in every respect.

The Axe FX II is basically a very high-end digital modelling pre-amp and effects unit with dual DSP chips for incredible amounts of processing power. The first DSP chip powers all of the amp modelling and the second is dedicated to FX. Featuring hundreds of new amp and cab models, the unit uses Fractal's all-new G2 modelling technology to model pre-amp and power amp tubes in impressive detail. New 'Virtual Vacuum Tube' technology creates a dynamic model of a vacuum tube for realism, complexity and response, matching

the real deal, and the G2 technology also models the entire power amp including the tubes, transformers, choke, filter caps and more. This level of complexity allows for the most impressive modelled tones I have ever experienced, with amp models sounding and reacting just like the real thing.

The modelled cabs are all based around Impulse Response technology (IRs) - essentially a sample of an actual cab and mic combination stored in an onboard file. IRs allow for far more realistic cab sounds that are identical to the real thing and since the cab is such a huge component of any guitar tone, getting this right is essential for modelled tones. The Axe FX II even allows you to create IRs of your own cab/mic combinations, using the onboard Cab IR capture utility. Being able to capture the tone of your own cab and use it anywhere, be it studio or stage, is a fantastic addition and works superbly in practice. To complement the IR capture function the Axe FX II also has a Tone Matching feature, allowing the



unit to match a preset to a reference signal from a mic or recording. This allows you to match your sound to your favourite artist, simply by playing their tone into the unit!

You can basically think of the Axe FX II as being a modeller hooked up to a studio level FX processor, as the unit includes a whole array of superb quality effects built-in. Amp models and effects are arranged in blocks on the edit page and can be arranged in any order you like, with up to four signal paths at once. The level of control on offer for each effect and amp model is obscene as every parameter imaginable can be edited with precision and ease. This is a tweaker's delight and it would be impossible to exhaust the possibilities. Effects on offer include: Overdrive, Distortion, Fuzz, Wah, Whammy, Chorus, Flanger, Phaser, Tremolo, Univibe, Delay, Reverb, Harmonizer, EQ, Compression - and this is only scratching the surface as each effect type has a large number of sub-models on tap, to allow for even more creative expression. In use, the effects sound incredibly pristine and realistic - this really is as good as it gets and the sheer number of options on offer is mind-blowing.

To add even further control, the Axe FX II includes what Fractal calls 'Modifiers'. These modifiers are controllers that can be mapped to many of the parameters for amp and cab models or effects. Two LFO (Low Frequency Oscillators) and two ADSR (Attack, Decay,

Sustain and Release) curves are included, allowing you to create time-based changes to effects or amps and parameters which can be mapped to a huge array of external controllers such as expression pedals, switches or continuous rotary controls, including the four rotary 'ABCD' quick controllers that are on the front panel of the unit.

Fractal also makes a dedicated controller called the MFC-101 (for which there is now a dedicated input on the back of the Axe FX) for direct control over all the available parameters. In use, these modifiers allow you to create sounds that are totally unique to the Axe FX and allow for a huge amount of creativity, inspiring you to look for the next new sound.

Onboard ins and outs have been vastly upgraded from the original unit, with professional-grade, balanced and digital s/pdif and AES in and outs. A dedicated headphone out (missing from the original unit) is very useful and allows for superb practice tones late at night. The unit can be used direct into a desk, soundcard or PA, into a power amp and monitors/guitar cab, into the FX return of an existing amp or direct into the front of a guitar amp. The greater processing power even allows for combinations of set-ups or multiple configurations at the same time, allowing you to run a signal into your amp whilst

[...>]

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

having a different configuration running to your in-ear monitors on stage. This sonic and logistical flexibility make the Axe FC II very attractive for the gigging musician, as well as the recording artist.

Onboard USB connectivity allows the Axe FX II to act as a soundcard with two inputs and four outputs, sending audio direct to your DAW for recording as well as the dry signal for re-amping at a later point. MIDI is also sent via USB, allowing the unit to be controlled via a DAW or by Fractal's impressive, free, computer-based editor – Axe Edit. This software makes editing patches even easier with a great and well thought-out visual interface allowing you to develop new sounds in a very practical way. Patches can be saved to your hard drive for future uploading to the Axe Fx II, or saved from the Axe Fx to your computer for future editing. The Axe FX

II also includes an on-board back-up utility via a flash ROM, so if you lose all of your patches mid-gig you can recover them without needing your computer. It would seem that Fractal truly have thought of everything!

One of the greatest aspects of the Axe Fx II is Fractal's dedication to firmware updates. The original Axe Fx was updated over 11 times during its lifetime and the Axe Fx II has already been updated a number of times since release. I was lucky enough to get my hands on the beta release of the latest update for the review and the new drive pedals and other features on offer were very impressive.

In use the Axe FX II sounds incredible, with easy patch editing, even at the deepest level. Creating patches from scratch is as simple as selecting your amp model and cab, adding effects and then getting creative

with modifiers. The possibilities are literally endless. The modelling is phenomenal and has reached the stage where it is almost impossible to tell the difference between modelling and real tube amps. Just watch the video review to hear examples of what's on offer. We were lucky enough to borrow Matrix amplification's demo Axe FX II for this review, which they use to show-off their fine power amp to the best advantage (see our Matrix review in this issue) and together they really do make a superb combination. To have all of this power, flexibility and control in one rack unit is insane and I am seriously tempted to drop all of my other gear in favour of this unit - it really is that impressive! (*steady-on, old boy! Ed*)

No doubt this is an extremely expensive piece of kit, but to buy all of the amps, cabs and effects to get this level of flexibility would cost an absurd amount of money, so in fact you certainly get what you pay for here. With the added attraction and excitement of future updates from Fractal and a support network of dedicated users and developers exchanging sounds and patches, the Axe Fx II might just be the most exciting guitar product out there right now. Amazing - congratulations Fractal!

Our thanks to Matrix amplification for the loan of their demo model and to Fractal for the help.



Fractal Audio AXE FX II Part 1



Fractal Audio AXE FX II Part 2

Ernie Ball Musicman Reflex Game Changer

Sterling Ball has called the Game Changer one of the biggest developments in the electric guitar since Leo Fender created the five-way selector switch on a Strat! The Game Changer could certainly change the way we look at guitar electronics. Our resident Musicman expert, **Jamie Humphries**, is well placed to explain the system as he is a regular demonstrator. As Jamie is a Musicman endorser, we are awarding no rating on this unique iGuitar demonstration.

I've been playing a Reflex guitar for quite sometime now, the Reflex starting life as the 25th Anniversary Model. The Reflex is essentially a larger bodied Axis - a single cut design which started its life back at the end of the '80s, beginning of the '90s as the EVH Signature model. The slightly bigger bodied Reflex features a chambered basswood body with a mahogany tone block running through the middle of the guitar, where the pickups and bridge are mounted. The body includes a comfort cut where the picking arm rests, as well as a belly cut on the back.

There are various different pickup configurations available, as well as the piezo acoustic bridge option. The Reflex/Game Changer that I have as my demo guitar features an HSH pickup configuration, and includes custom DiMarzio pickups. The bridge is a vintage tremolo system, which comes set against the body from the factory. I have mine set-up so there is a whole tone pull-up on the G string.

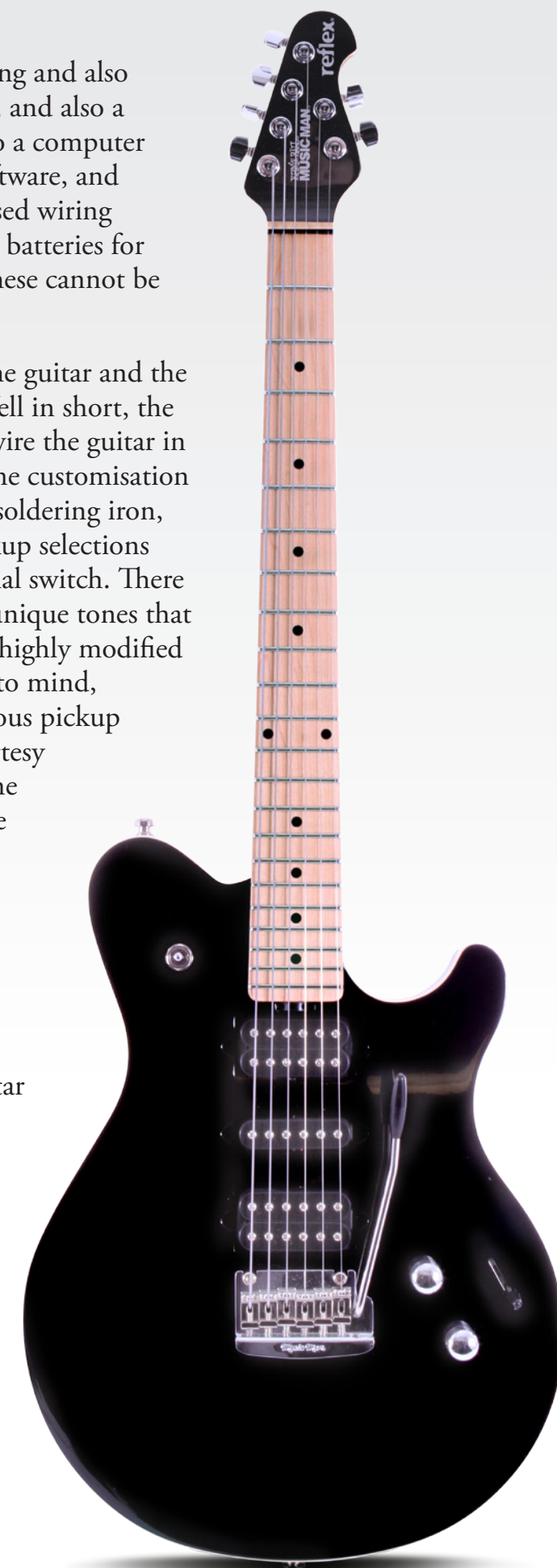
Musicman guitar's normally have very small dot inlays, but for this guitar have opted for the bigger, more traditional, style dots. The neck and board are maple, with a 25-1/2" scale length, and a 12" neck radius, with a satin oiled finish. The fingerboard includes 22 high profile medium width frets, which feel great for bend and vibrato. The signature four and two headstock design features a black finish, matching the body and the design of the head stock results in straight string pull, meaning much more stable tuning.

Now on to the revolutionary stuff! At first appear the Musicman appears to have the regular controls you'd expect. At the lower part of the body we have a volume control, which when pushed acts as a save button, a single tone control, which is a push pull and acts as bank A, when down, and bank B when pulled up. There is also a five way selector switch, and on the top horn we have a momentary three way toggle switch which is the preset bank Z. As well as the regular

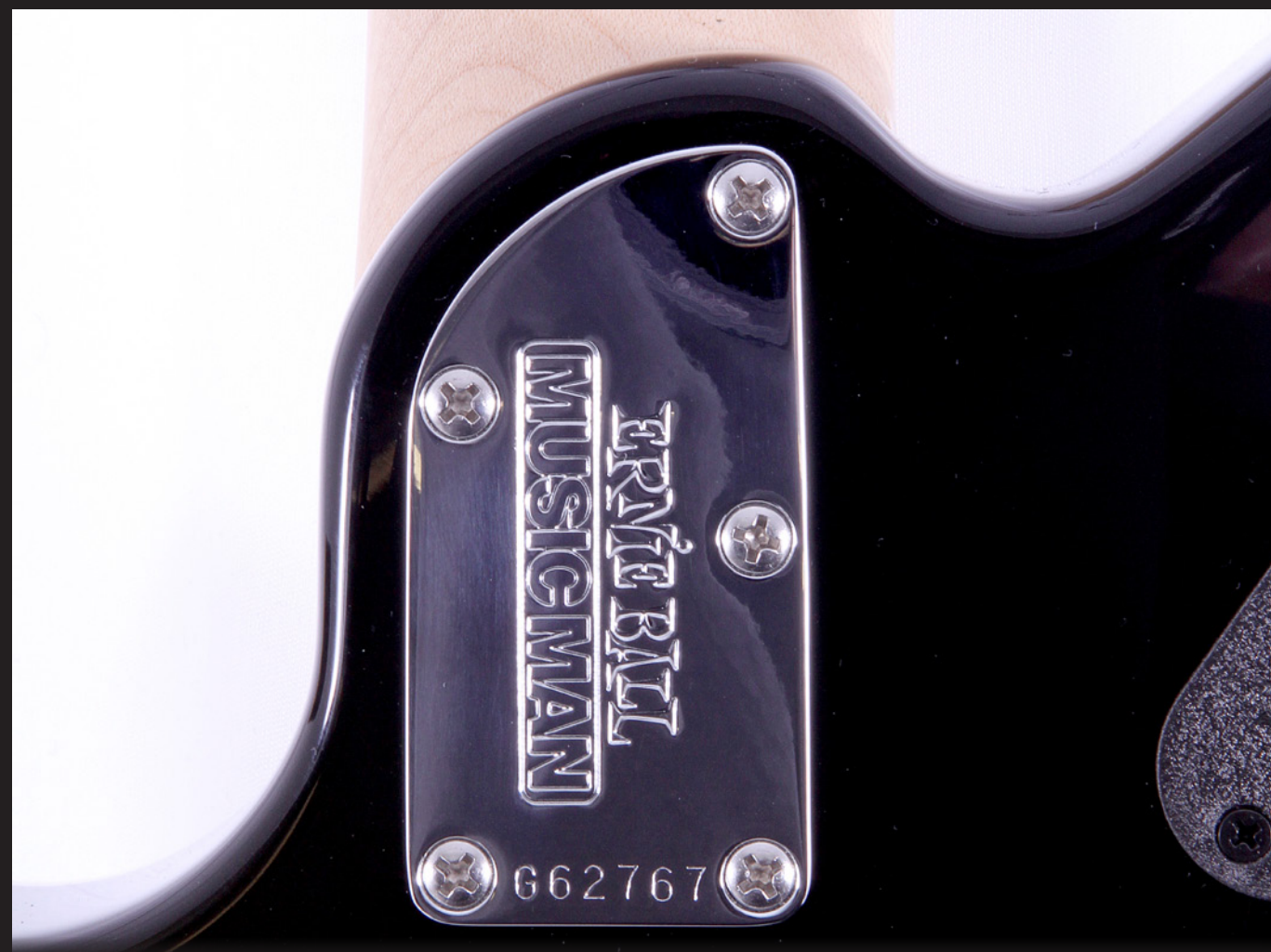
1/4" jack, there is a MIDI-in that enables editing and also pickup selection via a MIDI controller board, and also a USB that enables you to connect the guitar to a computer for deep editing, using the online browser software, and also for loading a variety of user and artist based wiring configurations. The guitar does take three AA batteries for power when connecting to a computer and these cannot be recharged when the USB is plugged in.

So now that I have run through the spec of the guitar and the controls, what exactly is a Game Changer? Well in short, the idea of the Game Changer is that you can rewire the guitar in ways that have only been possible with extreme customisation to a guitar, including rewiring with a regular soldering iron, and either sacrificing some of the regular pickup selections found on a five way, or by adding an additional switch. There are many guitarists who are known for their unique tones that were produced by their either home made or highly modified guitars. Brian May is one player who springs to mind, with his Red Special, which is capable of various pickup configurations, either in or out of phase, courtesy of the six switches on the guitar. Another is the original Steve Morse Telecaster, which became the Steve Morse Musicman we looked at in iGuitar Issue 9. Again, this guitar is able to produce a variety of tones that you could not achieve with a regular guitar. But what if you were able to achieve these tones, plus literally millions more with one instrument?

Basically, the regular five way switch on a guitar is what the guitar designer decided were the most versatile sounds he wanted to make available and without modification those are the only choices you have when you buy a new guitar. What the Game Changer does is, effectively, let you rewire and store different wiring configurations, as well as the more standard configurations, and recall them on a gig/session with just the guitar controls that I outlined in the spec. You can wire in series, or parallel, in and out of phase, and you can also wire from different points of the pickup.



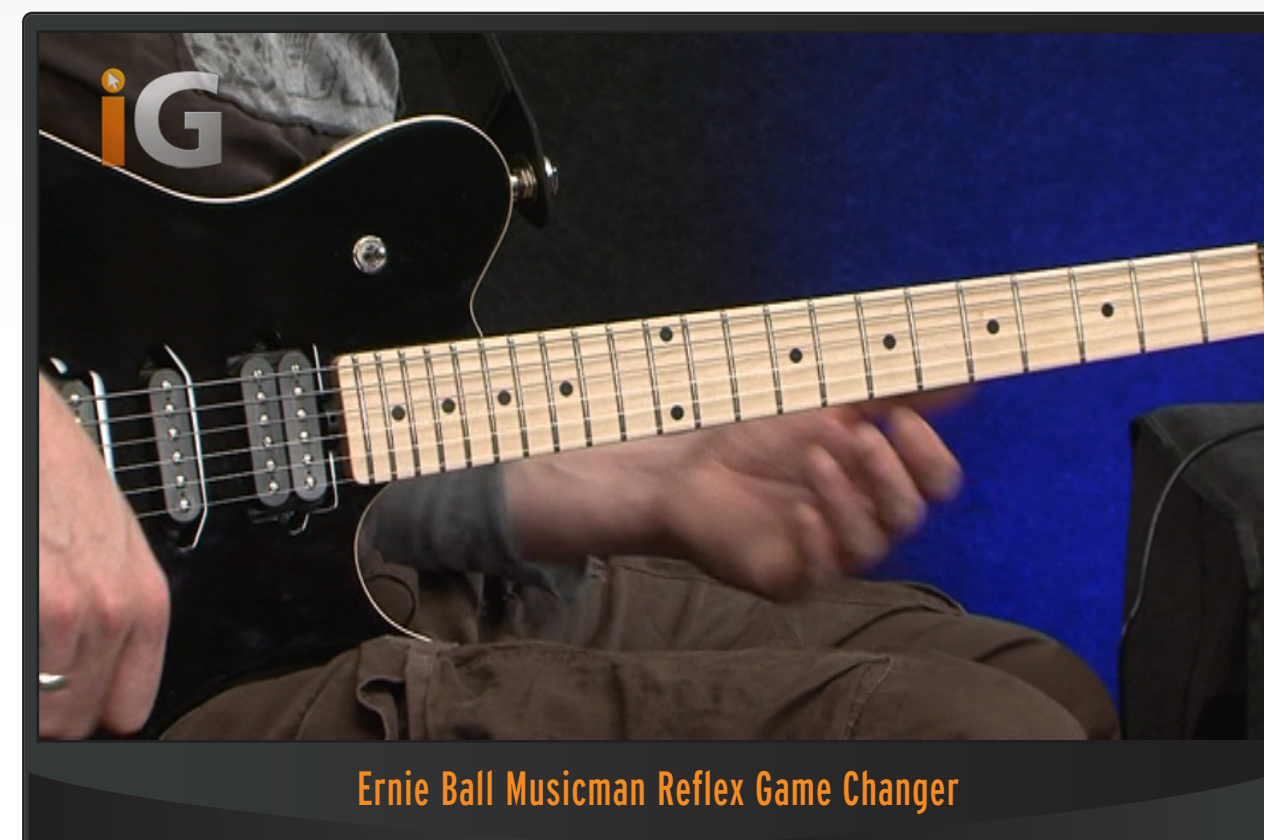
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There are two main ways of programming the configurations, by either using the guitar itself, or by running it with a computer. When programming on the guitar, you simply choose a desired preset tone using bank Z switch, then push and hold down the volume control on the guitar until it mutes. Then select either bank A or B, and then set the five way lever switch to the location where you want the sound to be, hold the volume control again and the tone is saved; it really is that simple. I have my guitar set-up so that bank A is as I would expect an HSH guitar to appear on a five way, and then bank B contains more custom sounds.

The other way is to use the computer program, which works by simply connecting the guitar to a computer with a USB cable.

By using the program it is possible to simply click on the pickups and have them change configuration for you, either splitting so you can use individual coils, running them in series or parallel, or simply in and out of phase. The other way of using the program is to use the grid, which enables you to wire different coils, and also have them in series, parallel, and also in or out of phase, but by using the grid you can get into much more intricate wiring possibilities. To really get a full understanding of this make sure you watch our demo video. Also with in the program there are libraries, where you can store your own sounds, share sounds with the online community and also load user sounds from the likes of Steve Lukather, John Petrucci and Blues Saraceno.

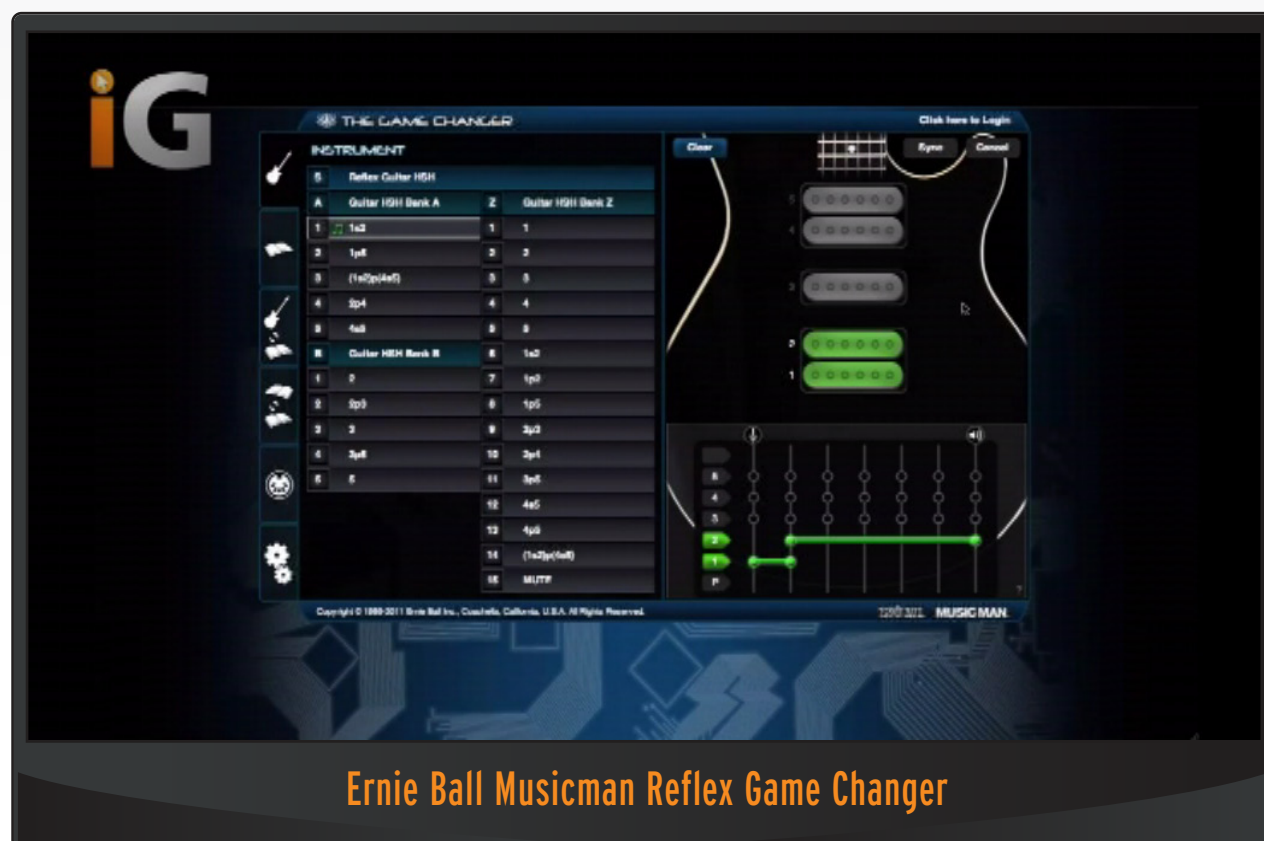


Ernie Ball Musicman Reflex Game Changer

[...>]

To many people the thought of all of these options, and connecting the guitar to a computer may seem too much. I have also had people quoting the Line 6 guitar to me in conversations about Game Changer but it's very important to realise that this is not a digital guitar. It is like a regular guitar that uses the computer to access countless options, but the guitar and pickups remain those of a normal analogue guitar. As regards to the learning curve, it does not take long to get your head around, plus with the various options of storing and programming configurations you can start with the basics, using the guitar presets, gain an understanding of the instrument and then work up to full blown grid programming.

I realise I could be accused of bias here as I am a Musicman endorser and product specialist, but we have consciously opted not to make this a review - more an explanation of a system by someone who knows how it works. So, no star rating, just make up your own mind from the video and, of course, trying one in a guitar shop! I can honestly say I have waited two years for this guitar. For my work at Lick Library and iGuitar, this is going to be such a valuable tool for being able to nail any tone I want. Also for a gigging guitarist, or the studio musician, it's a very powerful addition to your guitar arsenal. I couldn't be without one now!



Peavey Butcher 100w Head

Peavey has carved out a great reputation for its high quality Rock and Metal amps. Does the brand new Peavey Butcher 100 tube head keep the Meridian Masters ahead of the pack? Power chords at the ready, **Tom Quayle** checks it out!

Having produced some of the most iconic Rock and Metal amps, a new top-end Peavey head is an exciting prospect. With a healthy reputation for crushing tones and great construction, I was very optimistic when I unpacked this substantial Peavey Butcher head and plugged it into our 4x12 studio cab.

The Butcher is an American made tube amp, featuring independent clean and crunch channels and an array of controls for shaping your tone, provided by five 12AX7 preamp tubes and four EL34 power tubes. Each channel has independent three band EQ controls with volume and gain with a global presence dial for shaping the top end frequencies. Both channels feature a switchable pre-gain boost for adding in more filth with the crunch channel also sporting a 12-segment 'punch' control that allows you to shape the low-end response to your taste or requirements. Two switchable master volumes allow you to dial-in your normal volume level plus a solo boost and since they are post-gain you'll just get louder without affecting your tone.

Round the back of the amp you'll find an active effects loop with send and return

controls allowing you to match the loop to rack or pedal based effects. Next door is the footswitch in and Peavey's microphone emulated MSDI output for plugging the head direct into a desk for recording or live use. The MSDI tone can be dialled in for bright, normal or dark settings, giving you control over the high frequencies in your signal. The amp can take 4, 8 or 16 Ohm cab configurations with dual speaker outputs and can be switched to half power mode (50 Watts) using the power switch on the back. 4, 8 and 16 Ohm cabs can be used in either power mode using a selector switch.

The Butcher feels very well constructed and is reassuringly heavy, weighing in at just under 25kg. Obviously, that's not light but what 100 Watt valve head is? The controls all feel very solid and tight and the general finish and construction is high quality with black tolex covering the chassis and a white inner detail running around the Peavey logo and central fascia. The faceplate is very clean and not cluttered with hundreds of controls like a lot of modern amps. As such, the Butcher is very easy to use and learn, making it simple to dial in tones quickly and efficiently. It won't take you months and months to master this beast.

A solid metal footswitch is included in the package (*good to see that! - Ed*) and connects via a very secure DIN-cable running to the back of the amp with a very long cable run. Channel switching, master volume selection, effects loop on/off and channel boosts can be switched via the footswitch, giving you plenty of control at the front of the stage. We did notice something that may (or may not) bother some users here. During channel changes there seemed to be a slight lag. We went back to Peavey about this and were told that to get fully noiseless operation, the company has decided to use optical switching (Peavey isn't alone in this) but that the lag should not be bothersome and that it was possible we had a faulty sample. Our suggestion would be that you try it for yourself.

The clean channel has a great deal of clean headroom thanks to that 100 Watt rating and can be dirtied-up with higher gain settings and using the pre-gain boost switch. The tones on offer ranged from sparkly and tight with the treble and presence controls in upper positions, to darker, jazzier tones with lots of bottom end and girth.

Dynamically the Butcher is very responsive, tracking pick dynamics well with no muddiness to speak of. It's also very easy to play through and compresses beautifully at higher power amp volumes. The crunch channel is where this amp really excels, and a whole range of low, mid and high gain tones are on offer with a great deal of tonal shaping via the three band EQ, presence and punch controls. This certainly isn't a Metal amp in the manner of the 5150 for example - the gain levels here are more hard Rock than hardcore, but the tones are exceptional and can be pushed even further with a drive or boost pedal. As with the clean channel the crunch tones are dynamic and responsive, cleaning up very nicely by using the guitar's volume control. The punch control works well for dialling-in a tighter and 'punchier' low end, adding more body to smaller cabs or dialling less bottom end for bigger 4x12 configurations. Using the MSDI output yields very realistic tones and makes the amp a viable recording solution without resorting to real mics.



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



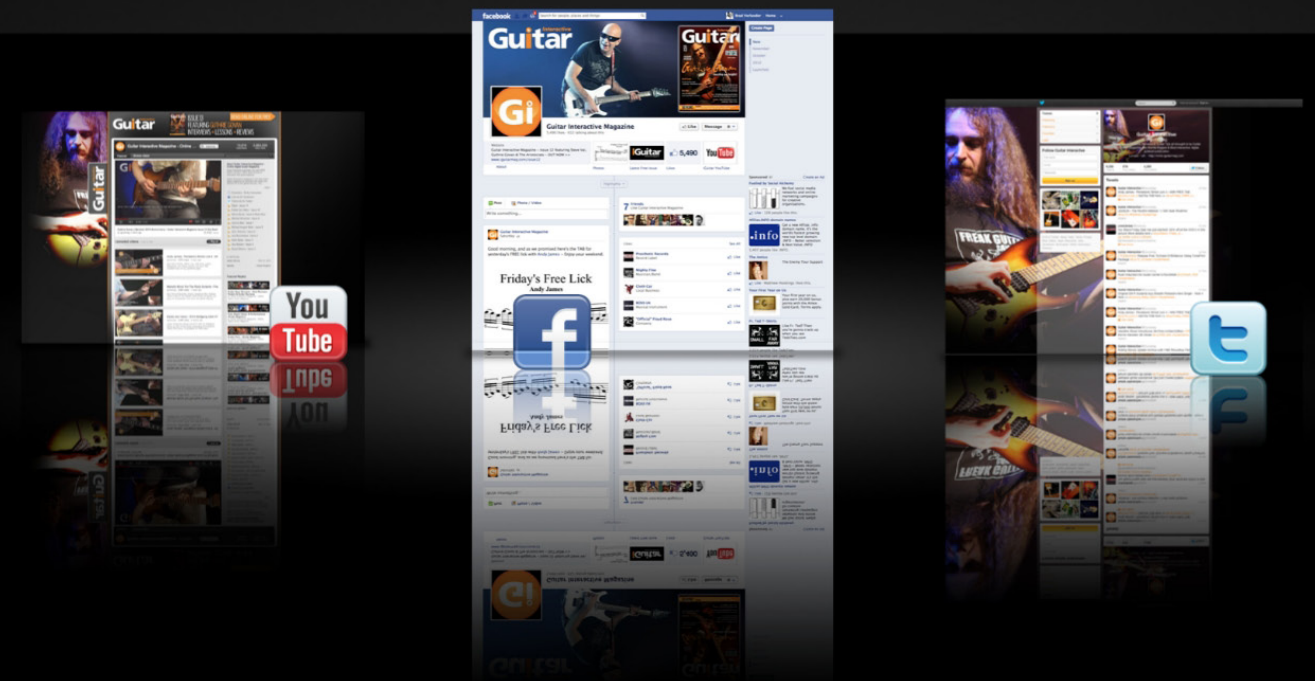
If you play classic or modern Rock and need a great clean channel to compliment your driven tones, then the Peavey Butcher makes for a superb choice. It's versatile, easy to use and well made, but above all it sounds great!



Peavey Butcher 100w Head

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PocketLabWorks iRiffport

As Apple's iOS software and hardware become more and more popular, companies are scrambling for opportunities to create products for guitarists. PocketLabWorks is the latest with a guitar-specific interface for the iPad/Pod/Phone. **Tom Quayle** checks it out...



PocketLabWorks' iRiffPort is a compact audio interface designed to provide guitar players with a high quality connection to their iOS enabled device. The unit is an all in one interface and cable design that plugs into the 30-pin connector at the bottom of your iPhone, iPad or iPod and then into the jack socket of your guitar, providing a direct signal to the application of your choice. Also provided are 3.5mm line out and headphones sockets, the latter being located next to the input jack for your guitar reducing the propensity for the headphones cable getting tangled around your instrument as you play.

The iRiffPort features a solid, moulded-plastic 30-pin connector and 6ft jack cable that feels well made and durable. As with all cables, careful use will ensure longevity but this certainly isn't a cable that you'll be able to fix using a soldering iron. I would have preferred a longer cable as I found myself almost pulling my beloved iPad onto the floor if I turned left or right too far. The 30-pin connector is also very easy to pull out by mistake and could do with a more solid connection if it's to be relied upon in a performance.

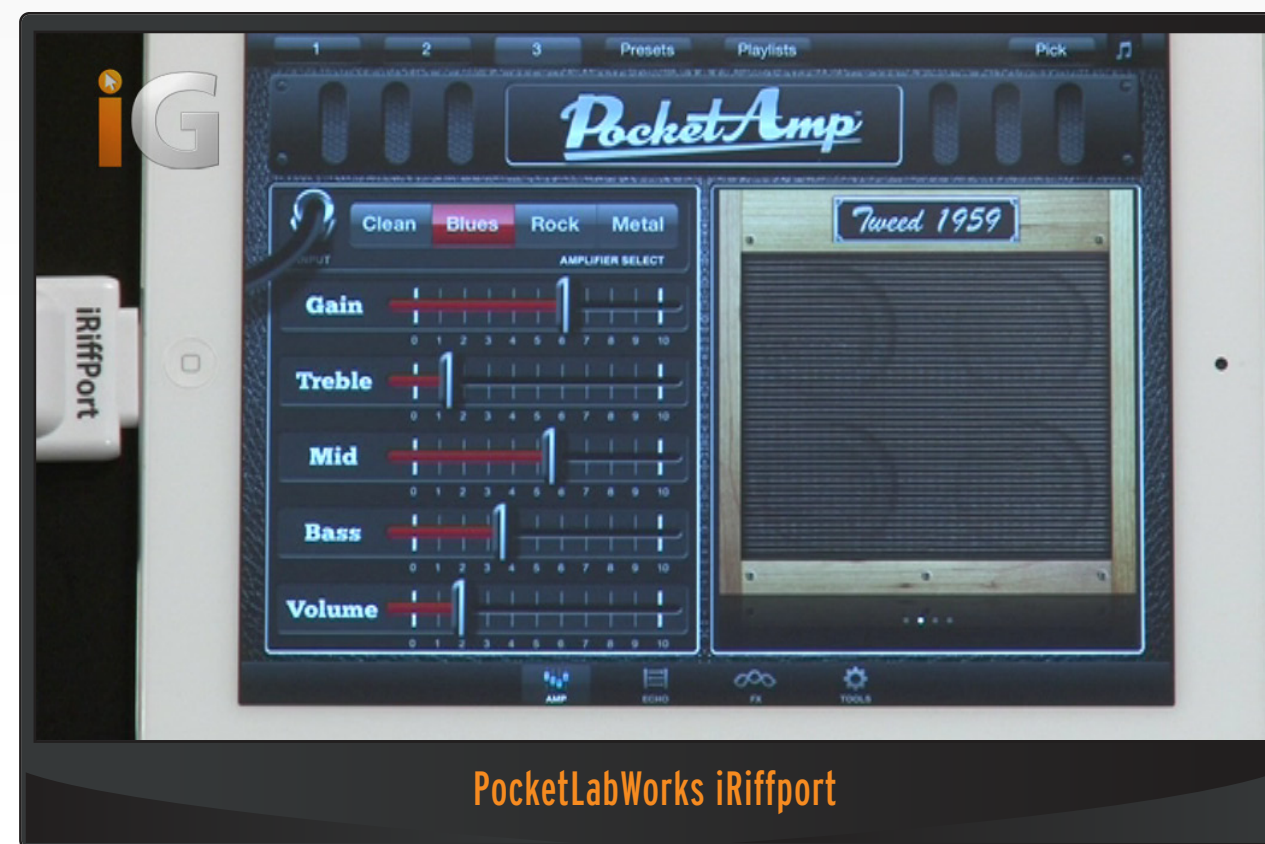
Sound quality was superb, considering the diminutive size of the unit, with no noise or clicks/pops and lots of high end frequencies present. I tested the iRiffPort using PocketLabWorks' own amp simulator Pocket Amp 2 (purchased separately and demonstrated in the accompanying video review) and was pleasantly surprised with some very usable tones ranging from sparkly cleans to aggressive metal tones. All the while the sound remained pristine and



noise free with none of the horrendous feedback issues associated with similar cables that plug into the headphones socket of the iOS device.

One thing to be aware of with any of these devices is their compatibility with apps from the App Store. The iRiffport is not compatible with all the apps that are available, so it's important to check out the compatibility list on PocketLabWorks website before purchasing. The unit worked very well with Apple's Garageband app but was completely incompatible with Amplitube for example, although that may be expected, as IK Multimedia make a similar product of its own.

The ability to use amp simulators, multi-track recorders, high quality tuners and effects processors with great sound quality in such a small, portable and elegant package is very attractive. If they can sort out the connector and compatibility issues then I think this would be an irresistible buy for iOS guitarists.



iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

Blackstar Series One 104 6L6 100watt Head

Low power exotic tube combos may be flavour of the month - but nothing beats a stack when you're looking to make a big impression. **Michael Casswell** sets out to see if he can do just that with Blackstar's mighty Series One 1046L6.

It's always good to get to grips with a Blackstar product and I've been waiting for this one for a while, being a player and user of mostly 6L6 loaded amps. In case you are not sure what I mean by the term 6L6, I refer to my favourite sounding output valve. I do own some EL34 tube amps, but for sheer size and weight of sound, a 6L6 powered amp does it for me. I have found that you really start to hear the difference at stage volumes. When things get a little louder, the British sounding EL34 amp seems to get squashier as you turn up the volume, rather than louder, whereas, a US 6L6 loaded amp will get louder and louder, and still retain definition and clarity. It will also sound huge, and for me, huge is good! I generalize, but in my experience, that's usually how it goes down. I also tend to make full use of effects loops, so a little definition and clarity is exactly what you want when using delays and reverbs.

I did try the original Blackstar Series One which uses EL34's and it's a good sounding amp. It has that British grind that you associate with classic Rock, and I am sure for most players, it's just what the doctor ordered, but for me, it lacked a little of that low-end 'thump' that I look for. I knew it was just down to my preference in output tubes, so I was keen to check out this 6L6 version!

In my time I have used the original Peavey 5150, Soldano, Boogie, Rivera and Fender amps, and I'm currently running a couple of early '90s 6L6 loaded Marshalls, so I sort of know the qualities that make a good musical amp, rather than something that is loud, but a bit characterless. This amp is certainly loud, and a lot of the character will come from you as a player and your guitar choice. I chose my 2006 custom shop Beck Strat, loaded with Fender noiseless pickups (not as good as the old Lace Sensors) for the review, and the Blackstar certainly did kick out some great characterful tones.

Channel 1 is supposed to give a Marshall Plexi-type clean, and this and Channel 2 have a little push switch to give an option on the sound. The push switch boosted the top and bottom on Channel 1, and warmed it up nicely, but to me it was a little lifeless by itself. Kicking in a few pedals soon made this channel sing and zing. A compressor worked perfectly with this channel for some great splangs and chimes and a Fulltone Fulldrive 2, delivered a lovely traditional Blues tone. This is pretty much exactly what I want from a clean channel, because those in the know will either use a little compression, or a good loud pedal, to get the best from any clean channel on any amp.

Channel 2 is a good crunch channel. It's nice for chord work and dynamic playing via your guitar volume pot. Push the little button in, and you get more gain, which thickens the mids. Again, you can push this channel by kicking in a comp or overdrive, which I did, and it gave great response from the amp, giving bags of sustain and tone, whilst keeping the character of my Strat.

Channels 3 and 4 are the full-on drive channels. Channel 4 takes over where Channel 3 leaves off and both gave a thick, fat tone, which kept the definition at the front of the note. When it comes to saturation, you need to hear the pick attack and the front of the note, and all was good on both these channels. If you were going to use pedals in front of either, it would only be to manipulate and massage the sound. You wouldn't need more gain, but by backing the gain down on the amp, and pushing the channel with some choice stomp boxes, a whole new world opens up if you are chasing a sound in your head. In effect you have four channels, but two of those channels you can also tweak with those little push buttons. You get the footswitch to take you through the four channels.



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC 

I'm glad the amp has a series effects loop, because I use volume and expression pedals live, and to do this, I need a series loop. Just for fun, I stuck a cheap Boss reverb in the loop and left it on for the whole demo. Reverb is best when it's felt rather than heard, and I think it added to the overall vibe well. There's the usual +4/-10 level setting to accommodate for most units, and it all was just how I want it.

Added to all this, you also get a great speaker emulated output, MIDI switching, a resonance control, dynamic power reduction (DPR), and two 'Infinite Shape Feature' pots (ISF), which basically means you can take it anywhere from 100watts down to 10watts, or make sound a little more 'British' or 'American', as Blackstar puts it.

For me, personally, Blackstar has really got it right this time. As the range has grown they've produced an amp for just about everyone and it seems they have finally made the perfect amp for me. If you were someone who wasn't quite sure about the EL34 powered version, try this. It's excellent. I may have to buy one!



Blackstar Series One 104 6L6 100watt Head Review



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THE BASSMENT

Gallien-Krueger has become established as one of the most significant bass amp brands - particularly at the high-tech end of the market. Dan Veall, our resident dungeonmaster, has been itching to get his hands on one of G-K's products since we opened The Bassment and in this issue he finally got his chance with one of the new and much-talked about MB 800s.

Professional gear is all well and good but it's important to remember that beginners need good gear too - in some ways even more so as a poor product can put a would-be musician off for life. That was why we were keen to sample two quite affordable products from Warwick - a Rockbass Streamer and a 40 Watt

combo. Low cost gear doesn't have to be cheap and nasty (though it can be!) so we asked Dan to give these two a serious thrashing to see how they will stand up to the demands of a beginner pushing them as far as they can go.

Finally, we're back in effects country again with a second pedal from 3Leaf - this time with the company's Proton. Bass effects are growing in importance and this is an area we intend to keep a close eye on in the future.

Remember that we're always keen to hear your suggestions about what you'd like us to look at. Just email your suggestions to editor@iguitarmag.com

Gary Cooper - Editor



3 LEAF AUDIO PROTON ENVELOPE FILTER

Dan Veall was so carried away with 3Leaf's GR2 (reviewed in issue 9) that we gave him another from the Seattle wonders, just to watch his little red eyes light-up with joy!

After the fun I had with 3Leaf's GR2 in our previous issue I've been given another of the company's envelope filters to try this time, but this one based on another legend of the Funk world. I'm pretty sure 1970s Funk and Soul music wouldn't be the same without this characteristic sound. A bit of Bootsy anyone? Stevie Wonder and Jerry Garcia, amongst others, also helped make the Mu-

Tron III envelope filter famous. Mu-Tron's beast of a pedal was another that ate up pedal board real estate and didn't make life easy for guitarists, as it needed its own special power supply (and a suitcase to house it in!). Spencer Doren of 3Leaf Audio has taken the design of the Mu-Tron and in his view improved it, as well as treated it to a serious diet. Once again, he has managed to squeeze

a beast of a box in to a small case. In fact, this time it's even smaller than the GR2 Groove Regulator.

The fewer controls of the Proton in comparison to the GR2 certainly does not mean there is any less flexibility in terms of available sounds, though. In fact, the Proton, like the GR2, is packed with useful and epically funky sounds!

I feel the sign of a great boutique pedal designer is to know what features are needed and useful while not 'over-cooking' things unnecessarily with too many bells and whistles. This could also be said about great amplifier manufacturers. Cluttered knob layouts lead to confusion. Most bass players like to keep things relatively simple, I think, and for that reason the Proton will be welcomed with open wallets - simplicity, ease of use and overall great sounds!

Like the GR2, the top left control is the 'sensitivity' but on this model it is labelled Gain instead. I think I



GR2 Envelope Filter Review

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



[...>]

Having both of these pedals in at the same time for review was pretty exciting and I am pleased to report that they delivered signature funky tones

prefer that as a name as it is controlling the level in to the filter circuit. Too low a level and the filter won't affect the signal. The Proton doesn't have the attack and decay controls of the Groove Regulator, however adjusting the Gain control does affect those functions as you advance the knob clockwise. Experimentation is needed to find that point on the dial that nails the sound you are after. Again, like the GR2, switching to a bass with a different output level may mean that you'll need to readjust this control.

To the right hand side is the Peak knob - this could be described as the effect resonance, or the 'depth' of the effect. I found that lower settings were subtle and much higher settings delivered an effect that would cut through any band mix. In some cases a few ear drums too! I'm sure this would have sounded fantastic daisy-chained with a distortion pedal connected after it (placing a distortion pedal after a pedal that relies on signal dynamics instead of before will ensure a stronger effect from the dynamic pedal. Distortion pedals compress the dynamic range on higher gain settings so if placed

before can mean that the dynamic effect is subdued.)


Three switches below the two knobs include: Range, which controls the frequency range of the filter sweep – great for using with either bass or guitar, you can switch to the range that has the strongest effect or indeed, whichever you prefer! Moving on to the range switch, which again, like the GR2, toggles between a band pass mode that focuses the effect more aggressively in a specific region but loses low end. Or there is the low pass mode that allows low frequencies through the pedal as well so that the signal remains full. There's nothing worse than disappearing from a mix, swallowed up by the volume of other instruments when your low end disappears! The last switch on the front panel reverses the direction of the sweep effect. 3Leaf Audio suggests raising the gain control a little to make the effect more pronounced.

Having both of these pedals in at the same time for review was pretty exciting and I am pleased to report that they delivered signature funky tones. It was easy to get great sounds and I feel that even a novice to envelope filters would be grooving very quickly with either of these models.

Which one is for you? Well watch the video here and check-out iGuitar 9 to hear the GR2! To me, both are fine boutique pedals and which you choose will depend on your ears!



Our thanks to Bass Direct for the loan of this product. www.bassdirect.co.uk



"The Stetsbar is very special. Having used virtually all the 'bars on the market' - beginning with Bigsby in the 60s - all I can tell you is that Stetsbar is the very finest I have encountered. I installed one on my custom-built BJ & Byrne and am so delighted that I am now having one fitted onto one of my favourite 1963 Stratocasters. The design is totally unique. Eric Stets has invented a completely revolutionary system that not only keeps tune superbly, it also treats the strings with a gentleness that I feel will keep them sounding 'live' longer. Then there's its gorgeous looks... I rate it a five out of five." Elliott Randall Steeley Dan's premier guitarist www.elliott-randall.com

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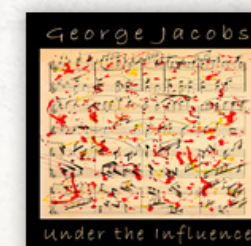
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WARWICK BC40 COMBO

Life isn't all about 1000 Watt Class D heads - even for **Dan Veall!** We opened the Bassment door, chucked a Warwick 40 Watt combo into his lair and waited for the howls of outrage....

Germany's Warwick is not only well known for its wide range of basses but also for powerful and flexible amplification. In both markets it covers everything from professional to beginner level products and in this issue we are looking at one of a range of current Warwick combos that are designed specifically for the needs of either those looking to buy their first amplifier, or a home practice amplifier. Indeed, Warwick markets this range of combos to include teachers needing dual inputs to share with students and make use of the additional MP3 audio input, as well as for 'backstage warm up/ tune up' amplification - so they are quite clear about their intended buyers.

The combos in this specification range include the BC20, BC40 and larger BC80. If you need a bigger or more powerful combo with more features, then there are two additional models in the BC range: the BC150 that features a 150W amplifier and an effects loop (like the BC80) and auxiliary level control and the even larger BC300.

Warwick's BC40 is a step up from the baby of the pack, the 20 Watt BC20, and would do nicely for beginners who are starting to play with other musicians, who need a reasonably priced combo to get started with. I myself teach a local Rock school and have found that guitar amplifiers purchased by the students are usually of the 30 Watt

'modelling amplifier' variety, while the kids on bass usually have a combo between 30-60 Watts. So this amplifier, or its larger brother, would fit the bill nicely.

The front panel layout of the BC40 is simple, straightforward and uncluttered. The controls are functional and ideal for those who wish to just plug-in and get a good sound with the minimum amount of fuss. Warwick makes a point of advertising that the BC combos have been designed to achieve the best sound possible, employing the use of 'A Class' preamp topology for a pure signal path and a power stage that doesn't use a fan for cooling, so that background noise is kept to a minimum. The power amplifier module and its heatsink can actually be seen behind the bass port on the front of the cabinet. Cooling of the amplifier is aided by the flow of air through the port as the speaker moves back and forth. For an amplifier of this low power, this method is sufficient to keep things cool and running safely.

Tonally, the 10" Warwick bass speaker and 2" tweeter translate the tone of your instrument amicably and the addition of the port at the bottom of the cabinet adds to an amount of low end girth as the amplifier is turned up. Moderate volume was easily attainable and we found no reason to criticise the combo at all. It gets the job done and well.



[...>]

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

A curious inclusion at first look on the BC20, BC40 and BC80 is the use of a 'figure of eight' power plug and socket on the rear of the combo (in the UK - this may be different elsewhere). I'd expected to see a more usual IEC connector on the rear, or indeed a 'hard wired cable' at this price. Warwick has a point though: a lot of consumer goods don't need an earth wire (or earth pin on the plug) due to the way that they are insulated. Warwick has taken this method and brought it to these three combos. A positive side effect of this is that with no earth wire plugging in to the mains outlet, there is less chance of noisy 'earth loops' and other mains borne noise being picked up by the combo. Clever thinking. It does mean though, you'll need to make sure you don't lose the cable - you might not find another laying about at a rehearsal space!

There are a few more features on board the BC40 that help it stand-out in comparison to some other combos in the same product bracket. For example, it boasts a 'dynamic limiter' that is said to be an improvement over standard amplifier limiting devices, because it actually senses when the amplifier is being pushed into distortion, instead of setting a nominal threshold level for a standard type limiter to kick-in. Warwick advertises this as meaning that this 40 Watt combo can be louder than an equivalent competitor unit. We were unable to test this in the studio, but can certainly confirm that it seemed to deliver a pretty good volume for such a small cabinet and power rating.

Finally, we were pleased to see two very handy connections for rehearsal, practice and learning: the inclusion of an MP3/CD input and headphone output.



Both are stereo, making silent practice a joy as you'll be able to mix your bass sound into stereo headphones.

The BC40 doesn't feature all the bells and whistles of a modern modelling combo, nor is it pretending to be some boutique 'must have' valve amplifier. It is however dead easy to use and presents you with exactly what you want to hear: unadulterated bass tone that sounds full and clear. It's brilliant for those who don't need lots of effects and for those who just want to 'plug and play'.

I like the sloped front of the tough metal grill, which is very pleasing to the eye. Check out the full specification to go with this review and enjoy the sounds in the video.

In summation, this is a great little combo from Warwick, playing to strengths of simplicity and tone. Looking around at the obvious competition, it seems reasonably priced, too.



Warwick BC40 Combo

WARWICK ROCKBASS STREAMER LX 4

Warwick has been massive in the bass world for many years and continues to deliver quality goods consistently to the professional and beginner markets alike. Back in 1982, company founder Hans-Peter Wilfer had a vision to create premium instruments offering exotic tonewoods as well as new twists on classic construction. Warwick basses blend ergonomic designs with eye catching and instantly identifiable body outlines.

Oh, and identifiable they are - not just in looks but tonal character too. Warwick attracts major artists for this reason. You only have to look at the impressive list of endorsees - Jack Bruce, Stuart Zender, T.M. Stevens, Jonas Hellborg, Adam Clayton, Robert Trujillo, Bootsy Collins and Steve Bailey to name just a handful.

Not content with providing professional-class instruments, Warwick has gone on to introduce a number of additional product lines, such as its RockBass budget range of which the subject of this review, the Streamer LX.

The premium LX model appeared in Warwick's arsenal in 1996 and has been a favourite amongst Warwick bass players.

This Streamer version, delivers the LX in a more affordable package.

The bolt on maple neck with 'Ekanga' veneers has a nice comfortable rounded feel to it. The veneers make for a tasty 'pin stripe' look down the back of the satin feel neck. Err.. 'Ekanga' Dan? - Well, after a little research I find that this 'wood' is man made and mainly composed of reclaimed wood fibre. As I understand it, Warwick is a very 'green' company and reuses left-over wood as much as possible. This reclaimed product is reformed for use in new instruments and is called Ekanga. So there you have it!

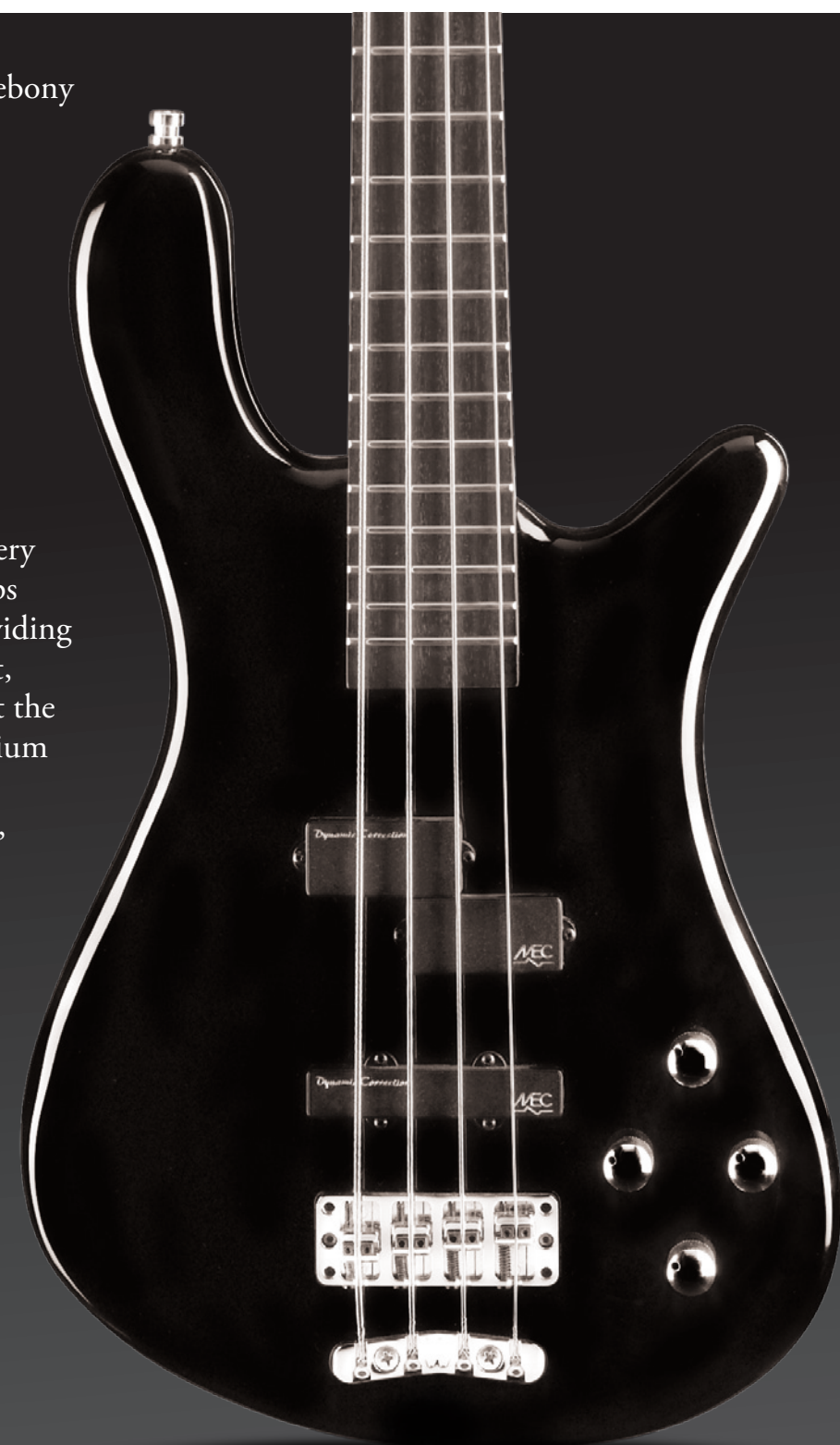
I'd say that it had a fairly 'quick' profile - certainly not a chunky classic P-Bass handful. Very comfortable in fact. I love the glossy black finish - it looks ultra sleek and modern, though it was easy to spot that this finish was part of a cheaper instrument. It wasn't as smooth as it could have been in places. If black isn't your bag though, Warwick makes four, five and left hand models as well as a fretless model available in metallic red and metallic blue high-gloss finishes too. There are no fretless left hand versions. The 24 frets are nicely finished on the rosewood fingerboard. If you go for the

Warwick is one of the giants of bass. **Dan Veall** checks out an affordable entry to this prestigious brand.

fretless version, you'll get a tiger-stripe ebony fingerboard thrown in to the deal too.

On board is a set of passive MEC 'Dynamic Correction' pick ups. Despite a lack of information as to what the 'dynamic correction' feature actually is, I can tell you that the tone of the instrument for the price bracket is actually rather pleasing, as you will hear in the review video. The Volume, Pan, Treble and Bass controls have a smooth sweep to them and we found very usable tones available from both pickups with the help of the active preamp providing the boost and cut EQ. Having said that, although it's a very usable sound, it isn't the same as you would expect from a premium Warwick - then again, what would you expect at this price? This is no criticism, more an observation.

Round the back of the RockBass, I was very pleased to see that the compartment lid could be removed with nothing more than bare fingers. No tools here. - It's actually a patented design by Warwick and is very handy, especially for those who have needed to change a battery five minutes before performing and find all their tools are packed away in their car/truck, or backstage! Interestingly, I was talking to a good friend of mine yesterday



[...>]

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

I have to say that genuinely, this a a good little bass for the money and shouldn't be cast aside from your shopping list if you are looking for a starter instrument or a cheap back up.

who owns a 'boutique' bass. He was genuinely annoyed to find that the battery compartment was secured with four Allen key bolts! I feel your pain Hugh, I really do!

The hardware onboard the 'carolena' wood (also a recycled product, we suspect) bodied bass is of a good quality. It's great to see the Just-A-Nut III nut too - something that has been in place on Rockbass instruments since 2008. I'd actually like to see adjustable nut heights on premium basses. We as bass

players spend a lot of time looking for the perfect action and neck relief combination for our instruments but the nut seldom gets touched. Adjustment is a one-way journey. If you have to file the nut, you can't return it back to it's original 'setting' unless you replace it. With the Just-A-Nut, it's easy to lift the height or lower it for optimal playing position. In tandem with the nice, chunky two-part Warwick bridge that is a mainstay of their instruments, string changes and adjustments are a breeze. I'd expect to see a

long life from the bridge pieces and Warwick tuners. Finally looking at the hardware, Warwick fits its own strap locks to RockBass instruments too. You're unlikely to see this on other budget instruments and it's a very welcome addition.

Playability of the instrument is good across the whole of the neck, though I have to say I'd have personally liked to have seen the action on this example lower. As I mentioned in my video, I've played other models from the RockBass line that had a great low action, so I expect the set-up here isn't typical. Tonally there's a good strong definition to individual notes acoustically on the instrument's 34" scale length.

I have to say that genuinely, this a a good little bass for the money and shouldn't be cast aside from your shopping list if you are looking for a starter instrument or a cheap back up. I'm very lucky in that all the basses that have made it to review have all been good ones and this I think this would be a sensible choice for the budget conscious among us.



Warwick Rockbass Streamer LX 4



GALLIEN KRUEGER MB800

As the race to make the loudest and the lightest bass amp shows no sign of abating, US maker Gallien-Krueger makes a bid for the 'best in class' award. **Dan Veall** looks very thoughtful...



The last couple of years have seen a real step up in the output power of bass amplifiers. They seem to be getting smaller and smaller too. Recently we have reviewed the TC Electronic RH750 and the Ampeg PF350 (that is also available in a 500 Watt version) and enjoyed looking at the Randy Jackson TTE500 from Markbass, yet another company which also brings lightweight and powerful amplification to the table. Amongst the well known manufacturers showing off new kit at this year's NAMM show in Anaheim was Genz-Benz with its updated Shuttle and Streamliner heads, boasting huge D class amplifiers in gigbag sized cases. And then there was Gallien-Krueger's latest - the MB800.

Since hearing via the 'bass playing grapevine' rumours that a higher power version of the Gallien-Krueger MB500 was on the cards, I've been waiting rather patiently to get my grubby paws on one. Like many iGuitar readers, I am very much a musician with those 'gear buying needs' and have read many a comment online, comparing this new head to the others I have mentioned above. The MB800 promises much, so it was with a certain amount of excitement that I finally hauled one down the stairs into the Bassment for what we like to call...a good once over'.

For someone who has a certain penchant for coloured lights, even switching this amplifier on is a joy. On pushing in the power switch, the outer ring changes from a red light to

blue when it is all ready to go. Similarly the mute switch has a ring round it that glows red when engaged and should you clip the input with a signal that is too hot, the ring around the pad switch flickers red too. But there's more on the front panel: the MB800 includes a foot switchable channel function (a simple but very sturdy metal foot switch with integral LED indicator is included in the box for the amplifier along with a standard instrument lead for connecting the two.) On the front panel of the head are two gain controls and a separate level control for the second 'channel'. When the second channel is selected, the blue lit ring on the channel A gain knob changes over to the Gain B knob providing visual notification of the channel change. Incidentally, without a foot switch, channel changes are made by pushing the gain A or gain B buttons in.

Soundwise, those who have already had an opportunity to try this amplifier have suggested it is unmistakably G-K in character. It is punchy in the bottom end with a great clarity that is a little forward without being harsh, they say. I've played through a few G-K heads in my time and I am inclined to agree with that, but there's something about the MB800 that feels more energetic than the other MB heads I've tried. The mid-frequencies are great too. It has a lot of power on tap which almost seemed to burst out of the test cab we were using. This head does include a completely different preamp in comparison to other MB heads though, featuring an all FET design for a 'valve-like' feel. To over-simplify, 'Field Effect Transistor' circuits can be configured in such a way that they have a similar effect on signals to valve circuits, which is pleasing to the ear and the MB800 sounded great

[...>]

iG STAR RATING FOR BOTH ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

**Gallien Krueger MB800**

when the pre-amplifiers were driven towards distortion. That means the 'G-K growl' is very much alive and well here when the gain control is pushed up! Bob Gallien obviously knows this tried and tested method works well and has used the same 'G.I.V.E' (Gate-Induced Valve Effect) design in his FET pre-amps for the last 30 years. I have to say, this amp delivers by the spade and is fast becoming my favourite 'gig bag' sized amplifier - and I've been lucky enough to play through a lot of the current crop of favourites too.

Whilst we were recording the videos, we did notice the sound of the two fans situated on the side of the unit kick in with a fair amount of gusto. You may think of it as a negative point, but I see fan noise as a by-product of the technology used and thus I can easily live with it. Hopefully, you'll be

making use of those huge Watts in a gig where you won't hear too much of that fan noise - it will be masked by those luscious bass tones coming from the superb EQ section!

Speaking of huge Watts, the MB800 also includes a power amplifier limiter that can be disengaged. One of the nice things about the functionality is that when the limiter is not part of the signal path, you will still get indication that the amplifier section is peaking. That's good thinking on the part of G-K, providing constant indication of the amplifier's status.

Also on the front panel, as well as a wonderfully usable and musical four-band EQ section, is a contour control. This allows manipulation of the amplifier response, for example scooping out those mid-frequencies to make the amplifier do a brilliant modern

slap sound. Yes, I am really pleased to say that this amplifier is able to produce a wide range of usable sounds, with very little tweaking. I find that some amplifiers either have an inherent tone that you just can't get rid of, or the EQ section makes it difficult to dial in the sound you want easily. Not so with the MB800. I'd have been happy leaving all controls at 12 o'clock.

Around the back, G-K has managed to cram in even more usable functionality. Two Speakon connectors and the IEC power socket at either end of the shell flank the foot switch socket, effects loop and tuner out socket (for silent tuning). As if that wasn't enough, there is a socket that can be used as

a line-out or headphone connection. A 'mode' switch next to it allows you to choose between the two modes of operation. There is also a D.I. output. Once again take a look at the technical specs for this amplifier. It's great to see so many cool features in a head that will slide nicely in to a 1u rack space or gig bag and weigh just over 2Kg and be powerful enough for pretty much any gig. The tone of this amp is great, the price is very fair. In fact I think we have just found a new review favourite. This is just a brilliant, brilliant amplifier!



THE QUIET ROOM

We've a slightly truncated Quiet Room this issue, due to the non-appearance of one of our intended review subjects, but fear not: plans are afoot for more products, more tuition and more artist interviews over the coming months! Our reviews feature a newcomer from the old world and an established brand from the new. Bob Taylor's fabulous acoustics need absolutely no introduction. They set a benchmark for a new style of acoustic guitar when they were first launched - instruments that players more familiar with electric guitars could easily get to grips with. Since then, Taylor has enhanced its reputation for making not just guitars that are great to play but are among the world's best-sounding. Ever-restless, Taylor regularly tries new ideas and we jumped at the chance to review an early sample of the 700 series, launched earlier this year.

Almost at the other end of the recognition scale are Furch guitars, or Stonebridge as they are known in the English-speaking world. Made in the Czech Republic (a country renowned for its traditional musical instrument making skills) Stonebridge are now quite widely available in North America and the UK as well as in continental Europe and elsewhere and promise traditional handmade quality at production guitar prices.

Add more from those two superb musicians and teachers, Giorgio Serci and Maneli Jamal and that's this issue of the Quiet Room - the part of iGuitar where sanity reigns!



Gary Cooper - Editor

gary@iguitarmag.com

Taylor 710 CE

There's something very traditional - almost plain - about Taylor's new-for-2012 700 series. But don't be fooled by the modest looks of the 710CE. This is a killer guitar, as **Michael Casswell** found out.

Bob Taylor's company makes a bewildering range of acoustic and electric guitar these days but they all seem to have one thing in common. I have played quite a few and now take it for granted that they are all exceptional. I have never come across an average, or just OK one.

Having got that out of the way, they are often very different, so when I was asked to look at one of the recently introduced 700 Series (a 701CE) I had no idea what to expect when I opened the deluxe hardshell case. Visually, it made an immediate impact, because it sported a very nice, deep vintage looking sunburst, which, when it catches the light, glows a very attractive deep dark red. It's really quite old school, which was, apparently, what Taylor was trying to achieve with these dreadnought sized models. You get used to seeing so many Sitka spruce plain tops, it's always good to see something a bit more - dare I say it? - 'old Gibson' looking and the Engelmann spruce certainly helps there. If you want, you can choose cedar as an alternative and if you did you would get, Taylor suggests, a warmer, slightly darker sound, more suited to the needs of fingerstyle players. My advice would be to find a good

Taylor stockist and try both, side by side.

The handsome, not to say restrained and traditional looks of the 710CE, come despite the use of a poly finish. Taylor stopped using nitro finishes in the late '90s, saying it's better for the environment to use a poly finish, which, anyway, protect the guitar better and makes spot repairs easier to carry out. This may be true, but for me, you can't beat what 20 or 30 years of playing does to a nitro cellulose finish. This guitar will look exactly the same as the years go by, because a poly finish is much more resistant to scratching and temperature variation, which is obviously good in many many ways, but my heart often rules my head when it comes to guitars, and I prefer the more labour intensive nitro cellulose path to guitar perfection. Taylor do apply their finishes expertly and very thinly, so the guitar is in no way compromised in resonance and tone. I suppose what I'm saying is this guitar will look pristine for longer and for many (most?) that will be a good thing.

Talking of temperature variation, Taylor guitars have the most stable necks in the business, as far as I'm concerned. Often

you have to be very careful where and how you store your guitar, and an acoustic guitar neck can be very susceptible to temperature change, which can be a problem for a touring musician, but Bob Taylor has developed something called an 'NT' neck. This is basically a way of completely supporting and installing the neck to the body in such a way as to retain complete stability and playing perfection, and still make it easy to adjust. This is a brilliant innovation because even the most expensive, best-made acoustic guitars can be easily compromised by humidity and temperature fluctuation. No neck is completely impervious to the problems of travel, but there's a reason why Taylors are so popular among touring professionals, over and above the sound quality and renowned playability.

As for that playability, this neck is very comfortable and the set-up on our sample was perfect, making it easy to use for most acoustic styles. The fretboard is ebony with 'Heritage Diamond' dot markers and the bridge pins are also ebony, which is a nice touch. The back of the mahogany neck has a satin finish and is joined to the body using a scarf joint.



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC 

[...>]

The back and sides of the dreadnought body are Indian rosewood, which you can also find as a headstock overlay and truss-rod cover. The body has a 'Venetian' cutaway making access to the upper frets easy and the ivoroid binding is another little touch of class that endows this guitar with a traditional feel.

The whole thing exudes a rather restrained class and quality and, let's be frank, it doesn't come cheap. Pricewise, you are looking at a serious outlay, but this is a serious, US-made guitar, made from high quality tonewoods and a great pickup/pre-amp system. A guitar like this will

stay with you, and the price is competitive compared to similar high-end guitars of this quality.

When it comes to sound, Taylor uses various styles of bracing, which allows each series of guitar to be fine-tuned to have its own particular voice and resonance. The 710ce has bracing that is forward shifted to allow maximum resonance, as well as something called a 'relief rout', which is a groove carved along the inside edges of the top to give extra flexibility without sacrificing structural strength. This neat innovation gives extra bass and volume, but with a real balanced tone. Which is





Taylor 710 CE

exactly how the 710ce sounds acoustically. I would almost have to use the phrase 'just right'. If you strum hard, the sound is big, balanced and very detailed. If you play softer, you still get that clarity but with a lovely sweetness to each note. It also sounds fantastic when plugged in. Taylor's on-board 'Expression System' needs little comment. It's revered for natural, rich sounds which just how you want an amplified acoustic tone to sound. I particularly liked the simple volume, bottom, top, controls to fine-tune it. Nice and easy and very hard to go wrong with. We plugged it into the desk, added a little plate reverb, and instantly the sound was glorious.

What can I say about this fabulous guitar, other than that I liked it very much? At this level, you really do need to audition

instruments to make sure you are buying the right one, so if this is the sort of money you are thinking of spending, get yourself to a Taylor dealer and don't be fooled by the 710CE's restrained looks. Despite the dreadnought size, it isn't a big, boomy strummer's guitar (though it can make a powerful enough sound!) because it's also capable of responding to more thoughtful playing, just as well. It may seem a bit over the top to give guitars costing this sort of money that 'extra half' making them four and half star reviews, but we're in a different league here, where a guitar this good, for the person who can afford it, is actually good value for money, as well as a joy to play and listen to.



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Stonebridge DS 20CM

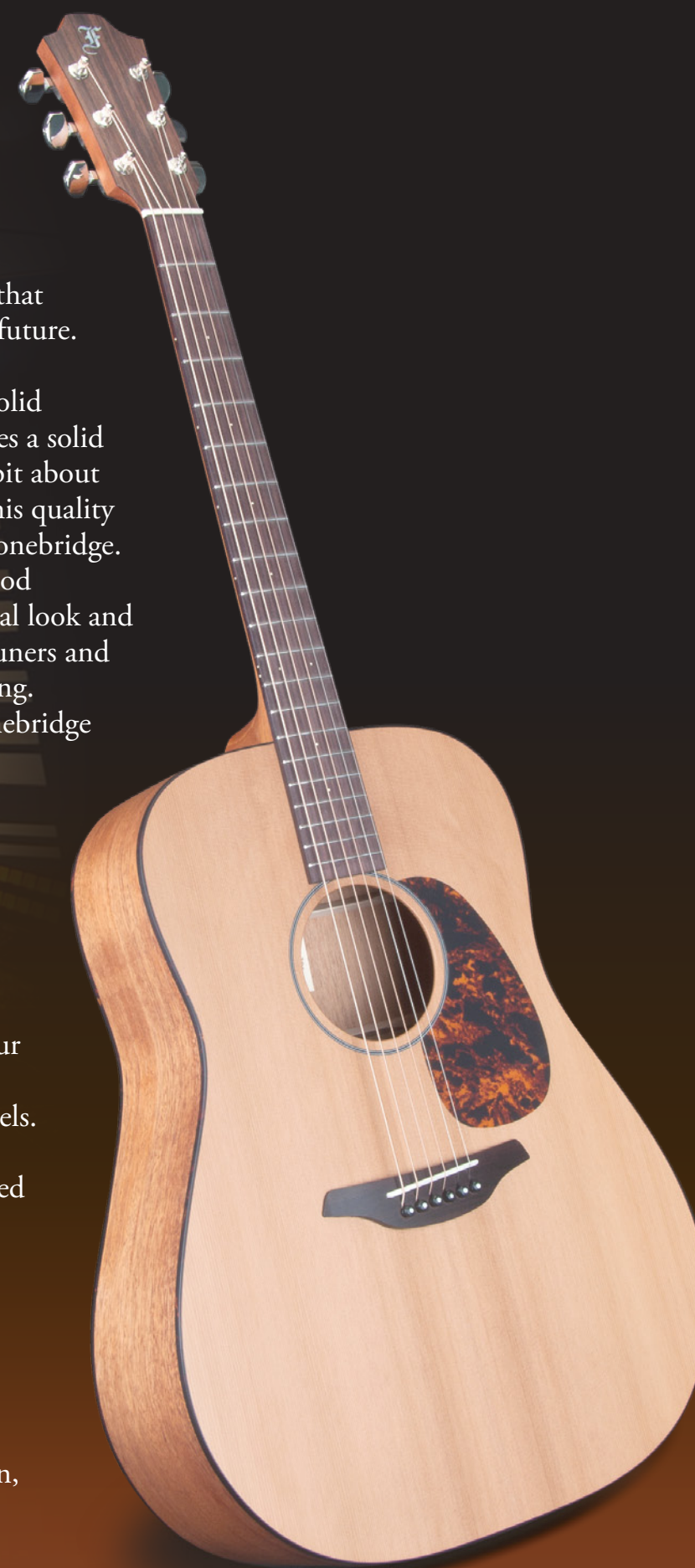
Known in the English-speaking world as Stonebridge, and as Furch throughout Europe, the acoustic guitars made in the Czech Republic by Frantisek Furch have been building a serious following since their launch in 1981. Now available in North America and the UK, will they be able to make themselves heard in such crowded markets? **Tom Quayle** finds out.



I must admit that when I was given the Stonebridge DS-20CM to review, it was a name I'd never heard of and I had no idea what to expect. What a pleasant surprise! I was handed a model called the DS-20 and it turned out to be superbly constructed instrument that really exuded quality and tone. This was a name that I evidently need to remember and one that I'm sure we'll be hearing more about in the future.

The DS-20 on review is constructed using solid mahogany for the back and sides and features a solid cedar top. It's important to remember that bit about 'solid wood' as an all-solid wood guitar of this quality is usually going to sell for more than this Stonebridge. Complementing those tonewoods, a rosewood fingerboard and bridge complete a traditional look and are matched very nicely by Schaller nickel tuners and imitation tortoise shell pickguard and binding. This model is at the cheaper end of the Stonebridge range and as such has a basic but functional look, with no abalone or mother of pearl inlays. It's also bereft of pre-amps or inbuilt microphones. Instead, what you get though is a very well made acoustic that is beautiful in its simplicity and harks back to a simpler era. Of course, should you want bells and whistle they are on offer from Stonebridge as extra cost options - and, as you'll see in our Tech Spec box, there's a very wide range of choices on offer, including left-handed models.

Our dreadnought model in the video featured 20 frets and a cutaway, allowing upper fret access with ease. An open-pore satin finish lets the woods vibrate and breathe naturally and feels very comfortable in the hands. I much prefer the feel of natural wood on an acoustic and this is about as close as you can get whilst retaining some kind of protection long term. Speaking of protection, Stonebridge includes a quality gig bag with this model.



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

The first thing that hits you upon inspection of this guitar is the build quality. The chosen woods, especially the rosewood fretboard, feature a very tight grain pattern and all body and neck joints are flawless. The internal binding is beautifully done with no signs of excess glue or rushed finishing. Fretwork is supremely clean and the headstock, small fingerboard inlays and imitation tortoise binding give the guitar a very classy look. Stonebridge offers the option of a slotted headstock that would enhance this even further.

Our review model was strung with 12-53 gauge Elixir strings and was set-up for a low to medium action, resulting in an easy and engaging playing experience that reacted to each note's attack accurately and dynamically. This would be a great guitar for Bluegrass style flat-picking, or any fingerstyle playing in fact, as notes are well projected and sound strong across



[...>]



its entire range. Strumming is well handled too, as the dynamic range of the guitar allows for an accurate representation of right hand technique and makes you listen more to your attack, resulting in a more musical performance. Tonally, the DS-20 is very even with a tight bottom end and bell-like upper range. The mids are focussed and give an almost 'Hi-Fi' feel to the sound of this guitar with no dead spots or weak areas. If you need to amplify your sound fitting a third party pickup would be very simple and allow you to tailor the amplified tone to your specific needs and tastes.

The acoustic market is very competitive and offers a huge amount of choice for the consumer. Stonebridge is certainly offering something here that gives a value for money that better known brands don't always offer. The DS-20 certainly feels and sounds like a much more expensive guitar with many options available. You can even order a 12-string version if you so desire. So, if you've not heard of Stonebridge guitars, then now's your chance to check them out. If you have heard of them and not tried them yet, then what are you waiting for!



serious guitar

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First Steps In Fingerstyle

Hello there and welcome again to Guitar Interactive's Quiet Room!

Having a Masters Degree in Composition I get asked many times about my approaches to composition, particularly writing for guitar, so I decided to write a short study piece for you to learn and analyse. This will provide a perfect opportunity to discuss a few simple but effective compositional ideas, which hopefully will stimulate your creative self. Let's start!

Composition can be described in a nutshell as the art of choosing and blending notes, organizing these into melodies, harmonies and rhythms, with awareness of structure, dynamics, textures and sense of direction.

Just like a chef would choose the right ingredients for his recipes, using just the right amount of each, the composer will choose scales, modes, harmonies and rhythms with different stylistic connotation. The work is more likely to be purposeful the more the composer understands the inherent quality of his chosen ingredients. In every art, aesthetic quality are as important as purpose, in other words making sure not only the melody, harmony and rhythms are satisfying but the orchestration and the performance have to give justice to the seminal composition, like a chef would know how to beautifully present a dish.

To facilitate composers' choosing task, many road-tested melodic, harmonic and rhythmic templates or clichés can be used. Some of these clichés have been used by our most celebrated predecessors and, no doubt, will be used for many years to come, in order to generate many other magnificent compositions.

The word cliché may carry negative connotations as it implies a repetitive use of an idea, which eventually will become unoriginal. However, in a broader sense, ideas are often recycled simply because these are great ideas. Furthermore, clichés are often seminal ingredients of a composition and definitely an integral part of any language, including the language of music. (This metaphor is incidentally another cliché!)

The first cliché in this tune is the descending chromatic bass line, which has been used by countless composers from Chopin to Led Zeppelin in Stairway To Heaven! Another recurring idea is the use of particular harmonic resolutions or cadences, for example, the interrupted cadence in bar 12-13, and the plagal or amen cadence in bar 24-25. You may want to research these topics for more inspiration and in order to expand your harmonic lexicon.

[...>]



Let's look at the meat-and-potatoes of the piece. It is in $\frac{3}{4}$, 3 beats per bar or in other words, one accent every three beats, and it gravitates around the key of Em (G).

The picking hand pattern is as follows: p and a finger play the outer notes of each chord implied and the i and m finger fill the gap by playing the G and B string on beat 2. This pattern varies slightly to add variety of texture (bar 5, 13 etc), or to accommodate motivic variations (bar 15 etc) as shown in the video and as depicted in the PDF.

Fretting hand nomenclature: i.f. = index;
m.f. = middle f: r.f. = ring f: l.f. = little f.

Bar 1: Beat 1: i.f. on fret 2 of D, l.f. on fret 3 of high E. Beat 2: Open G and B for held for 2 beats.

Bar 2: Beat 1: m.f. on fret 6 of A and l.f. fret 7 of E. Beat 2: i.f. on fret 5 of G. r.f. on fret 7 of B

Bar 3: Beat 1: Open D, m.f. fret 3 of E. Beat 2 open G and B.

Bar 4: Beat 1: r.f. fret 4 of A and open E. Beat 2: i.f. fret 2 of G and open B.

Bar 5: Beat 1: r.f. fret 3 of A and open E. Beat 2: fret 2 of D and open G. Beat 3: fret 1 of B and open E.

[...>]



Bar 6: Beat 1: i.f. fret 2 of A. r.f. fret 3 of B. Beat 2: open D and G.

Bar 7: as bar 5

Bar 8: as bar 6

Bar 9: as bar 5

Bar 10: i.f. fret 2 of A. r.f. fret 3 of B. Beat 2: open D and G and fret 1 of B. Beat 3: open B

Bar 11: Beat 1: r.f. fret 5 of A. l.f. fret 5 of D. i.f. fret 2 of G.

Bar 12: Beat 1: r.f. fret 5 of A. m.f. fret 4 of D. i.f. fret 2 of G.

Bar 13: Beat 1: i.f. on fret 2 of D, l.f. on fret 3 of high E. Beat 2 and 3: Open G and B.

Bar 14: Beat 1: m.f. fret 6 of A and l.f. fret 7 of E. Beat 2: i.f. fret 5 of G. r.f. fret 7 of B.

If you are interested in composition, I recommend researching some of the salient harmonic ideas used in this composition such as modal interchange, diatonic and diminished substitutions, inversions, extended chords etc.

Beat 3: i.f. (still in barre position) fret 5 of E.

Bar 15: Beat 1: Open D, i.f. fret 3 of E. Beat 2 open G and B and m.f. on fret 5 of E. Beat 3: l.f. fret 7 of E.

Bar 16 till bar 22: as from bar 4 till bar 10.

Bar 23: Beat 1: r.f. fret 5 of A. l.f. fret 5 of D. i.f. fret 2 of G. Beat 2 (up beat): m.f. fret 4 of D.

Bar 24: Beat 1: r.f. fret 3 of A. m.f. fret 2 of D and open G. Beat 2 (up beat): open D.

Bar 25 & 27: Beat 1: m.f. fret 3 of low E, open D, G, B. Beat 2: open D and G. Beat 3: open B and fret 3 of B.

Bar 26 & 28: Beat 1: m.f. fret 3 of low E. i.f. fret 2 of B. Beat 2: i.f. fret 2 of G. Beat 3: i.f. fret 2 of D. (Barre on 2nd fret).

Bar 29: m.f. fret 3 of low E. Open D and G.

Bar 30: m.f. fret 3 of low E. l.f. fret 4 of D. r.f. fret 3 of G. i.f. fret 2 of B and E.

If you are interested in composition, I recommend researching some of the salient harmonic ideas used in this composition such as

modal interchange, diatonic and diminished substitutions, inversions, extended chords etc. Similarly, melodic ideas such as use of modes (N.B. Lydian mode in bars: 26 and 28) and motivic development (bar 15)

I recommend playing the melody part first and then the bass line independently. Next, memorise small chunks of it, ideally one bar at the time. Whether you will play this study piece on a steel strung or a nylon-strung guitar, make sure that, both, the melody line as well as the bass line are as sustained as possible, for a fluid outcome. Furthermore, the harmony should be quieter than the melody.

As recommended in the previous columns, focus on accuracy and consistency of tone. Strategies to further develop include the use of the planting technique described in the previous columns, resting our fingers onto the chosen strings, and executing each stroke with a controlled and even pressure and with tonal and dynamic awareness. Each note we play should sound as full-bodied and as good as the previous one.

I hope you will enjoy playing this study piece and that this will give you some ideas on how to write your own solo guitar compositions.

Till the next time, Good-bye!



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LEARN PERCUSSIVE ACOUSTIC PART 4

with Maneli Jamal

Before we get more into some progressive fingerstyle, it is critical to know some fingerpicking patterns as well to apply to our vocabulary of techniques. I spent a great amount of time focusing on getting good tone on the right hand and experimenting with nail lengths. Right now I get my right hand fingernails 'done' at a nail salon. I go for the acrylic gel on top of my natural nail. They will become hard as rock and I get them redone every month or so. If you mind the embarrassment of going to do this you can always find a do it at home kit. Just note that anything you put on your nails will go into your body and some people can have allergic reactions to this method. The length of each finger is important and depends on what kind of sound you're going for. I have found that the best tone for my style is using both flesh and nail to get a balanced warm tone. Too much nail will sound sharp and no nail will sound very warm.

In the first example, we have a pretty simple progression from G, D, Em, D. The trick in getting the "x" to sound clean is to slap the right hand thumb on the low E string on every 3rd beat per bar. I personally use a thumbpick for this but you can also use your bare thumb. Whenever we hit the "x" with the thumb we always use that thumb to hit the open low E string after to sound fluid. Using the same chords we can now use our right hand palm to accent the 3rd beat of each bar. Example 2 is just a simplified version of this without any slaps. Combining these ideas is an important step to making a good arrangement with dynamics.

[...>]

Example 4 now shows us how we can incorporate a melody inside this chord progression while keeping the same fingerpicking pattern and thumb slaps. This is the root of all fingerstyle music, bass notes with treble notes combined to create a full harmonious sound. This is simply one approach to this chord progression but what happens if we fuse this style with some Jazz chords now? We can have some cool phrasing here as shown in Example 6.

These are mostly maj7, min7 and dominant 7 chords played in different inversions. Try these fingerpicking patterns to some of your own progressions to see how they can add some more musical elements to your playing.

If you'd like to hear how I use these techniques in my own compositions you can always find me on [youtube.com/maneli](https://www.youtube.com/maneli) or [facebook.com/manelijamalmusic](https://www.facebook.com/manelijamalmusic).



