



ISSUE 8

Interactive Magazine

# iGuitar

INTERVIEW + STYLE ANALYSIS  
+ **DEAN SCHENKER V HISTORY**

# MICHAEL SCHENKER

**JOE SATRIANI & MICHAEL ANTHONY**

Chickenfoot's guitar & bass dreamteam interviewed

**BRENT MASON**

Meet Nashville's number one session guitarist

**THE SWAMP MONSTER**

Restoring a '61 Gibson Les Paul

**REVIEWS**

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# HIGH PRIEST

AT THE

# TEMPLE OF ROCK

With Michael Schenker's Temple Of Rock world tour steaming around the globe, **Jamie Humphries** met one of Rock guitar's legends. **Levi Clay** examines the Schenker legend.

The landscape of lead guitar, and music in general, is an ever-changing scene - and that change is getting faster all the time. Technological advances such as the Internet and the mp3 have opened up the speed at which we can share information, discover, and draw influence, meaning young guitar players today have it pretty good, with a wealth of knowledge literally at the tips of their fingers. Everything from traditional Balkan folk music to underground speed metal made by a guy in his basement, can be accessed in seconds. There are lessons, interviews, music (not to mention Guitar Interactive!) available at any time of the day or night - it really is exciting, if not a little overwhelming.

It's not often that people look at the flipside of the direction we're heading though. As a teacher nothing gets my goat more than that immortal phrase "dude, have you got a tab for that?". There was a time when the only way to learn how to play like your hero was to sit down with a record player and skip back over and over again until the vinyl was worn out (well, it was the humble cassette tape

in my day!). The other thing we seem to have lost is the natural progression and evolution of a genre. You can download the latest Van Halen album in seconds on iTunes for a fraction of what the music would have cost 30 years ago. In days gone by, you could literally trace where an idea started and where it spread. You just need to look at the birth of electric blues in the US and how the music of BB King and Muddy Waters was picked up by British players like Clapton and Page. It happened over many years and its development was exciting. Now a band like Periphery breaks and suddenly everyone and their dog is making "djent" a fad which nobody had heard 10 years ago.

I hear you wondering "Why is he telling me this?", well it's really simple. This spread of information has boosted the guitar world to a place where nobody predicted it was capable of going in the '70s. There are kids on Youtube who have better chops than a Canadian lumberjack, and the players who top the polls in terms of "the greatest technical/rock guitar player" are guys like Vai, Gilbert, Petrucci, Cooley and Buckethead. With a

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[...>]





benchmark like that, it's easy to see why you can put on a Michael Schenker solo for a 15 year old and get that "What's the big deal?" look.

Michael Schenker was born in the small town of Sarstedt, Germany in 1955, the younger brother of Rudolph Schenker (Scorpions rhythm guitar king). Michael received no formal training and had no internet to help him on his journey to rock stardom. Legend has it the he would sit at home while Rudolph was at work and work out licks from old tapes of Mountain, which he would then teach to his brother when he returned. The term 'prodigy' is thrown around a bit too lightly today (again thanks to the Internet) but in rural Germany, that's exactly what Michael was, rocking out in bands from the age of 13, having mastered the solos of everyone from Hank Marvin to Eric Clapton. It wasn't long before he was drafted into the Scorpions, where he would be exposed to a much larger audience. Schenker really was born in a good year, as 1955

also saw the birth of guitar legends Eddie Van Halen, Angus Young and Uli Jon Roth (well he was December '54, but you get the point!). All guitarists who would go on to become household names on the Rock scene, but in reality, Michael beat them to the starting line. In 1972, at the tender age of 17, he recorded the Scorpions debut album Lonesome Crow, and when you consider that worldwide releases from the Van Halen and AC/DC didn't happen until the late 70's, it really should show you just how far ahead of the game Michael was.

Of course, it's the playing that should do all the speaking, and Michael's solos scream. Unfortunately Eddie Van Halen reinvented the game again in 1978, so Michael's playing is often overshadowed by this. When you put the two on paper though, and remove Eddie's two handed tapping technique, the two sound a lot alike – they're both Blues players on steroids.

"It's not just Michael's playing which had the ability to turn heads, he has a great collection of eye catching gear too"

In 1973, while on tour with the Scorpions in support of the British band UFO, Michael was asked to join (having his boots filled by Uli Jon Roth) a gig which he gracefully accepted, despite not really speaking English! It was here that Michael really came into his own, and UFO's 1974 record Phenomenon was an international success with hits like Doctor Doctor and Rock Bottom (better than any of the riffs on Van Halen I). Again Michael Schenker had arrived, and all of those names you associate with guitar royalty today were still nowhere to be seen.

It was during this period that Schenker's reputation as a bit of a wild card developed, leaving the stage midway during songs and causing concerts to be cancelled. Alcohol abuse had reared its ugly head and personal problems between Michael and UFO's singer Phil Mogg resulted in Schenker leaving the band in 1978; but not before releasing one of the greatest live albums in rock history, Strangers in the Night.



[...>]





It's not just Michael's playing which had the ability to turn heads, he has a great collection of eye catching gear too. In his youth, Schenker played a Les Paul for a short period until one night with the Scorpions when Michael broke a string, Rudolph came to the rescue and quickly gave his brother a Gibson Flying V.... which he never got back! For the next spell of his career, Michael became one of those, comparatively rare, ambassadors of the Flying V, which were often patterned in a split black and white design. But his relationship with Gibson changed in 2004 when he joined with Dean guitars - perhaps the ultimate metal merchants - to put out a Michael Schenker signature model. There are now currently nine different Schenker models on the market and Michael even has a signature pickup, the Dean "Lights Out" model, which allows any fan to get close to the legendary Schenker tone on a budget.

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For those of you chasing that Schenker sound, it's worth mentioning that he traditionally opts for two 50 Watt Marshall JCM800s, over a more powerful modern head. Pedal wise Michael has often been spotted using BOSS products, in particular, a DD3 digital delay, a CE5 chorus, and a RV3 reverb pedal. The other essential element to Schenker's tone is a wah, as Michael is often known to use a wah pedal as a tone control to give him a distinctive bite and bring out the mid range honk you get on a flying V (just check out the live version of Rock Bottom). Although a Dunlop Crybaby will certainly do the trick here, if you want the true 70's Schenker rig, I'm almost certain you'll need an original JEN Crybaby, so off to eBay!

And if you want the *real* inside story on how to play and sound like Schenker, check out Jamie Humphries' style analysis in this issue! In 1980 Michael formed MSG (Michael Schenker Group) which still tours tirelessly today - currently on the worldwide Temple Of Rock tour. The first record contained some great material, and a particular point of interest Bijou Pleasurette.

Many of today's generation would consider Yngwie Malmsteen to be the forefather of the neoclassical genre (Rising Force, 1984), but it has been a staple of the vocabulary of players like Richie Blackmore, Michael Schenker and Uli Jon Roth since the '70s. Michael's playing oozed that melodic modal quality and it's the source of much of his improvisation.

Although MSG has been Michael's main outlet now for many years, that doesn't mean that he has been forgotten in the UFO and Scorpions world, and over the years he has returned to each briefly. MSG have had some serious output over the years, having released their 12th studio album (and 20th release including live records) Temple of Rock in 2011. If history is anything to go by, Schenker will probably return to UFO and the Scorpions again in future, but until then there will always be the Michael Schenker Group, and it's safe to say that with the status Schenker has, this won't be the last MSG album you're likely to hear.



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**Paul Guerin**  
The Guireboys

**Paul Raymond**  
UFO

**Dave 'Bucket' Colwell**  
Bucket & Co. / Bad Company

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# A Man and his Flying Vs!

**Gary Cooper** plots a course through the myriad Flying Vs owned and endorsed by Michael Schenker.

It was 1958 - the year Elvis received his draft notice, Nikita Khrushchev became President of the USSR, NASA was created, Boeing's 707 made its first commercial flight from New York to Paris, and the US Airforce lost a hydrogen bomb somewhere off the coast of Savannah Georgia, never to be found again. But far more importantly for our purposes, it was the year Gibson launched the Flying V guitar - the first of the company's 'Modernistic' series, designed to combat the growing challenge from California's upstart Fender brand.

Like the other two Gibson proto-pointy guitars, the Firebird and the Explorer, the Flying V got off to a shaky start - in fact it didn't really achieve major stardom until the 1970s, though Lonnie Mack and Albert King both made the V their trademark guitars pretty early on, and the Kinks' Dave Davis had a gorgeous korina bodied V in the mid-1960s. In '67 Jimi Hendrix acquired one, too. He may be forever associated with a Strat, but much of Hendrix's Bluesier playing was undertaken on a V. Keith Richards briefly toted one at the legendary Stones

In The Park gig in London, 1969 and in that same year Wishbone Ash formed, giving the guitar its longest serving ambassador - Andy Powell, featured in our previous issue. Since then, while never coming within a country mile of the success of the Les Paul, Gibson's Flying V has become a staple of Rock guitar. ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons played one on Fandango and Germany's Michael Schenker joined the exclusive brethren, too, soon to be followed by Judas Priest's K.K. Downing.

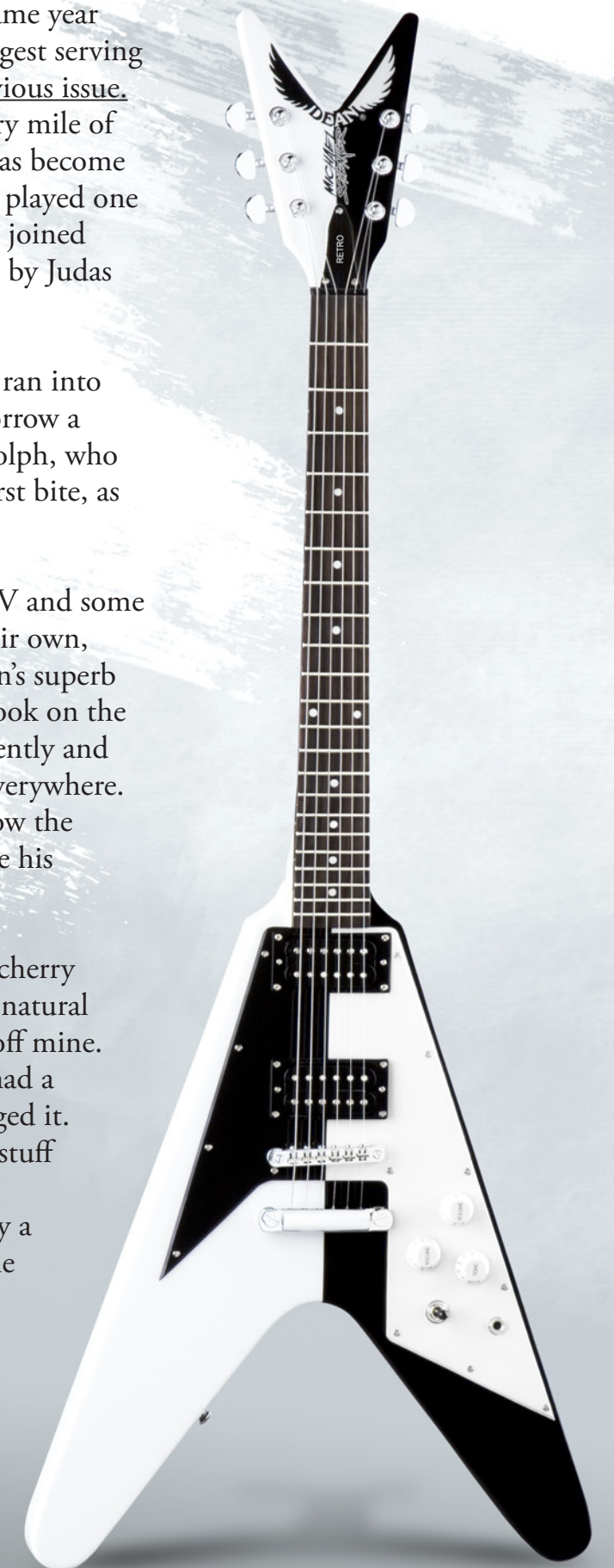
Schenker's relationship with Vs began when he ran into problems with his own guitar and needed to borrow a replacement in a hurry. Enter big brother, Rudolph, who loaned him a '71 Medallion V. It was love at first bite, as Michael plugged it into his Marshall stacks.

If you want the full story of the Gibson Flying V and some of the wild-side guitarists who have made it their own, you won't do better than consulting Tony Bacon's superb "Flying V, Explorer, Firebird" - the definitive book on the "Modernistic" Gibsons, which we reviewed recently and which is available via Hal Leonard just about everywhere. In Bacon's book, Michael; Schenker explains how the trademark black and white Vs that have become his signature came about:

"The V I got from Rudolf was I think a sort of cherry colour. But I saw somebody playing a V with a natural wood look, and I liked it, so I took the colour off mine. I took a hammer and chisel to it -- and then I had a guitar with lots of grooves in it where I'd damaged it. Some guitar tech filled all the holes with white stuff and then painted it over so you couldn't see the damage any more. I didn't know if I should play a black V or a white V, so I asked him to spray the guitar black and white, and that was it."

The hallmark colour scheme stuck and later, when Schenker went to that Saville Row of Heavy Metal guitar making, Dean, he stuck to his monochrome theme.

One of the curious things about the V is that a lot of the most famous ones have



Michael Schenker Group live at Dean Guitars NAMM JAM 2011!



*"The model designed with his brother, Rudolph, called The Schenker Brothers was particularly impressive"*

never been anywhere near Gibson. Andy Powell uses a V made by Kevin Chilcott, K.K. Downing went to Hamer and ESP for some of his and Michael Schenker is famous not just for having his characteristic V made by Florida's Dean Guitars, but for having spawned a series of them - no less than nine variations currently being listed on Dean's website.

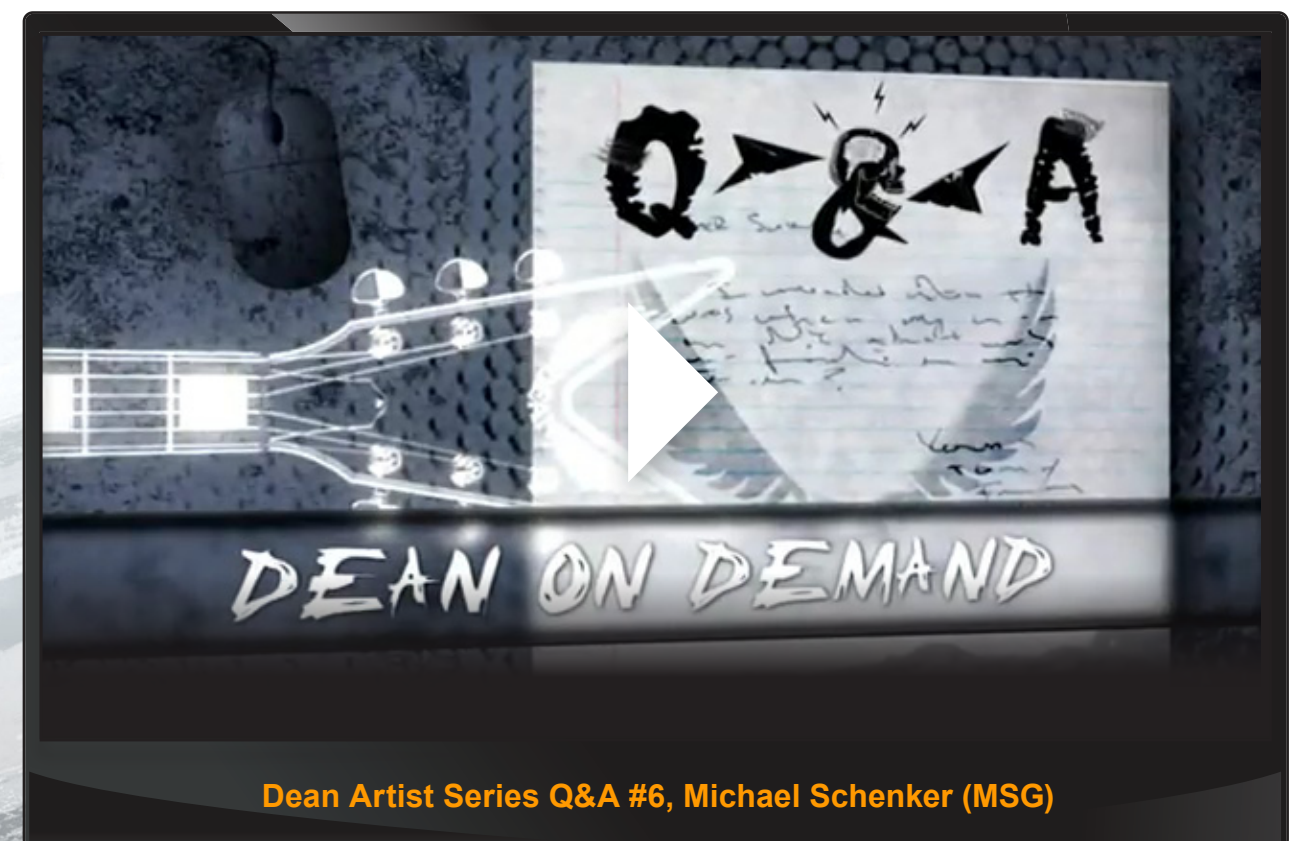
Matt Speed, who looks after Dean Guitars in the UK says: "Michael was already familiar with the guitars and their quality when he came to Dean in the early 2000s and the first one the company released was the Michael Schenker Standard USA - which is a half black, half white one with block inlays.

"The thing you need to know about Dean Guitars is that it has never had a mass production facility in the USA, so every USA guitar that is made is handmade, from start to finish. Those guitars were produced in very limited numbers and it wasn't a situation where you had an area in the Dean facility where production Michael Schenker guitars were built and then you had just one guy building guitars for the artists - they were all built by the same people.

"At the time, Michael was using DiMarzio Signature Series pickups and they were part of a guitar that had a mahogany body, ebony fingerboard, half black, half white finish - white binding on the black side and black binding on the white side, Grover tuners and a different way of positioning the controls, with the volume controls set up away from the playing position, with the switch out of reach too, so that you don't



Demostración fábrica Dean Guitar USA



Dean Artist Series Q&A #6, Michael Schenker (MSG)



knock them by accident. It's the only guitar in the Dean range that is configured that way." About three years ago, Dean decided it wanted its own pickups, so designer Pat Baker was drafted in, who set to work with the extensive Dean artist roster to produce a range of 'DMT' pickups that was to be completely artist designed. This gave rise to the Michael Schenker 'Lights Out' model (named after the legendary UFO song of the same name) which is now available not just fitted to a Dean guitar but also as separate replacement pickups.

"There have been various Schenker models since then," Speed says. "The model designed with his brother, Rudolph, called The Schenker Brothers was particularly impressive - a flame-topped guitar with the Schenker name inlaid in pearl into the ebony fingerboard with a laser used to etch a printed design embossed into the image. It's a really

beautiful guitar. They weren't cheap, but you have to remember that these are handmade guitars of the really highest quality.

"The Michael Schenker Flames came next and I remember seeing a picture of the first one and sending it to my boss with just the one word "Want!". Michael was using that almost exclusively for a while and he still does use it a lot.

"After that - and here's one if you like your tonewoods - they took a big chunk of maple, a big chunk of mahogany and joined them together to create what they called the checkmate - it even had a half-maple, half-ebony top and they repeated that on the neck - even the fingerboard is half and half but with the inlays made of the same woods but the other way around. Only 50 were made."

If your finances don't run to the handmade USA Dean Schenkers, all is not lost. The Flame is on offer in a Korean-made version, which comes with US-made DMT Lights Out pickups.

As you would expect, there are now Dean Schenkers built in China too now - not least the Retro, which mirrors the Gibson-era Schenker. Finally, there's the astonishing graphic design - Strangers In The Night model - which pretty much defies description!

Confused? Fortunately, Dean has made a lot of Schenker and V video available!





the supergroup on steroids?

## CHICKENFOOT

**Jamie Humphries** meets Chickenfoot's Joe Satriani and Michael Anthony while **Levi Clay** asks - just what is a "supergroup" and how does this one stand alongside the all-time greats?

Over the last 40 years the term "supergroup" has been used to describe a band which consists of members who have already achieved fame somewhere else. These titans of music come together to create something new and exciting. Few would dispute that Cream are often cited as one of the greatest supergroups of all time, but some would argue that Cream actually define Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker's career, overshadowing anything they

did before - or even since. Much the same could be said of Traffic (possibly the first band to be hyped this way) Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, and perhaps even ELP.

The other thing to be aware of in the supergroup genre is the syndrome of replacing the original singer and being labelled as a supergroup by the press. This is less of a bringing together of great minds and often just a way to remove a difficult personality.

Would you consider bands like Audioslave, Velvet Revolver and Alter Bridge as supergroups? Or are they just incredible bands in their own right?

We live in a time where we're spoilt for choice on the supergroup front with Dave Grohl playing a part in Them Crooked Vultures, Blues sensation Joe Bonamassa doing well in Black Country Communion and even Tom

[...&gt;]

DeLonge's project Angels & Airwaves - and those are just some of the more successful ones. But one supergroup stands out in the crowd: those Blues Rockers Chickenfoot.

Chickenfoot began to come into being in 2008 when Sammy Hagar and Michael Anthony of Van Halen (or Van Hagar to you die-hard DLR fans) sat down for a jam with Chad Smith of the Red Hot Chilli Peppers. Now Sammy is no slouch on the guitar but this band needed that something special, so Sammy put in a call to the man he described to Classic Rock as "the best guitarist in the world", one Joe Satriani, and Chickenfoot were born. A funky Van Halen with Blues Rock maestro Joe Satriani on guitar? That's a supergroup by very definition.

Now Joe Satriani should need no introduction as he's been at the forefront of instrumental guitar and blues rock for several decades. I won't go into too much detail here as







Chickenfoot Interview Part 1.

we ran a feature on Joe in [Gi 2](#), but for the uninitiated I would seriously recommend picking up *Surfing With The Alien* or *Strange Beautiful Music* (not a common choice but it's a sublime album if you ask me). It's also worth checking out any one of the the G3 DVDs to see Joe choose tasty Blues Rock licks time and time again over egotistical shred. Joe's name is synonymous on the guitar scene with slippery legato lines, whammy bar antics and an unparalleled ear for a good melody!

The bands' self-titled album was released in 2009 to great critical acclaim and charted well in the US, going gold in less than six months. It's not hard to see why, with singles "Soap on Rope" screaming Led Zeppelin and "Oh Yeah" mixing Joe's riffing with Smith's rock solid grooves, having everything a Van

Halen fan was looking for, with Anthony's trademark staccato basslines. All this before looking at just how awesome Hagar sounds on top - it really is the perfect sweet icing to a world class bluesy cake.

The only problem anyone could foresee was Chad having to go back and record with the Red Hot Chilli Peppers and fulfil touring commitments there. Many would have predicted this would be the end of the band, but Chad reassured the fans "Chickenfoot isn't a one-off thing for any of us. We're a band". It seemed that the chemistry was great and that the clash of egos wasn't going to rear its ugly head and end this band as it had with countless other supergroups over the years. All that was left for the fans now was the long wait for a follow up.

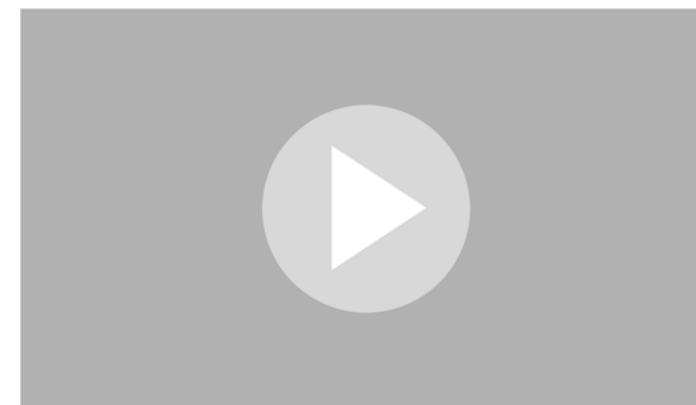
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It would actually be a real shame if you were to dismiss Chickenfoot as **“just another guitar band”** because of the pedigree of guitar players you associate with each member.





Fast-forward to 2011 and it's finally confirmed by Anthony that the full line up would return to the studio and record the next album together and that the group would tour but with a replacement drummer when necessary. This is always a tough pill to swallow for any fan, but there really is no stopping the Red Hot Chilli Peppers, so we just had to endure that long wait for the next album.

Released in September 2011 Chickenfoot III (not the third album as the title might have you think) received positive reviews from the press. It differs greatly from the first album in that the band seem to be developing their sound a little more here, with slightly less of that Zeppelin influence and a little bit more of that trademark Satriani vibe. This isn't just a guitar fan's album as aside from having creamy drives and great licks, tracks like "Last Temptation" and "Big Foot" are just

great Rock tunes. It would actually be a real shame if you were to dismiss Chickenfoot as "just another guitar band" because of the pedigree of guitar players you associate with each member. This album is full of incredible playing, but it never gets tasteless, it's full of song first and guitar second.

This brings us nicely back to that term - supergroup. As I mentioned earlier, this band are definitely a supergroup but don't write them off as a gimmick that will pass after just a few over-hyped albums. It genuinely wouldn't surprise me if in a few years, just like the greatest supergroups, the members will be known for Chickenfoot rather than where they came from. What's more, with everyone and their dog reuniting (including Van Halen) it's going to be great seeing these bands go head to head for our attention. I know who I'm going to be rooting for!



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# SHADE SHIFTER

**Stuart Bull** meets Brent Mason: Nashville's - and maybe the world's - most recorded session guitarist. **Gary Cooper** profiles the 'Guitar City' legend.

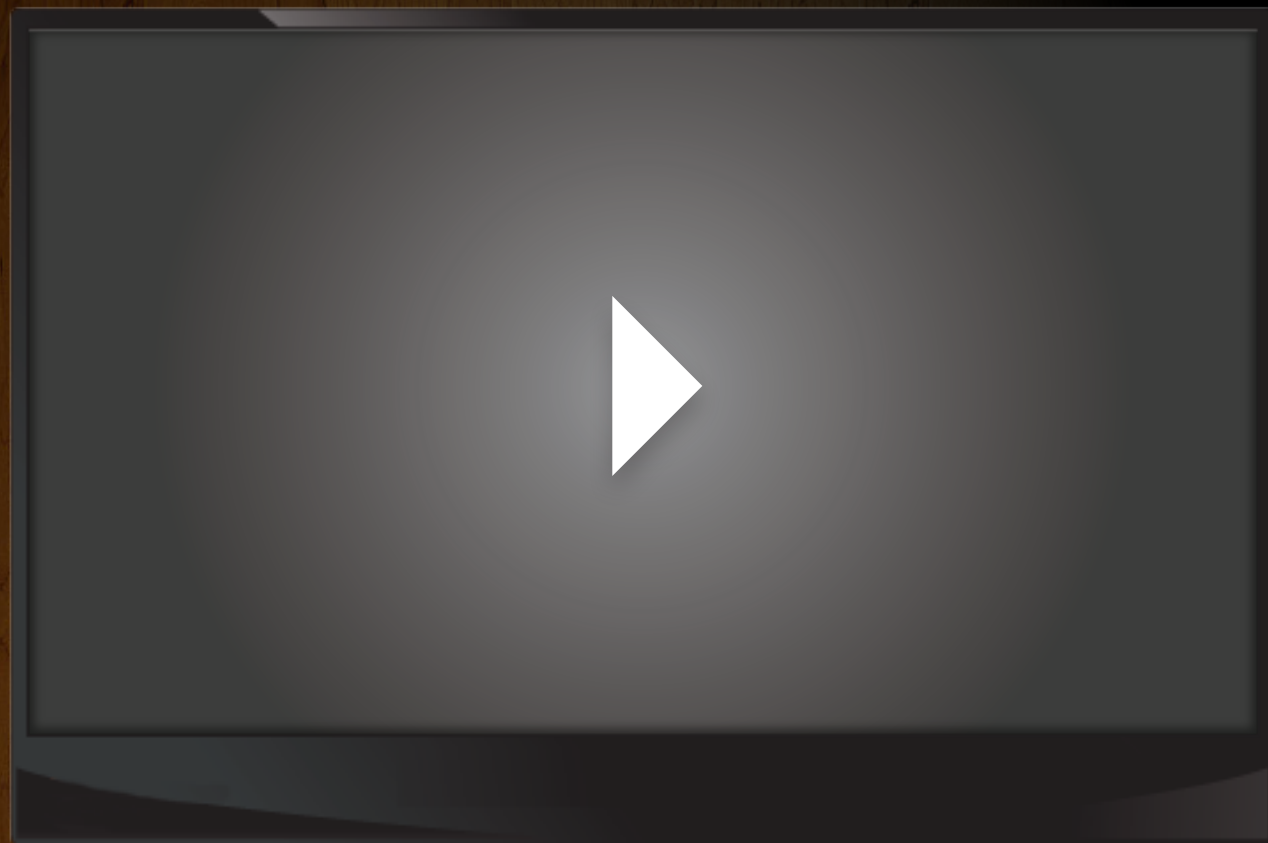
To devotees of fine Country guitar picking, Brent Mason is the king of the game. He has played on records by just about everyone who is anyone in Nashville, probably appeared on more top ten hits than any other session guitarist, won a Grammy, been 14 times winner of the Academy of Country Music Guitarist Of The Year Award, the CMA (having been nominated every year since 1991), and has been showered with accolades since, aged 21, he moved to Tennessee from his Ohio birthplace.

But as our interview shows, there's even more to Brent Mason's repertoire than the Country licks he apparently effortlessly squeezes out of his trademark, heavily modified, '68 Telecaster. As he sits speaking with *Gi's* Stuart Bull, with a PRS in his hands, what you're hearing is more Jazz than Country - which is perhaps curious for the man whose ability to spit out blistering Country licks is unsurpassed.

Once you start to delve, though, it soon becomes apparent that Mason

is a man of many parts. Among his influences he lists James Taylor, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Marcus Miller, David Sanborn, Herbie Hancock, Diana Krall, John Mayer, Sting, Michael McDonald, Natalie Cole, Anita Baker, Michael Franks, Steely Dan and Keith Jarrett, while he says his favourite guitarists are Jerry Reed, Lenny Breau, Pat Martino, Roy Nichols, George Benson, Jeff Beck, Carlos Rios and Larry Carlton... neither list what you might expect from one of Country's biggest stars.





## It can be hard to get a handle on a guitar player's style when their work is mostly to be found on other people's records

Though he comes from a musical background, Mason started life working in the family owned toolbox factory and famously quit when a punch went through his thumb. It was a defining moment, you can't help feeling, when he faced a straight choice between playing and working in the family firm.

Just like in the movies, breaking in to the Nashville scene wasn't easy - Guitar Town is competitive. But through his one session

contact in town, Mason ended-up with a regular gig, eventually being taken under the wing of that great mentor of Country guitarists, the late Chet Atkins. Not only did Atkins come to hear Mason play, he brought George Benson with him the next time, then later asked Brent to guest on Atkins' album, Stay Tuned.

That tightly closed studio door had opened at last, and Brent Mason was on his way. Twenty five years later, he is still regarded as

»

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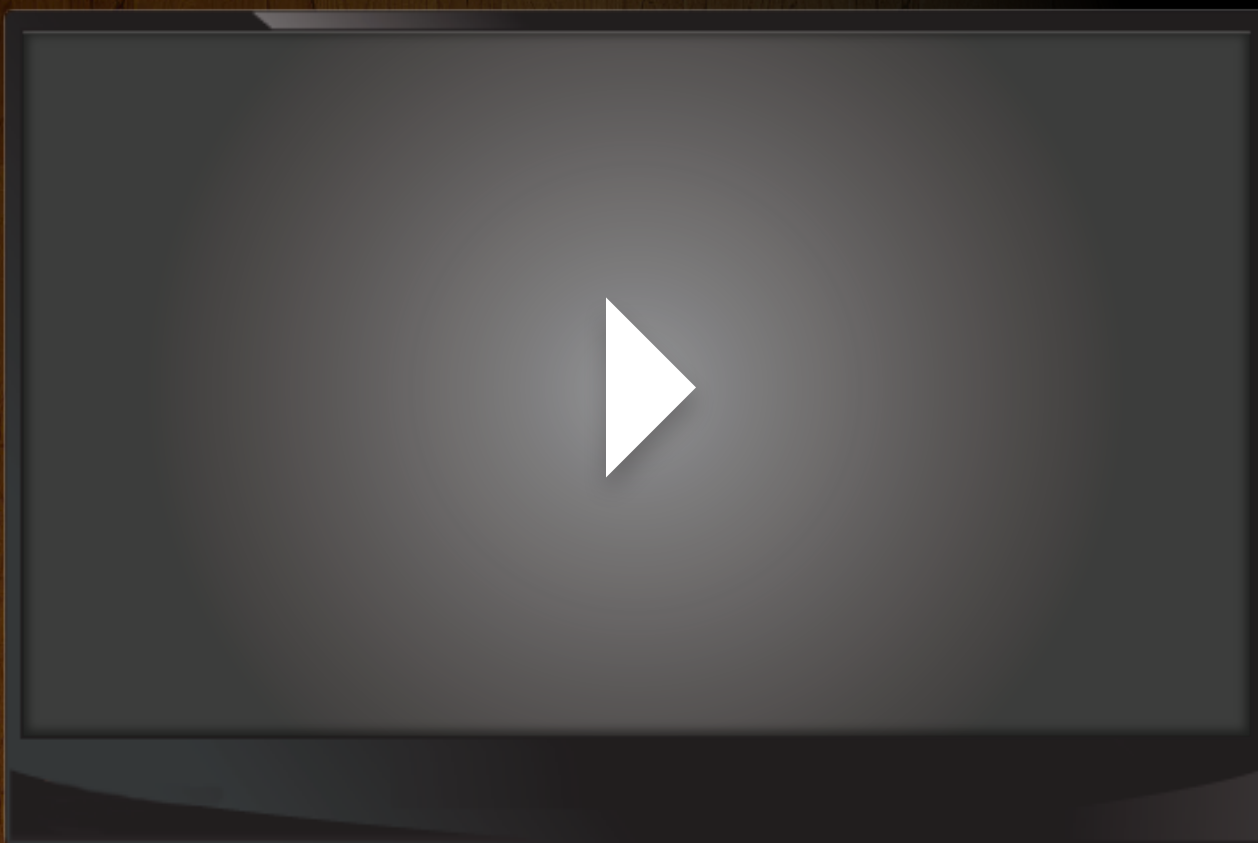
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It can be hard to get a handle on a guitar player's style when their work is mostly to be

found on other people's records, but Mason has two albums to his name: 1997's Grammy award nominated Hot Wired (bizarrely still out of print from Mercury records and commanding obscene prices on eBay) and Smokin' Section, recorded with his brother, Randy, released in 2006 and much closer to Mason's heartland music of Jazz than the Country many had anticipated.

Mason is also a teacher (in the widest sense) having produced tuition videos and, most recently, having released the DVD Recording Guitar (see our clip and link below) which can be bought direct and which gives a real insight into the processes that make a Nashville guitar recording the thing of wonder that it is.

[...>]

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For seven years from 2003, Valley Arts (subsumed into Gibson) produced a Brent Mason Signature model, based on his venerable Tele. He used it alongside an impressive array of vintage instruments including a Les Paul, an SG, a 335 and a Strat - some 50 guitars in total, he confesses. Most recently, however, Brent has teamed-up with Paul Reed Smith. For now, he is playing an NF-3, as reviewed in this issue, though he told us also plays a PRS DGT and "Paul's Signature model - a lot". It's hard to imagine that it will be long before PRS introduces a Brent Mason signature model.

Amp wise, Mason seems pretty uncommitted (at least, in terms of endorsements - for the most part he's a 1960s vintage Fender man) but he is firmly associated with the pedal

genius Brian Wampler. Indeed, not only does Brent use and endorse Wampler pedals, but he has his own Wampler pedal, the Hot Wired, an overdrive/distortion: one of the highest regarded pedals of its kind.

Finally, there's hope for those out there who despair of ever being able to read music. Brent Mason, Nashville's Number One and unquestionably one of the finest electric guitarists in the world, doesn't read a note and has never had a lesson in his life!

### Check out Brent's new DVD, Recording Guitar:



Brent Mason Recording Guitar DVD







# PURE MSG

To accompany this month's Michael Schenker special, **Jamie Humphries** delves into the great man's bag of licks for this special tech session.

With such a long career spanning more than three decades, there was plenty of material for me to use as inspiration for this month's Tech Session. Michael has performed and recorded with his brother's band The Scorpions, UFO, with his own Michael Schenker Group, as well as a solo artist. In this analysis I've looked some of Michael's signature riff ideas, including galloping swing rhythms, incorporating open strings, plus some of his fiery blues inspired licks. We'll also be looking at how Michael uses the wah pedal as a tone control, producing his trademark nasal cutting tone.

For many years Michael's main tone tools were a Gibson Flying V and Marshall stacks, while these days he favours signature Dean V's, though he has stuck resolutely with his Marshalls. For both the video session and backing track production I used a Musicman Axis Supersport. I also used an EVH wah pedal and an Xotic EP Booster. When recreating the Schenker tone, remember that although this is considered heavy metal, it's vintage metal, so don't make things too dirty.

Our track is based around two sections, a verse and a chorus, with the feel of the track being an up-tempo driving swing/shuffle. Our first section has a slight Into the Arena feel and sound about it. The verse section is based around E natural minor, and consists of an E5 power chord being performed against a driving muted open 6<sup>th</sup> string, performed with palm muting. Make sure that the chord really cuts through and the low muted root note is tight and driven. The chord is embellished with various fills, the first being a triplet scale based idea that uses notes from E minor scale.

The verse riff also includes chord fills based around C5, A5, D5 and B5, as well as another scale based line that is performed with a tight muted triplet rhythm. Throughout this entire section, timing and feel is essential, so make sure you pay close attention to keeping the triplets nice and tight and make sure your picking is accurate and consistent.

The chorus section changes feel and moves into a bluesier dominant feel, with the next riff being based around both A and D Mixolydian. These new riffs are quite

[...>]





**“It’s very easy here to get things out of sync and mute the open strings by accident.”**

tricky as they make use of the open A and D strings, pedal between fretted and open string notes with our triple swing groove. This riff borrows slightly from the classic track Captain Nemo. These riff may prove quite tricky, as left and right hand coordination is vital; it’s very easy here to get things out of sync and mute the open strings by accident.

Following our chorus we head back into the verse riff which repeats twice, although on the repeat we introduce a figure the makes use of major and minor 3<sup>rd</sup>s performed on the G and B strings, against an open E. This little figure is reminiscent of something heard on the UFO track Lights Out.

Now it’s solo time, and things kick off over our chorus section, with our intro lick including bluesy bends, and making use of the Major/Minor dominant A pentatonic scale; a kind of hybrid of both scales that crosses both major and minor 3rds, and resulting in a very bluesy sound. Our next lick compliments the D riff, by also including some pull off ideas on the open D string. The next lick is a tricky ascending figure that crosses the neck covering both A major and minor pentatonic scales.

[...>]



*Planet Rock*

The final part of the solo is performed over the verse section and includes some fast pentatonic flurries, a signature sound in Michael's playing, plus a slightly tricky descending scale sequence. The solo concludes with a tremolo picked line based around E harmonic minor.

As you can see there's a lot of different techniques and approaches in this track, so I would advise that you take things slowly, and approach this in bite size sections before piecing it together. Good Luck!



 A blonde Vigier electric guitar is the central focus, positioned diagonally. The background features a wall with patterned wallpaper and several framed pictures of guitarists, including one labeled 'Guthrie Govan'. A large white play button icon is overlaid on the guitar. The Vigier logo is prominently displayed at the bottom left.
 

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# THE RETURN OF THE SWAMP MONSTER

**It started life in 1961**

- one of the first twin cutaway Gibson Les Pauls that eventually mutated into SGs. Loved and played until finger grooves were worn into the fretboard, the Swamp Monster wound-up in an Alabama pawn shop, still in its original Gibson case.

Brought to England by Gi's Editor, **Gary Cooper**, it lay sleeping until this year, when authorised Gibson repairman **James Collins** was asked to bring the Swamp Monster back to life.

**Here's how he did it.**

# Revisited

You always want to know who owned your guitars before you got your hands on them, but in the case of the Swamp Monster it's a real need.

Whoever had bought this guitar from new - and I'm pretty sure it was just one person - had loved it to bits and played it close to death. There are no belt buckle marks on the guitar, just a few scratches here and there, the warped scratchplate that most examples of that era suffer from and...well, that's just about it. The Swamp Monster doesn't even have the telltale crack at the back of the headstock where, leant against an old Fender Twin, it fell one boozy night and cracked. So many old Gibsons have that scar - this one hasn't.

How I came by it back in the 1980s is a story for another day (though money - not a lot - did change hands) but 'life' got in the way of an immediate resurrection. I gave the guitar to a guitar making friend (a fine craftsman let it be said) without a clue what he could hope to do about the grooves worn into the fretboard by its previous owner, who had played that guitar for so

long and so hard, that it had deep ridges worn into in the exquisite rosewood. My friend removed the frets, started work on it, then hit 'life' problems of his own and went out of business. It was rescued for me by a mutual friend at the time, the pickup maker Kent Armstrong - then living in the UK - to whom I owe an unpayable debt for getting it back to me.

Returned to its case, with 'life' still going on and other guitars to play, The Swamp Monster slumbered. Why the name? The original Gibson case came with its very own mould culture which, even if it hasn't damaged the velour lining, continues to rampage over the outer surface and has... let's just say suffused the entire assembly with an odour of the humid, swampy, deep South. Open the mouldy case and before you even touch the guitar, you just know the kind of music it played in its youth, the roads it has travelled and the songs it has sung.

When I finally decided to restore Ol' Swampy, I had a tough decision to make. The UK isn't short of great guitar repairers, but I decided the safest thing to do as go to one of Gibson's approved repairmen. I was lucky because, though they are pretty thin on the ground here, James Collins of 12th Fret Guitars in Winchelsea, East Sussex, was local

[...>]







enough, came with the Nashville giant's seal of approval and seemed keen to take on the project. I probably should add that he doesn't charge a king's ransom, either - even for a project as tricky as this one.

Neck breaks and twists and refrets and the like are meat and drink to any decent guitar repairer, but the Swamp Monster's problem was that fretboard. Could the finger grooves be filled? Could it be sanded down? How do you restore a guitar with great gouges worn into the fretboard? On the bright side, that was just about all that was wrong. The single coil P90 was functioning and fully original, the three on a strip machine heads did what they had to do, a new wrap around bridge was needed to replace a broken casting but the neck and body were fine. It was just the fretboard that needed attention. Oh, and it needed a new nut. Fortunately James and I agreed here, too - only bone will do.

I went away from the 12th Fret workshop with a slightly troubled mind. Clearly James knew his trade. He'd trained with the right people and was passionate about his craft. He'd also warmed to the guitar - though when he showed it to his family, apparently they recoiled at the Swamp Monster's, 'distinctive odour' too!

A few weeks later and a call from James drew me down to Winchelsea to collect my prize - a fully resuscitated double cutaway '61 Les Paul, with a sweet, warm strength that you simply wouldn't believe possible if the only single coil pickup you've ever experienced has been on a Fender. James, smiling all over his face, plugged the Swampy into his Marshall head and started picking. Clean and sweet... and then he wound up the volume pot, with

a grin. Even on the Marshall's clean channel, the Gibson began to sing as it roughened-up. I must have grinned like an idiot too. I might even have laughed. The Swamp Monster was alive again and ready to make some more of that magic that you just know it has spent much of the last 50 years singing out loud.

## ABOUT THE GUITAR

By 1958, sales of the original single cutaway, maple-topped Les Paul were falling (ironically, given the fabulous status of the 1959

versions today, as featured in Guitar Interactive issue five!). Gibson knew it was facing increasingly serious competition from Leo Fender and that, in comparison with models like the Stratocaster, its expensive to build and to buy Les Paul looked a little antiquated. Remember, this was in the days before 'old' meant 'good' in the guitarist's lexicon!

I'm hesitant to write anything at all about the birth of the double cutaway Les Pauls as even a careful reading on A.R. Duchossoir and Tom Wheeler's books (Gibson Electrics Volume 1 and American Guitars - an illustrated history) it's pretty clear that there is still more than

enough room for a lifetime of arguments and forum flamewars. Suffice it to say that by 1958 Gibson had started to make double cutaway 'Les Paul's' and, though he was photographed holding them, it's clear that Les Paul himself didn't much care for them. Which is a shame, because however wonderful a maple-topped single cutaway Les Paul undoubtedly is, and however different the thin, solid mahogany bodied twin cutaway versions may be, the latter is still a fabulous sounding guitar in its own right, with a sound and feel all of its own.

The 'Jr' (or 'Junior') Les Paul started life in 1954, and by '58 had sprouted a double cutaway. By early 1961 - the year the Swamp Monster was born, in Gibson's spiritual home of Kalamazoo - it was teetering on the brink of becoming a full-fledged 'SG'. It had gained the chamfered edges that characterise the 'real' SG, yet still sported the wrap-around bridge and single coil P90 pickup. Note the SG style pickguard (warped with age - and no I'm not going to replace it!) and the primitive tuners on a plate (they're stiff, not very good, actually, but I refuse to replace them either).

Eventually (many years later) the SG went on to gain humbucking pickups, tune-o-matic bridges (the Swamp Monster, with its early wrap around bridge cannot be adjusted for intonation and yet, curiously, doesn't seem to need it) and even Gibson vibrolas on some models. I love those too, but they are very different animals.



[...>]



The Swamp Monster undoubtedly deserves a better player than I will ever be but for now he's back in one piece and ready to play sweet Southern Blues and Rock and Roll. Welcome to the Deep South, Swampy - the deep South of England!

## ABOUT 12TH FRET'S JAMES COLLINS

There aren't many authorised Gibson service centres in Northern Europe and 12th Fret Guitars is one of the happy few. James Collins, who runs the one-man business, spent some years on the record company copyright/licensing/royalties side of the music business before deciding that what he really wanted to do was repair and make guitars. It was a career change that led him to the USA in 2007 where he met Todd Money, the manager of repair and restoration at Gibson. Todd recommended that James went to luthiery school in Michigan - the renowned Galloup School of Guitar Building and Repair, no less. And so he did.



"The philosophy behind Galloup's School is that if you can build it, you can repair it." James told me. "We had lengthy discussions about repair but they were teaching us how to fret the guitar we'd made and from doing that you know the whole theory behind fretting. Obviously, we'd sit down and do re-frets and neck sets and so on, but that grounding in doing it from scratch was already there."

One difference James notices between the UK and USA is that repairmen in the US tend to regard what they are doing more as a career that you train for - while guitar repairmen in the UK often come from having learned repairing 'on the job'.

"I went in at the deep-end. I could probably have gone to Todd at Gibson and said I wanted extend my visa for six months and work for Gibson and that's what a lot of people from Galloup did. It's more a real career there than it is in the UK."

One of the things that a repairman soon learns is what is wrong with production guitars, so it's no surprise they often start making guitars of their own. This year James Collins has built and sold six swamp ash 'Teles'. As he says, "They have good pots, good capacitors, waxed and foiled, treble bleed, bone nuts - things that I would upgrade someone's guitar to make it better. I do think repairing makes you a better guitar maker."

So what did James think when he first met my Les Paul - out of the swamp? "It did smell like it!" he laughs. "I took it home and said 'You have to look at this' and they said 'But it stinks!'. But it's lovely - clean

and with no breaks in the neck, which you see so many of, with Gibsons. The biggest problem was that worn fretboard. I planed it with some levelling bars and I did have to go down quite a way and with regret. But the new frets went in really well, some of the slots needed cleaning-up, but it was fine and it has the thinnest, most delicate neck that is absolutely straight. And it sounds - fantastic!"

James's latest venture is something really exciting. He is hosting three day custom guitar building courses, where small groups are taught body & neck assembly, pickup and electronics installation, plus the professional setting up of an electric guitar. At the end of which, attendees go home with a Strat-style bolt-on neck guitar which they have assembled and finished from components supplied as part of the course. You can find out more by following the link below.

My thanks to James for helping bring the Swamp Monster back to life after all these years in his musky case. Now I just need some guitar lessons.... and I think I know just the place to go!



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Guitar Interactive was one of the first TC Electronic pedals to review for this issue and we had a blast doing it. We were so into it, we even went to the TC Electronic factory in New York, to see how they make their pedals.

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Q1. John Petrucci has a signature guitar manufactured by which company?

A/ Gretsch B/ Music Man C/ Gibson

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A/ SnapShot B/ FXPatch C/ TonePrint

Q3. The Dreamscape pedal offers switchable true bypass operation?

A/ True B/ False

1/ All entries must be received by 9th April 2012. 2/ No cash alternative is offered instead of the stated prize. 3/ All entries must be submitted via e-mail. 4/ Employees of Guitar Interactive, Licklibrary, TC Electronic and their immediate families are ineligible for this competition. 5/ The winner will be chosen, at random, from registered readers of Guitar Interactive who provide the correct answers. 6/ The judges' decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into regarding this competition. 7/ Entrants 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.

*Yngwie Malmsteen on Song For America by Kansas*



"I dug into that and developed my songwriting around those terms."

"This is one of my absolute favorites - not so much this particular song as the band itself and Kerry Livgren (guitar/keyboards/synthesizer). He writes beautiful arrangements. The production on this has a dry, studio sound. They have a song called "Journey from Mariabronn" that is so good. They think about what they do. It's very orchestrated and well-arranged. I can say that about this song and any Kansas song. I think the earlier stuff is best. I like "Point

of No Return," "Dust in the Wind," and "Carry On My Wayward Son." This, and early Genesis records like *Selling England by the Pound*, is the best classical rock. *Selling England* is what turned me on to classical music. I said, "What chord progressions are these?" It had inverted chords, diminished chords, suspended chords. Then I realized it was all Bach. I dug into that and developed my songwriting around those terms." Yngwie Malmsteen

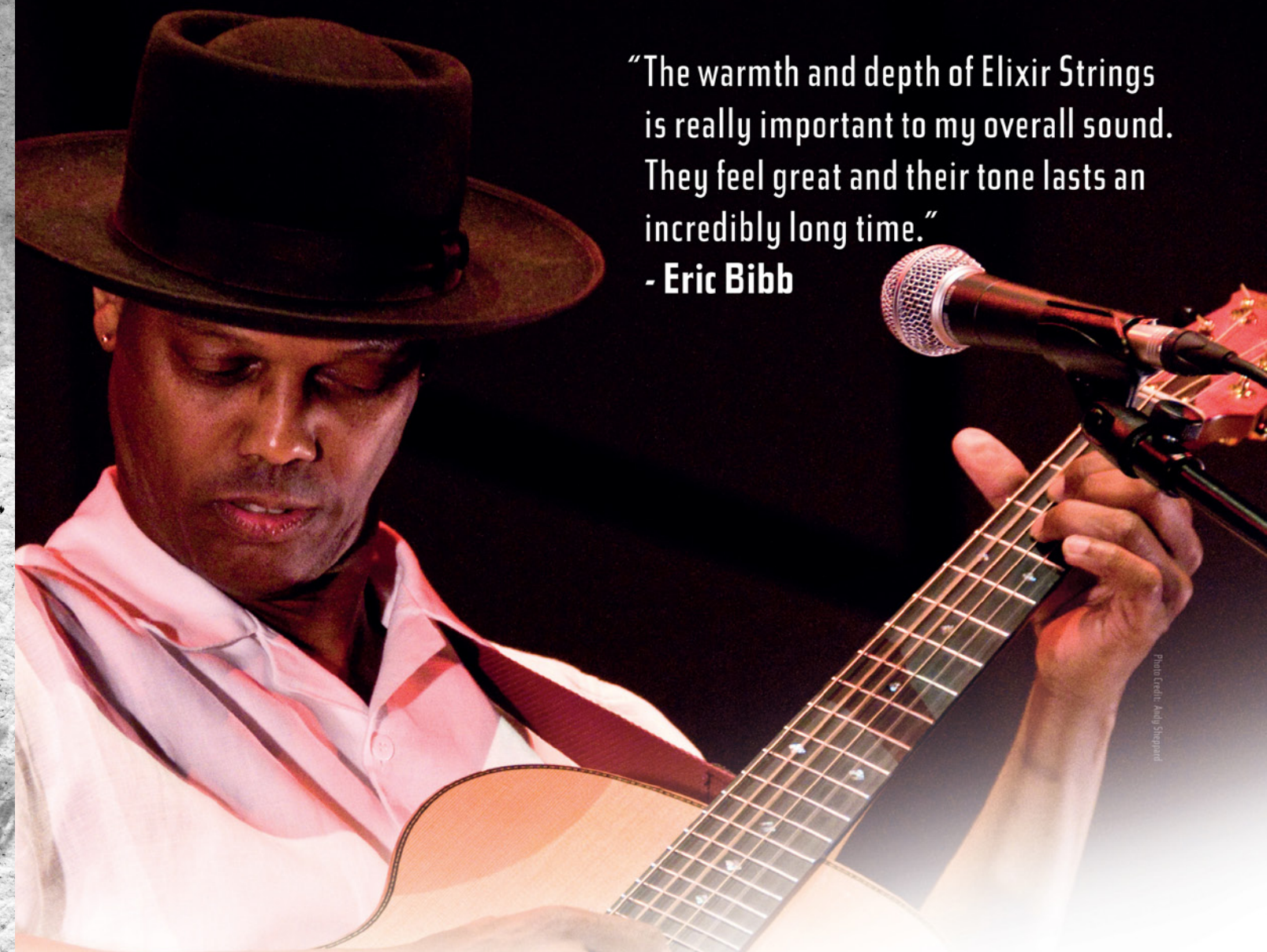


**John Stix** was the Founding Editor-In-Chief of *Guitar For the Practicing Musician Magazine* and a principal architect for the creation of *Guitar World* and *Guitar One Magazines*. He started *Guitar Recordings* where he signed Blues Saraceno, Mike Keneally, Mark Bonilla, Randy Coven, and Brad Gillis.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

[...>]



# Journey from Mariabronn by Kansas



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# VIDEO GEMS

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

## *She Drives Me Crazy*



"It's the advice I've heard most often in my 30 plus years as a music journalist. It's simple and it's true. A great song can always be stripped down to one voice and one instrument. Here's one way it was put to me: "I love songs live with just a guitar and a voice. When people say I'd like to send you a demo, should I go into the studio and do it? I say, listen, just put it down on guitar or piano and sing it because if it makes it there, if the song lives in that form, then no matter what you do to it, it will be a fine song. That's quite true." – Graham Nash.

Which brings us to this issue's hidden gem. We've got acoustic guitarist, vocalist, and visionary, Michael Hedges and his version of the 80s pop gem "She Drives me Crazy". The signature song of The Fine Young Cannibals, the original had a great melody supported by synth bass, a metronomic snare drum, a funky guitar rhythm part and delivered by the outstanding vocals of Roland Gift. Hedges dropped it down to voice and his grease and groove acoustic guitar playing. The original was simple and direct. Hedges' version is Spartan and compelling. I first heard it live, (there is no studio rendition) when he opened up for

CSN at the U.N. in N.Y.C. It was a radio broadcast and as I sat in my seat shaking my head, I smiled, knowing that I was recording it at home at the same time. Michael was barely playing chords, not when one well-struck note would do. It's the attack, the vibrato and where the note is placed in the groove, all coming together to outline the chord, the rhythmic funk and the attitude of why the song became a monster hit. One note, well placed with a vocal is what Graham Nash was talking about.

Hedges adds moments where the acoustic explodes in Townshend-like fashion, followed by harmonics that meld into a sound where melody and rhythm are the same. Add an exquisite sense of dynamics on the guitar with Hedges' falsetto and full throat vocals and the song shows its full worth in this barebones setting. More to the point, everyone I've shared this with in a mix has gotten back to me to say I love this song, and I really love this version. I agree, it's bare bones and as good as it gets.



"A great song can always be stripped down to one voice and one instrument."



# GUITAR INTERACTIVE'S ISSUE 6 FREE ENTRY D'ADDARIO GIVEAWAY

## THE RESULT!

In Gi Issue 6, we teamed-up with our good friends at D'Addario/Planet Waves for a great free entry giveaway.

We had three fabulous D'Addario prizes. Our First Prize winner gets a D'Addario/Planet Waves Essential Guitarist's Kit comprising 24 sets of D'Addario's fabulous nickel plated steel XL 110 strings plus one of the fine new Planet Waves NS-Mini headstock tuners, a Dual Action capo, a Planet Lock Strap, 50 picks, an instrument cable and a D'Addario T-shirt and mug!

Our second and third prize winners each receive a D'Addario/Planet Waves Guitar Care Kit comprising Three Step guitar polish, lemon oil, XLR8 fret cleaner, Head stand, a Pro string winder, polishing cloths, three sets of D'Addario EXL110 strings and - of course - a D'Addario T-shirt and mug!

## AND THE WINNERS ARE.....

### First Prize:

Barry Roberts from Birmingham, UK

### Second and Third Prizes:

Michael Van Malderen from Perk, Belgium and Stuart Marcham, from Surrey, UK

Congratulations to the winners and our thanks to D'Addario/Planet Waves!



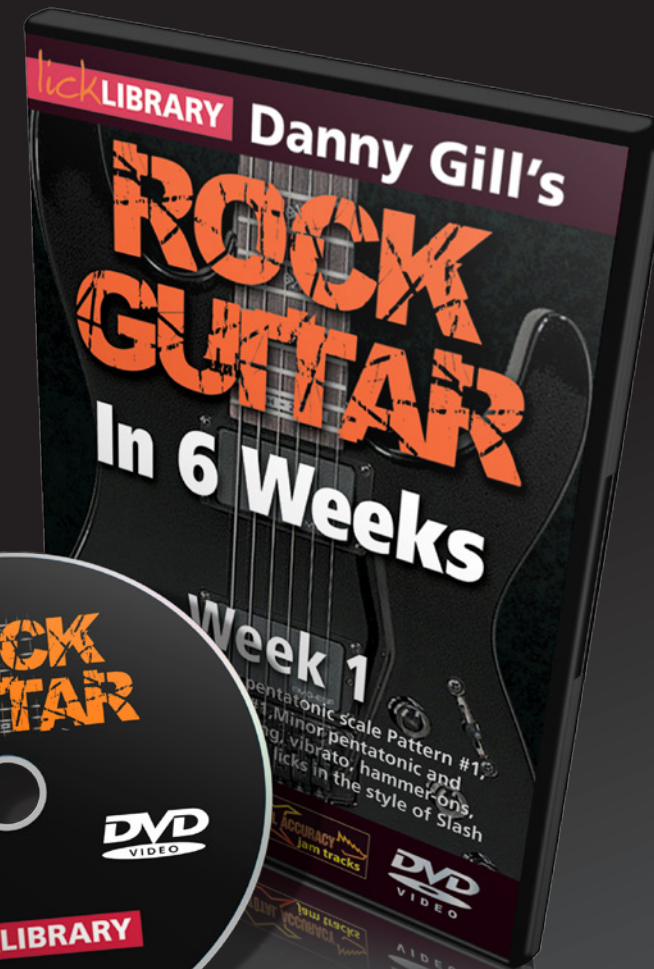
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## BOOK

REVIEWS

**Squier Electrics - 30 Years of Fender's Budget Guitar Brand**

Author: Tony Bacon

Publisher: Backbeat Books (Hal Leonard)

ISBN: 978-1-61713-022-9

Format: Paperback

Price £16.95/\$24.99

It's hard for someone who only knows today's guitar scene, where Fender is rampant, to comprehend how bad things were for the company in the early 1980s. Dogged by poor quality US production (bear that in mind when people start talking about 'vintage' Fenders from the 1970s and '80s!) the company had suffered badly under the ownership of CBS, which had bought the company from Leo Fender in 1965. It was also under serious assault from rampaging Japanese guitar makers who, in many cases, simply copied Fender's designs and made them better. The Japanese had sensibly worked out what players wanted - what Fender had last offered in Leo's day - and were giving it to them at excellent prices. If someone tells you that an early '80s Tokai, or Greco (to name just two) is one of the 'best Strats or Teles I've ever played' it would be wise to listen.

Fender's reaction, invigorated by a new management team, was to play the Japanese makers back at their own game. It started copying its own guitars, using Japanese factories to produce Japanese Fenders to undercut in their home market and then took a huge gamble: it introduced a new 'budget' range which it called 'Squier' - named, the author of this fascinating new book reminds us, not because Fender's lawyers couldn't spell 'Squire', but after a string making company, V.C. Squier, it had bought, also in 1965.

Fender's Japanese made Squiers were launched in 1982. Would US and European guitarists look down their noses at 'cheap Japanese Fenders'?

Would they decide they were so good they would never want to buy US-produced ones again, once US production re-started? Would it, in short, devalue the iconic brand?

As it turned out it was a stroke of genius and Squier rapidly became a great deal more than 'Fender's cheap brand' - indeed, it has its own set of devotees and it is for them this book is intended.

Tony Bacon has written a small library of guitar history books and this is a welcome addition. He has managed to get access to current and former Fender personnel who are notoriously shy of speaking publicly. If there is a criticism to be made, it could be that for a reader who really only cares about fingerboard radiuses and pickup windings, some of the contents might seem a bit corporate and political. But for the rest of us, it's a rare glimpse inside the Borg.

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 has passed. WIN - Squier Electrics - 30 Years of Fender's Budget Guitar Brand

We've got four copies of Tony Bacon's latest guitar history to give away - the true story behind the birth and rise to success of Squier - Fender's budget brand.

All you have to do to enter our competition is A/ be a registered subscriber to Guitar Interactive (it's completely free!) B/ Answer the following questions and C/ Send us an email with your answers. Four entrants with the correct answers will be chosen at random and will receive a free copy!

**QUESTIONS:****Q1. Fender called its budget brand 'Squier' after:**

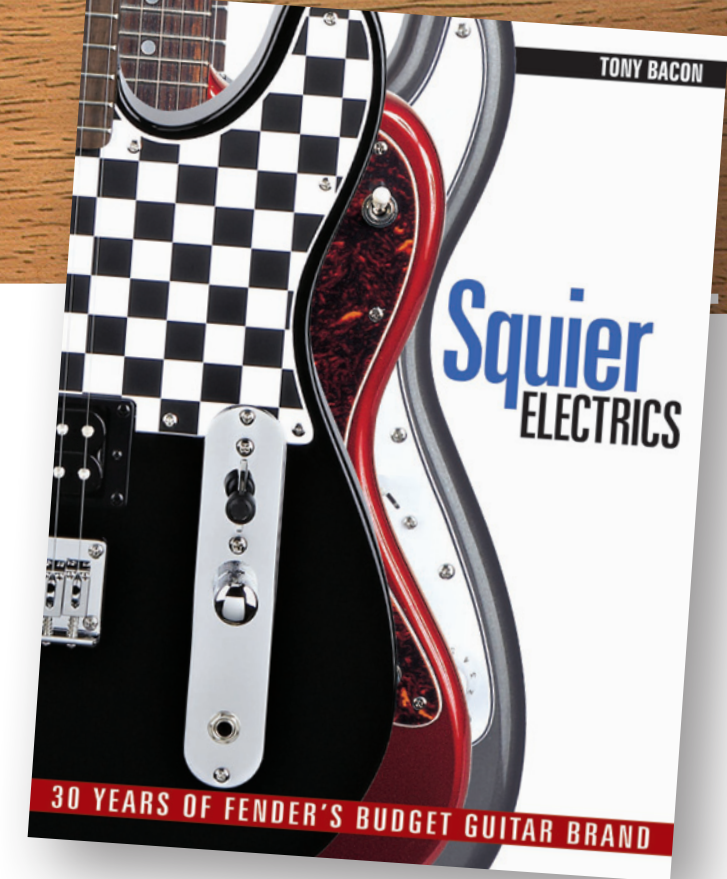
- A/ An early one pickup Telecaster variant?
- B/ A string making company it had bought?
- C/ A story in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales?

**Q2. CBS bought the Fender brand from Leo Fender in:**

- A/ 1963?
- B/ 1966?
- C/ 1965?

**Q3. In Guitar Interactive Issue 7, Tony Bacon wrote an article on the history of:**

- A/ The Fender Stratocaster?
- B/ The Fender Jaguar and Jazzmaster?
- C/ The Fender Mustang?



To Enter - Email your answers (e.g. Q1- B ) along with your name, country, email address and daytime phone number headed 'Squier Book Competition' to [competitionsiguitarmag.com](http://competitionsiguitarmag.com)

1/ All entries must be received by 9th April 2012. 2/ No cash alternative is offered instead of the stated prize. 3/ All entries must be submitted via e-mail. 4/ Employees of Guitar Interactive, Licklibrary, Backbeat Books, Hal Leonard, Fender and their immediate families are ineligible for this competition. 5/ The winner will be chosen, at random, from registered readers of Guitar Interactive who provide the correct answers. 6/ The judges' decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into regarding this competition. 7/ Entrants 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.





# MAB to the Max!

## This issue - **MAB on String Skipping**

Guitar Interactive is thrilled to welcome back one of the crowned kings of shredding and metal guitar - **Michael Angelo Batio!**



One of the techniques I like to use in combination with alternate picking passages is what is referred to as “string skipping.” This is a very important component of my soloing “style.” I love the sound and the fact that wide intervals are heard. I also like that when string skipping riffs are played fast and clean, they have the unique feeling and sound that reminds me of a runner not only moving forward, but side to side, making quick, precision cuts. This is my American Football reference! In this lesson, I demonstrate how to string skip between strings 1 and 3, then 2 and 4. I also demonstrate finishing up a longer string skipping riff by moving from strings 3 and 5 and finally 4 and 6.

I have always believed that if one practices and works on what they consider is the weakest part

of their technique, not only will that eventually improve but things that you are good at will become better as well. Alternate picking is very difficult for many guitar players. Many of you are familiar with the idea of using three notes per string passages on guitar. I think practicing three notes per string riffs are extremely helpful when working on Alternate picking, string skipping patterns. The reason is simply that the first note of every other string will be picked using an upstroke. This upstroke on a new string is the main reason alternate picking is so hard for so many. By taking alternate picking a step farther and employing string skipping exercises, your overall alternate picking technique will dramatically improve. I sincerely hope this helps.





PART

7

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THE

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# RHYTHM METHOD

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## Chord Arpeggios

Welcome to another instalment of the rhythm method. In this lesson we are going to take a look at the technique of chord arpeggios. This basic rhythm technique enables you to perform the notes of the chords separately, allowing the tones of the chord to be played individually as opposed to a full strumming motion. Although this technique may seem quite straightforward, it can be quite technically challenging, with the guitarist having to have a controlled and precise picking technique, enabling him to be consistent with his picking and also to be able to cross and jump strings to produce more interesting patterns.

Many famous guitarists have used this technique on many of their most famous tracks. One of the most basic and simple tunes that beginners often learn that uses chord arpeggios is The House of the Rising Sun by The Animals. Other famous tracks that use this technique include Stairway to Heaven by Led Zeppelin, Hotel California by The Eagles, Every Breath You Take by the

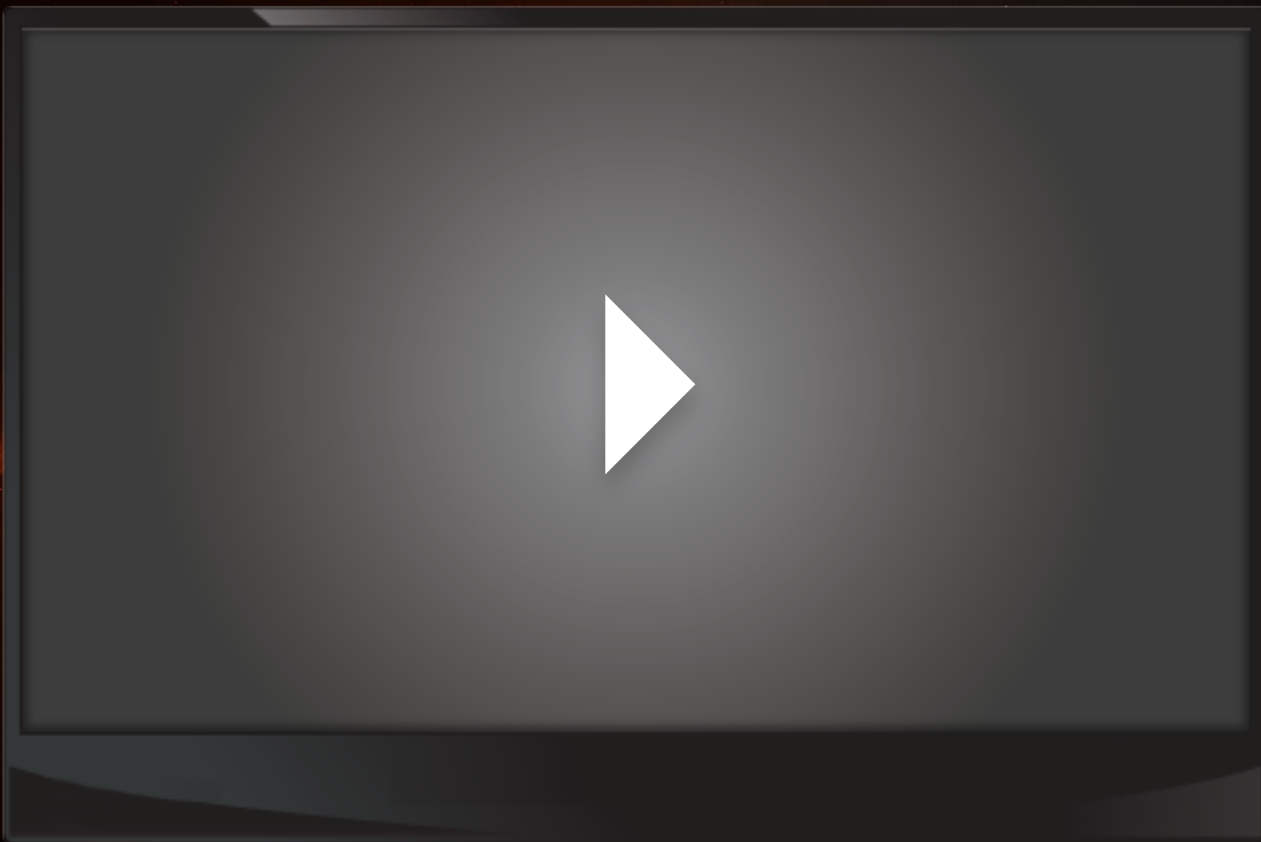
Police and Street Spirit by Radiohead - and there have been countless others. There are many other guitarists particularly known for using this technique, including one of my all time favourite guitarists Ty Tabor from the band Kings X.

The technique can be used to really add more dynamic contrast to your rhythm playing, especially if you go from full thick powerful rhythm strumming to sparse chord arpeggios - John Petrucci of Dream Theater uses it to great effect. He will create a modulated arpeggio part, with either flanger or vibrato effects, using a single coil tone, but still using a crunch tone with the guitar volume backed off, so the tone cleans up and becomes thinner. He will often double this part with an acoustic guitar in the studio, or live with the piezo pickup on his Musicman, adding a crisp sparkle to the arpeggio part. Remember, the tone of your guitar is very important with this technique, as if you are using a crunch tone, too much distortion would make the part sound messy.

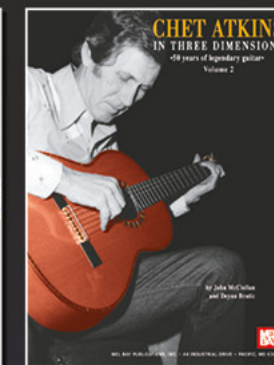
**Jamie Humphries** explains one of the most useful techniques for spicing up your rhythm guitar parts..

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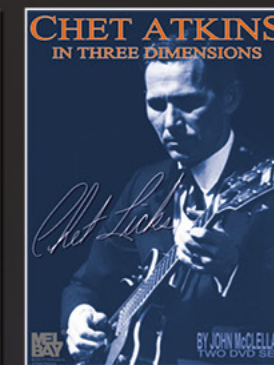




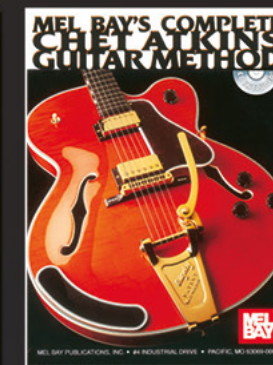
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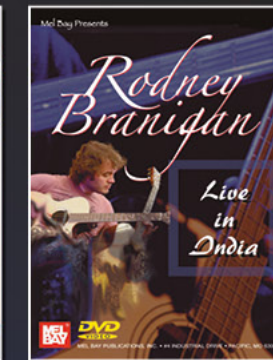
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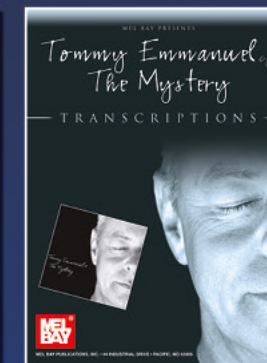


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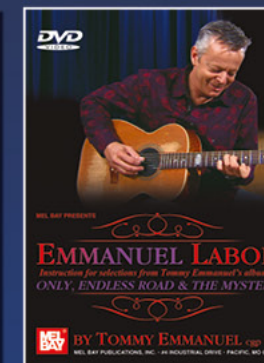
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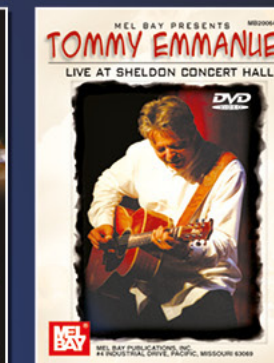
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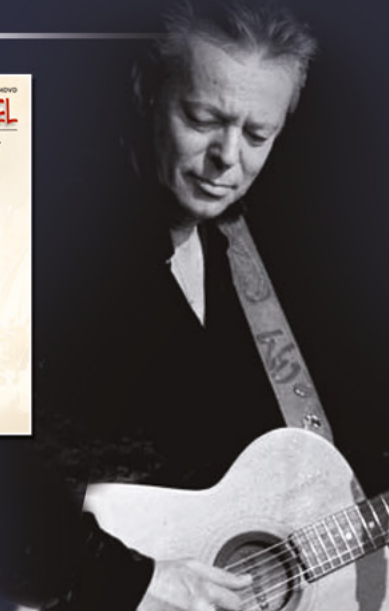
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## "Be sure to pay attention to the tone used in the video lesson.."

Now let's discuss the technical side of this technique. One of the things that I am often asked about this technique is whether alternate picking should be used. I think this is very much down to both the individual and also what type of part is being performed. I normally find if I am playing a more simplistic ascending and descending arpeggio pattern, I will use a downward picking motion across the strings, and an upward motion coming back across the strings. If I am playing a more intricate part, such as something like Street Spirit, then I would use an alternate picking technique as I would find this much more accurate. I would advise that you experiment with some simple chord progressions, or even some of the example tracks that I have mentioned.

Now let's take a look at this month's example piece. This month I have chosen to move away from a Blues based sounding track, to something slightly more contemporary. The inspiration for this track was both Kings X guitarist Ty Tabor and Radiohead. The track is made up of three sections: verse, chorus, and an alternative verse. The verse makes use of some pretty straightforward chords, although I have used a minor inversion, Am/C, if you cast your mind back to earlier columns, we discussed major inversions. The picking pattern for the verse is pretty sparse, so make sure you experiment with different approaches. For the chorus I have included a descending style arpeggio progression, I

have made use of open strings, and chords that descend on the A and D strings, the open strings giving them more interesting extensions. The alternative verse features a looping figure. This is pure Radiohead; I love how those guys orchestrate their guitar parts and set up melodic interplay between different rhythm figures. This part features some pretty wide stretches, so make sure you get your hand in a position that helps with them.

That pretty much ties up this month's lesson, I hope you enjoy it, and find these examples inspiring. Be sure to pay attention to the tone used in the video lesson, and make sure you push these ideas further and experiment with ideas of your own.



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BY RICK GRAHAM

# GUITAR ROADMAPS

## Pentatonic Double Stops

Let's continue our exploration of the humble but remarkable minor Pentatonic scale! In this issue I'd like to focus our attention on double stops. If you haven't heard of this term before don't worry as it is nothing complicated. All it means is that we fret or 'stop' two strings at the same time. Personally, I've always loved the use of double stops within a solo as, for me, it adds a different element to a solo, often adding a lot of colour and interest, when used creatively of course.

Using our good old friend the minor pentatonic scale we can get to grips with some great sounding double stops simply by manipulating the scale shape. As it is a two note per string scale, we can take pairs of strings on either side of our box shape 1st position. What we end up with is a succession of 4th and 3rd intervals as we ascend through the scale. These can sound really nice if used sparingly within a solo and notice that they have a distinct Oriental sound. By approaching double stops in this fashion, we still have a clear mental picture of the scale upon which we are building them which can make life a whole lot easier. Once you have practised the double stops taken from our 1st position minor pentatonic, we can then proceed to play the double stops built upon the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th positions. If you know your

pentatonic positions back to front, as I'm sure you all do (nudge, nudge!) you'll find it very easy to whiz through all of the double stops available using the minor pentatonic. Very useful indeed.

We can take these double stops a step further by staying within the confines of the Pentatonic framework but playing the double stops in a staggered fashion i.e. one note at a time. So, taking the first double stop at fret 5 of the low E and A strings, all we have to do is play the low E string first followed by the A string. I use hybrid picking technique to achieve this but feel free to use any picking technique you wish to. Again, we can practice this by advancing through the Pentatonic positions.



[...&gt;]



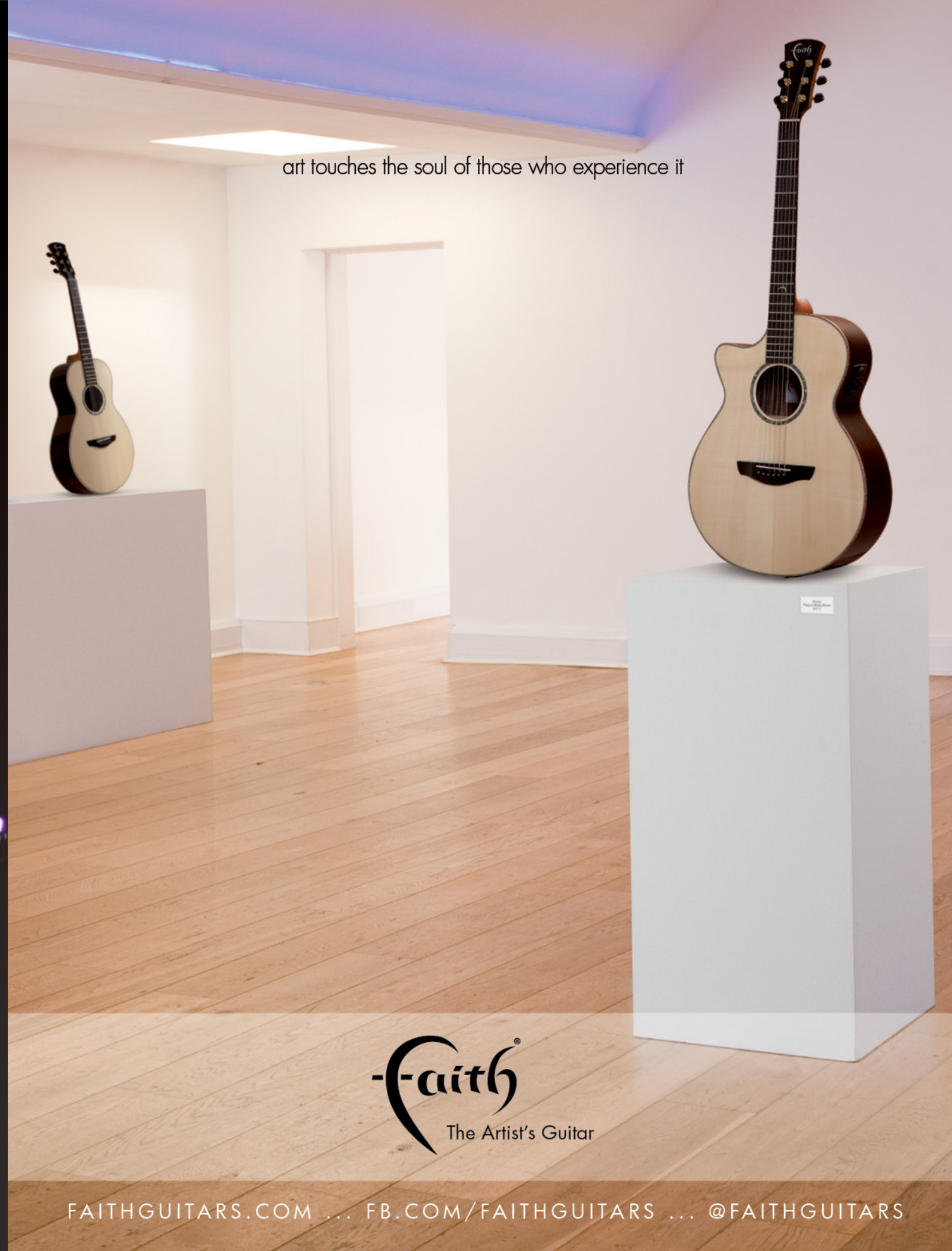
Taking it even further still, we can take the notes of the first double stop and play them on the low E string only, playing fret 5 and fret 10 followed by a regular double stop on fret 8 of the low E and 7 of the A. Of course if we do this the first 2 notes are not technically double stops but we are using the idea of double stops and taking it into more creative territory, which is great in my book!

Try experimenting as much as you can with these ideas as they can yield some very interesting results which will, hopefully, add more colours to your musical palette.

Hope you've enjoyed this and I'll catch up with you next issue!



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# USING MODES TO EXPAND OUR CHORD VOICINGS *Part Three*

## THE Tom Quayle COLUMN

For the last two issues we've been looking at expanding our chord vocabulary and understanding by using modes in diatonic harmony. So far we've looked at the formula or intervallic construction of each mode and applied this formula to each chord within a key to produce a series of diatonic 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> chords. For this issue we'll be expanding even further by using these modal formulas to produce diatonic 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> chords in a major key. If you're new to this idea I recommend you check out the last two back issues of the magazine and read my column in order to get up to speed.

Before continuing let's remind ourselves of the formula for each mode:

Ionian/Major – 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Dorian – 1 2 b3 4 5 6 b7

Phrygian – 1 b2 b3 4 5 b6 b7

Lydian – 1 2 3 #4 5 6 7

Mixolydian – 1 2 3 4 5 6 b7

Aeolian – 1 2 b3 4 5 b6 b7

Locrian – 1 b2 b3 4 b5 b6 b7

Remember that we're assigning a chord to each mode using roman numerals. Let's take the key of C major giving us:

Chord I – Cmaj7 (Ionian)

Chord II – Dm7 (Dorian)

Chord III – Em7 (Phrygian)

Chord IV – Fmaj7 (Lydian)

Chord V – G7 (Mixolydian)

Chord VI – Am7 (Aeolian)

Chord VII – Bm7b5 (Locrian)

In order to work out the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> intervals for each chord and add them into the voicing, we need to remember that the 11<sup>th</sup> is the same as the 4<sup>th</sup> degree of the scale and the 13<sup>th</sup> is the same as the 6<sup>th</sup> degree. We'll deal with the 11<sup>th</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> first.

The rule for adding an 11<sup>th</sup> to a chord is that we usually replace the very neutral sounding 5<sup>th</sup> with our 11<sup>th</sup>. As the 5<sup>th</sup> has very little bearing on the sound of the chord (it simply adds body to the sound) we can remove it and replace it with the much more colourful

[...>]



11<sup>th</sup>. This works for each chord in the key with one exception – the I chord. The 11<sup>th</sup> (F) for the Cmaj7 (I chord in the key of C) clashes very badly with the 3<sup>rd</sup> (E) of the chord so we don't play a Cmaj11 chord in the key of C major. We don't normally play an 11<sup>th</sup> chord on Chord I in any major key due to this undesirable clash. You'll hear me demonstrate this on the video for reference.

Adding in the 11<sup>th</sup> to each of the remaining chords gives us the following:

Chord I – Cmaj7

Chord II – Dm11

Chord III – Em11

Chord IV – Fmaj7#11 (the Lydian mode contains a #11 interval)

Chord V – G11

Chord VI – Am11

Chord VII – Bm11 (no 5<sup>th</sup> in the voicing so we don't call it Bm11b5)

You'll find lots of voicings for these chords in the TAB section at the back of the magazine. Study them and try using them in place of the standard 7<sup>th</sup> chords for a prettier sound.

Now onto 13<sup>th</sup> chords.

We can play a 13<sup>th</sup> chord for every chord in the key without creating any undesirable clashes in the voicings. If the accompanying

mode contains a b6 we use the term b13 in the chord symbol. The 13<sup>th</sup> is again going to replace the 5<sup>th</sup> at the top of the voicing. This gives us the following chords:

Chord I – Cmaj13

Chord II – Dm13

Chord III – Em7b13

Chord IV – Fmaj13

Chord V – G13

Chord VI – Am7b13

Chord VII – Bm7b13

By their nature 13<sup>th</sup> chords sound fairly dense and complex and should be used with taste rather than constantly and with a sense of what works for the genre of music you are comping in. Again, you'll find the voicings in the back of the magazine.

Next issue we'll be moving on to creating and playing over modal chord progressions using what we've learned so far. See you there!



## USEFUL LINKS

[www.tomquayle.co.uk/](http://www.tomquayle.co.uk/)





# MICHAEL CASSWELL



## PRO CONCEPTS8

### STRING SKIPPING

Hi everyone. This issue I have explored the cool sound of string skipping, but before we talk about this, I want to have a quick review of what we have looked at so far in previous issues.

First of all I talked about the importance of always thinking in a creative way and applying it to improvisation. Creative thinking is the quickest way to sounding better than you do now, because technique on its own isn't enough to set you apart in 2012, it's emotion, feel and creativity that can really make you stand out.

We also looked at vibrato, string bending, and some more advanced creative bends and double stop ideas. String bends, combined with vibrato, are the two things you have to get right before anything else. No amount of creativity will hide a nasty vibrato, or a poorly executed string bend.

Then there was hybrid picking. A great tool to have at your disposal that always sounds cool, without sounding dated, or like you're trying too hard!

In the last couple of issues, it was some slide techniques and adding chromaticism to your playing, both of which are very strong approaches to explore, because they add so much to the sound of you as a player.

Through all my tutorials there has been occasional use of the whammy bar and general talk about time, rhythm and good feel, so we have quite a list of concepts building up as each issue goes by. With time allowed, I can only scratch the surface of each subject,

[...>]



# ALL THE SCALE INFORMATION IS LARGELY D MINOR PENTATONICS AND WHEN I ADD ANY EXTRA NOTES, THEY WILL BELONG TO THE D DORIAN MODE.



but if I start you off thinking about each concept, and I put a tiny part of it on the fretboard, so you can see and hear it, then hopefully you can see some ways to improve as a player, and I get a little bit of job satisfaction.

So this issue I wanted to show you some string skipping ideas. There are actually two things going on here, because as I am showing you the concept, I am also doing it on the spot unplanned, using the creative thinking approach, hopefully building the idea to a finished run or phrase, which you splice-up and steal. All the scale information is largely D minor pentatonics and when I add any extra notes, they will belong to the D dorian mode.

So string skipping is all about larger than normal interval jumps. In order to create a lick or phrase that has a large interval in there, we generally have to think about skipping a string to get to the desired note, which hopefully is a long way apart from the previous note. Sometimes you can skip, or miss out, two or three strings to create a really big leap, which has a really nice 'unplayable' sound to it.

What also works nicely are huge position shifts with repeating licks. I think I put

one or two of these into our run, and I am not sure these can be classified as string skips, but they are certainly effective as a colour. Having mentioned 'colour', that's what our list above is all about. If you can create different sounds, tones, pace, feel and excitement, not just in your solos, but in your rhythm playing as well, then you have a better chance of getting respect as a player, and even turning professional to make guitar playing your career. Obviously overplaying is never cool, but having the chops to be musical is!

I hope you enjoy the finished result - all improvised - and as always, you can contact me on my Michael Casswell musician/band Facebook page, or on my Licklibrary forum, where I try to make time to get back to everybody. Hopefully see you all here next issue. MC



## CHECK OUT THE DVDs



## USEFUL LINKS

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Hi everyone and welcome once again to my Guitar Interactive column.

Last issue we looked at some more hybrid picking ideas incorporating some arpeggios and legato ideas. This time around we are looking at some licks which still feature hybrid picking and legato but we have a slightly more Rock/Blues flavour for the first three licks. Players such as Gary Moore and Paul Gilbert sound very different when they play but the one thing they have in common is they take traditional Blues lick ideas and play them at warp speed. Licks of this type have become very popular with Rock and Metal players. Using the hybrid picking technique is perfect for executing these ideas and can also help to make very cool variations.

Lick No. 1 uses what some people have called the dorian hybrid scale. Basically we take the standard dorian scale and add the flatted 5th, mainly for two reasons: first it sounds good and second it's very conveniently placed. The first, second and third strings have three notes on the same frets (this will become apparent upon learning the first lick). Looking at the first half of the lick, we see the dorian hybrid scale put to good use with an ascending legato idea, we then see as the lick descends the hybrid picking comes into play. The scale of choice for the descending lick is the A minor pentatonic. This variation of both scale and technique give us the ability to spice up licks and put our own twist on them.

Lick No. 2 also uses the A dorian hybrid scale. We start out with a grouping of seven notes immediately taking the lick away



[...>]

# Stuart Bull's

## GUITAR WORLD

### hybrid picking





somewhat from the standard Blues format. We then move through the second and third strings, using the A minor pentatonic scale for our descent. The hybrid picking technique is once again in use here. This lick demonstrates how we can take lick No. 1 and come up with a cool variation. I suggest you squeeze as much juice as you can from these licks!

Lick No. 3 uses three ideas. The first idea is an Am arpeggio using hybrid picking. The second idea is legato line using the A natural minor scale; on completion of this second section we jump to the 13th position to play a descending hybrid picking run using the D Blues scale. We can see at this point that by merging techniques scales odd grouping ideas etc. we can have an endless flow of licks and phrases.

Lick No. 4 brings a new idea to the table. This lick starts out with a combination of scale and arpeggio brought together. We have added the 9th (B note) to the A minor arpeggio, still using hybrid picking. The added 9th brings a little spice to the arpeggio and also makes the timing and placement of the notes within the lick nice and interesting. At this point we have a standard legato phrase using three notes per string, then we ascend to the 10th position to sweep down an E minor Arpeggio.

We have looked at some interesting combinations of scales techniques and ideas, hopefully you are filled with enthusiasm to build your own licks, phrases and ideas. See you next time. Have a nice play!



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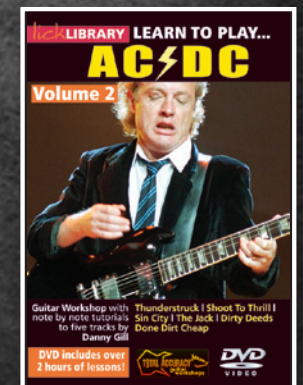
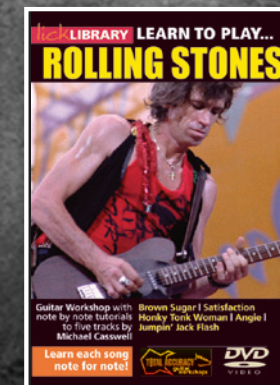
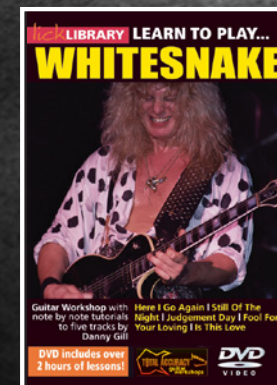
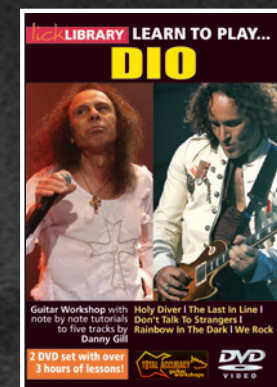
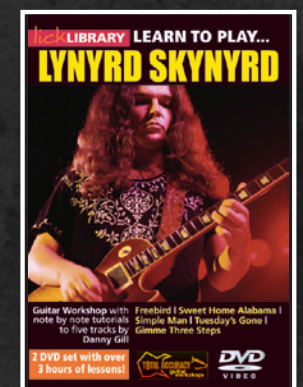
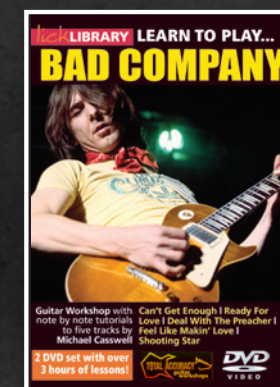
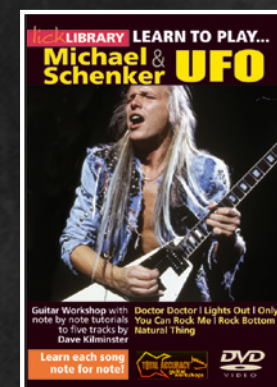
**Giorgio Serci** - Lesson\_Aguado



**Rick Graham** - Minor Pentatonic Double Stops



**Maneli Jamal** - Lesson 2



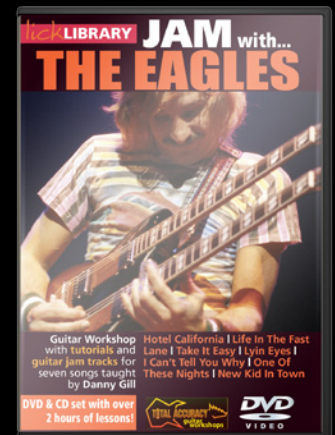
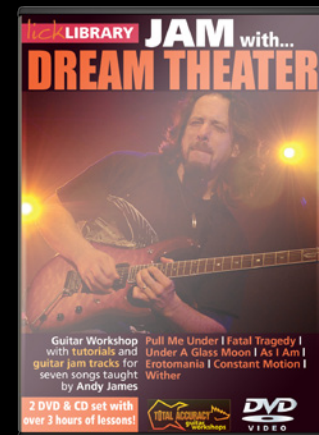
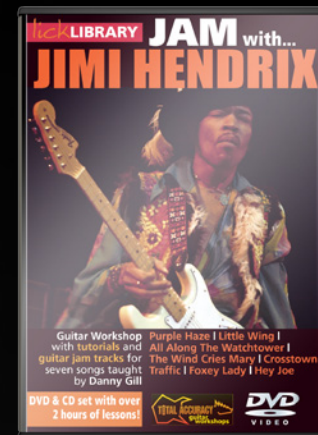
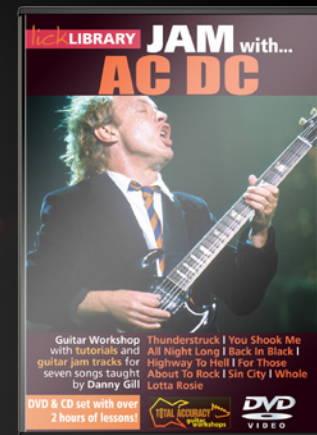
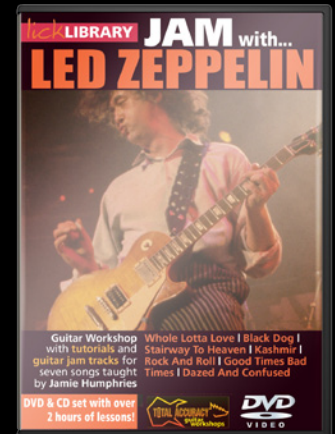
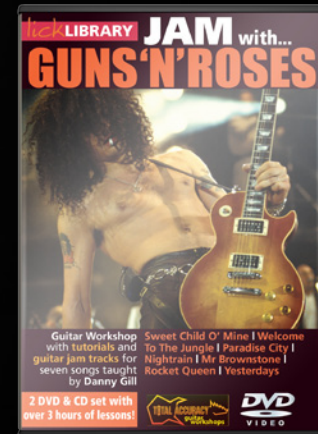
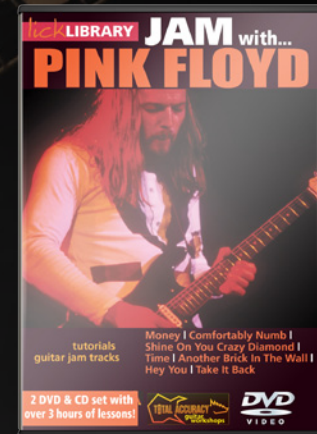
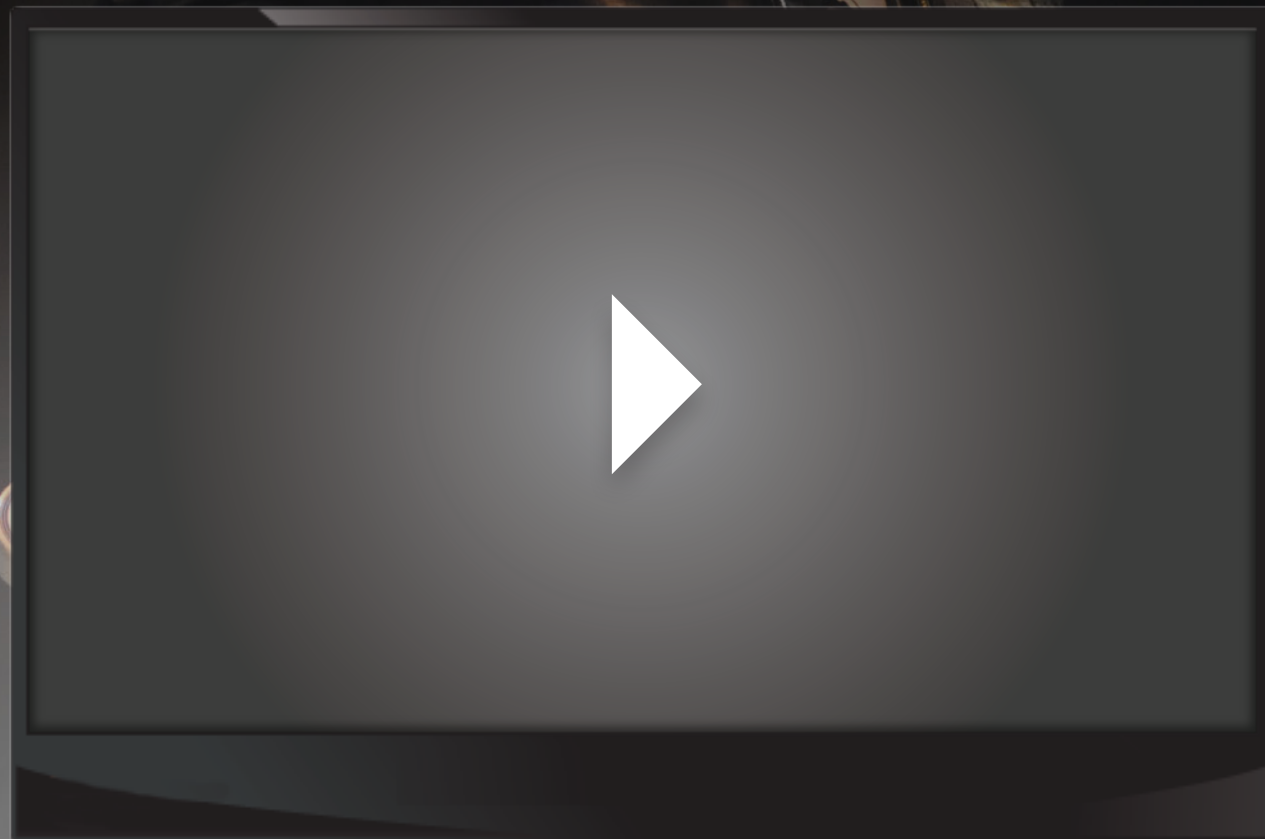


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# Reviews

Welcome to Guitar Interactive's  
reviews section.

We've headed into boutique country for this issue with reviews of a clutch of products designed to prize-open even the tightest wallets!

If the very best in hardwired boutique amps appeals, how about a luxurious 3 Monkeys head? Or what turned out to be a stunning new tube head from Orange? Looking for something easily portable - maybe a ZT Lunchbox?

If it's effects you're after, we review two of Wampler's finest and we take a first look at TC Electronic's new John Petrucci Dreamscape signature pedal. That unit is so hot we've even arranged to give one away in one away in a competition!

Guitars? Of course! Tokai rocked the guitar world in the 1980s with its immaculate

replicas. We've got our hands on a brand new handmade Tokai from the x company. Can the tiger still roar? We've also got a fabulous PRS nearfield-equipped model to go with our Brent Mason interview, a bargain-basement Ibanez and a really impressive debut from the fast-growing Fret-King range.

Each issue we try to mix it up, with something for everyone. Why not email and tell us what you'd like us to look at? Just email [editor@iguitarmag.com](mailto:editor@iguitarmag.com)



Gary Cooper - Editor





## 3 Monkeys Grease Monkey

Monkey business - **Jamie Humphries** gets to grips with the latest boutique amp from North Carolina's 3 Monkeys.

The boutique amp market has grown like wildfire over the past few years, with numerous small manufacturers coming along to offer what's becoming a bewildering choice of hand-wired products. Why? Well, mostly they claim to offer tones that 'mass produced' amps don't and they also have that magic ingredient - exclusivity!

3 Monkeys amps are hand-built in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA, and are the brainchild of Greg Howard (a touring guitar tech for the likes of Green Day, Aerosmith, Jimmy Page and the Black Crowes) Ossie Ahsen, (a custom amp builder for the likes of Aerosmith and the Goo Goo Dolls) and Brad Whitford, Aerosmith's rhythm guitarist.

The story goes that, following the end of their 2002 tour, Aerosmith went into the studio to record a blues/rock album called "Honkin' on BoBo". Greg was asked to find vintage gear capable of producing a more 'organic' sound and in 2003 he came across the Blockhead Amps brand, being built by Ossie Ahsen. Brad Whitford duly became a Blockhead user and by 2006 the idea of starting an amp company was being mooted as a partnership between the three.

The first 3 Monkeys amp saw the light of day in 2008 (The Orangutan) and the brand was off and running, immediately gaining

ground in the States, as word spread among professional players.

The model that we were sent to review, the Grease Monkey II, was kindly loaned to us by the exclusive UK retailer, Tone World, and is a strikingly retro looking creation. It's a hand-wired 30 Watt all valve head with red Tolex covering and an impressive crushed glass fascia. Looks are subjective, but the consensus at Gi Towers was that we thought it looked amazing.

Inside the handsome box ('no rectangles', the company proudly says of its shaped cases), the Grease Monkey II features three 12AX7 pre-amp tubes and four EL84 power amp tubes, not to mention a custom built 3 Monkey's transformer, with everything mounted on an aluminium powder coated chassis, for real on-the-road ruggedness. At the rear of the amp there is an opening for cooling, which also gives you a great view of the insides, where you can see the impressive components and build quality.

The 3 Monkey's controls feature vintage style chicken head knobs and include Master Volume, Cut, (which when turned clockwise cuts top-end frequencies), Bass, Treble, Pre-Amp volume and a Shape control, which effects the bottom end. The front panel also has the regular power and standby, while the



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC 

[...>]



## Three Monkeys delivers just what you'd hope for from an amp of this class.

rear of the amp has the speaker outputs, plus a switch for hi or low gain input. This amp is very traditional and does not have an effects loop.

I tested the 3 Monkeys with my main Musicman guitar which has very low output traditional pickups fitted and from the moment I plugged in and hit a chord, I knew I was in for a real treat. This amp oozes quality. You can feel it from the moment you turn the controls - leaving aside the electronic aspect, even the feel of them is luxuriously smooth, solid - the sort of component quality you'd hope to find in from a boutique

amp. And tonally, exactly the same applied.

With some amps, you get to a certain point where the controls appear to do nothing, but not the Grease Monkey! The cut control is an engineer's dream and the shape control, which has three settings - bright, regular and meaty - enables you to go right from thin, glassy tones to thick, ballsy, full-bodied sounds.

The Three Monkeys delivers just what you'd hope for from an amp of this class. Turn-up the pre-amp and you're into that classic, rich British crunch tone and it's vintage all the way, from clean to overdriven. This is not a high gain head and the crunch is pure and natural with plenty of depth and harmonic







overtones. It's wonderfully responsive, doesn't compress when the gain's up full and there is plenty of headroom, so when you back-off on your guitar, it cleans up perfectly.

As we always say - check out the video!

There's no escaping the fact that this is a very classy act indeed. Yes, it's expensive but what you're getting is a product aimed at the serious guitar player, who is willing to pay for supreme build quality, mil-spec components and fabulous tone. The Grease Monkey II is one of the best boutique amps I have ever had the pleasure of playing through, so go check one out, you won't be disappointed!



Our thanks to Manchester's Toneworld for the loan of this product: [www.toneworld.co.uk](http://www.toneworld.co.uk)

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# ZT Lunchbox Combo

Has California's ZT created the ultimate ultra-portable combo? **Rick Graham** thinks it might just have...

Formed in 2008, the Californian company ZT Amplifiers claims that to have achieved a perfect balance of affordability, practicality and world class tone. Well, I can't help but be sceptical when a company makes claims like that, but, ever the optimist, I had my fingers crossed that they'd prove me wrong.

First things first, this combo is small. Make that very small. In fact, at first glance it's hard to believe that this tiny package is capable of making anything louder than bedroom levels, let alone the 200 Watts that it is purportedly able to push out. Well, we shall see.

Looking at the amp you'd also be forgiven for thinking that the 6 1/2" inch speaker is housed within a metal cabinet. It's actually made of MDF, with a silver high gloss finish to give it that metal look and I must say it does look like a very tidy package indeed! Measuring in at a tiny 7.9" x 9.8" x 4.4" (192mm x 250mm x 112mm) and weighing in at 9.5lbs/4.3kg, it is very unlikely to give you a hard time carrying it to and from a gig, as it really takes up very little space. You could stick it in a back pack with a few cables and you'd be ready to go!

Despite its diminutive dimensions, the Lunchbox is packed with lots of genuinely useful features. The amp offers four main

controls: from left to right: Ambience, Tone, Volume and Gain. At the rear you find yet more goodies, including a voltage selector, a speaker output, so that you can hook it up to an extension cabinet, a headphone out with headphone volume control (which also doubles as a direct out for input straight into a P.A. or home recording set up), an auxiliary input, so that you can hook up your iPod or mp3 player to the amp for backing tracks and last - but definitely not least - a speaker mute switch which comes in very handy if you want to monitor your direct signal. This is a good range of facilities to find on any amp - let alone on one so diminutive - and suggests that ZT has gone right back to basics and asked itself what do players really need?

So what about the sound? Not expecting too much from such a tiny package? Let me tell you it is very loud! As I said before, it's really hard to imagine such a big sound coming from such a small amp but believe me, it holds its own - and then some!

And then there's the sheer quality of ZT's sound. Our video demonstrates this to best effect, but starting out with all of the controls in a flat setting produced a superb tone which got me very excited to see what kind of territory I would find myself in with

a little further exploration. The answer was that 'Tone' control gave me access to very punchy thick Jazzy type response, all the way right through to bright shimmering cleans and really twangy Country style lead tones, without ever sacrificing the quality. This is very impressive indeed!

Pushing the gain to max delivered a very raw, but classy, sounding crunch, perfect for Blues rhythm and soloing. I personally found it to be ideal with this setting, which I could then

clean up via the guitar's volume control. This amp takes pedals very well too, offering a lovely creamy saturated lead tone with the pedal that we popped in front of it. The 'Ambience' control when on full gives the sound of an open backed cabinet and while it's not a replacement for reverb, it's great to have it there, just in case you feel the need for a bit more openness in your sound.

You just can't fail to be impressed by this little amp. In fact, it does it an injustice to



[...>]

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

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keep referring to its size as that is really is no indication of what it is capable of.

If you're looking for a very sensibly priced, portable amp with huge volume and world class tone, the 'Lunchbox' may very well be the answer to your prayers. We were impressed. Very impressed!



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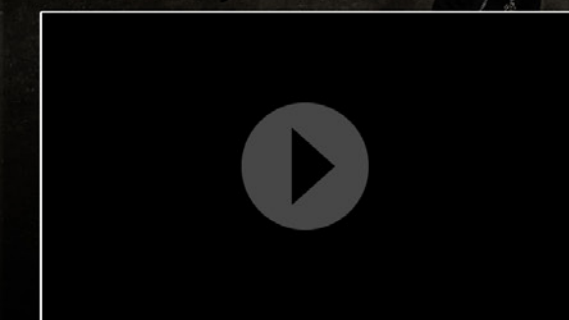
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# Orange TH-100 Amplifier

It's the highest Wattage, highest gain amp Orange has ever made. Funnily enough, **Tom Quayle** found even more reasons to fall for the TH-100.

Orange has been on a roll for the past few years. Since Gi started we haven't found an Orange amp that we haven't liked. The morale at Orange has been high, too. Founder Cliff Cooper (no relation to Captain Grumpy, our editor) recently won a lifetime achievement award from the Music Industry Association in the UK and there has never been a time when we've seen more Orange gear in working bands' backlines that we're seeing now.

Which brings us to the TH-100, an amp we were itching to get our hands on, the company's top-end TH series head and the bigger brother of the TH-30 combo and head. It is a 100 Watt unit, utilising four 12AX7 tubes in the preamp and four very British sounding EL34's in the power section. A 12AT7 in the tube buffered effects loop completes the line up.

In order to create a versatile amplifier for both live and studio use and allow users to really utilise the power tube section, Orange has supplied four power options via a Full/Half power selector switch on the front and a Four/Two power tube selection on the back. This allows the user to select between two tube operation at 35w or 70w and four tube operation at 50w and 100w. These power options greatly affect the tones on offer and

allow much greater power tube saturation at lower volumes with just the flick of a switch.

This level of simplicity follows through to the control section of the front panel, consisting of just six control knobs and a channel select switch. The TH-100 has clean and dirty channels, each with independent EQ and volume controls. The clean channel has Volume, Bass and Treble and the Dirty channel consists of Volume, a supremely useful Shape control and the obligatory Gain. Speaker outputs are available for all standard cab combinations and the head is built to the usual high standards that we've come to expect from Orange with a instantly recognisable design and bomb proof construction.

For the review we plugged the TH-100 into our straight-faced Orange PPC 4x12 cab and mic'd up with an SM57 and AKG414 microphones. We started in full power mode with the clean channel and a small dose of delay in the effects loop. With the volume about half way up I was instantly blown away by the dynamics present and the warm, fat tone from my neck pickup, presented with no trace of harshness or breakup from the power section. Cranking the volume to 3 o'clock gave insane amounts of volume and a beautiful crunch tone with spangly highs and



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



tight bottom end from the EL34's. This really feels and reacts like a boutique hand-wired amp and feels very classy, inspiring you to play better!

Rolling the volume back on my guitar allowed for clean tones with no loss of high end or attack. Switching down to half power produced a beautiful AC/DC style crunch tone with a surprising amount of drive at an acceptable volume. Once in two tube mode, with the head set to 35 Watts, power tube break up happens earlier on the volume control and crunch tones can be achieved easily and rolled back for spanky cleans via your guitar. The EQ section is very effective and remains musical even at the extremes. This is a versatile head indeed and

we've not even checked out the drive channel yet!

Switching over to the drive channel, the first thing that becomes apparent is just how much gain is available on the TH-100. This is Orange's highest gain head yet and if you want de-tuned chug with a tight bottom end and cutting highs you'll find it here. An alternative and darker clean tone can be achieved on this channel using the gain at lower levels with all ranges of filth available in between this and the maximum setting. The lack of dedicated Treble, Middle and Bass controls may seem tonally limiting at first but actually, replacing these with the shape control works very well and simplifies the

search for a great tone. In the left most position you achieve the most vintage, 'squashy' tone. Dialling the knob to the right produces ever more modern, scooped tones more suited to metal and higher gain settings. With the control all the way to the right a super-tight metal tone, bereft of all dims, is attained and it's perfect for power chords and palm-muted chugging riffs. Check out the video to hear for yourself.

It's amazing that Orange has combined a superb clean channel with a super-high gain drive channel and managed to produce the best of both worlds. Combined with the versatile power section and tube buffered effects loop this TH 100 presents a hard to resist package. What is

more, it comes at an amazing price compared with some of the 'boutique' competition, which, in many cases, it simply out-performs. That's why, even though it is not exactly a cheap piece of kit, we have rated the TH 100 as highly as any amp we've ever reviewed: because, compared against other professional class amps of this class, it is actually stonking value for money. If you need a versatile head and don't want to have a masters degree to operate it then look no further. I may well get one myself!





# Ibanez GRG150DX

Life's not all about PRS, Suhr and Musicman - however much we like to dream! What most of us want - particularly beginners, hard-up students and those of us without oil wells in the garden - is a guitar that doesn't cost an arm and a leg but will still do the business. Enter the Ibanez entry-level Gio range. 'Entry level'? Doesn't that mean cheap? Not necessarily, says **Rick Graham**.

Ibanez has been a force to be reckoned with ever since Hoshino Gakki, the owners of the Ibanez brand, decided to move away from copying 'classic' American guitars and concentrate on creating its own original designs. The change paved the way for Ibanez to focus all of its efforts on creating a unique brand of instruments with innovative designs. This culminated in the 'Iceman' and 'Roadster' series guitars which were well received and which also led to their extremely successful superstrat series during the 80's and 90's. Couple that with an artist roster which reads like a who's who in music and it's clear that Ibanez is one of the most popular guitar manufacturers out there today.

For this review our attention is focused upon the GRG150DX which is a guitar from their entry level 'GIO' range, described on the website as being 'Ibanez quality in a more affordable package' and as an Ibanez user for most of my formative playing years, I'm very keen to see if Ibanez can still cut the mustard at this level!

The GRG series, which falls under the GIO range, has essentially been based upon the now classic Ibanez RG design but for a guitar to come at a fraction of the price of the original range it is inevitable that corners will have been cut - so what do we need to look for?

In terms of shape, the 150DX is as decisive as they come and

with its unmistakable body and headstock design it oozes no-nonsense Rock attitude. Just like its big brother, the GRG body is a solid piece of Basswood however I doubt this can be quite the same grade to the wood used for the RG models - at this price, how could it be? The maple neck comes with a bound rosewood fretboard and a surprisingly neat job on the binding it is too. It's interesting to note that even though these guitars are budget instruments, they still carry the full 'Ibanez' logo on the headstock which other top tier companies don't do: they create 'sub brands' for their cheapest instruments. Not doing that implies real confidence in your products. In fact, the GIO series logo alongside the main Ibanez logo is the only feature which makes this guitar immediately identifiable as a budget model. Pickups are Ibanez's own and come in an H-S-H configuration, coupled with a five-way selector alongside volume and tone controls. The 150DX comes armed with a 'Fat 10' single-locking floating tremolo bridges in lieu of a double locking tremolo system that you will find on more expensive models.

On to the sounds and starting with a clean setting, the 150DX surprised me with its sheer versatility. This is a Rock guitar through and through but it is more than capable of holding its own, producing some lovely twangy bridge pickup tones to thicker, warmer tones



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC 

[...>]





at a simple flick of the selector. But gain is definitely where this axe shines through and after all, that's what these guitars were made for! Again, the pickup variations allowed access to some very nice tones indeed for both rhythm and solo work, following my playing dynamics with confidence all the way through.

Playing this guitar was a very comfortable experience and the set-up was remarkably good. The action was very low without any fret buzz whatsoever, which was mightily impressive especially for a guitar at this price. The bridge also felt great to use and was also very stable with little tuning needed after I put it through an afternoon's heavy usage - even despite our studio lights.

It's great to see Ibanez putting so much effort into their entry-level guitars. Particularly bearing in mind the street price of this guitar it's impossible not to give it our highest rating. The no compromise Rock looks might not appeal to everyone but that aside, the GRG150DX is pretty hard to beat!



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## PRS NF 3

When Country's top session star, Brent Mason, starts using a new guitar, it's time to sit-up and take notice. So that's just what we did, handing **Tim Slater** a PRS NF-3. OK Tim, is it really just a 'Strat on steroids' or is this the PRS that takes the fight to Fender?

Paul Reed Smith has never been a man to rest on his laurels. An utter dedication to perfection means that the American guitar designer and businessman remains very much a 'hands-on' kinda guy; even when his position as the CEO of one of the world's most popular guitar brands must demand that more than a fair share of his time is spent tackling spreadsheets instead of handling a chisel.

The NF-3 sees PRS addressing probably the largest sector of the electric guitar market, the classic bolt-on neck three pickup solid body. PRS has already dabbled in this field via now-discontinued models like the EG3 and EG4 but the NF-3 is really an entirely different animal from any PRS that we've seen before, feeling totally in step with the latest generation of guitars built in PRS's main US manufacturing facility, in Maryland.

Using the classic three pickup solid body guitar as a very basic template, the NF-3 deliberately aims to capture something of the unique resonance and clarity that the bolt-on neck design is renowned for, whilst still taking care to ensure that the NF-3 retains enough unique personality of its own. There is little point in straying too far

onto ground that Fender, not to mention plenty of other manufacturers, already have well covered but many guitar players still need convincing before they to come over to the 'Dark Side', despite PRS's well-deserved reputation for excellence.

With that in mind the NF-3 also sports a revised and more user-friendly neck profile and a 25.25-inch scale length; two important features that are tailored to convince non-believers to finally make the switch.

The NF-3 features a trio of the new PRS Narrowfield mini humbucking pickups that the company claims offers the bite of a single coil whilst eliminating mains hum that any Strat player will tell you is the unfortunate flipside of enjoying the single coil pickup's special combination blend of clarity and punch. Of course, the laws of physics demand that it is impossible for a mini humbucker to sound exactly the same as a standard single coil - no matter how narrow its magnetic field - but the Narrowfield pickups definitely sound much brighter and more tightly focused than a typical full-sized humbucker.

Interestingly, the Narrowfield pickups use

the same vintage style 57/08 wire that PRS also uses on its full-blooded 57/08 humbucking pickups and the coils are wound around newly revised bobbins that eliminate the gap between the pickups and pickup surrounds that you get with conventional humbuckers with exposed coils. The latter element has little bearing on the tone but it does grace the Narrowfield pickups with a clean appearance that looks really crisp and fresh. A standard five-way bladed selector switch offers a choice of each pickup individually plus the two ever-popular combined bridge/middle and neck/middle tones. The Narrowfields produce more output compared to regular Strat single coils and so a wee bit of adjustment to the amp's gain and EQ settings was necessary to prevent the Narrowfields from overloading the preamp on our test amplifier but once everything was balanced correctly the NF-3 really began to settle down nicely.



iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC 



The sweet sounding slightly hollow ‘quack’ demonstrated by the in-between settings sounded very authentic and was particularly impressive when you consider that these are not conventional Strat pickups in any sense. There was no information regarding whether or not the Narrowfield pickups coils are tapped in order to obtain these sounds but I would hazard that they aren’t: you definitely get the sense that there is slightly ‘more’ of everything whilst still sounding right in the ball-park, tone-wise.

The NF-3’s 25.25-inch scale definitely helps to contribute a little extra tautness and snap to the lower strings but speaking personally, I have never found PRS guitars to lack anything when it comes to their ability to cut through a mix like a blowtorch. Indeed, in the past I have often found that PRS’ full-blown humbuckers usually needed taming

down a bit. In this instance, however, the Narrowfields seem to do a really great job of combining the sparkle of a single coil with a bit of extra wallop that rock players can still use effectively.

Mega gain levels are no problem: the Narrowfields take brutal levels of overdrive in their stride, in fact the more you ladle on the gain the Narrowfields tone actually seems to ‘grow’ and expand, naturally compounding the solid korina body’s natural resonance to deliver superb sustain and a breezy sparkly tone that sounds like one of the most sonically well-balanced PRS guitars that we’ve ever played!

Whilst the sound is obviously impressive, a large part of the credit for the NF-3’s endearing nature must go to the superb Pattern Regular neck shape. The new neck profile feels almost like a ‘D’ shape and fits

the player’s left hand far more comfortably than the Wide-Thin & Wide-Fat neck profiles that PRS used as its standard pattern throughout most of the past decade. Combined with the easy-playing satin finish on the rear, this new neck shape gets a big old thumbs-up from us; in our opinion it helps the NF-3 appeal to players that have previously found PRS to be maybe too idiosyncratic to make them seriously consider changing over from their beloved Fender or Gibson. This time the playing field feels a lot more level and even if you’ve never really been swayed, this time you might find your self pleasantly surprised.

The standard PRS whammy works well, too, with a very firm action, and the new Phase III locking tuners help to maintain rock-solid tuning. The Phase III’s also have open-backed gears, which look a bit strange at first compared to the heavy-duty enclosed chrome plated types but they also work brilliantly.

So, is the NF-3 a Strat on steroids or not? Well, ‘not’ is the quick and dirty answer. While it can definitely deliver the popular in-between tones so beloved by Strat players, the NF-3 still sounds like a humbucking guitar but one with most of the superfluous fat trimmed away. Imagine the warm-yet-strident tone of a really good Gibson SG, with the extra top end ‘zing’ of a decent Strat and you’re getting close to what the NF-3 is all about - but you still really need to try one to really appreciate what it is capable of. This isn’t a typical ‘furniture’ PRS that you’d stick in the corner of your studio and admire from a distance: the NF-3 is a street fighter’s guitar, a real working man’s axe that begs to be taken out and played to death. In that respect, it isn’t cheap but it does merit the investment because you can easily envisage a good guitarist appreciating the NF-3’s quality

and versatility without their enjoyment being spoiled by a sense that the grass is greener elsewhere.





# TC Electronic Dreamscape John Petrucci Pedal

Dream Theater's John Petrucci joining forces with TC Electronic? It sounds like a magic formula. Well the partnership was announced at NAMM and they're calling the result the Dreamscape pedal. **Jamie Humphries** finds out if what's likely to be one of the most talked about effects this year justifies the hype.

TC Electronics is one of the most highly regarded manufacturers of guitar effects and pro audio equipment in the world. Put that illustrious Danish company together with John Petrucci, hailed as one of the best guitarists in the world, and you have what should be an unbeatable combination! As a huge Petrucci fan, and also a TC user myself, I was keen to get my hands on this pedal and put it through its paces (he was a bit more than 'keen' - Ed!).

There are certain things you can always take for granted from a TC product. Build quality is one (and this pedal is absolutely no exception) and the second that it will be right at the forefront of current technology - and that's true here, too. The Dreamscape is one of TC's much applauded TonePrint pedals, which allow the user to download TonePrints created by artists, simply by connecting your pedal to a computer and grabbing the TonePrint you want from TC's website. It is also updatable with any Corona Chorus TonePrint.

Petrucci was apparently one of the first artists to come onboard the TonePrint project and

the drive behind the Dreamscape was that he wanted to gather his TonePrints into a single pedal - even though his original TonePrints are for three different pedals in the series. The result is that the Dreamscape has three modulation effects built-in and Petrucci has created a brand new TonePrint for Vortex Flanger, taking the total amount of custom-tweaked tones up to six - two chorus, two flanger and two vibrato.

The pedal is housed in a sturdy metal case; with a high quality silent stomp switch. It has four rotary controls, one that clicks to the chosen effect - you have a range of six onboard tones plus one TonePrint to choose from - while the others that let you dial in and alter the tone. These are labelled Effect Level, which allows you to dial in the amount of effect required, Speed, which controls how fast the modulation is, and Depth which alters the intensity of the effect. There is also a little switch that changes the EQ of the effect, with three settings: Bright, Normal and Dark. The effect can be connected either



Petrucci was apparently one of the first artists to come onboard the TonePrint project

iG STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

[...>]



in-line or via the effects loop, and auto-senses the different input levels.

When I tested the pedal I was running it inline into the front of the amp. The pedal produced beautiful sounding effects, from shimmering chorus, to a more intense thick chorus that worked fabulously with both clean and crunch tones. The EQ switch was very useful when using the pedal with crunch, the vibrato setting was very inspiring, and I have to say I could really hear this effect on Dream Theater tracks - it was very inspiring to play with. The flanger effect, meanwhile, created some classic tones, and with the depth control turned up delivered a real Van Halen tone, which John even stated as his inspiration for the tone.

To conclude this is a very versatile pedal. Not only does it feature six effects tones in one compact pedal, it also has the revolutionary TonePrint technology on board, not to mention switchable True and Switchable bypass modes. The Dreamscape won't take up lots of space on your board unlike the several modulation effects it replaces, and with its simple controls you will have your perfect modulation effect instantly available.

Versatile, built like a brick, filled with great sounds and always updatable - it certainly lives up to the excitement it's been generating since it was announced!



# Play Loud, Make History



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# Wampler Ecstasy Overdrive and Ego Compressor FX

We're going boutique crazy this issue - with a look at two more of Wampler's hand-wired pedals, the Ecstasy Overdrive and the Ego Compressor.

**Jamie Humphries** gets ready to stomp.

Wampler pedals are designed and hand-built in the USA by Brian Wampler. A self-confessed tone geek, like many guitarists Brian spent many hours modifying pedals, until eventually he gained such a reputation he found himself modding pedals to order. Fast forward a few years and Brian now produces a range of his own FX that have won him countless accolades and a star-studded artist list including Brad Paisley, Brent Mason, Keith Urban and Dweezil Zappa.

Back in Gi 5, Rick Graham sampled Wampler's Faux Tape Echo and the SLOStortion pedal and was so impressed that we've come back for more! For my turn, I was given the Ecstasy overdrive and the Ego compressor pedals.

## Wampler Ecstasy Overdrive

STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



The Ecstasy overdrive is an overdrive pedal designed to give your clean channel some balls and crunch. It features four rotary controls including tone, bass, volume and gain. The pedal also has a switch that labelled Smooth, Open and Crunch, which alters the type of crunch, making this a very

versatile unit. The idea of the pedal is to offer the guitarist a fully dynamic range of natural overdrive and crunch tones. There has been a lot of thought put into the design and features of this pedal and the range of controls greatly alter the sound and how



it responds. The volume and gain controls speak for themselves, the gain alters the amount of crunch, while volume controls the level of the effect. The pedal also has a true bypass stomp switch.

The Wampler's EQ controls are very interesting. The tone control comes after the drive circuit and allows you to alter the high frequencies of the crunch tone, ranging from thick dark tones to crisp bright tones with lots of presence. The bass control is before the crunch circuit, so it affects the low end of you note before it hits the clipping part of the pedal. The three way toggle switch allows you to change the type of overdrive. Smooth gives you a classic warm "Dumble" style overdrive, while Crunch will help you achieve almost fuzz-like tones. The middle setting, Open, gives you a full range very

dynamic overdrive, with plenty of crunch at your finger tips.

I was very impressed by how natural and rich this pedal sounded. The smooth setting had plenty of "bark", with a nice full rich bottom end, with the tone cleaning up when I backed off the guitar volume. The crunch setting was aggressive and raw and with the bass control backed-off and the tone pushed it produced authentic fuzz style tones. Push the bass control and the tone became very reminiscent of Jimi Hendrix. The open setting produced a louder tone, and was very dynamic. Not only could I produce a wide range of crunch and overdriven tones, but if I backed-off the gain and boosted the volume the pedal turned into a very transparent clean booster.

Check out the video!



[...>]



## Wampler Ego Compressor

STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



Now let's take a look at the Ego compressor. Compressors are often misused, and sometimes they sound too obvious. In basic terms, a compressor will control the level of your playing, stopping louder sounds from peaking and lifting the level of more delicate quiet sounds. They are great for evening out your playing, especially when picking with a clean tone. Compressors can also be used to aid sustain, as well as being used to help drive amps and pedals for more saturation.

The layout of the pedal is pretty familiar in terms of compressor design, although it does include a couple of extras. The bottom row of controls includes Volume, which controls the level of the unit, Tone, which will enable you to add sparkle to your sound, and Sustain, which controls how long the compressor holds onto the note, producing long sustain. The top two controls are Blend, which is a great feature, as it enables you to mix clean sound with the compressed tone, making this pedal very transparent, and Attack, which controls, a slow compression is more subtle, with the compressor gradually compressing the signal, while a fast compression grabs the note instantly and gives the note a characteristic popping tone: think Chili Peppers Under the Bridge.

In use, this compressor more than lived up to my expectations, giving me a very



transparent dynamic compression, that was hard to notice - until if I turned it off, when it was immediately obvious that it wasn't there, which to my mind is the sign of a great compressor! But I could also dial-in more extreme tones, to give me a popping Country tone. It also worked great with high gain sounds, helping me push the amp harder for more saturation, and aiding sustain. Another interesting application for this pedal was to use the blend control to turn the unit into a clean boost. I have to say that this is by far

There's no doubt these two Wampers are pedals of the highest quality.



the best compressor I have ever used. It ticks every box, and does what you expect it to do in a natural and musical way.

There's no doubt these two Wampers are pedals of the highest quality. Not only are they well built but they also help you to create natural usable and very musical and inspiring tones. These pedals don't just simply do what other units do. The more you experiment with the carefully designed controls, the more you can unlock many other applications, making both these units a must for the guitarist serious about tone!





# Fret-King Super-Hybrid

Fret-King is one of the most ambitious new guitar lines in a decade. Its Black Label Range aims to offer unique Custom Shop style features at prices well within reach of the average working musician. Is that actually possible? **Tim Slater** samples the new Super-Hybrid to find out.

Fret-King guitars' Black Label series marks an interesting progression for the brand, which is masterminded by the ever-inventive British guitar designer Trevor Wilkinson. Whereas the Blue Label and Green label Fret-King ranges respectively offer production-based and more expensive high-end versions of models in the Fret-King line, the Black label series gives guitarists the unique opportunity to sample Fret-King's more experimental and esoteric side, without necessarily having to re-mortgage your granny in order to afford one!

The Super-Hybrid is a great example of the Black Label series rationale. Electric guitars that aim to offer a choice of usable electric and acoustic tones in a single package are not unusual but they do tend to be either fairly expensive, or else housed in designs that are maybe a bit too eclectic to appeal to the typical guy who just wants a decent 'meat and potatoes' axe to gig with every weekend.

The Super-Hybrid's double cutaway design feels reassuringly familiar. However, to really convince a seasoned guitar player to adopt the Super-Hybrid as his main guitar, its electric sounds need to cover all of the most popular tones, while its electro-acoustic

sounds need to be both easy to access and up to scratch. So does the Super-Hybrid make the grade?

Plugged in, the Super-Hybrid feels like a fairly neutral guitar, conveying the impression of a vintage Fender that has been tweaked slightly to update its playability to a sleeker, more modern, standard. The slim 'C' profile neck has a smooth and non-sticky satin finish on the rear and the 10 inch radius rosewood fingerboard displays a near-perfect blend between a comfy curve that naturally fits the player's left hand while offering better access to wide vibrato and string bends, compared to a narrower vintage radius board. The two-octave fingerboard isn't something demanded by many guitarists but the extra range is still handy and whilst the fingerboard seems to extend fairly deep into the body, the slim neck heel and generally well conceived lines mean that upper fret access is still relatively unhindered.

The overall physical impression of the Super-Hybrid is that it feels solid and well made but also a bit bland. The neck's generic pale maple satin finish is partly to blame, it just feels like a typical Far Eastern guitar neck:



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC 





an application of gun oil as per Musicman would definitely grace this neck with a touch of class - but then it would probably also add to the price so maybe it's better to live with it as it is!

Still, the Super-Hybrid's electronics display the huge experience that Trevor Wilkinson has bought to bear on this instrument. The conventional pickups comprise a pair of Wilkinson WCV ceramic humbuckers that Fret-King claims are carefully voiced to sound closer to the warm chunky delivery of a classic PAF, instead of the more aggressive slicing treble that ceramic humbuckers are usually known for. That said, these humbuckers sounded a little thin on clean tones until they were properly dialed-in. They benefit from a little bit of help in the low end but through an overdriven amp both humbuckers begin to sound a bit more enticing. Nobody is going to be fooled that this is an original '59 Les Paul but the Fret-King's humbuckers still display a warm and transparent sound with good definition between notes and a nice tightly focused delivery.

The middle single coil makes a nice contrast to the humbuckers. It sounds surprisingly fat and punchy and makes a

great rhythm pickup if you find the humbuckers a bit too overbearing, especially if you don't particularly want to fall back on the 'in-between' sounds available from positions two and four on the five-way bladed pickup selector. As an extra measure, both humbuckers are also linked to a universal coil-tap located in the electric circuitry's push-pull tone control. All-in the Super Hybrid definitely leaves virtually no stone unturned in its quest to deliver the full gamut of tone's required by the working guitarist.

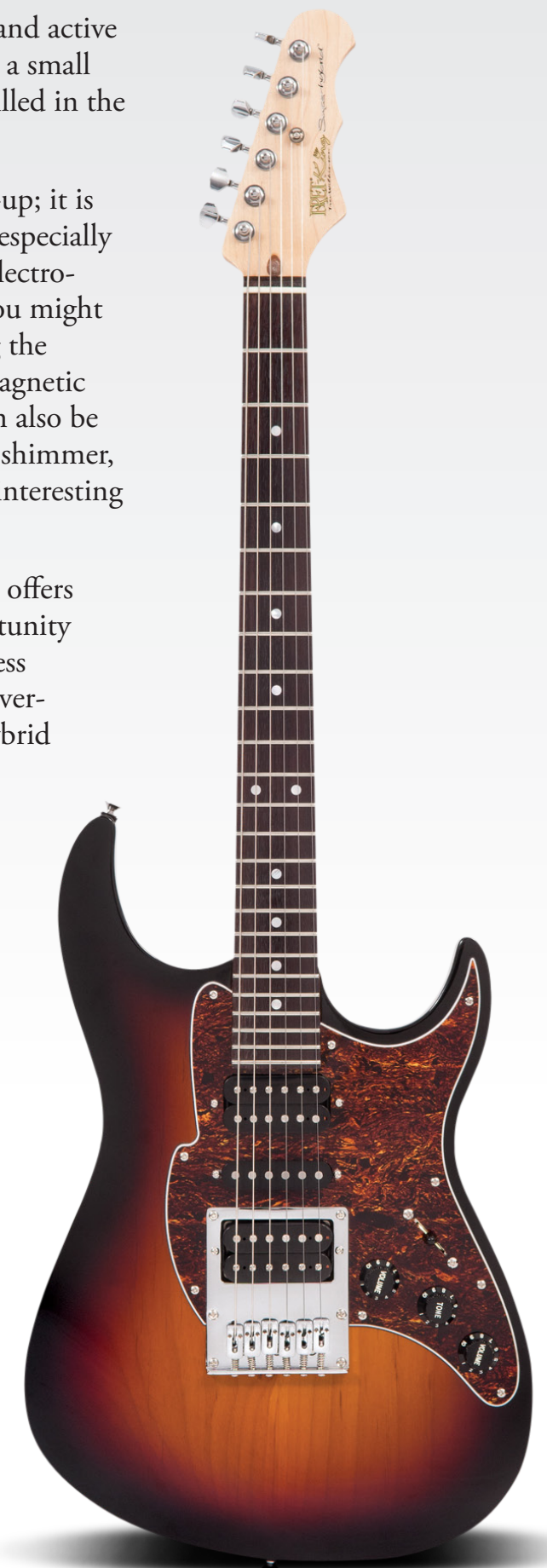
The ease of access between the Super-Hybrid's electric and built-in acoustic sounds is definitely worthy of praise. I had absolutely no access to the guitar before I took it out of the shipping crate to shoot the accompanying video to this review but the familiarization process was happily fairly swift and painless. The Piezo under-saddle transducers are linked to a rotary volume control located where you'd expect to find the bottom tone control on a typical Strat-style guitar. To access the acoustic tones, simply roll off the magnetic pickups master volume control to disengage the electric circuit and turn up the Piezo volume pot. Both circuits feed to a common output in the form of standard quarter-inch jack socket but if you'd still prefer to send your acoustic signal to a dedicated acoustic amp or direct to the PA you could use an A/B box on stage to re-route the acoustic signal to a separate source.

Sending a Piezo signal to a conventional electric guitar amplifier isn't always ideal but to help

compensate there is a three-band active EQ that can be adjusted with a small screwdriver via three holes drilled in the rear cavity cover.

I really enjoyed using this set-up; it is definitely very stage-friendly, especially compared to carting a spare electro-acoustic guitar around that you might only use once or twice during the course of an entire set! The magnetic and Piezo pickups' output can also be blended together for an extra shimmer, which also creates some very interesting new sounds.

Fret-King's Black Label Series offers a genuinely interesting opportunity to sample the seemingly endless flow of fresh ideas from this ever-creative brand. The Super-Hybrid genuinely succeeds in its goal to provide a great all-round axe for the working guitarist; yes it does have certain idiosyncrasies but these don't cloud that it offers easy access to virtually all of the most popular electric guitar tones together with a more than decent Piezo acoustic facility that takes the pressure out of having to swap to an acoustic sound in a live setting. Good common sense with an engaging flare for lateral thinking shouldn't come this competitively priced, but I for one am very glad that Fret-King has nailed it.



[...>]



# Tokai LSS-195 Guitar

Tokai's 1980s 'replica' guitars have achieved iconic status - thoroughly collectible in their own right - but the company has been quiet for a few years. Now Tokai says it is on the way back, so are today's Tokais anything like the great guitars of the past?

**Tom Quayle** reviews the ULSS-195, **Gary Cooper** provides the background.

The early 1980s were interesting times in the guitar world. Whatever people anxious to sell you a 'vintage' guitar might like to claim, all was not well with the two major American manufacturers - Gibson and Fender. Elsewhere in this issue I've reviewed Tony Bacon's excellent new book about the creation of the Squier brand - Fender's attempt to counter the flagrant copying of its designs by Japanese guitar makers who were (as openly admitted by former Fender alumni in Bacon's interviews) sometimes making a better job of building Fenders than was Fender itself. Much the same was true of Gibson, some said.

Whether it was ethical to buy a 1950s Gibson or Fender, strip it down to its component atoms and copy it exactly is one thing, but (writing as someone who was earning his living reviewing guitars back then) it didn't strike me as particularly ethical to build pretty horrible guitars and charge high prices for them, either. And anyway, all many guitarists cared about was getting the best instrument for their money. And that best often had the name Tokai on the headstock.

As you would expect, Brands G and F didn't take the copying lightly. Though it took years to shake themselves out of their torpor, legal and commercial countermeasures were eventually taken that effectively stopped the exact copy market and while some of the 'offenders' (notably, Ibanez ) successfully strode on to reinvent themselves as more than capable rival with their own designs, Tokai, though it had some very tasty superstrats and the inimitable aluminium-bodied Talbo in the '80s, never made that transition and became more or less invisible in some major markets - the UK and USA to name just two.

Coupled with the onslaught from lawyers, Squier and what became Gibson's own 'copy brand', Epiphone, Japanese makers also suffered a huge rise in production costs - and that hasn't changed. The Tokai we're reviewing in this issue is actually more expensive than what might seem to be a comparable Gibson. Then again, so is a Collings or a PRS, or a Suhr. At some level quality counts for more than price.

Our ULSS-195 is a Japanese sample, handmade in Hamamatsu in a small factory

that still employs some of the workers who produced those original ground-breaking '80s models.

There are now Chinese-made Tokais at far more affordable prices and we will be looking at some of those in coming issues, but for now we wanted to jump into a time machine and head back to those golden days in the early 1980s, when a dazzling new star briefly lit-up the sky.

## Can a Tokai still cut it? **Tom Quayle** found out:

The model we were sent for review was a handmade Tokai 'Love Rock LSS-195'. It is obvious where the influence for this guitar comes from, so before the lawyers start getting excited, let's gloss over that and judge this instrument on its own merits.

The body and neck are built from beautiful Honduras mahogany, both being one piece constructions, finished with lacquer. It's a very clean and traditional look and the deep set-neck joint is flawless. The guitar has a rosewood



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



Even the included hard case feels well constructed.

fretboard with 22 vintage sized frets, a bone nut and amber cell inlays. Hardware is very high quality, comprising Switchcraft jack and pots, with P90 style pickups in the form of a pair of LP-OLD MK1's, made in Japan. Vintage tuners and an aluminium LPT-8N tailpiece complete the traditional look.

Construction is of a supremely high level throughout with no obvious flaws anywhere on the instrument and a general level of quality and tightness in the hands. Even the included hard case feels well constructed. The only issue I could find with the guitar was the set-up. The action on our sample was set insanely low, with a set of 9s, and things were fretting out on even moderate bends. This is not the fault of the instrument though and a quick set-up and a more manly set of strings would improve things immensely!

Putting the set-up issues to one side, the guitar plays very well. The shorter scale length and slimmer than average neck, combined with a traditional radius, allow for very easy playability. Chords feel great, even with wider stretches and lead work is fast and without the fatigue problems associated with larger, fatter neck shapes.

Soundwise, the first thing that struck me about the LSS-195 was the resonance of the whole guitar. A single strum of the open strings caused a level of vibration usually associated with a wood such as korina. There were no dead spots across the neck and you

can feel the whole instrument singing in your hands. Plugged in to our studio amp I started by checking out the clean tones on offer from the P90's and the three-way switch. The neck pickup was broad and fat sounding without being boomy and had the lovely cutting edge and bloom that you can only get from P90's. In the middle position, things took on a pleasing nasal quality, again remaining clear as a bell and very musical. The bridge position never became harsh and inspired clean Blues licks with the singing, natural resonance of the guitar allowing for lots of sustain even at lower volume levels.

As good as the clean tones were, overdriven tones are where this guitar really came to life with the bridge position P90 giving a biting and throaty crunch sound and sustain for days with a higher gain tone. Bridge position tones gave instant creamy Blues tones that were thick and punchy but with superb dynamic response. The volume and tone controls worked as expected, with a very musical taper and no learning curve due to the traditional layout.

Judging the LSS-195 as a guitar in its own right, there is no escaping that this is a handmade instrument, built from the finest quality materials by people who know exactly what they are doing. It's not cheap and you might ask whether you would be crazy to pay more for a Tokai than for some of the Gibsons you see in the stores, though

[...>]







searching around will yield some very good deals for the LSS-195, we discovered.

I think the consideration here is whether you plan to purchase a guitar that you will keep and treasure for a long time, or one that is a stop gap for another guitar later down the line and so will be needed to keep its value upon resale. In my opinion the Tokai fits into the former category. It may be more expensive than Gibson's similar offerings but I feel that you're getting a guitar that has superb quality Honduran woods,

great hardware and more importantly has been built with a supreme eye for quality and detail. I can see owners of the LSS-195 building an emotional connection with this guitar and that may be something that is hard to find with a mass produced alternative. And, who knows, if past precedent is anything to go by, it, too, could become a collector's item one day?



[...>]



# THE BASSMENT

The Bassment has been a hive of activity recently, with our resident dungeonmaster, **Dan Veall**, hard at it to bring you the best in bass gear reviews.

For this issue, we've let Dan loose on two basses at both ends of the price scale - one of Sheldon Dingwall's Canadian-built pro-class six-strings and one of the entry-level basses that are helping carry the renowned Spector name from the "pros only" class to the mainstream market.

For amps, we sampled a Trace Elliot rig - a tower of power from the brand that reinvented bass amplification back in the early 1980s and which is now owned and manufactured by Peavey.

Bass effects have really come out of the shadows in recent years and we know from your feedback that

bass players today are just as keen as guitarists on pedals. We've lined-up a tantalising selection for the next few issues, beginning with one of the fabulously-named Darkglass units - a Finnish brand that is really starting to reel-in big name users.

Remember that we're always keen to hear your suggestions about what you'd like us to look at. Just email [editor@iguitarmag.com](mailto:editor@iguitarmag.com). Go on - we have to keep Dan busy or he'll get up to real mischief!



**Gary Cooper** - Editor





# SPECTOR PERFORMER SB4

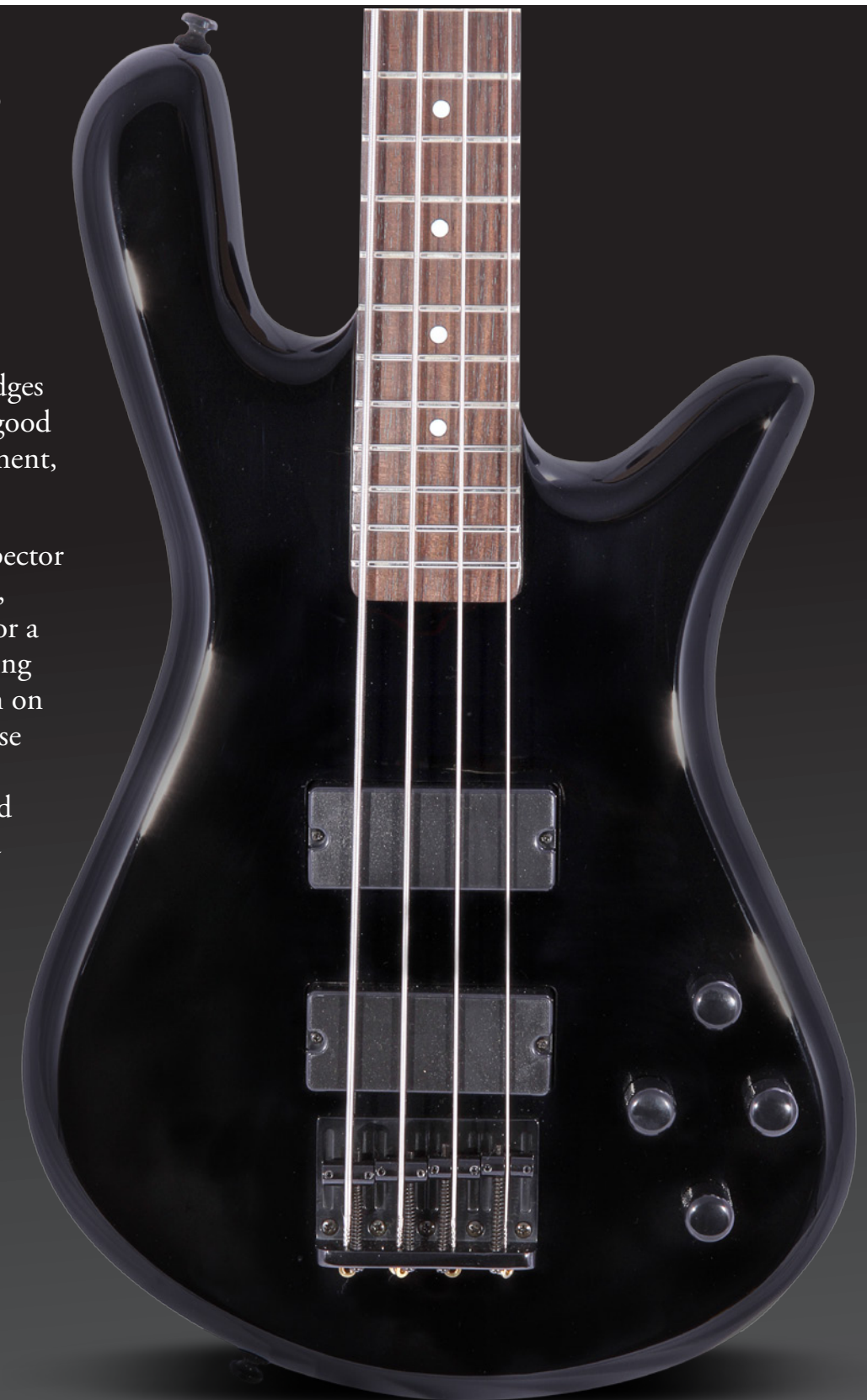
An easily affordable, yet still high-quality Spector bass? Isn't that asking for too much? No it isn't says **Dan Veall**

Drawing on the roots of the highly regarded and successful 'NS Bass' designs from the late 1970s comes this Indonesian made take on Ned Steinberger's ergonomic and aesthetically pleasing bass guitar outline that has made Stuart Spector's basses so identifiable today. The Performer range was released in 2011, with the goal of introducing an affordable entry level instrument to

the product line, yet still being of the high quality expected by Spector users. The product range, including Indonesian made Performer models like the model we had for review, encompasses premium US made models direct from the workshops at Saugerties, New York, the Euro series, made in the Czech republic, and the Professional series, made in Korea.

Getting straight down to business, the Performer's rock maple neck has a smooth profile and is adorned with a 16" radiused rosewood fretboard with simple pearl dot inlays. It's well finished with no sharp edges from frets - particularly good for an entry-level instrument, in fact.

The characteristic 2x2 Spector headstock is angled back, thus negating the need for a string tree for better tuning stability and to cut down on friction that can also cause tuning problems. The lightweight neck is bolted to a basswood body via a rounded heel. Access up to the very top of the neck is only slightly hindered by the heel block, though this is no different from many bolt-on neck basses on the market today. It's actually far less cumbersome than that of bolt-ons with large square heels.



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC 



On the hardware side, a good quality bridge and smooth action tuners take care of anchoring the strings. The overall action wasn't too high either which made the instrument comfortable to play. I'd personally like to take it down a notch or two for a slightly slicker feel but, that said, it's a matter of personal taste and I had no complaints about the set-up.

On to the electronics. EMG supplies the pickups but to Stuart Spector's design specifications. The paperwork suggests that these versions of the EMG passive soapbars, feature more mids than the standard 'HZ' models. I didn't have a set to compare with, but certainly there was a great little 'burp' in the tone with both pickups on full that made them sound punchy and somewhat modern through our studio test rig. Looking at the controls, a standard passive two volume/two tone control combination made for some nice tonal options between the two pickups as demonstrated on the video.

Lightweight and balanced, this Spector bass is a joy to play and not fatiguing. It fits in to the budget instrument bracket at a price point (particularly at 'street' prices) that would suit the pocket of a student or as a usable spare gigging bass, yet the quality of the demo instrument would suggest a higher price tag hanging from its glossy finish! The Spector SB4 is available in solid black or metallic red, both featuring black hardware.

In summing up, this is yet another cracking bass to arrive at our studio that I think would be a great inclusion as a flexible instrument in most situations. It certainly wouldn't look out of place doing Rock or Country, or Jazz. The Spector Performer is a great bass - indeed, it can teach some of the 'big name' competition a thing or two!



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- Yolanda Charles

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# DINGWALL BLACKBURST AFTERBURNER ABZ 6

**Dan Veall** gets to sample a luxurious Dingwall fan-fretted bass. The only trouble is, he has to explain to us what that means. Oh, and he has to give it back, too...

It seems to me that every month I have a (somewhat geeky) conversation with iGuitar's editor Gary Cooper about what exciting gear will be coming up for review in future issues and there has always been at least one item I am thrilled at the thought of getting my paws on. Last month I was flabbergasted at the brilliant Yamaha NE2, the Nathan East signature 5 string. I figured it was going to be hard to beat. Then the spec of the following bundle of joy appeared in my inbox from Mark Stickley at Bass Direct, here in the UK, who was kindly offering to lend us a Dingwall Afterburner ABZ 6 string bass - made in Canada by Dingwall Guitars, owned by Sheldon Dingwall. I'd actually played a few fan fretted Dingwall basses in the past, but this is the first time I have ever had an opportunity to dig in and really get to know the instrument a bit more.

So let's take a closer look at the specification. Immediately your eye is drawn to the obvious difference visually with Dingwall basses. They incorporate the 'Novax Fan Fret System' - a scale length method developed by Ralph Novak. What's that I hear you say? Much like a grand piano, each string has an optimal scale length for best tension and tone. Lower tuned strings in a piano are longer and according to Sheldon Dingwall

when explaining the fan fret system, a string closer to its ideal length will have a brighter tone. This is certainly true if you were to compare short scale instruments with longer scaled counterparts, indeed it's a well known fact taken in to account when comparing Les Paul guitars with Stratocaster guitars tonally. Thus each string is arranged so that the bridge and nut are at opposing angles, allowing the B string to be longer in comparison to the higher strings - in this case this six string model is standard tuned B to C. The scale length for the B is a huge 37" coming down to just under that of a standard P bass at 33 1/4" for the high C string.

As for how the fan fret system ended up on Dingwall basses, Sheldon had originally seen a magazine review of another guitar featuring Novak's system and later met him at a convention. He suggested to Novak that the system might work well on basses and the rest, as they say, is history.

Moving away from the frets, the look of this beast of an instrument may make it seem like a rather daunting affair. As someone who has played six and seven string basses for many years, I needed little adjustment to my actual technique to play the bass comfortably - I just had to be a bit careful

to begin with as I got used to moving from position to position. We shot the video fairly quickly after I picked up the instrument for the first time, so you can see how easy it was to acclimatise to the unusual fretboard layout. Whether that would be true if all you were used to were traditional four stringers, is less certain, of course.

Unplugged and on my lap it was immediately obvious that the bass had something to show off in terms of tone and sustain. We have other basses in the studio to compare and the ABZ 6 sounded clear and true against everything. The low B had a great fullness even when just played acoustically. The neck was a joy to handle and I especially liked the fingerboard carve. According to the details online it's of a compound radius, the neck profile itself being



[...>]

**iG** STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



## The experience only improved when I plugged in.

a 'medium C' carve. Either way, it was instantly comfortable. The string action was set to a comfortable height with no unwelcome buzzes from the frets. And speaking of frets, I'm not aware of playing a bass with banjo-sized frets before, but I have to say that I am converted! Absolutely brilliant! Up until now I've always preferred medium frets on my basses and that has just changed. The whole neck is maple, by the way - a very stable five piece laminate for the main shaft. The fingerboard is also maple for a bright and snappy attack.

The whole instrument is finished with satin polyurethane, the headstock is adorned with six custom Dingwall tuners made by Hipshot, while the body is two piece

swamp ash. I love the way the grain has been left open for a tactile finish to the whole body. Finished in a 'blackburst' coating it really does look great with the glossy black hardware and 'soft touch' knobs. Yes, even the knobs are made in house for just the right styling to fit the instrument. There's real attention to detail here!

The experience only improved when I plugged in. Despite personally preferring active pickups and pre-amps, I can only report that the completely passive ABX



sounded superb. Master volume and a single tone control flank the pickup selector - a four way switch. Check out the video review to hear how each setting has its own flavour. Starting counter clockwise you have a great biting bridge pickup soloed. In the next position both pickups are wired in parallel for a classic tonal configuration. For a fuller mid present sound position three is both pickups wired in series - boosting the output slightly. Finally up to the last switch position for a nice mellow almost P bass character that just begs you to roll the tone control back a little bit for some vintage love!

There are times when words just aren't enough so, again - please check the video!

OK, so this is a premium instrument with a premium price tag. I've been lucky enough to play instruments with high price tags in this and the previous issue but there is a reason why basses like this fabulous Dingwall and the custom shop Yamaha I was raving about last month, are so expensive: put simply - they're worth it. And, anyway, the asking price of this stunning Dingwall is less than you can pay for a US-made Fender Precision (at least, it is in the UK), so by that standard this is ridiculously good value for money.

This one nearly came home with me - I'll be sad to see it returning to Bass Direct!

Our thanks to Bass Direct for the loan of this instrument [www.bassdirect.co.uk](http://www.bassdirect.co.uk)





# DARKGLASS MICROTUBES B3K

Dann Veall plays dirty with a Finnish overdrive

Even before this pedal arrived I knew that I was in for a treat. There has been much interest on the bass forums in the Internet world about the Finnish made Darkglass products. In the distortion department, the B7K and its little brother - the B3K model we have here for review - are well in demand from bass players favouring a bit of grunt and drive from our rigs, so now seemed a good time to get to grips with one!

Darkglass doesn't do things by half and promises the very best in handmade products for bass guitar. Both the B7K and B3K feature hybrid J-Fet and CMOS gain stages for a 'more dynamic response' they say - so let's see.

A simplified control layout in comparison to the B7K does not in any way mean any shortcuts taken when it comes to the tones available from the pedal. Darkglass promises the B3K "delivers an immense amount of sounds, from warm, clear, and punchy tube-like Overdrives, to devastating Raging Bass Distortions, all without losing a gram of low end or definition! Doesn't matter if you play pop, rock or metal. This is the Bass Distortion you've been always waiting for".

Well, they're not wrong! In my video review I run through a range of settings to show what the pedal can do but don't forget to take in to account amplifier settings/sound as well

as that can have a profound effect on the resultant tone too. Don't fear though, this pedal sounds great with an amp set 'flat'. My favourite sounds of the day were based round the 'just breaking up' settings - the kind that so many distortion and overdrive pedals manage to fall short of whilst favouring all out brutality - something the B3K can also do, but musically. I'm pleased to hear that the low end stayed tight and focussed but those mids warmed nicely with an attack and bite that sounded really natural. Personally, I don't like any distortion pedal that makes the bottom end of my signal go too flabby or mushy. Well done here B3K!

The controls are easy to understand and I was pleased to see that the level knob only affected the 'effect' and not the clean bass sound - so with the blend at zero up to 50 per cent, it was possible to kick the pedal on and off with no loss in clean bass signal. This is very important I feel when remaining 'in the mix' at a gig! Using the level and blend controls judiciously allowed a wide range of tight and usable sounds. In fact, I'll go as far as to say, I don't think there are any bad sounds available in this pedal. Great stuff, I very much enjoyed cranking the drive up for some real tonal filth! The 'grunt' switch is a really nice touch; three levels of bass boost from a section of circuit placed before the gain stage. This means that it's easier to

**I very much enjoyed cranking the drive up for some real tonal filth!**

drive the low end in to fuzz territory if that is your wish. Pushing the blend control forward allows the dry bass low end to make way for the fuzzier bass tones delivering a more aggressive sound.

Also very useful is the attack control, boosting the higher frequencies. I could see this being useful for those who choose not to use a tweeter in their bass cabinets but want more top end bite. The test amplifier we were using did have a tweeter and in the studio we could have probably pulled back the highs a little, but I have to say I didn't get any shrill high frequency artefacts coming through - could this be part of the design



[...>]

**iG** STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



too? If yes, well done! There's plenty of pedals I have dismissed for that 'wasp in a bottle' distortion sound! Eeeeshhh!!!

Darkglass is already garnering quite a list of users including Justin Meldal-Johnsen, Alex Webster, bassist Adam 'Nolly' Getgood and guitarist Misha Mansoor from Periphery amongst many others.

I've got to give this pedal a good 4/5 for just being brilliant straight out of the box. Think I'd like one of these in my own rig! I highly recommend it.

Our thanks to Bass Direct for the loan of this product: [www.bassdirect.co.uk](http://www.bassdirect.co.uk)



# The Next Big Hughes & Kettner

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Check out  
Thomas Blug's  
TubeMeister  
18 video demo





# TRACE ELLIOT AH600-12 BASS HEAD AND 1015H CABINET.

Dan Veall comes face to face with a tower of power from veterans Trace Elliott. Who blinked first?

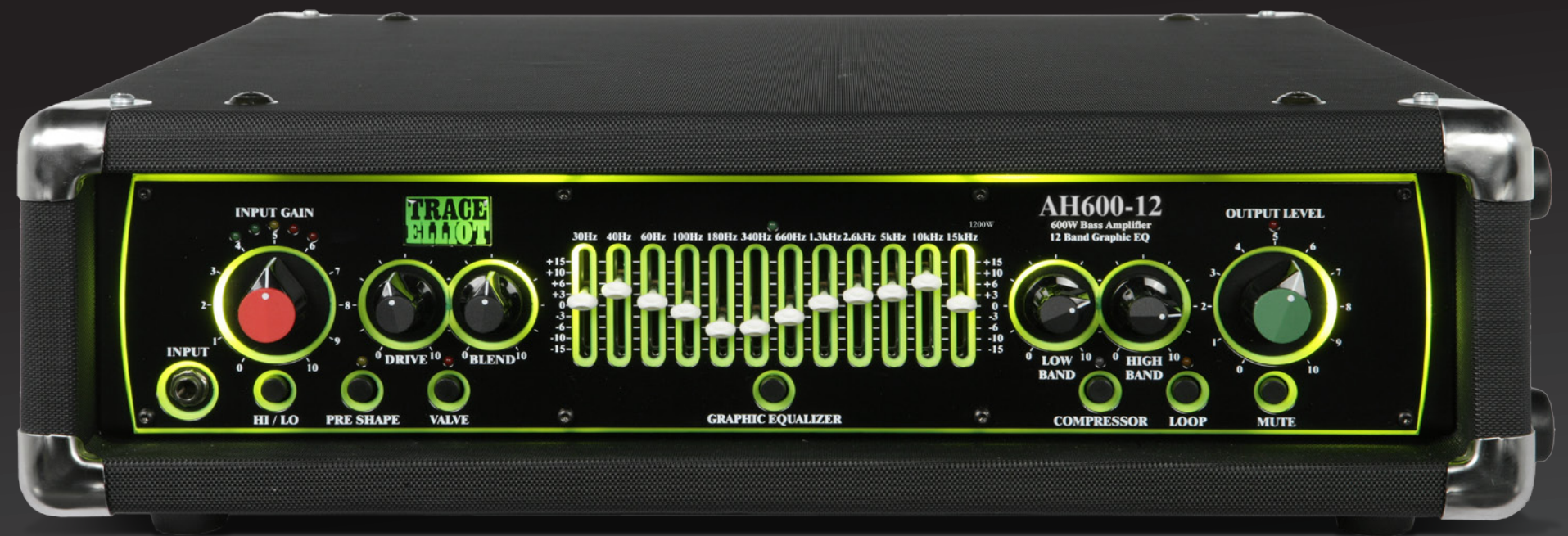
In through the doors at iGuitar Towers came this beefy, half-stack sized gig rig from veteran bass amplification manufacturer Trace Elliot. Since its humble beginnings producing PA gear from a shop in Essex, UK back in 1979, the company, these days owned by the mighty Peavey, has been relentlessly delivering bass gear seen the world over with the now famous green and black livery. The kit we unboxed showed off its distinct identity and standing tall in the had an air of business about it. Loud business!

Trace Elliot's current gear line-up features a wide range of kit for us bass players. Listed on the Trace Elliot website are three different amplifier head specifications, three combos and eight different cabinets. There is certainly a range of choice when it comes to configurations that will cover everything from bedroom rehearsal to club gigs and even stadium show big rigs. For this review we received the AH600-12 head, an amplifier with a massive amount of features crammed in to it for your every tonal option requirement and the BFC's younger cousin, the 1015H speaker cabinet. The former we shall begin looking at first.

I'll start by saying that despite the clearly laid out front panel there are so many tonal options available - especially when you take in to account all of the connections featured on the rear panel too - that I actually found it difficult attempting to skim through the details in the video, as I would have had to have talked for a great deal of time if I delved any deeper. I'll address some of that extra functionality here and now.

The AH600-12 is, as the name suggests, a 600 Watt RMS mono output amplifier driven by MOSFET technology and will deliver in to a 4 Ohm minimum load. How loud is the rig? Certainly in the studio the video shows that the volume never went over '2' on the dial - this was certainly loud enough for a clear review. I found out earlier on that when we turned the dial up to see what the amp could do, the iGuitar team could hear the stack upstairs, on the other side of the studio's soundproof doors! (*he enjoyed that - Ed*)

Inside the steel chassis, the power amplifier is mated with a pre-amplifier design that includes a valve and dedicated valve drive circuit. It doesn't end there. A Trace Elliot voicing 'pre-shape' control, a full 12-band graphic, a dual band compressor and a multi function effects loop with a built in crossover for hi pass, low pass and full range outputs completes the on board features. The amplifier also includes the ability to daisy chain to another amplifier for full stereo operation using the included stereo effect returns. The effects loop itself is also able to run in series or parallel mode, the latter is useful as the 'dry' signal from the pre-amplifier is always present in the signal as well as that being fed from the send to the return sockets. On the subject of the effects loop, the built in crossover is also very useful.



It's possible to separately apply effects to the low and high portions of the bass signal, or to send a high frequency effected signal to one amplifier and a low non effected signal to another, amongst the myriad of user configurations available .

**iG** STAR RATING FOR BOTH ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC

[...>]



If that wasn't enough, the AH600 has not one, but three electronically balanced DI outputs. The first is a 'pre-eq' output, the other two are for the separate left and right outputs (the left being used separately for mono applications). Finally topping off the specification is the stereo line outputs for hooking up to external equipment (such as another power amplifier) all crammed in to one unit weighing in at a substantial 17Kg.

All of the main user functions of the amplifier are controllable by the included footswitch. No plastic here, a tough metal casing housing the buttons and LEDs for Preshape,

Valve Drive, Graphic EQ, Compressor, Effects Loops and a Mute switch. The rear of the amplifier similarly neatly designed is home to the Speakon and Jack output sockets, power input and on/off switch, footswitch sockets and the previously mentioned effects loop and crossover.

In use it was easy to dial in a selection of very usable tones. The footswitch with its bright and clear LEDs made jumping through sounds a breeze. I set the valve section up for some mid drive and the compressor with some low end compression and effortlessly moved between slap sounds and raspy pick passages without a hitch. I like that the

effects loop can be switched out of the signal path completely from the same pedal board too. This would allow you to put, for example, an envelope filter in the loop, but leave it on top of the amp. No leads trailing across the stage for guitarists and singers to trip over and you still have the ability to switch the effect on and off from just one pedal board.

Moving on to the little beast underneath the AH600-12 head; the stocky 1015H cabinet is solidly built and made of plywood. It features a single 15" Celestion made speaker in a ported cabinet and two 10" Celestion speakers sharing a separate compartment with a single centre mounted tweeter. All of the hardware is made of metal, including all corners and handles giving

the cabinet a rugged look whilst wrapped in 'pimple finish' tolex type covering. Taking care of protecting the speakers is a large metal grill in black that is of a heavy gauge and will no doubt shrug off the majority of abuse received whilst on the road. This particular example did rattle a little at high volume, but I think it would have been easy to remedy by tightening the grill. The only other niggle we had was that the fan seemed quite noisy on our sample. This may be an individual fault or it may be a characteristic of the amp, we'd no way of telling, but it could prove irritating in some situations.

Speaking of volume - the 1015H delivers by the truck load! I left the tweeter set at 50 per cent by the control on the back of the cabinet and was greeted with a clear tone with great mids and top end. Pushing

the low end on the graphic allowed the 15" speaker to deliver too and I am pleased to say that we could dial up some really nice punchy, mellow, aggressive or Hi-Fi tones easily with the AH600 head. With a massive amount of headroom, I think the 800W RMS cabinet (at 4 Ohms) is more than capable of being a 'one cab solution' - I'd have loved to have heard this set up at a gig. I'm sure the mids from this cabinet will have cut through guitar half stacks easily.

Time to sum up. In operation there was something immediately familiar about the stack and there are two ways you can look at that. On the one hand, if you were to buy, say, an Ampeg SVT and it sounded like anything other than an Ampeg SVT, you'd probably feel aggrieved. Well, that's how it is with the Trace Elliot.



[...>]



You know what it's going to do - and it does it. In spades. But if you were looking for anything different, any significant advances on the Trace Elliotts of yore, then this probably isn't going to be your thing. For those who are upgrading from a lower powered Trace Elliot system to a feature rich stack, they may well be looking for that same identity that they can relate to. As I said, it's familiar - you could go from an older 'Series 6' head or 'Hexavalve' amplifier and not even have to open the manual to use any of the new series.

We had some lengthy discussions about this. I would like to have seen some signs of changing with the times, but other voices suggested that there's nothing wrong with offering exactly what people expect. As the saying goes: 'people who like this sort of thing will find this the sort of thing they like'.

Either way, The AH head and cabinet are more than capable and can really deliver a wide range of tons in a substantial package that will suit the vast majority of live situations for the owner. On the subject of substantial, by the way, the head weighs-in at 17Kg is about average for a MOSFET amplifier of this power. The 1015H cabinet, although a robust 42Kg, does feature handles on the side and top, big rubber wheels and a kick plate allowing for easy manoeuvrability but for those of a small stature, a lift up the stairs at the local venue may require a hand.



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# THE QUIET ROOM

One of the greatest pleasures we've had in this first year of publishing Guitar Interactive has been the enthusiastic reception for our dedicated acoustic section - **The Quiet Room**.

**Gary Cooper** - Editor [gary@iguitarmag.com](mailto:gary@iguitarmag.com)

The Quiet Room has been a haven of tranquillity and good taste for the past few weeks - not least because we reeled-in a fabulous unamplified model to review: a Larrivee 000. Larrivee is one of the more interesting acoustic brands at the top end of the market, for a number of reasons. To start with, luthier Jean Larrivee knows as much about guitar tonewoods as just about anyone around, also because he builds surprisingly affordable, yet still resolutely professional quality, instruments both in his native Canada and in the USA. We hadn't played a Larrivee in a while and were keen to see one of the recent models.

At the other end of the spectrum, Crafter, is one of the world's biggest selling acoustic brands, from a manufacturer that has managed to build a great name as an acoustic and electro-acoustic specialist in a market fiercely contested by the 'big name' brands' acoustic offerings. We've wanted to get our hands on a Crafter for a while now to see why they are so well regarded and we weren't disappointed.

Meanwhile, our regular Quiet Room columnists **Giorgio Serici** and **Maneli Jamal** continue to bring you the best in acoustic technique sessions. Enjoy!

[...>]



# Larrivée 000-03W Limited Edition

Canadian guitar brand Larrivée has a reputation for offering exquisite handmade acoustics at tempting prices. Tempting enough to win over **Michael Casswell**? **Gary Cooper** adds background on this unique maker and a rare model.

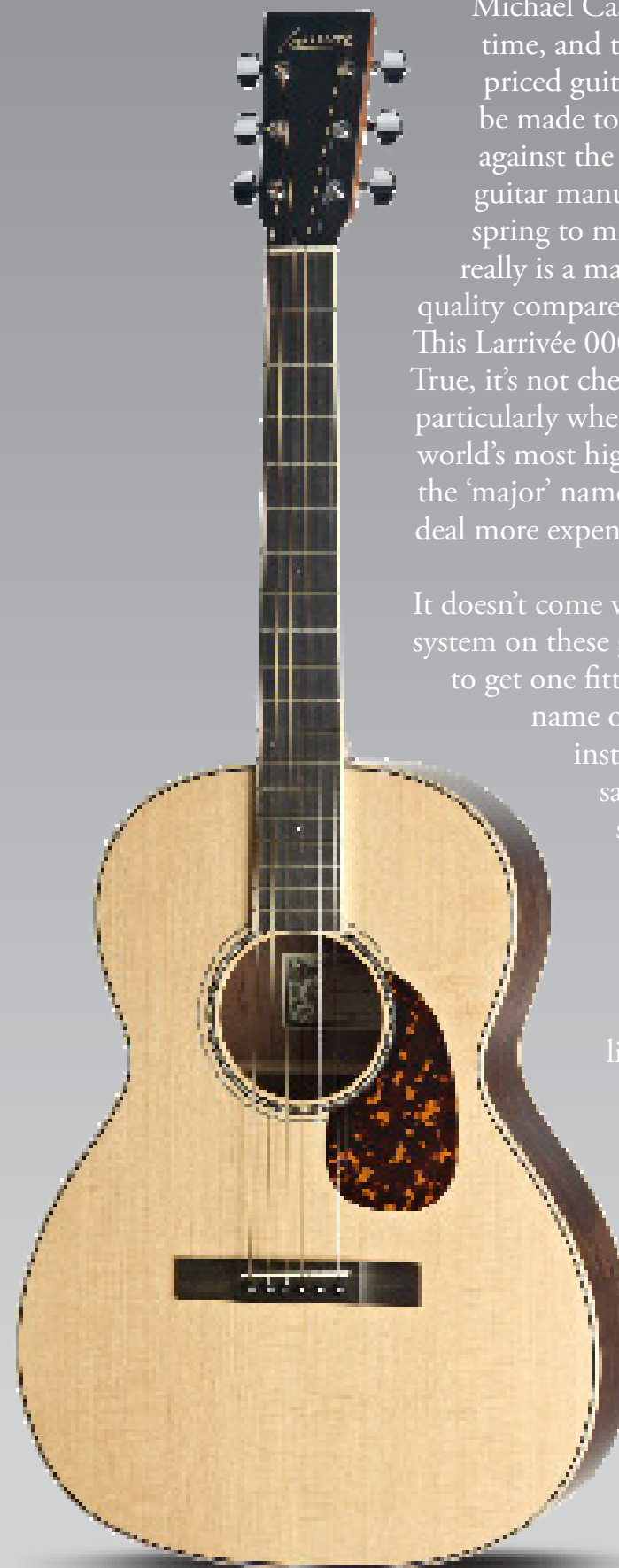
Though Larrivée may not be the best known acoustic guitar brand outside of North America (which takes around 70 per cent of everything the company makes in its Canadian and US plants) it has a strong reputation at home and a surprising one within the inner sanctum of guitar makers. Its founder, the French Canadian Jean Larrivée, isn't just one of the world's most respected production builders, he is also regarded as a guru to other manufacturers. Word has it that when an acoustic plant runs into trouble, Larrivée is the man they call on for advice on how to fix it. He is also (perhaps not surprisingly, considering where he hails from!) one of the authorities on guitar woods and is even the proud possessor of his own sawmill!

Larrivée also has strong principles. Though he has helped advise and troubleshoot factories in Asia, he refuses to make Larrivée acoustics there, shunning the route taken by so many guitar brands that have introduced 'subsidiary' lines. Larrivée just refuses to do it.

The guitar we were sent for review was, in some respects, an oddity in the Larrivée line-up. It's a 000 size (in Martin parlance - Auditorium elsewhere) sized model with 12 frets to the body, that sits in the company's

Recording range and brings to it a model that, were it in Larrivée's Traditional series, would be priced a great deal higher. That said, no savings have been made in terms of the quality of the wood used in this stunningly simple, not to say puritanically beautiful, guitar, nor in its construction. It's just unadorned with decoration and flounces, comes with no pickup and represents the stripped-down classical essence of a true fingerpicker's recording guitar - the 000.

This particular model comes from Larrivée's Vancouver plant (the company also manufactures in Southern California) and is offered in two very limited edition versions. Both are constructed entirely from satin finished solid wood and are handmade instruments, featuring Sitka spruce soundboards, single piece mahogany necks, ebony fretboards and bridges. They also sport traditional dovetail glued necks, adjustable truss rods and Graphtec TUSQ nuts, saddles and bridges, plus high quality chrome tuners. The difference (and it is reflected in the price) is that one features a rosewood back and sides, while the other features the, more costly, walnut option. Naturally, we borrowed the more expensive version to hand to Mr Casswell!



Michael Casswell writes: I have played a lot of acoustics in my time, and there is a definite point where a good, reasonably priced guitar that we would all love to own and play can be made to look and sound mundane when it is held up against the product of one of the true masters of acoustic guitar manufacture. Makers like Collins, Fylde and Taylor spring to mind as being in this sort of class! At this level, there really is a marked difference in the touch, response, sound and quality compared to what we usually think of as a good acoustic. This Larrivée 000 has it all in spades - it's a true player's guitar. True, it's not cheap, but it's also not as pricey as you might think, particularly when you consider that it is handmade by one of the world's most highly regarded makers. In fact, with any other of the 'major' names on the headstock, we reckon this would be great deal more expensive than it is.

It doesn't come with a pickup, but I have seen the LR Baggs system on these guitars and they work well. It wouldn't be difficult to get one fitted if you wanted but its primary purpose, as the name of the series it sits in suggests, is to be an acoustic instrument - a recording guitar - and this particular sample really delivered on that score, sounding so sweet that even with the most average of microphones, you couldn't fail to get a superb recorded tone.

You may have noticed on my jammed demo of the guitar, I have messed with the tuning a little. Nothing drastic. I just dropped the bottom E down to a C, and the top E down to a D. I did this for two reasons - firstly, to make me sound like I know what I'm doing! Secondly, to demonstrate the enormous even response of the guitar. The lows are fat but crisp, the mids are sweet and even, and the highs are full of life and don't just die on you as they do with many lesser acoustics.

Gi's Bassment specialist, Dan Veal, and the camera guys were listening to me play before the cameras rolled, and all commented how the sound of the Larrivée filled the room and had

[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



“girth” (Dan’s word), which is a very good description on how this guitar sounds. I would like to think it was my playing, but actually it was all the guitar!

I did sneak this guitar home with me for a one night stand, and it was an inspiring instrument to spend time with. If you are remotely creative, then the simplest of ideas take on a life of their own, and make you pursue the complete song.

The satin finish on this guitar is so subtle that it almost feels like there’s no finish at all. The effect is like touching silk every time you pick it up to play (which you would do a lot). It’s very tactile. Plus it has a solid wood construction, which means no laminated top and sides, but real solid pieces of spruce on top, with walnut back and sides, in this case. Solid wood construction means as the years pass, the sound the guitar makes should simply get better and better. With

laminates, generally how the guitar sounds new, is pretty much how it will sound as the years fly by (which they seem to be doing at alarming speed). It’s a sobering thought that this Larrivée, all things being equal, is going to end-up in a few years time sounding even better than it does now!

Having spent time with this, and other Larivee guitars, I can say that in my opinion it’s up there with the best you can get. If you are serious about your acoustic playing, then you are probably already aware how good this maker is. And if you are not serious about your acoustic playing, then you should be, because if you want to be a great electric guitar player, then starting on an acoustic is best for your playing, and best for your soul.

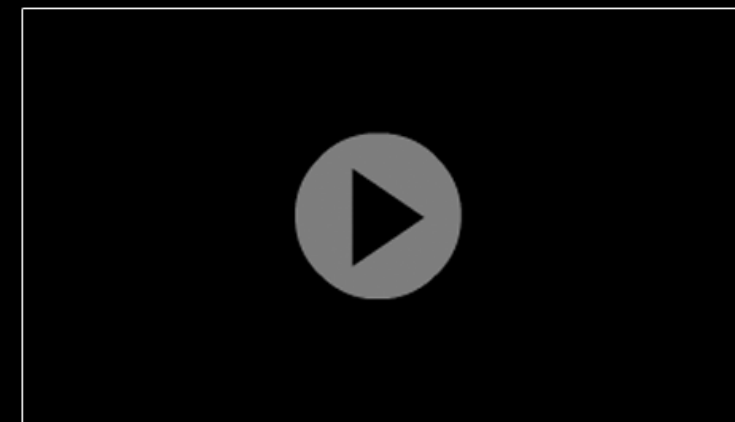
This guitar was superb - and at the price it is also fantastic value for money for a world-class instrument.



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# Crafter HiLite-TE-CD-VTG

Crafter is one of the most respected names in the mid-market acoustic world. We've been wanting to get our hands on one since we opened the Quiet Room's doors. **Tim Slater** finds out whether it was worth the wait.

Crafter guitars are usually associated with the entry level to mid-priced sectors of the acoustic market but the brand has nevertheless managed to gain an impressive roster of artist endorsements including fragrant UK-based songstress Katie Melua and even grizzled old rockers Satus Quo, who have been known to strum a Crafter acoustic or two in between unleashing salvos of their trademark heads-down boogie! Crafter's reputation for making good quality affordable acoustic guitars clearly demonstrates that it knows a thing or two about acoustic guitar manufacturing; indeed it's said that the company's Korean factory is one of the world's most impressive guitar building facilities. It seems to have an instrument on hand to cater for just about any style and budget and the Crafter HiLite appears to have been pitched to tempt electric players seeking an acoustic whose easy playability and neutral feel allows a relatively comfortable transition between an electric guitar and an acoustic.

The HiLite is a full-sized orchestral model whose complex product description helps to delineate its features and finish: 'TE' donates that this is an electro-acoustic model whilst 'CD' alludes to its lower cutaway

and 'VTG' refers to its convincingly aged-looking satin vintage sunburst finish. The orchestral body is comprised of a solid cedar top and laminated mahogany back and sides, neatly finished off with black edge binding. The solid top is 'A' braced, which refers to the bracing pattern helping to stiffen the underside of the solid top between the sound hole and the neck block; there isn't any noticeable difference in tone between A bracing and standard X bracing patterns, in this instance the A shape is simply there to accommodate the lower cutaway.

In typical orchestral style the HiLite features a 14<sup>th</sup> fret neck join, bolstered up by a traditional dovetail join that guarantees a firm union between the neck shaft and the neck heel. The mahogany neck itself feels very comfortable; it's firmly rounded 'C' section offers a compact but not cramped playing environment that doesn't feel too far from Gibson's luxuriously comfy '59 profile. Indeed, this neck feels very familiar, demonstrating our earlier point that this guitar feels ideal for the electric player who maybe doesn't play acoustic that often and would appreciate any instrument that helps to make the transition between the two disciplines as smooth as possible.

The satin finish on the rear of the neck also feels very smooth, sidestepping the mildly uncomfortable sensation of resistance often found with a normal gloss finish neck.

The rosewood fingerboard looks like a good quality piece of timber and it's also good to see a decent setup, the fret ends are evenly profiled and the frets twinkle with a freshly polished gleam! There are only 20 frets, which might seem a bit limited if you are used to playing 22 frets and beyond but even taking that into account, the HiLite's generous cutaway still allows virtually unhindered access to most of the important bits that soar beyond the 12<sup>th</sup> fret.

This electro acoustic delivers its amplified sounds courtesy of the onboard C4T active preamp. The compact control surface contains a simple but highly effective three-band EQ, a rotary master volume and a phase switch that inverts the polarity of the signal between the guitar and the amplifier's speaker, thus helping to eliminate tiresome feedback that threatens to spoil your latest Magnum Opus whether you are performing down the local acoustic jam night or onstage at a football stadium.



[...>]



STAR RATING ★★★★★

CHECK THE SPEC



The pre-amp's built-in digital tuner bypasses the pre-amp's output, thus saving your audience from the ordeal of listening while you tune-up, aided by a small but nonetheless very bright and easily readable LCD display that helps to monitor the tuning process.

Dual ¼ inch and XLR outputs offer a choice of connecting to an acoustic combo or else sending the signal directly out to a PA, which is a very useful and unexpected feature to find at this fairly modest price range. Orchestral guitars by their very nature are designed to be fairly strident and the amplified tones duly reflect this whilst being really rather good! Time was when an acoustic pre-amp often meant being saddled with an uncomfortable compromise that inevitably revolved around rather harsh faux acoustic sounds that sounded miles away from the natural tone of the instrument

itself. The Crafter HiLite's amplified tones, however, are thankfully much more rewarding; the guitar's natural brightness is still evident but the EQ provides plenty of scope to adjust the tone to suit the player's personal taste and the EQ requirements of the venue in question.

Even in an ideal world you still need an electro-acoustic guitar with a fairly flexible EQ to compensate for the widely varying acoustics of the typical live gigging circuit and the C4T system seems more than up to the task. It is also simple to use and even those with gnarled 40-something-plus fingers should soon get the hang of it!

The natural acoustic tones have a pleasant roundness and the brisk-sounding top end displays an underlying sweetness that sounds surprisingly sophisticated given that we are dealing with a very affordable instrument.

There is a very slight hint of boxiness to the lower frequencies but the general impression is of a guitar that punches above its weight, tonally speaking. Digging in, the guitar doesn't sound particularly cloudy or over-compressed when you strum firmly and it definitely makes a really effective acoustic 'lead' guitar; demonstrating a very punchy and clear attack with the power to inspire the player to attempt some pretty ambitious soloing if the need arises.

The Crafter HiLite-TE-CD-VTG feels like the type of electro acoustic that you can safely take home to meet your mother! The vintage style finish makes a refreshing change from the popular pale and glossy spruce and the compact dimensions are counterbalanced by a pleasantly big and punchy sound. You can imagine this guitar suiting a Jazz or Country soloist just as adeptly as it effortlessly sits alongside a singer songwriter; the terrific neck, good tone and workable amplified tones add up to a whole lot of fun. Just as importantly this guitar won't break the bank, either. In fact it's really very good value for money.

Our first Crafter in the Quiet Room certainly lived up to all the good things we've heard about this brand. We'll be back for more!







# FIRST STEPS IN FINGERSTYLE

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

In this column we will be looking at the wonderful piece simply called 'Lesson' by the Spanish composer Dionisio Aguado.

The difference between this composition and 'Spanish Romance', which we have covered in the previous two columns, is that the melody of the former is in the lower register, rather than in the most common higher one.

This is a bespoke composition, designed to improve coordination skills of the picking hand, particularly the p, i, m fingers, but particularly to highlight the melody played with the 'p' finger from the accompaniment played by 'i' and 'm' fingers.

These play a repeated pattern consisting of p, i, m, i. Those of you familiar with Country Music may find some affinity between this picking pattern and the one normally used on a banjo (banjo rolls).

As always, tonal and dynamic awareness is what makes our playing sound 'expensive' or 'cheap'. To meet the former objective, slow practice is key, as we certainly don't want memorise wrong parts or develop bad technical habits.

Take one beat at a time, memorizing the fretting hand shapes and pattern.

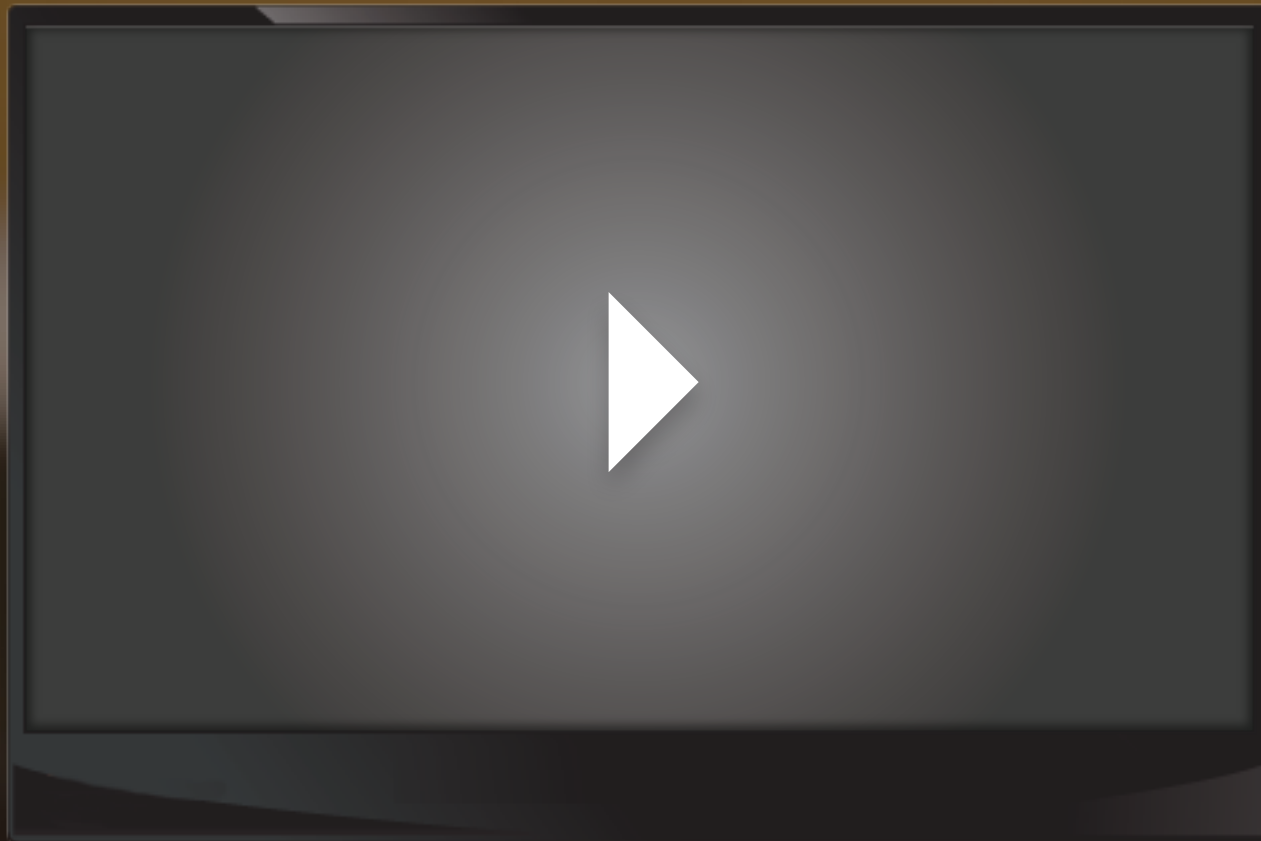
It is wise to follow the recommended fingering as per the video and the transcription included. Please notice how the first note of each beat (the melody) has been notated with a secondary stem pointing downward. This is to indicate that the composition has two parts (voices) melody and accompaniment, but most importantly, that each melody note should last for a full beat rather than just a semi-quaver.

Practice singing the melody played with the 'p' finger while playing the piece can help performing the tune in a more '*cantabile*' (singing like) manner.

As recommended in the previous columns, where we mainly focused on the picking hand, we ought to focus most of all on accuracy and consistency of tone. Strategies to further improvement 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.

[...>]





Here is a recommended hierarchy of dynamics and velocities:

**Melody:** Loud with the 'p' finger

Accompaniment: Quiet with the 'i' and 'm' fingers.

**The picking hand:**

Plant, press and release the 'p' 'i' and 'a' fingers together respectively on the 3<sup>rd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> string. Next, 'i' fingers on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string.

Practice this pattern for a while with open strings, paying attention to accuracy, consistency of tone, dynamics and emphasizing the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> string,

where the melody will be played.

**The fretting hand:**

**Bar 1:** Place your middle finger on fret 2 of the G (3<sup>rd</sup> string) and the index on fret 1 of B and open E. Arpeggiate as explained above for 2 beats.

**Bar 1:** Beat 1: Same shape one string up.

**Bar 2:** 'p' finger plays D string:

**Bar 3:** Little finger on fret 4 of G. Ring finger on fret 3 of B. Open E.

**Bar 4:** Beat 1 as bar 1. Beat 2 As previous apart from 'p' which plays an open A string .

**Bar 5:** Beat 1 as bar 1. Beat 2: Open G, middle f. on fret 2 of B and open E.

**Bar 6:** Beat 1: Ring f. on fret 3 of D. Little f. on fret 3 of B. Index on fret 1 of E. Beat 2 The same but with an open D.

**Bar 7:** Beat 1: Middle f. on fret 2 of D. Index on fret 1 of B. Open E. Beat 2: Index on fret 1 of G. Open B and E.

**Bar 8:** As bar 4 but without the arpeggio on beat 2.

**Congrats! You've completed the first half of the tune.**

Please focus on minimum-movement approach, as this will help delivering the piece in a more accurate and consistent manner, while saving energy.

**Bar 9:** As bar 1.

**Bar 10:** Beat 1: Open G and B. Index on fret 1 of E. Beat 2: The same but with a low G fret 3 of E with ring f.

**Bar 11::** Beat 1: Ring f. on fret 3 of A. Index on fret 1 of B. Open E. Beat 2: same but starting with middle f. on fret 2 of D. (It would be wise to finger a Cmaj chord 'C shape'). However, make sure that the low C note is not sustained on beat 2, as this would mask the sound of E.

**Bar 12:** As bar 10

**Bar 13:** Beat 1: Ring f. on fret 3 of A. Index on fret 1 of B. Open E.

Beat 2: Middle f. on fret 2 of A. Little f. on fret 3 of B. Open E.

[...>]



**Bar 14:** Beat 1: Open A string. Index on fret 1 of B. Open E. Beat 2: Ring f. on fret 3 of A. Index on fret 1 of B. Open E.

**Bar 15:** Beat 1: Open D and B strings. Index on fret 1 of E. Beat 2: Middle f. on fret 2 of D. Little f. on fret 3 of B. Open E.

**Bar 16:** As bar 8.

This will complete 'Lesson' by Dionisio Aguado.

Whether you will play this composition on a steel strung or a nylon strung guitar, this will provide a great opportunity to improve coordination skills of the picking and fretting hand.

I hope you will enjoy playing this piece and that your attention to detail such as tone quality, attack, dynamic awareness etc. discussed in these columns are paying off.

Till the next time, Good-bye!



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## ISSUE TWO

# LEFT HAND/ RIGHT HAND

Guitar Interactive  
is proud to  
welcome back  
Guitar Idol finalist,  
percussive acoustic  
virtuoso,  
**Maneli Jamal.**

### Welcome back to my Guitar Interactive column!

Welcome back to my third acoustic guitar column! Here we'll be looking closely at some percussive playing on the body of the guitar, while the left hand is keeping two notes going the whole time. We get the illusion that there are two instruments being played. This is the beauty of the acoustic guitar - that it has this potential to incorporate drum sounds with melodic/rhythmic phrasing. I always enjoy playing these types of things, especially in a live setting as people often wonder if it's all one instrument, or if I have a backing track playing. In any case, let's get you started with some of these groovy examples!

The first example is holding an Em chord and pulling it off then hammering it back on. This is done throughout all of the examples in the video. The tricky part is that it is in 6/8 time so the accents lie on the 1st and 4th beat. We'll be using our palm on the right hand to accent those beats on the lower bout of the guitar. We can then add a "snare" hit by using the right hand fingers to strike the side of the guitar to get a nice attack sound that emulates a snare hit on a drum kit.

[...>]



Once we have this comfortably down we can do many different things to spice-up our playing. Instead of using our right hand palm to accent beats 1 and 4, we can now use our right hand middle finger to do a harmonic slap on the 12th and 19th fret. The trick with these is to make sure you're directly hitting the fret, not behind it. I usually accent these harmonic slaps by hitting my right hand palm on the body of the guitar at the same time above the strings. If you angle your wrist diagonally you can achieve this with finesse.

Lastly in example four, we have a combination of both percussive hits and harmonic slaps combined to get a rich and

dynamic sound. As you can see having left/right hand independence is key to trying to get them to sound like different instruments. It's a really good idea to try to learn some basic drum beats to incorporate them into your playing. It will also help you understand the importance of dynamics and accents inside each bar. Have fun with this one and remember to always experiment on your own!

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).





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