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10 STEPS TO MONSTER CHOPS

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MUSTAINE REVISITS MEGADETH'S DEBUT

GHOST "RATS"

FLEETWOOD MAC "NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN" PLUS "THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER," BRIAN MAY "WIRE CHOIR" STYLE!

MEGADETH "TAKE NO PRISONERS"

"THE BEST OF CLAPTON WITH THE BEATLES!"

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY CARLOS SERRAO
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Guitar Pictured: Gibson Custom Slash Anaconda Burst; Photo Credit: Kat Benzova
Lucky Charm

Hi There, Gang. I’m Damian Fanelli, the new editor of Guitar World. Although my name, face, Fender Telecaster and button-up “Alcatraz circa 1966” shirt might be unfamiliar to some of you, I’ve been at GW for more than seven years, first as online managing editor, then managing editor and now, well, this. Between the website and the magazine, I’ve written thousands of stories (who can forget my non-Pulitzer-prize-winning Al Jardine interview from the June 2015 issue?), started in a few lesson videos and wore out my Converse Chuck Taylors at every Winter NAMM Show since 2012. During that time, I had the privilege of working under two supremely gifted (and very calm) editors, Brad Tolinski and Jeff Kitts. I know new editors are expected to say stuff like “I’m also a longtime reader!”—but I have actual proof. In the 1985 issue (Yes, I’m talking about something that happened in 1985), Lita Ford mentioned “a snake charmer scale that Ritchie Blackmore showed me once,” so the GW editors asked readers to chime in with their theories on what this mysterious “snake charmer scale” might be. I drew up a little something and mailed it in—and they actually printed it. You can see my submission below; it appears on page 73 of the November 1985 issue, which features my hero, Stevie Ray Vaughan, on the cover.

But, as you can see, I screwed up. As GW’s former technical editor, Mark Bosch, pointed out all those years ago, I should’ve dropped the notes between the frets instead of on the frets. Hey, what did I know? I was a self-taught guitarist-playing kid who watched The A-Team and Night Court when I should’ve been brushing up on my Hungarian minor scales. Yet, that’s how I learned the correct way to draw a fingering diagram—right there and then—and I haven’t screwed it up since. It’s OK to make mistakes, people; we’re supposed to be learning something new every day. It was GW’s aim to guide readers of all ages back then—and it still is today. To that aim, be sure to make use of our Master Class with the amazing Doug Aldrich, not use of our Master Class with the amazing Doug Aldrich, not mention the debut column by Judas Priest’s very own Richie Faulkner—and don’t forget our “very popular on YouTube as I type this” lessons by Nita Strauss and Plini.

By the way, GW also screwed up back in ’85. My bass-playing brother’s name is actually spelled Antony, without an H. He’s been waiting 33 years for that correction!

—Damian Fanelli
Editor
Sennheiser evolution wireless G4, Orange OB1-300, Ibanez SRSC805, TAMA Superstar Hyper-Drive Duo 5-piece Shell Pack, Meinl Cymbals Byzance Cymbals, Fender Eric Johnson Thinline Stratocaster, Peavey Invective,412 Extension Cabinet and Invective.120 Tube Head, Fender Santa Ana, Walrus Audio Deep Six, Yamaha LJ16BC Billy Corgan Signature

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Changing His Stripes

I truly enjoyed the interview with Jack White [July 2018]. As someone who has been reading guitar magazines for more than 40 years, I never really found any interview of his to be satisfying or informative until I read this one. The way he talked about the instruments he played on his current recording and how he was experimenting with artist-series guitars was fascinating. I also like him because no matter how successful any particular direction he goes might be, he always changes it the next time around and goes in a completely different direction. I really like that in an artist.
—Howard Elovitz

Rock Your Heart Out

I’ve been subscribing to, reading and learning from Guitar World for more than 27 years. There’s always a lot of great tunes and tabs. I’ve had a love for music since I was four. It’s my companion when I’m alone and the hop in my step when I’m happy. Now, imagine, if you will, the combination of all those feelings with the beauty of loving a woman that makes you complete. That’s what my favorite bass guitarist in the world does to me—my girlfriend, Lisa Zimmerman. She rocks the bass and has been involved in the music scene in the Phoenix area for many years. Her passion for music is captured in this drawing of her, which I recently gave to her. She plays in the band AZ/DZ. The Ultimate AC/DC Experience, which mostly travels the Southwest and casino circuit. She’s headlined at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and opened for Quiet Riot and Cinderella. She’s jammed with the stars of the Monsters of Rock Cruise and at the NAMM Show in Anaheim.

It’d be so amazing if you could publish her image in your Sounding Board column so that others can see why she’s my favorite. I mean, C’mon, how many women can rock an Ernie Ball Music Man StingRay with such vigor and “badassery”? Thank you for your time and consideration.
—Frank Bustamante

Taking the Pith

I just got done reading the Ritchie Blackmore interview [June 2018] and I was simply astounded. I’ve read dozens of interviews with Ritchie over the years and his answers can be considered pithy if I’m being kind. I figured I was in for more of the same when I saw him on the cover. I was blown away by what an in-depth and sincere back-and-forth the interview turned out to be. He actually seemed interested in discussing his craft for a change. Your interviewer should be commended for producing perhaps the most insightful interview with Ritchie Blackmore ever printed. Thank you so much.
—Chris Rodler

After the Flood

I just wanted to share a picture of my brother-in-law, Lars Andro.
soff. Last week we had a devastating flood in Grand Forks, BC, Canada. We lost our home, as did Lars and my sister-in-law and our family friend Norm. We haven’t been able to go back into our neighborhood because it’s still underwater. Norm is in a wheelchair from an accident years ago; his neighborhood opened up for a small window of time to go in and get personal items. The area was still underwater, so Lars offered to go in and was able to grab as many guitars as possible since it was only safe to go once. Here’s the amazing photo that was taken when Lars came out. We made sure Norm got some personal items that mean everything to him. Thanks for your time!
—Tanya McKimmie

Forward Thinking

Thank you so much for the awesome recent cover stories with Steve Vai, Joe Satriani and John Petrucci. Keep up the great work. I’d love to see the new breed of shredders such as Plini, Nick Johnston, Aaron Marshall, Scale the Summit, David Maxim Micic, Arch Echo, Artificial Language, Chon, the Helix Nebula, I built the sky, Owane, Polyphia and Jakub Zytecki grace your cover as well. Keep the shredding alive.
—Steve Smith

A Strong Eighties Vibe

I’m a long-time reader. If I recall correctly, my first issue was May 1988 (Steve Vai). In a recent issue, you asked for transcription suggestions. Here goes, plus the guitarists who played on the songs:

• “The Ultimate Sin” or “Bark at the Moon” (Jake E. Lee)
• “The Hunter” or “Kiss of Death” (George Lynch)
• “Wanted Man” or “Lay It Down” (Warren DeMartini)
• “The Analog Kid” or “Xanadu” (Alex Lileson)
• “22 Acacia Avenue” or “The Evil That Men Do” (Adrian Smith and Dave Murray)
• “Shake a Leg” or anything off Powerage (Angus and Malcolm Young)

I don’t believe these songs have been transcribed in any guitar magazine in decades, if ever. And while you’re at it, why not an Eighties-themed issue? George, Warren and Jake on the cover? Surely ESP and Charvel would be onboard? Please make it so!
—Henry M. Karowski

PASS IT ON: Got a tattoo of your favorite band or guitarist you want to share with us? Send a photo of your ink to damian.fanelli@futurenet.com and maybe we’ll print it or post it on our Facebook page!

INK SPOT

I got this Iron Maiden tattoo on Pike Street in downtown Seattle in 2010. It’s a tribute to arguably the best heavy metal band of all time.
—Ron Gillespie

SEND LETTERS TO: The Sounding Board, Guitar World, 218 E. 28th St., 12th Floor, New York, NY 10016, or email us at damian.fanelli@futurenet.com. All subscription queries must be emailed to guitarworldmag@icnfull.com. Please do not email the Sounding Board with subscription matters.
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READER ART

OF THE MONTH

If you’ve created a drawing, painting or sketch of your favorite guitarist and would like to see it in an upcoming issue of Guitar World, email damian.fanelli@futurenet.com with a scan of the image!

THE DOORS BY STEPHEN ZATLUKAL

Vinnie Vincent

BY KEITH BOLICK

DEFENDERS of the Faith

Jeff Moore
AGE: 49
HOMETOWN: Colonie, NY
GUITARS: Kramer Night Swan, Jackson Soloist, PRS Guitars 24-fret custom, Ibanez 520QM
SONGS I’VE BEEN PLAYING: Dokken “Unchain the Night,” Ratt “Round and Round,” Judas Priest “You’ve Got Another Thing Comin’,” Def Leppard “Foolin’”
GEAR I MOST WANT: Mesa/Boogie Triple Rectifier head, Ibanez Genesis

Rick Poulter
AGE: 37
HOMETOWN: Cleburne, TX
GUITARS: Ibanez Premium RG1070PBZ, Fender American Special Stratocaster, Wylde Audio Redrum Odin, Epiphone Bjorn Gelotte Signature Les Paul
SONGS I’VE BEEN PLAYING: Metallica “Harvester of Sorrow” and “And Justice for All,” Eric Clapton “Cocaine,” Black Sabbath “Iron Man,” Black Stone Cherry “Cheaper to Drink Alone”
GEAR I MOST WANT: Marshall JVM800

Dave Hammons
AGE: 27
HOMETOWN: Kansas City, MO
GUITARS: Sammick SG copy, Fender G-II acoustic, Eastwood Sidejack Pro
SONGS I’VE BEEN PLAYING: Songs by my band, Citizen Scum, plus “Bed I Made” by Allen Stone
GEAR I MOST WANT: Fender George Harrison Tribute Rosewood Telecaster, Ibanez RGAIX7U Antique Brown Stain

* Are you a Defender of the Faith? Send a photo, along with your answers to the questions above, to damian.fanelli@futurenet.com. And pray!
Since 1963 our hotel has been home to more legends than Valhalla. We’re not just where they live, we’re often where they are born. Join us this summer for our concert series LIVE@Sunset Marquis as we unleash the next Hollywood Legends.
Halestom Get ‘Vicious’

GUITARISTS LZZY HALE AND JOE HOTTINGER DISCUSS THE APPROACH THAT YIELDED THE BAND’S MOST IMMEDIATE-SOUNDING MUSIC TO DATE.

By Richard Bienstock

When it came time for Halestorm to enter the studio to record the follow-up to 2015’s mega-successful Into the Wild Life, the Pennsylvania-based hard rockers didn’t exactly know what type of record they wanted to make. But, says guitarist Joe Hottinger, “We did go in knowing what kind of record we didn’t want to make.” He laughs. “Which is half the battle, I guess.”

It all came down to the fact that, while the members of Halestorm—Hottinger, singer and guitarist Lzzy Hale, bassist Josh Smith and drummer Arejay Hale—had worked up plenty of new material on the road, once they got to the studio they didn’t feel the new music moved the ball forward as far as their sound or style was concerned. “They were good songs, and I think they would have done fine,” Hottinger says, “but it felt like a lot of rehashing of the same themes and musical feelings we’ve had before. So we went into the studio and we said to Nick [producer Nick Raskulinecz] ‘Hey man, we have all these songs and we don’t like ‘em! What do we do?’ ”

Raskulinecz’ proposal? Set up their gear in the studio, start jamming and see what happens. “It was interesting because it forced us to think about things in a different way,” Lzzy Hale says. “Because usually we go in the studio for a month and bang out a record. But this time we ended up...
applying the live thing to the studio and just playing. We would go in every day and record everything, and then Nick would say, ‘That right there sounded really cool,’ or ‘Do that again.’ We were basically turning these jams into songs.”

The result of this jam-based approach is the new album Vicious, Halestorm’s fourth full-length studio work and their most immediate-sounding—and, in some cases, hardest-rocking—effort to date. From the crushing, anthemic opener, “Black Vultures,” to the soaring “Killing Ourselves to Live” to the throttling first single, “Uncomfortable” (“one of the first instrumental jams we turned into a song,” Hale says), Vicious sounds like a band revitalized after the slicker, more produced sounds of Into the Wild Life. Says Hottinger, “I love [Into the Wild Life] and I’m glad we did it. But this time it was like, ‘All right, we went through that phase. Now let’s make a rock record!’”

Adds Hale, “Nick really pushed us in that respect. He didn’t cut us any slack. There are certain things on the record where he was like, ‘No, no, no, that doesn’t rock enough. I’ve seen you live and I know you can go to 11—so go there!’”

Which is not to say Vicious is a musical one-trick pony. In addition to the harder-rocking cuts, there’s swaggering, super-hooky pop-rock (“Buzz”), acoustic-based ballads (“Heart of Novocaine” and “The Silence”) and slinky, almost funky workouts (“Conflicted” and “Vicious”). “You can really hear all four corners of Halestorm on this record,” Hale says. “It’s not just about me singing and us having some catchy songs. It’s about what everyone brings to the table. And that ended up opening the entire world to us.”

And while one might be led to believe that the focus on heavier rock might have had something to do with the album’s title, Hale says it actually stemmed more from the lyrics. “Thematically, these lyrics came about from me almost trying to do my own therapy sessions, because this past year I was going through a couple of bouts of second guessing myself on everything. I was trying to get back to that place where I know that I’m a badass, and so these songs are about being fierce and pushing through all of that. That’s a big reason we ended up calling it Vicious.”

Overall, says Hottinger, “We finally made the record we’ve been trying to make our whole lives, and I think we accomplished what we were going for!” He laughs again. “Well, not what we were going for... What we weren’t going for!”

“WE FINALLY MADE THE RECORD WE’VE BEEN TRYING TO MAKE OUR WHOLE LIVES, AND I THINK WE ACCOMPLISHED WHAT WE WERE GOING FOR.”
—JOE HOTTINGER
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NO, YOU DON'T NEED to get your eyes checked. The striking axe at the top of this page is, in fact, one of Fender’s new Parallel Universe models. First unveiled at the 2018 Winter NAMM Show, the limited-edition Parallel Universe series is the byproduct of Fender sending some of their most iconic designs on a direct collision course with one another. The results—an eye-catching blend of the familiar, the retro and the unconventional—have caused a major buzz in guitar land ever since images of the new models started circulating in January.

With its direct hybrid models, the Parallel Universe line truly lives up to its name. The Strat-Tele Hybrid imagines a world where a guitar with a Telecaster body comes replete with the controls, synchronized tremolo bridge, pickups and contours of a Strat. The Jazz-Tele Hybrid, on the other hand, takes a Tele Deluxe body and tosses in the single-coil pickups and floating vibrato of an American Vintage ’65 Jazzmaster. The switching system of the Jaguar—which Fender already combined with the Mustang in the Nineties at the behest of Kurt Cobain—joins forces with the electronics of the Strat on the appropriately named Jaguar Strat.

“The Parallel Universe celebrates the modular nature of Fender guitars, splicing together DNA from various Fender models to create off-the-wall hybrids,” Fender Senior Vice President of Products Justin Norvell said of the series.

Where the Parallel Universe line isn’t trying to toss Fender’s most identifiable models into a blender together, it injects a dose of adventurousness into those same guitars. What would it be like if you threw some TV Jones Classic pickups onto a Tele? What if you mounted a Fender ShawBucker humbucking pickup onto the body of yet another Tele? How about adding some inimitable Tele twang to a Strat-style body?

The Tele Thinline Super Deluxe, the American Elite Telecaster HSS and the Whiteguard Strat answer all of those respective questions.

After offering a first look at each of the Parallel Universe models in January, Fender is planning to officially roll out one guitar every month for the rest of 2018. Considering the technical innovations of upcoming models like the Jaguar Strat (which’ll be unveiled in October) and the daring, futuristic design of guitars like the Meteora (November), we have a lot to look forward to.
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FOR MOST MILLENNIALS, their first musical experiences came via earbuds and the internet. Not so for Henry and Rupert Stansall. Growing up in Scunthorpe, England, the two brothers were raised on the booming sounds of their father’s stereo. “Our dad had an extensive vinyl record collection,” Henry says. “We heard a lot of early American music: Roy Orbison, the Everly Brothers, Johnny Cash, Muddy Waters. Those records were so rousing and passionate. Every song just went straight into your heart.”

By their early teens, the Stansall brothers were making their own music (Henry strummed an acoustic guitar and sang while Rupert assumed electric lead guitar duties) and they continued combing their dad’s albums for inspiration. “The guitar was always so prominent on records from the Fifties and Sixties,” Rupert says. “I really got into Chuck Berry, who wrote the book on guitar riffs. If you want to know how to kick off a song, just go to him.”

Combining their first names, the two called themselves the Ruen Brothers and honed their stage act on the British pub circuit. Moving to London, they released the retro-tinged single “Aces,” which became a BBC staple. The tune caught the ear of American mega-producer Rick Rubin, who had an idea: “Rick said, ‘What if the Everly Brothers and Roy Orbison made a modern record produced by Phil Spector?’” Rupert says. “We were like, ‘When do we start?’”

The Ruen Brothers’ debut album, *All My Shades of Blue*, makes good on Rubin’s grand plan. Songs like “Summer Sun” and the anthemic title track brim with widescreen hooks and twangy guitar lines from an era gone by. After that they’re infused with a contemporary rhythmic wallop (courtesy of Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith) to complete the picture. “We established a musical shorthand with Rick right away,” Henry says. “I mean, he’s produced Johnny Cash, so he understood what we wanted intimately.”

There were other benefits to working with Rubin, as Rupert points out: “You go outside Rick’s studio and there’s the Malibu sand and sun. For two guys who grew up in rainy England, it doesn’t get more American than that.”

**AXOLOGY**

- **GUITARS**
  - (Henry) Gibson J-160E, Gibson J-45, Epiphone Texan FT-79 (Rupert)
  - Fender American Deluxe Telecaster, Gibson Memphis ES-Les Paul, Supro Americana Series White Holiday
  - (Rupert) Supro 1600 Supreme, Fender Blues Junior III, Fender Bandmaster

- **EFFECTS**
  - (Henry) SansAmp pedal, Danelectro delay, TC Electronic delay

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  - (Henry) SansAmp pedal, Danelectro delay, TC Electronic delay
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THE RECORD COMPANY had to answer a tricky question on their second full-length album: How do you follow up a debut that became an unlikely hit, thanks to feeling fresh, raw and off the cuff? The Los Angeles trio moved from drummer Alex Stiff’s L.A. living room, where they cut Give It Back to You and two previous indie EPs, into an iconic Hollywood studio, Boulevard Recording. But they followed the same basic template: just play.

“We never want to polish all the edges off,” says guitarist/singer Chris Vos. “You have to be what you are. I embrace the looseness as a guitar player and as a band.”

The resulting album, All of This Life, continues with the same template the band has followed since they got together to jam in 2011, as exemplified by the hard-charging lead single “Life to Fix,” fueled by Stiff’s hooky slide bass riff and Vos’ grungy blues guitar and lap steel chops.

“We knew what kind of band we wanted to be before we actually formed,” Vos says. “We just started jamming and knew it sounded like a band. It was the first time in my life where the band immediately sounded like it was supposed to. We all knew we had something cool going.”

The band’s approach may not have shifted much, but their sound has matured and deepened after supporting their debut album with some 250 shows over 18 months. Starting in clubs, they moved to theaters with Buddy Guy before finding themselves at Madison Square Garden opening for John Mayer.

“You learn a lot about your sound playing all those shows and moving up the venue ladder,” Vos says. “You naturally open up, maybe playing harder or turning the amp up and filling the space.”

The same principles held true in the studio, as Vos turned from the beat-up Teisco Del Rey a friend fished out of a Dumpster to a custom-made Reuben Cox Thinline. “The Thinline is really open on the top end so it’s not a tight, ‘under-control’ sound,” Vos explains. “I’m using a Vox AC15 and a Fender Deluxe and turning them up enough to get that breakup. That said, recording in the living room, there are things like neighbors to consider.”

DESPITE A HARD-EARNED CLIMB UP THE ROCK-AND-ROLL LADDER, THIS L.A.-BASED TRIO MANAGES TO MAINTAIN THEIR ROUGH EDGES ON THEIR NEW DISC, ALL OF THIS LIFE.

By Alan Paul

THE RECORD COMPANY

(from left) The Record Company’s Marc Cazorla, Chris Vos and Alex Stiff

26 GUITAR WORLD • SEPTEMBER 2018
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DEAR GUITAR HERO
How many guitar parts do you have going in the solo at the end of the song “Kite” from your new album, Sparkle Hard?

—Mort Wilson

Just two. Sometimes three. They’re all first takes. I was almost just getting warmed up on it. I hadn’t mapped out anything to do, in terms of what kind of vibe I wanted. I had some ideas from the demo I made, but I didn’t play them the same way on the final track. So it’s literally three takes. I’ve done a lot of punching in and comping solo tracks in my time. But this time I thought, “Let’s just keep it fresh.” I find if you’re soloing over a really simple pattern—two or three chord changes—you can go anywhere.

What could be a Malkmus signature guitar pedal? What brand? What kind of effect?

—Yann (from France)

It’s hard to imagine that. I don’t overdose on pedals. I like pedals because they’re relatively affordable these days. For $100 you can have some kind of quick fun with them. Just a cheap thrill. So mine would be affordable. I always remember those DigiTech Whammy pedals. I used to have one of those. But I think Jack White kind of took over using them. But something like that would be fun—being able to change the pitch like that. One thing I can say about naming it is, I went to see this exhibit in Oregon of fishing lures in all these wild colors. One was called Crippled Herring. I would like to call my pedal Crippled Herring. I guess it would look sort of like a damaged fish. I could imagine just stepping on that and getting my mind blown. Fishing lures are really brightly colored.

How did your Guild S-100 Polara come into your world?

—Moute (from France)

I just saw someone playing it and thought it was really cool. It’s thin, with an SG shape and a long fretboard. Very light. I like guitars that aren’t heavy. Everyone else was playing SGs, so I didn’t need to. I just thought the Guild was a cool alternative. When you see everyone doing the same thing, it’s time to try something else. The Guild was also affordable by some standards—$1,100 or something like that. I don’t treat my guitars with the respect some of them deserve. I hunt around the lower echelons of the market for new guitars.

Can you explain how your friendship with Radiohead multi-instrumentalist Jonny Greenwood started?

—Christopher Cann

It started through Nigel Godrich, this amazing producer who is basically the architect of the sound of Radiohead. He also worked with Pavement on our last album, Terror Twilight. We were in London, and he said, “Jonny and the whole band really love you guys.” Which was nice; I love them too. And we thought it would be nice to have harmonica on these songs we were working on. Nigel said, “I can get Jonny in.” Among his other gifts, he can sound like he’s from Mississippi in 1940 or something. So that’s how I first met him. And also, we went on tour with Radiohead for their Hail to the Thief album and got to hang out with him and the band. He just seemed to be a very talented guy.


—Yolanda Lemos

That was because the drummer with some whammy bar action. I used on songs, like “Perfume-V,” you know?

Also maybe there was a Twin Reverb lying around. Basic stuff, you know? Steinberger guitars are also used on songs, like “Perfume-V.” with some whammy bar action. That was because the drummer for Pavement, Gary Young, his father worked in plastics and had designed the mold for those guitars. So Gary got some free ones. There was a Steinberger bass and some guitars. I was like, “I’ll try those. As long as no one sees me doing it, who cares?”

Alternate tunings are such an important part of your unique sound. What led you to start experimenting with different tunings, and how did you develop the ones you use most often?

—Steve Wills

I started really simple, like everyone, just dropping the E string to D. That’s a really good place to start. It gives you a little tougher sound in your barre chords. In Pavement, we didn’t have a bass guitar on the early recordings. So tuning down gave us a lower sound but also a fullness to the sound. That’s where I started. Then I simplified even more by bringing my G string up to A. I did a lot of things like that.

And then I read about Keith Richards and his open G, kind of blues tuning. It’s a very simple tuning, and that led to a lot of songs in Pavement. And then I just thought, “There’s so much more I can do with this. So I started doing variations, primarily on D and G tunings. Just tuning other strings in different ways and getting different intervals I could play. That’s how it happened. It’s something I really recommend.

Q: I get tear-y-eyed from many of your songs, like “Middle America,” “Zurich Is Stained,” “Freeze the Saints,” “Ramp of Death,” “Loud Cloud Crowd,” etc. What songs make you cry?

—Nick A.

You sure picked all the tear-jerkers. Sometimes songs by people who had a tragic end can be that way for me. Like Judee Sill; she had a hard life. There are songs where the backstory can bring things to an emotional level. “Helpless” by Neil Young can also be that way for me. Some Radiohead songs too. I guess I associate songs with the period when I first hear them. And when I first heard Radiohead’s OK Computer, I was in a self-pity moment. So it was like, “Oh, let’s be sad with this record.”

YOU’VE PROVEN TO BE PRETTY SPECTACULAR AT NAMING ALBUMS AND SONGS. MY WIFE AND I ARE EXPECTING OUR FIRST CHILD. WHAT SHOULD WE NAME THE LAD?

—JOSH MCLAUGHLIN

Biblical names are always classic. They’re out of style, but maybe it’s time for them to come back. It really depends on what you’re into. Look into your family history and look for some kind of forgotten uncle who has a cool name. You’re welcome to any of our song titles also. Maybe you want to name him “Trigger” after “Trigger Cut”—if a horse comes out instead of a person. Or maybe Colt...
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By Eric Feldman, guitarshoptees.com
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February 12, 1987: Megadeth’s Chris Poland (left) and Dave Mustaine perform at the UIC Pavilion in Chicago.
DAVE MUSTAINE reflects on the birth of MEGADETH’S landmark debut album—a ferocious blast of thrash called Killing Is My Business... and Business Is Good!—just in time for a killer deluxe reissue.

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK | PAGE THIRTY-SEVEN
When Guitar World poses a simple, if admittedly obvious, question to Dave Mustaine—why the Megadeth leader decided to revisit his band’s debut album, Killing Is My Business... and Business Is Good!, in a new deluxe reissue—he has a simple and obvious answer: “It’s the one that started it all, isn’t it?” Indeed it is. Released June 12, 1985, on the small, New York-based indie label Combat Records, Killing Is My Business announced to the metal world that there was a new player in town, and one that was arguably faster, more technically adept and straight-up crazed than any of its young peers—a not-unimpressive group that at the time included the likes of Metallica, Slayer, Anthrax and Exodus. For sure, few bands then or now combined instrumental dexterity with sheer speed and ferocity like Megadeth, as first exemplified on Killing Is My Business. From the NWOBHM-on-amphetamines rhythms of “Chosen Ones” to the unrelenting thrash throttle of “Rattlehead,” the mudslide-down-a-mountain riffing of the title track to the all-out speed-metal madness of Mustaine’s early Metallica composition, “Mechanix,” Killing was the sound of a band playing (and, as it turned out, living) in the red, with everything cranked to 10 and pushed to the extreme.

The cast of characters was extreme as well: Mustaine, fresh off having been unceremoniously kicked out of Metallica during a trip to New York, with little to show for it but a bus ticket back to L.A. and a renewed fire in his belly; bassist David Ellefson, a recent transplant from Minnesota and Mustaine’s first recruit for his new band; Gar Samuelson, a jazzbo drummer with a blossoming heroin addiction; and guitarist Chris Poland, a similarly ferocious jazz-fusion player, who, according to Mustaine, was likewise dealing with his own substance-abuse issues. It was a combustible combination—musically and personality-wise—to be sure.

But while the music they ultimately recorded together was electrifying, Mustaine has always admitted to being less than...
I didn’t have the experience in the studio, period, to say, ‘Guys, this doesn’t sound right. You have to fix this.’ Now I can, because I’ve learned so much along the way.

from 1986 to 1990, the audio of which was culled from old VHS tapes reportedly found in Mustaine’s attic.

In the following interview, Mustaine reflects on the making of Killing Is My Business… and Business Is Good!, a period that he freely admits conjures both good and bad memories. To the latter point, the lineup heard on the album lasted through only one more effort before imploding. “I don’t think we would have survived if we didn’t separate after [1986’s] Peace Sells…But Who’s Buying?” Mustaine says. More positively, Killing Is My Business also is indicative of a moment in American heavy metal where musical boundaries were being smashed with seemingly every new release, and Mustaine and Megadeth were all too happy to be right there on the forefront.

“When our record and [Metallica’s] Ride the Lightning and the Slayer record and the Anthrax record were all out, that was one of the coolest times to be alive,” Mustaine says. “Metal was huge and we were having so much fun. For Megadeth, that was kind of like a summing up of everything about growing up for us.”

When it came to revisiting Killing Is My Business… and Business Is Good! for this reissue, what memories or feelings were stirred when hearing this music again? Well, there’s still the whole scratching your head when you listen to the stuff—just thinking, Where did this come from? But it’s fun to listen to. There are great moments, and then there are also moments that are sad, where you think about some of the things we went through as a group and the constant problems with other players in the band. As enjoyable as it was, it was equally as awful because of the behavior.

What was your attitude going in to record it? Going into Indigo Ranch [Studios in Malibu, California] I was really excited. But we get there and [early Megadeth associate] Jay Jones and Chris Poland roll in, and half the recording budget has been spent on food and drugs. It’s very well-chronicled, and it’s been talked about for 35 years. Everybody knows that happened. We had an $8,000 budget and we commenced making a $4,000 record. I was pissed. I was absolutely pissed. Any hope of us having a relationship was shattered. From that point forward Chris Poland was just a player in a band. And Jay Jones’ time was marked.

Needless to say, Chris Poland and Gar Samuelson were a bit different from you and David Ellefson in terms of their personalities and musical backgrounds. Were you skeptical as to whether the lineup would work? Of course. And I wouldn’t say they were kind of different—they were completely different. From the way that they played to the way they believed bands were supposed to operate. The way they dressed to the things they drank to the drugs they took. All of it. You know, you don’t expect a guy to go off and get arrested right before you’re leaving on tour. And when you’re on the road, you don’t expect to have to scour the city pawn shops to collect all the guitars and cymbals and drum pieces that have been pawned. You don’t expect that stuff. So as much as Killing Is My Business was exciting and great at that point, it’s so much more enjoyable right now because fuckin’ Poland ain’t around. And, unfortunately, Gar passed away. Gar was a very lovable guy, but, you know, he had those same things. We played in Canada one time, we were with Exciter, and Gar decided he was gonna go off to the bad side of town and try to procure some party favors. And he doesn’t come back. We have a concert to do and he doesn’t fucking come back. He eventually sauntered in halfway through Exciter’s set and we played after that. But that was my first introduction to somebody putting a substance ahead of success. And I believe that’s kind of where the first fissure happened in Megadeth’s foundation and we started to swap priorities, where music became more like a byproduct of our lifestyle.

After you finished recording Killing Is My Business, what did you think when you heard the final product? I wasn’t really pleased with it, because we had had such a small budget to make the record. And this was going to be our first
shot doing something as Megadeth. And seeing as I’d already had some bad dealings out of the chute back in New York [with Metallica], I’d already started to become very skeptical. So when it came time to actually sit down with the record, I remember I was in my little apartment, and I don’t know what was more disappointing—the artwork or the way the album turned out musically. But I really didn’t know the nuances that were involved in making a record, like mastering and all that stuff. And sadly, I didn’t have the clout at the time to pull rank and say, “Look, I wanna use a better this or a better that.” And probably the most important thing was I didn’t have the experience in the studio, period, to say, “Guys, this doesn’t sound right. You have to fix this.” Now I can, because I’ve learned so much along the way.

What was your gear setup on the album?

For amps I think I was using Rocktron stuff. Then we moved up to Marshall. As far as my guitar, when it was where I left it, it was usually the B.C. Rich Bich. [laughs] David Ellefson and I were in the habit of buying guitars from B.C. Rich, and we had a lot of them. But after a while we started to find out that there were a lot of other guitar makers that had really cool guitars as well. And sometimes when you’re out on the road and you have a guitar and something happens to it, you pretty much put a damper on your feelings toward the whole company. So we were in Norfolk, Virginia, and I went out on stage and something happened and I thought, ‘That’s it—I’m done. And I changed my guitar company. That was when I first ordered a Jackson. And it was weird because I went to Jackson and I said, “I want to have a 24-fret guitar.” And they said, “We don’t do that.” And I went, “You said you’re a custom shop? I want a 24-fret guitar.” And that was the beginning of the 24-fret Flying V.

David Ellefson has told a story that, prior to recording Killing Is My Business, you received a letter from a fan who said he hoped your music would be faster than Metallica’s. In response, you kicked up the bpm’s of the songs. Is this true?

I don’t remember that. It could very well be.

Regardless, Killing Is My Business is a very fast record. Were you trying to make everything as fast as possible?

No, actually. We weren’t setting out to do that. I think that would have been a bit predictable. For the most part the songs were written, and then, yeah, we would adjust them to the point where they were as fast as possible. But then we’d settle them back a bit into the pocket. So you’d take a song to a point where you’d gone as far as you can possibly could and then just kind of bring it back in. Because I think when you have a great riff, there’s probably a window of about 10 beats per minute that you can experiment in. You can go a little above or a little below. But if you get too far off, the hook will go and it won’t come back.

What were some of the subjects you were tackling lyrically?

Well, a lot of people think, “Oh, all the songs are about the devil.” They’re not. I listen to it, and some of it is about the occult. But some of it’s about stuff that’s 100 miles away from that. Like “Killing Is My Business,” the title track, is about a guy who’s hired to do something, and he’s been hired to do the same thing to his employer. I loved watching movies and stuff like that, but I don’t ever remember watching a movie where something like that happened.

Let’s talk about the live tracks that are included in the new package. It’s so cool to hear audio of such early performances.

These were things you found on VHS tapes in your attic?

Yeah, the audio was from the tapes. And those were tapes we started collecting a very long time ago. We were going to make a project called These Boots that would have live songs from the latest lineup going all the way back to the first lineup. And the idea was to use whatever was the best version of the song, whether or not it was from the lineup that recorded it. So we had a whole bunch of different takes of a lot of different songs, and that was the whole premise. We were going to release every single song, if we could, and have this live anthology kind of thing.

What was your first impression upon hearing these performances from 30 years ago?

My impression was, “Wow, what was I thinking?” These songs, the progressions, and just the way the performances are…to me, looking back, it was highly energetic. And it was fun to play. You know, I don’t like doing stuff that’s difficult just for the sake of it being difficult. I’m not that guy. I don’t write stuff just to fuck with people. It’s whatever the song calls for.

How would you say the four of you—David, Chris, Gar and yourself—played together as a unit onstage?

There were good days and there were bad days. The thing is that Chris and Gar were so talented that, when they were on, you were literally watching something that was a sight to behold. But if they weren’t both on, you had one guy that was phenomenal and one that was mediocre, and it kind of showed. And the other thing was that those guys were so much farther along in their playing than David and I. So if one of the two of us wasn’t on, we’d just be kind of hanging on by our toenails.

At the end of the “Mechanix” performance, from a gig in Denver in 1986, you say into the microphone, “You’d better show up backstage or you’re dead meat.” Was there a fight going on?

[laughs] I have no idea. I was probably playing with a heckler in the audience.

You also make a comment at the end of “Chosen Ones,” from that same show, about the crowd being hospitable because they’re throwing drugs at you. That’s hilarious. Yeah, the crowds would do that. There were a couple places we’d play where they would throw bindles that had powder in them.

Then you go on to introduce a new song, “Bad Omen,” which would appear on your next album, Peace Sells…But Who’s Buying? So even as you were touring for Killing Is My Business you were getting ready for the next phase of the band. How did Killing Is My Business set up what was to come?

Very nicely! [laughs] But you know, I can’t even imagine trying to do nowadays what we did with Peace Sells piggybacking on Killing. Because we went on tour for Killing for 72 weeks, and then we had Peace Sells pretty much buttoned up by the time we went into the studio. And that album was done right. We went into a studio in Los Angeles and hammered it out.

Can you talk a bit about what’s going on with Megadeth now? Are you guys working on new material?

Yes, actually, we are. We have been for a few weeks now. All the band members are at home writing stuff and putting it in the same spot, keeping all the riffs centralized in one place. And anybody can access anybody’s stuff. And then once we’re done I’ll start assembling everything.

So, will we see new Megadeth music in 2019?

Absolutely. For sure. A whole new record, I would say the chances are probably 95 percent. And at least one new song, I’d say it’s 100 percent. No question.
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MORE THAN 40 YEARS AFTER MAKING ITS DEBUT, THE ERNIE BALL MUSIC MAN STINGRAY BASS REMAINS THE PREFERRED CHOICE OF COUNTLESS BASS-PLAYING PROS.

The story of the StingRay bass easily could have ended in 1984 when the original Music Man company went out of business, but fortunately both the bass and the company were revived when Ernie Ball bought the business and paved the way for an entirely new and invigorated Music Man company. Ernie Ball Music Man CEO Sterling Ball was involved in the design of the original StingRay bass during the Seventies, providing Leo Fender and his cohorts valuable feedback and insight from a bass-playing musician’s perspective. His decision to purchase Music Man and take over production of the StingRay bass was as much a personal one as a business one.

“The StingRay was mostly the product of Leo and Tommy Walker’s engineering,” Ball says. “My constructive criticism helped them refine the final end product. I did beta testing for Leo, although we called it ‘bandstanding’ back then. I would play the StingRay at live gigs, and I’d also show it to different bass players to find out what they thought of it. Leo wasn’t a musician, so while his designs were often impressive from an engineering or structural standpoint, they didn’t always make the greatest sense from a player’s perspective. That’s what I brought to the StingRay’s design.”

The StingRay bass was the first instrument Ernie Ball Music Man produced, making its official debut in 1985. Initially the design of the StingRay continued where it left off, but soon Music Man introduced new refinements that further improved the StingRay’s performance and appeal. Some of those changes were brought about by Sterling Ball, designer Dudley Gimpel and Dan Norton, who built the first prototypes of the Ernie Ball Music Man StingRay, but many improvements and refinements were also brought about via feedback from artists.

“When we bought Music Man in 1984, my goal was to make tools for artists,” Ball says. “The StingRay bass was our first instrument, because that was the only Music Man product that musicians still accepted. I think Music Man’s success is mostly attributable to the fact that we really listen to the artists who play our basses and guitars. Trends constantly come and go in this
industry. Music Man has survived two eras of pointy guitars and graphic finishes as well as the relic era. There are moments where the company was very hot, like we were with Keith Richards and Eddie Van Halen, and now we’re blazing hot once again with St. Vincent. But all through that we also always had close relationships with respected, timeless players like Steve Morse, Steve Lukather and John Petrucci. Over the years we have created the number one line of a living signature guitar player, and we’ve never discontinued a model.”

One of the most consistent supporters of the Music Man StingRay bass is Tony Levin, best known for his work with Peter Gabriel, King Crimson and hundreds of sessions. Levin first started playing a StingRay in 1979, and it has remained his main bass ever since. When Ernie Ball Music Man introduced the first five-string version of the StingRay in 1988, Levin was among the first to play it.

“During the Eighties I realized I needed a low C or low B more often,” Levin says. “I tried a bunch of different five-string basses, but I found the low E string didn’t sound as big or fat as I wanted it to, and I rely on that low E string a lot. The low B string sounded big and fat, but the E didn’t. When Music Man came out with the StingRay 5, they sent me one to try out. I was skeptical at first, but lo and behold the E string had the punch I wanted. I could play blues in E on the five-string and still feel very good about the way it sounded. I still have that first StingRay 5, which has a peach-colored finish, so I call it my Barbie bass. I use it on about 70 percent of the things I do, and my other StingRays on another 10 to 15 percent. The rest is either Stick or upright.

“The StingRay sounds like a rock bass to me,” Levin elaborates. “Almost all of what I do is rock of some sort, whether it’s progressive or soft rock. It has punch. To my ears and my sensibilities as a bass player, the StingRay just has that. You don’t have to work to get that. When you’re thrown into new musical situations, it’s great to have a bass that sounds great by itself. If it’s not right, it’s usually because it needs something else like my upright or Stick. The StingRay sounds like the bass you want to have when you’re playing rock.”

Today Music Man offers a wide variety of StingRay bass models, including the StingRay, Classic and Neck-Through, all also available in five-string versions, as well as the “Old Smoothie” model produced in celebration of the StingRay’s 40th anniversary. In celebration of the StingRay 5’s 30th anniversary, Music Man is producing a special model featuring a select roasted maple neck and fingerboard, Trans Buttercream finish, Red Tortoiseshell pickguard and a special anniversary humbucking pickup with ceramic magnet and soapbar cover.

The continuous refinements made to the StingRay design have attracted new generations of bass players to the model over the years. One recent convert is Stefan Lessard of the Dave Matthews Band, who switched to StingRay four- and five-string models in 2016.

“I wanted a new StingRay because I wasn’t getting the slap sound I wanted from the custom basses I own,” Lessard says. “I’m not really a slap player, but we were starting to experiment with some songs that required some slapping technique on the bass. When Music Man first sent me the StingRay, I really loved the tone. It has a lot of power, and I could get this really nice, warm R&B tone out of it, which is what I really strive for from my tone. The neck is super easy to play and adjust. I then asked them to send me a five-string, and Music Man sent me a neck-through model with this beautiful burgundy finish. The tone of that bass is just awesome. I get lows out of it that I struggle to get from my other basses. I fell right into it. I like experimenting with a lot of different basses, but these are just great, reliable working instruments.”

“I have a lot of different toys to play with,” Lessard continues, “but it can get very confusing to have to change basses often during a show. I have to work out what each bass is going to sound like before every show, and that can be a big challenge. Now I just play a four-string and five-string StingRay bass, and we don’t have to make any adjustments because they sound exactly the same. The other four- and five-string basses I had before had totally different tonal characteristics. That can be cool, but for a live show I want something more consistent. I brought other basses out on tour with us, but I’ve only played the StingRays so far. Why change something when it’s so great?”

“Today’s StingRays benefit from the latest automated systems and good old-fashioned hand crafting.”

“THE STINGRAY SOUNDS LIKE THE BASS YOU HAVE WHEN YOU’re PLAYING ROCK.”

“~TONY LEVIN”
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IT’S BEEN YEARS SINCE A NEW GUITAR HAS CREATED THIS MUCH BUZZ. JOHN MAYER EXPLAINS WHY THERE’S SO MUCH HEAT AROUND HIS COOL NEWPRS SILVER SKY GUITAR.
“Nothing to see here,” groused one irate Tweet, “it’s just a Fender Stratocaster with a PRS neck and headstock.”

“It’s a goddamn betrayal of two great guitar companies,” thundered a host of other Facebook trolls. And this was before anyone had a chance to play or hear one.

Mayer, who clearly enjoys the role of provocateur, was amused by the ruckus—but not surprised. “Traditionally, the guitar world hasn’t embraced or tolerated evolution all that well,” he says with a dry, knowing laugh. “The initial response to the Silver Sky was pretty negative because people tend to resist anything new. However, being a social-media target, I have experience that allows me to really understand the mechanics of disapproval. I’m perfectly tuned to withstand that friction period of people saying they don’t like something.

“Truth is, I don’t think guitarists are really saying they don’t like the Silver Sky. They’re just reacting. I’ve seen the lifespan of people’s negative reactions enough to understand what it means. What most people are really asking is, ‘What is this? What are you trying to do?’ You just need to get through the period that people register their confusion and dissent.

“Of course, there are going to be people who will never embrace it, and that’s fine. But it’s been interesting to watch players adapt to it. I think there is a desire for guitarists to hold something that’s a bit evolved.”

On some level, it’s hard to see what the fuss is all about. The guitar is a well-crafted gem and a fine addition to the PRS line. As Guitar World proclaimed in a recent review of the instrument [July 2018], “For aficionados of the classic three single-coil pickup solidbody guitar design, this is truly one of the finest examples ever produced.”

Granted, the Silver Sky may look like a Fender Stratocaster, but with its “reverse” PRS trademark headstock shape, vintage-style tuners with PRS’s locking design, a 25.2” scale length bolt-on maple neck, 7.25 fretboard radius and a distinctive trio of special PRS 636JM single-coil pickups, the instrument is undeniably its own unique rock-and-roll animal. Its mid-range clarity also makes it quite different from any Fender instrument we’ve played.

“We went with a Stratocaster-style body because it is just an excellent shape for an electric guitar, and it’s one that I’ve come to know really, really well. It’s part of my history. No one is ever going to look at a picture of Jimi Hendrix playing a Stratocaster and go, ‘Yuck.’ It’s undeniably classic. But, ultimately, I’m not interested in rehashing classics, I’m interested in pushing things forward.”

And perhaps that is where the confusion and the excitement over the Silver Sky stems from. Is it a variation on an old classic with some new features, or is it a new guitar with some classic design elements?

“If I want to take a point of view and adjust it,” Mayer responds, “And that’s the new sport—feeling your mind change. That’s what we do on Instagram every day. You may laugh and say, ‘Look at those giant sneakers!’ And then a week later, you’re wearing them.”

Trying to do something new with the electric guitar is extremely difficult. It’s one of the few inventions that the creators got right at the very beginning. Well, they either did or didn’t get it right. It might just seem that way because we have a difficult time seeing it any other way. But I’ll be the first to say those original guitars sure did support what musicians were doing. But it’s a real chicken-egg thing. Did a Rickenbacker guitar sound good because the Beatles used it, or did the Beatles use it because it sounded good?

So what were you and Paul Reed Smith aiming for? What did you need that you didn’t already have?

The answer is...nothing. If you take my five favorite guitars, I’m covered. But I wanted to do two things: First, I wanted to make a guitar that did away with the concept of “the magic guitar.” You know, the idea that you could play 10 different guitars
of the same model, but only one would be
good. I want all Silver Sky guitars to be
magic. I want them all to be magic. I don’t
suspect I will ever really have a Number
One Silver Sky, because all of them will be
good. I wanted to eliminate that idea that
one has magic wood and the other doesn’t.
The thinking was to build a well-designed
instrument that would be consistent, no
matter which one you played.

The second goal is, I want to have my
own little plot of land to develop and build
on. I tried to do something like this with

Fender, but I couldn’t create enough enthu-
siasm within the company for my vision.
I’m not hurt by that. No one is obligated to
be enthused about an idea of mine.

So, you see your relationship with PRS
going beyond creating a signature guitar.
I want to be clear, I wasn’t looking to cre-
ate a signature model. I want to go a step
deep into the genetic code of things. I’m
looking to create a series of instruments
that represent my point of view—and have
a little desk next to Paul where I can bring

some of my ideas to life that, over the years,
will tell a story.
The best analogy I can give you without
it being too self-aggrandizing is the rela-
tionship Air Jordan has with Nike. Air Jor-
dan is still Nike, but it’s its own brand. I
don’t want the Silver Sky to be a signature
guitar; I want it to become other people’s
signature guitar. My hope is to eventually
take my name entirely out of the equation.

I can appreciate that. It’s weird for a seri-
ous guitar player to play someone else’s
Mayer plays a PRS Silver Sky in a Tungsten finish.

"WE NEED TO FIND A THOUGHTFUL BALANCE BETWEEN HONORING THE HISTORY OF THE ELECTRIC GUITAR, BUT NOT TO THE POINT OF CUTTING OFF THE FUTURE OF THE ELECTRIC GUITAR."

Mayer plays a PRS Silver Sky, not a John Mayer signature model.

Where did the name come from?
I don’t remember. I think it might’ve been a broken piece of a song idea. I liked it because it sounded like a secret operation: Project Silver Sky. I sort of imagined a congressional hearing being assembled to find out more about this “clandestine Silver Sky venture.” I also felt it was in keeping with Paul Reed Smith’s bird nomenclature.
In another way, it reminded me of things like the Broadcaster, the Telecaster and the Stratocaster—you get this sort of air and sky vibration from the name.

I’ve heard a lot of people try to characterize the sound of the Silver Sky. How would you describe it?
I’ve made a lot of records and played a lot of guitar, and it’s important to me to evolve. My tastes have changed, and one thing that started fatiguing my ear was the out-of-phase quack. And look, I’m responsible for a lot of people using that fourth-position pickup sound. “Slow Dancing in a Burning Room” is the official song for checking out that out-of-phase thing, but at this point it’s almost unusable for me. I just got tired of it.

I started getting into the clarity of tone, like the stark beauty of a middle pickup or the sparkle of a nicely tuned bridge pickup. So, the point is, on this guitar, I’ve tried to add that clarity even to the out-of-phase pickup positions. You still can get that sound on my PRS, but without all those harmonic overtones that are so sonically heavy handed. The pickups don’t have that gumminess. Every position has a certain directness that excites me.

On a typical Strat, your bridge pickup would have a certain clarity, and so would your neck pickup, but as soon as you moved to the fourth or second position, you’d lose volume, because you’re literally out of phase. I was looking for something a little more refined, stronger and clearer.

I mean, if you were to play Jimi Hendrix’s “Little Wing” on a Silver Sky versus a Stratocaster, you might choose the sound of a Strat. But I’m not thinking about “Little Wing” anymore. I’m thinking about the future of recorded music, the future of guitar and the future of songwriting.

Most modern recordings are more direct and less watery and ambient. I can see how this guitar would fit with that. Yeah, there are a lot fewer tracks, and everything is getting more room and more space. To your point about recording, when I’m playing on people’s sessions these days, I don’t usually bring an amp, I record all my guitars through my Akai MPC. Why? Well, because that’s what the rest of the music is suggesting. When everyone is using virtual instruments and virtual effects, there’s no oxygen. Those frequencies are so well cordoned off, a Bassman amp with three mics put on it literally will not fit inside the song. There’s a lot of resistance to that from producers. My guitar parts are getting on three times more records these days than when I came in with my guitar amp and a couple pedals and mics. It wasn’t fitting the lexicon, so I had to really look at that and ask, “Is the old way of doing things really honoring the electric guitar?”

Pick your favorite guitarists from the Sixties and ask yourself, if they were around today at the age they were in the Sixties, would they have embraced new technology? Damn right, they would’ve! You’re damn right Jimi Hendrix would have been
WHAT MADE JOHN Mayer’s early-Sixties Stratocaster sound so singularly awesome? It was a worthy question for Paul Reed Smith, one of our most thoughtful guitar builders. In an epic two-year journey filled with lows and highs, he and Mayer worked their fingers to the bone to solve each and every mystery, culminating in the Silver Sky.

“While we were designing the guitar, John and I were aware of cynicism on the Internet regarding the instrument,” Smith says. “That was no fun. However, we were confident we were making a great guitar and that we’d eventually win in the court of public opinion.”

“What was fun was finally watching all the negative comments turn to positive when John live streamed his demo of the Silver Sky. The response was crazy. We were getting a thousand likes a minute. Not an hour. Not 10 minutes. A minute. Sixty thousand likes an hour.”

Over the last few months, Smith and Mayer have been working hard to convert skeptics into believers with their new guitar. Happily, the job has gotten easier. As the positive reviews started rolling in from just about every guitar magazine and blog, it became clear the Silver Sky was not just another Fender clone as many had suspected, but something fresh, innovative and needed. Yes, six months later, it appears the tide has turned, and on an appropriately sunny afternoon Smith tells us how it happened.

THE SILVER LINING

BY BRAD TOLINSKI
PHOTOS BY HUNTER SELMAN

What was it like collaborating with John?
I enjoyed working with John, like I enjoy working with people like Carlos Santana, David Gossom and Mark Tremonti. They’re highly intelligent musicians that know what they’re doing. If you look up Jimi Hendrix on Wikipedia, the first thing it says is he was a musician, which is broader than just a guitarist. I love that. I absolutely adore that they call Hendrix a musician on Wikipedia. These guys are musicians, and they know what they’re doing. I never met a musician at a high level that didn’t know what he/she was doing.

What surprised you about this project?
Many things. Initially, we thought we were going to use some stock PRS parts, but John pushed us to reconsider everything, and we ended up retooling the entire instrument. We retooled the bridge saddles, the string spacing, the bridge plate, the block, the tremolo arm. This is not a standard PRS guitar. We even retooled the knobs. I’m a player, and for years I’ve struggled with Strat knobs for a variety of reasons, and I don’t struggle with the Silver Sky knobs at all.

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People have been raving about the feel of the neck.
The neck shape was based on John’s ’64 Fender Strat, which was something that hadn’t been toolied in 50 years. I know what a ’63 and a ’64 neck feel like, and that feels exactly like one. That got me. When I held the first prototype, I literally weeped.

Modern trends have been toward flatter neckboard radiuses. Some new-school players have criticized the Silver Sky’s rounded 7.25-inch radius as difficult for soloing.

That’s just strange to me. Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Ritchie Blackmore didn’t seem to have any problem with a 7.25 radius. John does a pretty good job. Some will say there is an inherent problem with buzzing, but if your neck is dead straight and your frets are level, there’s no problem.

I feel the most unique aspect of the guitar is the sound of its pickups.
Building the pickups was our toughest war. John wanted us to get close to the sound of his favorite guitar, which is the ’64 Strat. The reason people love that era is the signal-to-noise ratio is better than a Fifties Strat. On those early ones, the noise from the pickup is almost as loud as the string, but by ’63 the string was louder than the noise.

But we discovered there were other reasons those ’63 and ’64 pickups sounded the way they did. Every single pickup we studied from that period sounded different, and we figured out why. They are all broken to varying degrees, and, ironically, that’s what makes many of them sound so sweet.
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If they are all different—and broken— how did you get the particular sound John was looking for?

I was standing on the stage at Verizon Center in D.C. at his sound check, and he had his old strat and an early Silver Sky prototype out. He had been complaining that something wasn’t quite right. So, he brought us up on the stage and played both guitars back-to-back. It was immediately apparent to me that the pickups in his strat had probably 6dB less high end and 6dB more bass than our guitar. I was shocked, because I’d used the same magnets, I’d used the same wire, I had used the same turns, the bobbins were the same size, the pickup covers were made of the same material, and yet there was a 12dB difference.

“He said, ‘This isn’t gonna work.’ I said, ‘The only way I can figure this out is if you give me your guitar for one day.’ My wife was with me, and we put it in the back of the Prius, and we drove back to the office and hoped we didn’t get rear-ended! I have a machine that we use to test pickups and it gives us a readout of how they sound without having to even plug them in. I put it on the machine and I got a printout, and my jaw dropped. And I went, Huh? I immediately jumped on the phone with some of my electrical engineers, because I had one day to do approximately two months of work.

One of my engineers gave me the idea of what was going on, and another genius in Los Angeles told me what to do to fix the problem, and he was right. I can tell you, the problem wasn’t a particularly well-known or well-understood phenomenon, and I got schooled. With that mystery solved, I put the guitar over my back and shipped it FedEx back to John and he had it back the next day.

Let’s talk about design. Although you’ve made some substantial revisions on the Silver Sky, this is still essentially a Strat-style guitar.

If you ask someone to draw a guitar, nine out of 10 people are going to draw a Stratocaster. So, when it came time to work with Paul, it was like, I just thought it would be an easier path to get people to understand that this is a Strat-based body, more than, “Hey, you’re gonna love this new shape... um, someday. This thing that looks like a starfish, or this thing that looks like a lizard’s dick—you’re gonna love it.”

There are design guidelines. I don’t set them. You don’t set them. The world just sets them. And sorry, I don’t deal in anything other than what is in keeping with the unchangeable truths of the shape of the electric guitar. But I do want to explore what is changeable. I’ve said it before, and I’ll probably say it again. We need to find a thoughtful balance between honoring the history of the electric guitar, but not to the point of cutting off the future of the electric guitar. I do feel like the industry has taken a bit of a hit with the physics, like there is a calculus to guitar building. You can’t just go, “And this body’s different.” Nobody would buy it, and I wouldn’t want to play it. Whatever we came up with had to be good enough that I would want to play it.

**Headstock designs are important. When a new company comes out with a guitar, I always say, “It’d better have a good headstock, because if it doesn’t, the whole thing is fucked.”**
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Agreed—the whole thing is fucked. We knew that. But guess who did create a headstock that has become an accepted silhouette? Paul Reed Smith. So, there was a moment where I decided, “Oh, I have to embrace the fact that I’m with someone who’s created a great amount of history inside of an industry that’s very hard to create. He’s made it through so many hoops with his design ideas. My guitar is going to be part of that tradition, so it has to have a PRS headstock on it, and it’s gonna be three-and-three.

Did the idea of putting a three-and-three on a Strat-shaped body make you nervous?
Without a doubt. When I started to see the drawings of the Silver Sky with a PRS headstock, I went, “Oh man, that’s a bummer. It’s a bummer!” I knew a lot of my reaction was based primarily on the visual repetition of what I’ve seen my whole life. It’s all just repetition, repetition, repetition, repetition. When the iPad came out, people made fun of it because they said it sounded like a feminine hygiene product. But when’s the last time you even thought, “Oh, iPad? Like a feminine hygiene product?” The repetition of exposure changes your familiarity with something. It just does. Eventually, I figured I’d get used to having the PRS headstock on my guitar. But, at the same time, I thought there might be a compromise we hadn’t considered.

We started moving some things around for purely functional reasons. My hand was used to a Fender headstock, meaning the thumb-side of the wood hits before the finger-side of the wood hits, because the treble side of the headstock is higher up. So we altered Paul’s headstock to accommodate how I was used to gripping an open E chord. It felt better, but visually, it made the PRS headstock look even weirder. If you can visualize this, the PRS headstock has a higher left point than right point. Well, so does the Silver Sky. So now the body was extending, and the left side was extending higher than the right side. And the left side of the headstock was extending higher than the right side, and the whole thing just looked bizarre.

One day I was messing around in Photoshop, and I reversed the headstock, and suddenly, everything changed. The shape looked balanced and harmonized with the rest of the body. After that, it was just a matter of getting used to it.

There was only one criteria for the design of this guitar—if I put it down and left it leaning against the chair in my room...
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and looked at it five minutes later, did I say to myself, “Hell, yeah.” Like when you get out of a nice car, and you walk into a place, but you turn around and you look at it, you want to have that one moment when you go, “Hell, yeah.” And that’s all I cared about—getting it to a point where I could turn around and go, “Oh, man.”

I knew when this thing came out that the more people looked at it, the more it was going to make sense. I also think we did a nice job on a lot of other design elements, like making the pickguard look cleaner and the input jack sleeker.

**How did Paul react when you expressed interest in changing his classic headstock design?**

I think he understood it. I don’t think either of us did anything to the other guy that provoked any upset or resistance because we were both so dialed in to what this guitar needed to be. I mean, we talked every day. I’ll talk to Paul before the end of the day is over, and I don’t know what about, but one of us will call the other.

I think the most difficult task is almost over, which is to say, “Please accept this silhouette as a viable guitar shape.” Because after you get guitarists to embrace that, what’s left to be upset at? Probably nothing. Then we can move forward with new iterations and interesting ideas. Once we’re past the shock of the visual, then it’s like gravy, baby.

I have two words for you…alligator pickguard.

[laughs] I like leaving interviews with at least one thing I can regret. I can tell you one thing this guitar will never have. It’s what I call, “Wolf playing pool.”

Okay, I’ll bite. What’s that?

The wolf playing pool is a certain part of guitar culture that has just held on for way too long. Like, you’ll see a new guitar at NAMM, and the sales guy will point at it and say, “This has a custom painting of a wolf playing pool.”

There’s a lot of what I consider to be slightly outdated imagery that has come to be associated with the guitar. You don’t need a guitar made all out of old bottle caps and license plates. You don’t need the wolf playing pool. Just stop it, and let’s just move forward. This idea of, “It’s the Fifties!” must end. That’s the part of the electric guitar that the electric guitar needs to blow a kiss to and leave in the past.
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George Harrison (left) and Eric Clapton at London’s Limehouse Studios in October 1985
A guide to nearly 50 years' worth of collaborations between Eric Clapton and The Beatles

By Damian Fanelli
The Beatles’ White Album—officially titled The Beatles—turns 50 this year. The Fab Four’s only double album is a sprawling masterpiece, a snapshot of the best that rock and roll had to offer in late 1968. You’ve got your classic rock staples (“Back in the U.S.S.R.,” “Birthday,” “Blackbird”), your fuzzed-out scream fests and heavy rockers (“Happiness Is a Warm Gun,” “Helter Skelter”) and your ultra-personal, warm-and-tender acoustic gems (“Julia,” “Long, Long, Long”). But you’ve also got a little something called “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” which—as it turns out—is the only official EMI Beatles recording to feature the fretwork of one Eric Clapton.

We’ve written about “Gently Weeps” several times over the decades—and you should keep an eye out for our transcription in an upcoming issue—but we’ve never really discussed the fact that Clapton’s recorded work with John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr didn’t begin or end with this classic White Album track. In fact, the former Cream axman is the only guitarist—ever—to play on a Beatles song and on studio recordings by all four solo Beatles. Below, we present a handful of highlights of almost 50 years’ worth of Clapton/Fab Four studio collaborations—besides “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” that is. Be sure to check out whereseric.com for a more complete guide to Clapton’s studio work.

Ski-Ing | George Harrison | 1968

In January 1968, Clapton added fuzz-drenched guitar to this simple, catchy instrumental from Harrison’s first solo album of sorts, an obscure movie soundtrack called Wonderwall Music. The track, which marks the first recorded collaboration between Harrison and Clapton, also features Starr on drums. “George told me he’d like me to play on something, or we’d write something as we went along,” Clapton said. “It was very experimental, and it was good fun.” John Barham, who assisted Harrison with the project, said, “I’ve never heard anyone play the guitar quite like Eric did on this track.”

Sour Milk Sea | Jackie Lomax | 1968

Harrison, McCartney and Starr recorded this Harrison composition at EMI/Abbey Road Studios. The song, the A-side of a single released by Jackie Lomax in 1968, also appears on Lomax’s 1969 album, Is This What You Want?

“With Clapton playing on it, it was on fire,” Lomax said. “When the backing tape was played back, I thought it worked as an instrumental. ‘You want me to sing on top of that?!’ There I am in the studio and there are three Beatles in the control room watching me...I guess I was nervous at first, but after a couple of takes I was into it.”

“Sour Milk Sea” is just a notch or two away from being a bona fide Beatles song: besides Harrison, Clapton, McCartney and Starr, it features ace U.K. session man Nicky Hopkins on keyboards—the same pro who played on the Beatles’ “Revolution.”

Badge | Cream | 1969

In early 1969, when Cream were history and the Beatles were heading in that direction, Harrison invited Clapton to sit in on sessions for Billy Preston’s fourth album, which Harrison was co-producing. Clapton’s brilliance is best represented on the album’s title track (Note: Be sure to track down the extended version, which is labeled “Parts 1 & 2.”)

While the verses and chorus feature Clapton’s sympathetic fills, things take off during the song’s final two and a half minutes. It’s as if Preston and Harrison pulled Clapton aside and said, “Okay, man, go nuts!” Maybe he was inspired by the presence of drummer Ginger Baker, who also plays on the track.

Cold Turkey | Plastic Ono Band | 1969

In late September 1969, John Lennon rounded up Clapton, Starr and bassist Klaus Voormann to record his second solo single, the grippingly chaotic “Cold Turkey,” backed with “Don’t Worry Kyoko (Mummy’s Only Looking for Her Hand in the Snow),” a rocking Yoko Ono composition.
Clapton was no stranger to either song; he had played them with Lennon, Ono, Voor- 
mann and drummer Alan White (who joined Yes a few years later) just a few weeks earlier 

Note Clapton’s Fender Strat tone, and remember this was recorded in the spring 
of 1970. It’s basically the same guitar sound 
he’d use on his mid- to late-Seventies albums, 
including No Reason to Cry, Slowhand and 
Backless, plus 1981’s Another Ticket. It is not 
the same Strat tone heard on his two 1970 
albums, Eric Clapton and Layla and Other 
Assorted Love Songs.

In mid 1970, Clapton played on Harrison’s 
 solo masterpiece, All Things Must Pass. 
Although the album’s liner notes didn’t 
bother mentioning it, Clapton can be heard 
on “I’d Have You Anytime,” “Art of Dying” 
and several other tracks. The wah-tastic “Art 
of Dying” is the closest Harrison got to hard 
rock as a solo artist.

“It was awesome when we were doing ‘Art of Dying’ [with] Eric on that wah-wah 
and it was all cooking—Derek and the Domi-

Ringo’s 1976 album, Ringo’s Rotogravure, is a 
fun, laid-back, star-studded affair. The disc 
features appearances by John Lennon, Paul 
McCartney, Peter Frampton, Harry Nils-

Clapton recorded two Harrison compositions 
for his 1989 album, Journeyman; however, 
only “Run So Far” made the cut. “That Kind 
of Woman” would eventually see the light of 
day when it was released on Nobody’s Child: 
Romanian Angel Appeal in 1990.

Behold Ringo’s tribute to Harrison, who had 
died of cancer only two years earlier. It fea-
tures some great Clapton riffs, from the solo 
through the end of the song.

Clapton and Starr found themselves in the 
same recording studio in early May 1970 
while working on “I Ain’t Superstitious,” a 
track from The London Howlin’ Wolf Ses-
sions. The album features a who’s who of 
British rockers, all of whom provide a 
smooth—and occasionally gritty—backdrop 
for Howlin’ Wolf’s booming voice.

Much to the delight of his patient and devoted 
fans, Harrison released one of his best 
albums—Cloud Nine—in late 1987. Although 
Clapton can be heard on four Cloud Nine 
tracks, we’ll offer up this one, which features 
dueling guitar solos by Clapton and Harrison, 
who plays slide. By the way, if you’re heading 
to YouTube, be sure to track down the live 
version of this song from Harrison and Clapton’s 

And, if you need some more tasty Clapton 
fretwork from Cloud Nine, be sure to check out “Devil’s Radio,” “Wreck of the Hesperus” and 
“That’s What It Takes.”

This Clapton recording—a harmless Old Sock 
album track—features McCartney on back-
ing vocals and standup bass. It’s the same bass 
once owned by Bill Black, the bassist in Elvis 
Presley’s early trio.  Finn
In this first installment of a two-part lesson, guitarist extraordinaire DOUG ALDRICH shares some invaluable insights into his formative musical influences, talks about what it means to be a rock lead guitar god and offers a slew of exciting and inspiring licks and technical exercises to help you become the player you aspire to be.
Open for business:
Doug Aldrich rocks a
Gibson Les Paul Goldtop
ATTITUDE

WHEN I FIRST started to play lead guitar, the most important thing to me was attitude. It was all about playing from the heart. The music that I got into and my influences made me feel like the people playing really meant it, and there was feeling behind everything that they played. I didn't know anything about technique, but I knew that hearing an aggressive string bend with vibrato felt like something and meant a lot to me.

One of my earliest big influences was Jeff Beck, especially his albums Blow by Blow and Wired. I was about 11 years old when those records came out, and hearing stuff like this (FIGURE 4), which is along the lines of “Goodbye Porkpie Hat” (Wired) just blew me away. Hearing his note attack and subtle use of feedback, done with such great control, on top of all of the attitude in his playing, had such an important effect on me and made me feel great about listening to and studying guitar players.

In time, I got into working on the things everyone must in order to play with control, and I still work on those things every day. I know guitarists that can go a month without playing, pick up their instrument and start wailing, but that’s not me. I need to warm up and go through a whole process to keep my chops together, even if I’m playing every day.

Paul Kossoff of Free was another guitarist who played with so much attitude in his rhythm playing and his soloing. He would attack the guitar! Like Randy Rhoads, he was kind of short when it comes to physical stature but he played with a big sound. He had an incredibly fast, intense vibrato (FIGURE 2), and played with so much feeling. His solo on Free’s hit song “All Right Now” is a classic. You can sing that solo because it’s so memorable!

INFLUENCES, STYLE AND TECHNIQUE

THERE ARE TWO kinds of guitar players: there are the technicians that will blow you away with certain things they do, and then there are guitarists that play with tons of feeling, like Kossoff, David Gilmour and Jimmy Page, all musicians that play solos you can sing along to.

When you’re first developing your style, it’s important that, when someone hears you play something like this (FIGURE 3), they can tell by the way you attack the guitar that it’s you. That’s a win right there. I think one of the best things a guitarist can aspire to do is develop a signature sound that is recognizable as your own, as all the greatest players have done.

Even something as simple as the way a guitar player will bend a note (FIGURE 4) can reveal things about their unique musical personality. The more you play and with the right attitude, you will in time develop a sound, and hopefully a style, that is your own. Every time you pick up the guitar and plug into an amp, you’ll find yourself going to certain sounds that are in your head, and you recognize the sound coming from your fingers and begin to develop it.

Style involves so many things, and for me, Paul Kossoff and Gary Moore were huge influences, especially Gary when he’d play things like this (FIGURE 5), picked with so much aggression and intensity. His legato
“Style involves so many things, and for me Paul Kossoff and Gary Moore were huge influences.”

playing was insane too, and the same can be said for Randy. Ritchie Blackmore was another huge influence, as was Jimi Hendrix, who just had me baffled in the beginning, but I loved what I heard. I couldn’t really copy any of those players when I was 11, but I loved trying!

It wasn’t until someone taught me some scales, and what to play them over to make them sound good, that I had my earliest epiphanies. I’d learn a cool lick and think, “Wow—that’s amazing!” The things I liked in the beginning were licks like these (FIGURE 6), basic blues licks built from hammer-ons, pull-off, bends and vibratos.

To this very day, when I first pick up my guitar, I might play a big E power chord, just to get me in the right frame of mind (FIGURE 7), and play some basic things to get my hands feeling confident. There needs to be a connection between your hands, your head and your heart. If I play something that makes me feel confident (FIGURE 8), then I can add to it little by little (FIGURE 9).

It’s always beneficial to make drills out of pentatonic-based hammer-on/pull-off phrases (FIGURE 10). If I don’t have the chance to do much warming up before a show, that stuff gets me started, and I can move into licks like these (FIGURE 9), picking all of the notes so that both hands are working together in sync with staccato picking. If I focus on a lick like this (FIGURE 11), then I can lay some legato articulation on top of that. With this phrase, you need to lock into a fixed tempo and groove in order to get the most out of it (FIGURE 13); notice
that in bar 8 that I make some wide fret-hand stretches.

A great thing to do when practicing is to turn down the guitar and the gain a little bit so you can focus better on clear articulation (FIGURE 14). This is a great way to focus on a better connection between the two hands. My favorite key to play in is G, for some reason, so if I start in E with a Gary Moore-style repeating pull-off thing like this (FIGURE 15), I’ll always work my way down to the key of G (FIGURE 16).

ESSENTIAL LICKS

FROM THE BEGINNING I loved the sound of legato playing, utilizing bends, hammer-ons, pull-offs, and finger slides. I think the first lick I learned was this A minor pentatonic phrase (FIGURE 17), where I’m picking only the first two of the four notes. That led to this six-note pattern (FIGURE 18), which is played with a down-up picking sequence. Because of Randy, I got into this legato “rolling” technique using three notes per string (FIGURE 19). I like to move back and forth between two strings before moving across the entire fretboard. With more gain, I can get this sound (FIGURE 20); when I get over to the top three strings, I incorporate hammer/ pull-offs to get more variety and complexity into the phrases.

But I couldn’t play that stuff when I was 14—I wouldn’t have had any idea how to do it! I got there by seeing guitarists like Randy and Eddie Van Halen play, and the incredible technique that they had. In fact, both of those guitarists would grab the neck in a traditional “rock” way, with the thumb over the top and the “baseball bat” grip, which is less natural for me. I started with classical guitar, with the fingers coming from above, parallel with the frets and the palm away from the back of the neck (FIGURE 21). When I saw Randy, he was playing his fastest stuff in that same way, so it encouraged me to stick with the same approach.

Ultimately, I’m always switching back and forth between the classical and rock grips, or fret-hand postures, especially when playing stuff like this (FIGURE 22). The classical grip allows some of the really wide stretches between the 12th and 17th frets. This naturally brings me into the
legato-to-staccato stuff, in E, starting all legato (FIGURE 23), and then switching to staccato for a shift in the sound and feel (FIGURE 24) and some wide stretches, ending with legato pulls-offs and hammer-ons.

Little by little, starting off with the really simple ones (FIGURE 25), you can always ramp it up from there. For me, there’s nothing more important in rock than the pentatonic scale. That’s where the nuts and bolts of everything is for me. Everything from Chuck Berry to Tony Iommi can be traced back to the pentatonic scale.

**BLUES AND ROCK AND ROLL**

So much rock and roll guitar can be traced back to the blues (FIGURE 26), and Chuck Berry, and Elvis Presley’s guitar player, Scotty Moore, and all the players from the 1950s. Then, in the Sixties, the British guys like Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page got it, and when we get to the Seventies, there were lots of guitarists that played with a lot of fire, like Ted Nugent, "So much rock and roll guitar can be traced back to the blues, Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley’s guitar player, Scotty Moore."
Pat Travers, Tony Iommi and Ritchie Blackmore, who was one of the first rock players I ever heard with really fluid technique. He could make it sound super easy (FIGURE 27) and beautifully smooth.

When Eddie Van Halen first stepped into the limelight, he represented rock guitar playing on a whole new level.

EDDIE AND RANDY
WHEN EDDIE VAN HaIlen first stepped into the limelight, he represented rock guitar playing that was on a whole new level. The arrival of Van Halen on the scene was, in my opinion, one of the biggest shifts ever in the history of rock guitar. No one had heard anything like that before. We’d heard Hendrix, Beck and Blackmore use the whammy bar, but not with that kind of ferocious attack.

It’s funny how things go full circle because, apparently, Eddie got a lot of his style and approach from Clapton, who in turn got it from the original blues guys.

Eddie loves to do really fast tremolo picking licks, like this (FIGURE 28), sliding up and down a single string, with that “butterfly” or “hummingbird” pick-hand technique he has. Just incredible. His playing made everyone realize they had to up their game, in terms of technique.

I went to see Van Halen when I was around 15 years old, and I had no idea who...
the moment of truth

Hollywood, California · December 8th 9:58 PM
Eric McFadden sits down with his trusty Ovation Mod TX. These are the moments when the music is most organic. When fret buzz is a thing of beauty. When the notes are spiritual.

Ovation, more than five decades of moments like these.
he was or what he sounded like. I just knew he was “Van” something! I’ll never forget: the curtain went up and Eddie played one of those licks where you slide up to the top of the board on the low E string and bend it. All that coming through 18 Marshall 4x12 cabinets! Even if they weren’t all hooked up, it certainly sounded like they were!

I didn’t think anyone could touch that until I went with a buddy of mine to see Randy play with Ozzy Osbourne at a theater in Philadelphia. We had fourth row seats, right in front of the stage. I wound up being truly smoked.

I could see everything Randy was doing, and he was the whole package—an incredible guitarist and a rock star. Killer tone, killer chops, in a killer band playing great music. Seeing Randy play live, I was simply blown away and left speechless!

I love those fast chromatically descending phrases Randy liked to play (FIGURE 29), picking everything and really picking hard. He attacked the strings very aggressively (FIGURE 30), and when he would bend a string, he’d shake the entire guitar. Randy’s playing upped the game even that much more.

[To be continued next month!]
The H9 MAX is a dream pedalboard that fits in your glovebox. Packed with Eventide’s iconic reverb, delay, modulation, pitch-shifting and distortion effects, it’s “the only guitar pedal you’ll ever need.” — Guitar Tricks.

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FOR THE FIRST time, D'Angelico has made a significant move in debuting a collection of solidbody guitars, introduced as part of its affordable Premier Series. With the announcement that these three instruments also would be available in the higher-end Deluxe series, solidbodies have worked their way back up the D'Angelico food chain to offer solidbody enthusiasts the full D'Angelico experience in all its glory once again.

We took a closer look at two of those new models: the Deluxe Atlantic and Deluxe Bedford. These models may look quite different than anything previously made under the D'Angelico name, but there’s a certain, distinguishable elegance about them that fits in with the brand’s celebrated history. Appropriately, deluxe appointments abound, but more importantly the craftsmanship, playability and attention to construction detail are all also worthy of the “deluxe” designation. If you’re looking for a solidbody that truly stands out from the pack and oozes class to boot, D’Angelico’s new Deluxe models may be exactly what you’re looking for.

FEATURES The Deluxe Atlantic and Deluxe Bedford feature body shapes that are reminiscent of other models, while still being entirely unique. (If you want a totally original look, the Deluxe Ludlow offers a truly unorthodox design.) The Bedford has a sleek, angular offset design, while the Atlantic features a curvaceous single-cavity shape reminiscent of a Les Paul but with its own distinctive set of curves, flat top and generous rear belly contour. Both models have a few features in common. The necks are constructed from a sturdy maple/walnut/maple laminate with a natural satin finish, C-shape profile, dual-action truss rod, Pau Ferro fin-
The Deluxe Atlantic is a dual humbucker model equipped with specially designed USA Seymour Duncan DA-59 humbuckers in the bridge and neck positions. Controls consist of a three-way pickup selector switch and individual volume and tone controls for each pickup with the tone controls also providing push-pull switching to engage coil splitting. The control knobs are D’Angelico’s art deco-style ebony knobs. All hardware is gold-plated, including the tune-o-matic bridge and stop-bar tailpiece. Other classy touches include seven-ply binding surrounding the top and f-hole-style, five-ply pickguard. Our test example had a swamp ash body with natural finish, but basswood body models are also available with Black, Hunter Green or Vintage White finishes.

The Deluxe Bedford we tested has a basswood body and USA Seymour Duncan DA-59 humbucker (bridge) and DA-59 single-coil STK (neck) pickups, but a swamp ash version is also available with the same pickups or optional P90s. Controls for the Bedford are essentially the same, except only the bridge humbucker tone control provides a push-pull coil split function. The Deluxe Bedford is available with a tune-o-matic/stopbar bridge or with a six-point tremolo system. D’Angelico also offers an optional Bedford model with a maple neck and black finish.

**PERFORMANCE** Like all other models that D’Angelico makes, the excellent playability of the necks makes an instant impression. Both the Deluxe Atlantic and Deluxe Bedford also make a great first impression with their sweet, seductive tones that can be smooth and jazzy or aggressive and raunchy depending on how the amp is set. The swamp ash body Atlantic delivers brilliant jangle and percussive twang that works equally well in both humbucking and single-coil settings, with the latter sounding deliciously Strat-like. The basswood body Bedford sounds darker and heavier, and it is the more ideal choice for harder rock and metal playing styles as well as jazz. The necks on both examples were identical, with generously wide string spacing and a relatively flat radius that makes it especially easy for bigger-fingered players like myself to play with clean precision. The shallow neck depth and smooth heel joint make these models some of the fastest and most comfortable guitars I’ve played in a while.
The end of all things... or just the beginning

The next step in progressive rock and metal tone

Ragnarok is here

Ragnarok is NOW

bareknucklepickups.co.uk
Since its introduction more than 50 years ago, the Fender Deluxe Reverb has enjoyed an enduring legacy as one of the most iconic amplifiers among guitarists. Why? It’s a perfect trifecta of an amp for its compact size, lighter weight and moderate-output volume—making it the ideal go-to amplifier for club gigs and recording sessions, especially if you love glassy clean tones and cranked-up overdrive. Throughout the years, the Deluxe Reverb has received countless modifications by the company and amp-tweakers alike because its venerable circuit can be endlessly fine-tuned for even more definition, headroom and dynamic response. But this time around, it appears Fender has really dialed in all the best elements of componentry and classic “blackface” tone into the hand-wired ’64 Custom Deluxe Reverb, which—in my opinion—is by far the finest iteration of this beloved amp.

**Features**

The ’64 Custom Deluxe Reverb has a certain gravitas, mostly because its ultra-thick textured vinyl covering and gently aged silver grille clothe almost make it look like a perfectly preserved vintage example found in someone’s attic. However, peeking inside, it’s immediately clear the superb build-quality, enhanced mods and premium upgrades will ensure that this 20-watt amp performs flawlessly for many years. Fender begins by constructing the cabinet from solid pine (as opposed to Baltic birch), which gives the amp a much lighter weight and more resonance in the low end. The cab also houses a 12-inch Jensen C-12Q ceramic speaker with a smaller magnet that aims to closely replicate the breakup from an original Sixties-era Jensen. What sets it apart from Fender’s other Deluxe Reverb reissues is its modified all-tube hand-wired AB763 circuit that’s neatly arranged, with braided reverb cabling. Fender’s Pure Vintage Blue Tone capacitors are employed to accurately recreate the sweetened “blackface” tone of the original Blue Astron capacitors. Also, the tube-driven reverb and bias-modulated tremolo can now be accessed on both the Bright and Normal channels, which incidentally, are now voiced differently for more sparkle and warmth, respectively.

**Performance**

The ’64 Custom Deluxe Reverb is a culmination of attention to detail that clearly shows Fender was extremely thoughtful in every aspect of this amp from top to bottom. I’ve played countless Deluxe Reverbs, and this ’64 is the smoothest and most pleasing in its nuanced tonal response and touch-sensitivity, but it’s also Fender’s most vintage-sounding “blackface” amp. The Bright channel is no longer harsh and has a great deal of compressed snapiness that’s perfect for humbucker-equipped guitars—because here, the sizzling overdrive emerges quickly when turning up the volume knob and is incredibly warm and crunchy. The built-in spring reverb is immersive and gorgeous, adding dimension to the sound rather than swallowing it up. I also love the tube-biased tremolo circuit for its natural vibrato effect. On lower intensity settings, it can undulate in the background for a slow pulsating heartbeat, or increased to achieve throbbing musical stutter. The Normal channel is my favorite; it has a higher clean ceiling, which is perfect for pedals, but it also has more rounded warmth and complex harmonics that makes single-coil guitars sing and twang.

**Street Price:** $2,499.99  
**Manufacturer:** Fender, fender.com

The tube-driven spring reverb and tremolo can now be utilized on the Normal and Bright channels.

The Jensen C-12Q is a well-suited speaker for full sparkling cleans at lower volumes and crisp, overdriven breakup at increased volume.

**The Bottom Line**

The hand-wired Fender ’64 Custom Deluxe Reverb is, without a doubt, an instant classic with authentic “blackface” tone and upgraded components that make it the quintessential amp to own for the next 50 years.
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IK MULTIMEDIA HAS rightfully earned acclaim from the guitar community for its software, plug-ins and apps, particularly its powerful AmpliTube products. These provide a wide variety of virtual amps, effects and more, that sound as good as or sometimes even better than the real thing. But it’s the hardware products offered by the company that really make it stand out from its competitors. These products provide a vital link between the real and virtual worlds, which make it much easier to harness the power of its software and apps, on stage and in the studio.

The latest addition to IK Multimedia’s hardware controller/interface products is iRig Stomp I/O, a powerful USB pedalboard controller that combines an MFi-certified audio interface with MIDI input/output for iPhone, iPad, Mac and PC, with a versatile floor controller unit. Even better, it comes bundled with several guitar, vocal and recording apps (and software for desktop/laptop computers) that provide users with comprehensive creative capabilities from the get-go.

FEATURES The iRig Stomp I/O unit is about the same size as an average guitar multi-effects floor unit, and it’s housed in an impressively sturdy professional-quality metal enclosure, with four footswitches, an expression pedal and front panel-mounted gain and volume controls. The top half of the upward-facing front panel features a textured, non-slip rubber surface that can securely hold an iPad or iPhone in place. The rear panel provides a 1/4-inch/XLR combo input jack, 48-volt phantom power switch (for mic applications), headphone output, a pair of 1/4-inch balanced outputs, MIDI In and Out jacks, two 1/4-inch external controller jacks, USB and an iOS Lightning audio connection. The footswitches perform multiple functions, including bank up/down, tuner, tap tempo, looper and stomp box selection. The iRig Stomp I/O unit can even function as a standalone MIDI controller without a computer or iOS.
device, allowing guitarists to control other MIDI devices in their rigs. The software and apps bundled with iRig Stomp I/O are comprehensive and if purchased separately, would cost at least three times the price of the entire iRig Stomp I/O package. For Mac and PC users, software includes AmpliTube 4 Deluxe, Ableton Live 9 Lite and several T-RackS processors: Black 76, EQP-1A, Mic Room, VC-670 and White 2A. Bundled iOS apps include Amplitube CS, AmpliTube Acoustic, VocaLive iOS and Mic Room iOS. If you already own other IK Multimedia software or apps, most of those products are also instantly accessible from iRig Stomp I/O when installed in your computer or iOS device.

**PERFORMANCE**

If you love the sound of IK’s virtual amps and effects but want a truly powerful, efficient and easy way to use them in the studio or on stage, iRig Stomp I/O offers the solution you’ve been looking for without compromising sound quality.

- A professional-quality foot controller unit that seamlessly integrates with an iOS (iPad or iPhone) device, Mac or PC loaded with IK Multimedia software and apps.
- The comprehensive software/app bundle provides guitar, vocal, recording and more functions to get users up and running instantly, and it also controls other IK software and apps.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE**

  If you love IK Multimedia’s virtual amps and effects but want a truly powerful, efficient and easy way to use them in the studio or on stage, iRig Stomp I/O offers the solution you’ve been looking for without compromising sound quality.

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**Electro-Harmonix Cock Fight Plus**

**Wah & Talking Pedal with Fuzz**

In my day, I’ve seen many a Cock Fight. Come again? Relax, dude—it’s an Electro-Harmonix pedal. Yes, despite the tongue-in-cheek name, the Cock Fight is a super-rad three-pedals-in-one stompbox (a cocked wah, a talking filter and a fuzz circuit), and for all its novelty, most of us who play it wish we had more controlled range over the wah and talking portions without adding an expression pedal. Well, check it out: Electro-Harmonix has now injected that circuit into a familiar rack-and-pinion foot controller called the Cock Fight Plus, so you now have absolute expression with the Cock Fight Plus because you can sweep its treadle back and forth for a multitude of classic wah and garbled talk-box sounds, along with ballsy fuzz on tap.

The Cock Fight Plus features two switchable filters: a traditional wah pedal circuit based on EHX’s Crying Tone wah, and a formant filter for vowel-like talking sounds. The pedal also contains a fuzz circuit that can be inserted before or after the filter or removed from the circuit entirely. The fuzz includes a Bias control that regulates the voltage of the pedal for crackling gated fuzz or full-on EHX Big Muff distortion and Holy Stain fuzz tones. The Cock Fight Plus comes equipped with a 9V battery or can be powered by an optional 9-volt AC adapter.

As a wah, the Cock Fight Plus is smooth and even, with a sweet wah-quack that most classic rock players will enjoy. Adding in the fuzz only exaggerates the wah effect, adding in more bottom end and saturated gain that sounds intense. I love that you can put the fuzz anywhere in the circuit (post or pre) for a huge range of fuzzed-out gooi- ness or choked-chicken cackle. The most fun is switching to the Talk mode, where you can really sputter out some cool Peter Frampton-esque talk box chatter or Kanye West vocoder-stylings. Because, why not?

—Paul Riario

**STREET PRICE:** $123.50

**MANUFACTURER:** Electro-Harmonix, ehx.com

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**Buzz Bin**

**GOLD AWARD**

**PERFORMANCE**

**GUITAR WORLD**
THERE ONCE WAS a time when the mighty flanger ruled the effects universe. It was heard on countless recordings, including the chorus-like chime of Andy Summers with the Police, the jet-like whoosh of Van Halen’s “Unchained,” the pitch-bending “auto whammy” of Pat Travers and Paul Gilbert and the natural, hollow-sounding “through-zero” tape flanging of the Beatles, Hendrix, Queen, the Eagles and more.

Many great flanger pedals are available today, but guitarists seem afflicted with decision paralysis when it comes to choosing one, especially because truly great flangers tend to be more expensive than most other pedals, and the majority excel at only one or two flanging effects. The brand-new Pyramids pedal from EarthQuaker Devices solves that dilemma by offering a plethora of awesome stereo flanging effects that sound better than most of the one-trick-pony pedals out there and for an affordable price to boot.

FEATURES Pyramids is a versatile yet easy-to-use flanger pedal with all of the desired controls (Manual, Rate, Width, Mix and Feedback) plus a Modify knob that controls different parameters depending on which mode is selected. The Mode switch provides eight distinctive flanging effects: Classic, Through-Zero, Barber Pole Up, Barber Pole Down, Trigger Up, Trigger Down, Step and Random. Pyramids has five individual, user-modifiable presets that are selected with the rotary Presets switch, which also features a ‘live’ mode that corresponds with the front panel control settings. The Activate footswitch provides latch or momentary operation, and the Tap/Trigger footswitch provides tap tempo control or triggers the Trigger Up or Trigger Down effects when those modes are selected. The pedal also includes pairs of stereo 1/4-inch inputs and stereo 1/4-inch outputs.

PERFORMANCE One word sums up the quality of Pyramids’ flanging effects: dazzling. I know of no other flanger pedal offering an assortment of flanging effects that are more comprehensive while also delivering stellar quality for each mode. The Through-Zero mode alone is worth the price of admission, and the desired effect is much easier to dial in and sounds closer to genuine tape-reel flanging than other competing products. If you love subtle, musical flanging, those effects are provided in abundance, but Pyramids also goes into more creative and experimental territory that most flanger pedals don’t even touch upon. Being able to save five of your favorite settings makes Pyramids an incredible and convenient tool for live performance when you need instant access to an encyclopedia of flanger effects.

SOUND CHECK

PLATINUM

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By Chris Gill

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MANUFACTURER: EarthQuaker Devices, earthquakerdevices.com

- Eight flanger modes (Classic, Through-Zero, Barber Pole Up, Barber Pole Down, Trigger Up, Trigger Down, Step and Random) provide a comprehensive selection of flanger effects.
- The rotary preset switch provides instant access to five settings that users can modify and save or simply enjoy in the original factory settings.

THE BOTTOM LINE

For flanger connoisseurs, Pyramids is an essential addition to one’s arsenal. For guitarists looking for their first flanger, Pyramids provides all the flanger effects a player will ever need.
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Walking down the major scale with contrary motion

CONTINUING OUR EXPLORATION of chord progressions built around a bass line that walks down the major scale, I’d now like to explore a musically dramatic twist to this composition approach that has been used by many famous songwriters and bands in some of their most enduring works. It’s a move that involves the second chord of the progression becoming a second-inversion dominant of the major key’s relative minor, or vi (“six minor”), chord, with an inner voice resolving upward and creating sweet-sounding contrary motion with the descending bass line. The result is a musically compelling and highly appealing sound that helps establish a tender mood for a vocal melody and lyric, which is why you’ll find it used mostly in laid-back ballads, so as to “milk” the juicy chord change.

A classic example of what I’m talking about here is the verse progression to “Bell Bottom Blues” by Derek and the Dominos, featuring Eric Clapton, who begins on a first-position open C chord then moves to E/B— an E chord with a B bass note, or “E over B”— which is a second-inversion triad (with the fifth in the bass) that resolves perfectly to Am, followed by the chords C/G (“C over G”), F and G, using the grips shown in FIGURE 1, which the guitarist gently arpeggiates in a flowing eighth-note rhythm. Notice the warm, “down-home” sound this move creates. (Also note that the original recording is 25 cents sharp of concert pitch.)

The verse progression to “Take It to the Limit” by the Eagles features almost the same move, but with a different set of open chords, a capo deployed at the fourth fret and the second chord being a dominant seven. As in FIGURE 2, the progression starts on G, followed by B7/F, which is the second-inversion V7 (“five-seven”) chord of Em, to which it resolves (with everything transposed up a major third, due to the capo). Note that, on the recording, bassist Randy Meisner goes up to the root of the second chord while the acoustic guitar does the “walk-down” with the inverted voicing. Paul Simon used pretty much the same progression in the chorus to “Kodachrome,” played capo 2, but with the guitar’s bass note going up to the root of the B7 chord instead of down to F5, which also sounds very nice, although I personally prefer the sound of the walk-down for this progression, with the low fifth in the bass instead of the root.

A classic keyboard-driven example of this three-chord progression is the beginning of the verse to the old jazz/blues/r&b standard “Georgia On My Mind,” famously recorded by Ray Charles in the key of G. In this case, the bass line initially moves from G down to F5, then flips up to B before resolving to Em. The verse progression to “New York State of Mind” by Billy Joel similarly starts on C, then goes to E7, which resolves to Am. Two bars later, Joel temporarily modulates to the IV chord, F, and does the same move—F to A7 to Dm.

FIGURE 3 offers some nice voicings to play for these chords, with second-inversion dominant sevenths employed to create a bass drop.

A more up-tempo, rockin’ example of this move in a rock song, from the Nine-ties grunge era, can be found in the chorus to “Lithium” by Stone Temple Pilots, where guitarist Dean DeLeo arpeggiates the E and Bdim/D# voicings illustrated in FIGURE 4 with a shimmering rotary-speaker effect. (The second chord may be thought of as a rootless G7.) The verse progression to “Lithium” by Nirvana features a similar progression—E5 G#5 C#—in this case with the bass drop being provided by bassist Krist Novoselic playing a low D# note beneath Kurt Cobain’s G5 power chord, with both instruments being tuned down a whole step.

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SOLING ON TWO ADJACENT STRINGS

A FAVORITE APPROACH of mine for thinking outside the box when soloing is to restrict myself to playing on only two adjacent strings, which ultimately forces me to move up and down the fretboard. Often times when soloing, one's lines will fall on one pair of adjacent strings, followed by another pair, then another. This would not be the case when utilizing techniques like sweep picking or playing extended arpeggio-based phrases, but the lion's share of soloing on the guitar can be boiled down to moving from one pair of strings to another.

Another great benefit of the two-string approach is that it forces you away from the “muscle memory” licks and patterns that so many players feel trapped by and are always trying to break away from.

Let’s begin in the key of E, focusing on the top two strings. FIGURE 1 illustrates two positions of the E blues scale (E G A B D), starting in ninth/10th position and moving down to seventh position. Intentionally remaining on these two strings within this area of the fretboard will force us to think melodically and employ different means of articulation, such as hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides, in moving from one position to the other.

FIGURE 2 offers a simple two-bar phrase, initiated by a slide up the B string, an eighth-note triplet figure and then sustained, vibrato-ed notes on the high E string. In bar 2, I include a pull-off and slide to move down to the lower position, ending with a bend vibrato. Overall, I’m looking to get the most out of the sound and articulation of each note.

Let’s now apply this approach moving between seventh and fifth positions with E minor pentatonic, as shown in FIGURE 3.

Another approach to staying on a single pair of strings is to implement a fixed intervallic relationship between them and move it up or down the board. In FIGURE 8, notes that are minor third (three half steps) apart ascend the fretboard, starting in seventh position and moving all the way up to 19th position. Once you have these phrases memorized, strive to invent solo lines of your own that utilize this two-string approach.
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Your heroes and your own sound

HELLO, EVERYONE, AND welcome to my new column for Guitar World. As a longtime fan of the magazine and someone who has learned a great deal from its pages, it’s an honor to join the ranks as an instructional columnist! I sincerely hope this series of lessons will prove useful to you.

Anyone who has heard me play can probably guess who my musical influences are because I wear them proudly on my sleeve. Zak Wykle, Jimi Hendrix, Dave Murray, Randy Rhoads, Brian May, Michael Schenker, and, of course, Glenn Tipton—all of these brilliant players have influenced my approach to the instrument. Hopefully, as all of these sounds and approaches are distilled, something comes out in another way that represents my own musical personality. It’s a wonderful journey, and the further I travel in my career, the more I feel I’m forging my own distinctive musical voice.

When I was younger, it was more about how fast, flashy and impressive one could play. But the secret of it all, I think, is really the space between the notes. One’s own fingerprint has a better chance to shine through as a note is held, or in the way each phrase follows the next in the telling of a musical story. Speed is great, but it’s just one tool in the box.

Michael Schenker’s playing in UFO is a classic example of what I’m talking about here. His note choice, spacing, phrasing, technique and articulation offer a master class in expressive lead guitar playing. FIGURE 1 is an improvised example of soloing in Schenker’s style: the lines are based primarily on B minor pentatonic (B D E F G) with the inclusion of the ninth, or second, C#. Throughout this demonstration, I follow a flurry of notes by lingering on one, adding expressive vibrato, and then leaving space between the phrases so that, like a good story teller, I’m “speaking” in cohesive sentences.

Articulation is tremendously important as well. I like to include pick scrapes, as in bar 2, on beat one; ghost-bends, or pre-bends, for which a note is bent first, then picked and released; gradual bends; fast or slow vibratos; quick hammer/pulls and slides; a sharp, staccato attack and whatnot.

If I were to speak to you at a million miles an hour in a monotone voice, whatever I’m saying would fail to grab your attention. But if I speak expressively, in clearly defined phrases, I will be better able to get my point across. An effective guitar solo works the same way.

FIGURE 2 offers another example in Michael’s style, wherein I alternate between rhythm guitar and solo lines, played with a triplet-based 12/8 feel. As you listen and play along, keep in mind that a less-saturated/distorted tone will better serve the many articulation variables in your pick attack.

 Richie Faulkner has been a member of legendary U.K. heavy metal band Judas Priest since 2011. Their 2018 album, Firepower, became the band’s highest-charting album ever in the U.S.
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LOCK STEP

Tightening up your rhythm chops

THIS MONTH, I’D like to focus on rhythm guitar playing. Even if, like me, you are far more interested in soloing than playing rhythm guitar, the truth is that strengthening one’s rhythm chops and sense of time are absolutely essential to becoming a better guitar player, and the best way to do that is to work with a metronome.

An exercise I regularly do to maintain a solid rhythm playing technique is to repeat just one note in various rhythms against a metronome click. Set the tempo at a speed that you’re comfortable with and that doesn’t feel frantic; I like 200 beats per minute. I’ll often think of the clicks as eighth notes—“ONE and TWO and THREE per minute. I’ll often think of the clicks as that doesn’t feel frantic; I like 200 beats at a speed that you’re comfortable with and against a metronome click. Set the tempo repeat just one note in various rhythms to work with a metronome.

As shown in FIGURE 1, I’ll repeatedly pick my open low E string, moving from quarter notes to eighth notes, 16th notes and 16th-note triplets, playing each of these rhythmic divisions for a single bar. I’ll use lightly palm-muted downstrokes when picking the quarter notes and eighth notes, then switch to alternate (down-up) picking for the 16th notes and 16th-note triplets, with heavier palm muting. When you get to the end of the four-bar phrase, repeat the entire figure a bunch of times.

Whenever I practice a specific guitar part, I’ll play through it five times, making sure I can perform it perfectly before increasing the tempo. I like moving it up in five-bpm increments, so in this case I’d move from 200 bpm to 205, then 210, etc. Start at whatever tempo feels comfortable for you. As I tell people at my live guitar clinics, if you move to a faster tempo before you can perform the lick perfectly five times in a row, the only person you’re cheating is yourself. If you make a mistake, start again from the beginning, dial back the tempo if necessary and focus on the minute details of the lick.

Many rock and metal rhythm parts are built around low, repeating pedal tones played against shifting chord forms, as happens in one of my favorite Alice Cooper songs, “The World Needs Guts.” FIGURE 2 presents a similarly styled part, with two-note power chords sounded on the A and D strings and played in a “threes-on-fours” rhythm as the pick moves between the two strings. The picking pattern here is up-down-down for the most part, and I often start a bar with an upstroke in order to make that initial chord “pop” a little more.

The verse riff in my song “Pandemonium,” shown in FIGURE 3, features a sequence of shifting hammer-ons on the A string played against a reiterated open low E-string pedal tone. The riff is based on the E Phrygian mode (E F G A B C D), illustrated in FIGURE 4.

Working through these examples with a metronome will help you to play in lock step with any groove and at any tempo.

Tune down one half step (low to high, E A D G B E), I’ll repeatedly pick my open low E string, moving from quarter notes to eighth notes, 16th notes and 16th-note triplets, playing each of these rhythmic divisions for a single bar. I’ll use lightly palm-muted downstrokes when picking the quarter notes and eighth notes, then switch to alternate (down-up) picking for the 16th notes and 16th-note triplets, with heavier palm muting. When you get to the end of the four-bar phrase, repeat the entire figure a bunch of times.

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Nita Strauss tours regularly with Alice Cooper and has her own all-female band, We Start Wars. Visit nitastraus.com for more information.
GROWTH FACTOR
Building a complex riff from a simple melody

OFTENTIMES, WHEN COMPOSING progressive or complicated music, one can become a little wary that the finished product may not live up to the depth and density of the music of our favorite prog-metal bands. This style of music is often characterized by shifting rhythmic syncopations, odd meters and dense, polyphonic chords. I have occasionally found myself thinking, “How do I get started crafting music that will embrace these elements?” When I write music, I like to begin in the simplest way possible, stripping the approach back to a melody so basic that it could be a child’s lullaby. This is precisely the approach I took in writing “Electric Sunrise,” a composition featured on my 2016 album, Handmade Cities.

**FIGURE 1** presents one of the piece’s primary themes, which is built from six descending chord voicings, followed by two ascending voicings, all played over a sustained open low-D pedal tone. (My guitar is in drop-D tuning, down one half step: low to high, D A# G E B E.) As you can see by the chord names, the harmony gets a bit dense and polytonal.

The way I devised these chords was by first establishing the melodic line, played on the high E string, as depicted in **FIGURE 2**. I then harmonized the melody by adding notes below it on the B and G strings. As shown in **FIGURE 3**, each of the melodic notes is joined by another note on the string directly below it, with intervallic relationships that alternate between fourths—fretting both strings at the same fret on the top two strings—and sixths. I then repeat this process when adding a third note to the harmonized melodic line, as illustrated in **FIGURE 4**, in this instance alternating between fourths and seconds. Looking at the notes on the B and G strings, I begin with E and B, respectively, which are a perfect fourth apart, followed by B and A, which are a major second apart.

**FIGURE 5** shows the notes below it on the B and G strings. As you can see, what started out as an innocent, almost childish melody developed into a grown-up prog-metal sound, via some sophisticated harmonization and aggressive rhythmic syncopations.

**FIGURE 6** presents one of the primary themes, which is built from six descending chord voicings, followed by two ascending voicings, all played over a sustained open low-D pedal tone. (My guitar is in drop-D tuning, down one half step: low to high, D A# G E B E.) As you can see by the chord names, the harmony gets a bit dense and polytonal.

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WHEN PLAYING THE fast-paced rhythms heard in the intro to “Take No Prisoners,” guitarists Dave Mustaine and Marty Friedman employ deliberate and precise picking patterns in order to perform the riff with consistent accuracy at the song’s brisk tempo. Picking prompts below the tablature in bars 1 and 4 reveal how the two guitarists use powerful downstroke attacks for the power chords and strict alternate picking for the single-note lines played on the low E string. (For more on alternate picking, see this month’s lesson for “Rats”). Alternate picking provides the most efficient method of articulating fast 16th notes on the same string, and mastery of the technique is what enables Mustaine and Friedman to articulate many of the riffs in “Take No Prisoners” with such clarity and precision.

The key to performing the long, descending melodic line heard in bars 26 and 27 (and also in bars 42 and 43) is to keep the fingering simple and rely on fret-hand position shifting to swiftly move down the neck. If you study bars 26 and 27, you’ll see that the notes are fretted chiefly with just the first two fingers, used in alternation. As you work through the transcription of “Take No Prisoners,” you’ll find it very helpful and beneficial to practice along with the original recording at a reduced speed. You can do this with a dedicated practice software program, such as the Amazing Slow Downer, or by taking advantage of YouTube’s “speed” control function and listening to the official Megadeth YouTube track at 0.75 speed or slower.

GHOST GUITARISTS FIRE: Ether skillfully employ alternate picking and pick-hand palm muting techniques to create the aggressive, “pumping” main riff for “Rats” (see Rhy. Fig. 1, bars 3-6). The specific pick strokes used are indicated below the tablature here and are what enable the guitarists to play the notes cleanly and to efficiently articulate the faster 16th-note rhythms. Notice that all notes that fall on a downbeat are picked with a downstroke attack and that all notes that fall on the upbeats receive upstroke attacks.

The palm muting technique occurs wherever you see the abbreviation “P.M.” above tabs. For those unfamiliar with palm muting, it involves resting the fleshy, outer edge of your palm against the strings as you pick, with the hand positioned just forward of and in slight contact with the guitar’s bridge. Note that the amount of palm pressure you apply to the strings, meaning how much it “leans” on them, has a big effect on the sound and duration of the muted notes, so spend time experimenting with varying palm placement and pressure when attempting to match the sound of muted notes heard on the recording.

The letter “T” appearing above the D note on the G string’s 19th fret in bar 52 (and also in bar 98) illustrates when Fire performs a pick-hand tap. To execute this maneuver, hammer-on the D note with the tip of your pick hand’s index or middle finger, just as you would when performing a fret-hand hammer-on. When releasing the tapped D to the lower A note at the 14th fret, “flick” the string slightly up or down to simulate a string pluck. Doing so will help ensure consistent volume between the two notes, without the pull-off sounding faint and weak.

—JEFF PERRIN

THIS FOLK-ROCK CLASSIC features Lindsay Buckingham providing a sprightly stand-alone solo acoustic accompaniment to his impassioned vocals and demonstrates the guitarist’s fingerpicking mastery. The song offers an excellent study in employing the thumb to pick an unwavering, alternating bass line while simultaneously using your first three fingers to perform flowing, banjo-like roll patterns. Playing the song authentically requires a disciplined finger-to-string assignment, with the seldom-used ring finger brought into play to pluck the notes on the high E string, which may feel odd if you’re not used to doing that.

Unless indicated otherwise, all notes on the bottom three strings are to be picked with the thumb. Be sure to palm mute the thumb-picked bass notes throughout to keep them sounding distinct and prevent them from ringing together. Doing so will also help you feel the strings more and provide better control over your fingerpicking technique overall. The key is to proceed slowly at first and practice certain recurring patterns, such as those first appearing in bars 2 and 26, and the two-bar pattern introduced in bars 5 and 6, repeatedly until you can get the notes to flow smoothly.

The other challenge here is forming the chord shapes cleanly and being able to switch chords seamlessly. Again, the key is to start out slow and steady before approaching the original tempo. Note that Buckingham plays this song in drop-D tuning and with a capo at the fourth fret, which should be thought of as the nut, or “zero” fret. When fingerpicking the high chords in bars 25–30, however, you may find it helpful to forget about the capo temporarily and just think “14th fret” when reaching for the highest note, which is tabbed as “10.”
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TAKE NO PRISONERS
Megadeth

As heard on RUST IN PEACE
Words and Music by DAVE MUSTAINE • Transcribed by JEFF PERRIN

Fast \( \frac{7}{4} = 144 \) (w/double-time feel)

Intro (0:00)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 (elec. w/dist.)

F\#5

1

N.C.(G5)

(A5)

A

Bass *

*Note played on repeat only.

1, 2

N.C.(G5) (A5)

3. N.C.(G5) (A5) (play 3 times)

N.C.

8

TAKE NO PRISONERS
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“TAKE NO PRISONERS”

\( \text{Guitar Tab} \)

\( \text{TAKE NO PRISONERS} \)

\( (q = 138) \)

\( \text{Guitar World} \)

1st Verse (0:48)

Got one chance will
Panzers

(Infilitrate them)

(Permeate them)

Get Break their pride

Break

Get their pride

N.C.\( (F)\)

The

And their people

(Permeate them)

Retrograde them)

D5

Typhus

(Deteriorate them)

G\#5

Songs_Sep_2018.indd   99
6/20/18   3:28 PM
Gtrs. 1 and 2

**Epidemic**

- **Gtr. 1 and 2**
- **F♯5 G5 F♯5 N.C.(F♯5) C5**

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 four times (see bar 14)

**Bass Fig. 2**

- **F♯5 G5 F♯5 N.C.(F♯5) N.C.(E5)**

Burn

**Bass**

- **N.C.**

- **N.C. (F♯5)**

- **N.C. (E5)**

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 26)

1. (1:13) **N.C.**

2. **F♯5**

- **G5 F♯5 N.C.(F♯5) N.C.(E5)**

Burn

1. (1:13) **N.C.**

2. **F♯5**

- **G5 F♯5 N.C.(F♯5) N.C.(E5)**

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 26)
"TAKE NO PRISONERS"

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass

2nd Verse (1:27)

Gtr's. 1 and 2

N.C.

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 26)

of heart and soul

N.C.

Gtrs. 1 and 2

N.C.
G 3rd Verse (2:04)

Love and war they say all is fair
Body has parts your country spares

By the

Gtrs. 1 and 2 substitute Rhy. Fig. 1 on repeat (see bar 50)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

F#5 G5 G#5 G5 F#5

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.) (Marty Friedman)

Substitute Bass Fig. 3 on repeat (see bar 50)

Bass

Take his life but won't take his hair
way son here's your wheelchair

He

Rhy. Fig. 1

Gtrs. 1 and 2 substitute Riff A on repeat

Riff A

Bass Fig. 3

*Note played first time only.

H (2:16)

Once had to be thing he's like all you and could be
Now he's nothing for no one thing

F#5 G5 G#5 D5 A5 G#5 A5 G#5

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass

Bass Fig. 4

*Note played first time only.
[``TAKE NO PRISONERS``](guitarworld.com)

1. nowhere to see
   - Gtr. 1 and 2
   - Bass plays Rhy. Fig. 2

2. Funny thing
   - Gtr. 1 and 2

Tears streak his solemn stare
   - Gtr. 1 and 2
   - Bass plays Bass Fig. 5

for wreckage Nobody cares
   - Gtr. 1 and 2

No one knew what would happen there
   - Gtr. 1 and 2

No one spoke dared No one country
   - Gtr. 1 and 2

Don’t ask what you can do for your
   - Gtr. 1 and 2

G5 F#5 G5 F#5 G5 F#5 E5

J

No one knew what would happen there
   - Gtr. 1 and 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 (see bar 52)
Ask what your country can do for you

G#5  G5  F#5  D/A  N.C.  C5  F#5  G5  F#5  D/A  N.C.  C5

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 64)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 5 twice (see bar 64)

Outro Guitar Solo (Friedman) (2:54)

Gtr. 3  F#5  D/A  C5  B5  D/A  B5  C5  Take no prisoners

Gtrs. 1 and 2  Rhy. Fig. 3

Bass  Bass Fig. 6

Take no shit

F#5  D/A  C5  B5  D/A  G5  F#5  A/E  F#5  A/E

end Rhy. Fig. 3

end Bass Fig. 6
"TAKE NO PRISONERS"

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 3 three times (see bar 70)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 6 three times (see bar 70)

F#5 D/A C5 B5 D/A B5 C5

Take no prisoners

Gtrs. 3

F#5 D/A C5 B5 D/A G5 F#5 A/E F#5 A/E

Take no shit

F#5 D/A C5 B5 D/A G5

Take no prisoners

F#5 A/E F#5 A/E

Take no shit

F#5 A/E F#5 A/E

Take no prisoners

C5

F#5 D/A C5 B5 D/A G5 F#5 A/E F#5 A/E

Take no shit

Gtr. 3

N.C.(E5) F#5 N.C.(E5) F#5 N.C.(E5) F#5 N.C.(E5) F#5

(trem. pick)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass
All gtrs. tune down one whole step (low to high, D G C F A D).
Bass tuning (low to high): D G C F.
All music sounds in the key of D minor, one whole step lower than written.

**Intro (0:00)**

Moderately $\frac{4}{4}$ – 124

**Verses (0:19, 1:01)**

1. In times of turmoil
   You let them in
   N.C. (E5)
   Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 3)
“RATS”

Beliefs
Now all contagious
contagious
loved ones

Spreading and all
disease

Your kin

N.C. (E5)

(repeat previous four bars)

C Pre-chorus (0:34, 1:17, 1:52, 2:54)

This wretched mischief is now coursing through your souls
will suffer punishments beneath the wrath of God
This devastation left your cities to be burnt
Them filthy rodents are still coming for your souls

B5

Gtr. 1 and 2

Bass

4th time, skip ahead to I (bar 59)

Never to let go
Never to forgive
Never to return
Never to let go

D5

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

3rd time, skip ahead to F Interlude (bar 37)

(1.) Them
(2.) Them

Gtr. 2

Bass

N.C. (B5)
1. **D** (E5)  

e5  c/e  e5  a5  e5  c/e  g5  d5  

Gtr. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 3)  
Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)  

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 3)  

2. **E** 1st Chorus (1:36)  

e5  c/e  g5  d5  e5  c/e  g5  d5  

Rats (oh ah)  
Rats (oh ah)  

(1:34)  

Gtr. 1  
Gtr. 2  
Bass  

(oh ah)  

Go back to E Pre-chorus (bar 15)  

E Interlude (2:11)  

w/half-time feel  

N.C.(E5)  

D5  

Gtr. 2  
Bass  

N.C.(E5)  

C5  

N.C.(G5)  

D5  

end Rhy. Fig. 2  

end Bass Fig. 2  

end Interlude  

N.C.(E5)  

D5  

Gtr. 2  
Bass  

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Go back to Pre-chorus (bar 15)
Rats still comin' after you (oh ah)
And there's nothing you can do (oh ah)
They're
N.C.(E5) C/E G5 D5
Gtr. 1 and 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see bar 29)

Rats still coming after you (oh ah)
And there's nothing you can do (oh ah)
They're
N.C.(E5) C/E G5 D5
N.C.(E5) C5
N.C.(G5) D5

Outro (3:48)

Rats
N.C.(E5) (G5) (E5) (B5) (E5) (F#5) (E5) (D#5) (B5) (C5) (Bb5) (F5)
Gtrs. 1 (keyboard arr. for gtr.)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 (w/dist.)
Rhy. Fig. 3

N.C.(E5) G5 (E5) B5 (E5) G5 F#5 E5 D#5 (E5) B5 (E5) C5 E5 Bb5 F5
Gtrs. 1, 2 and 3

(Play 4 times)
NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN
Fleetwood Mac

Acoustic guitar, in drop-D tuning (low to high, D A D G B E), capo 4.

* fingerstyle
* Let ring

Intro (0:00, 0:43)

Moderately Fast \( \frac{4}{4} \) (\( \frac{8}{8} \) is \( \frac{4}{4} \))

1st Verse (0:11)

Interlude (0:54)

2nd Verse (1:27)

1. She broke down and let me in
2. You don't know what it means to win


**NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN**

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“NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN”

Made me see where I've been
Come 'round and see me again

** Chorus (0:32, 1:16, 1:49) (no vocal 2nd time)

Been down one time
Been down two times

Never going back again

1st time, go back to A Intro
2nd time, go back to B 2nd Verse
3rd time, go back to A Intro again, then continue to end of song.

** 2nd and 3rd choruses only
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6/21/18   3:28 PM
THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER
(Brain May lead-style)

Music by JOHN STAFFORD SMITH • Arranged by JIMMY BROWN

N.C. (E) | (A) | A | E/G# | F#m | C#dim | F#m | B7

Gtr. 1 (w/dist.): melody

Gtr. 2 (w/dist.): middle ("alto") harmony

Gtr. 3 (w/dist.): low ("baritone") harmony


1. (A/C#) (A) (E)

2. (A/C#) (A) A

G#dim/B | A/C# | G#dim/B A

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"THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER"

E/G# A G#dim/B A E/G# D#dim/F# A E E9/D

A/C# A D#dim/F# E E/7/G# A Bm7 A/C# D D/A F#maj Bm A#dim/C# Bm/D#dim

Slower

A/E E E/7/D A/C# G#dim/D A/E E7/A G#dim/D A/E E7/A A/E E7/A

* Optional: For better clarity, have a fourth guitar play the low E and A bass notes as a separate part.
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WHILE RADIOHEAD’S second album, The Bends, did not ascend to the creative heights of the band’s subsequent breakthrough masterpiece, OK Computer, there’s no way it was ever a sophomore slump. The seeds of Radiohead’s transformation from Pixies-influenced quasi-grunge music to the atmospheric, ambitious and sometimes experimental style they honed on OK Computer are most evident on “My Iron Lung,” where guitarist Jonny Greenwood more freely explores sonic guitar textures to enhance the song’s mood.

What is particularly refreshing is that Greenwood used a rather primitive, inexpensive and arguably limited rig to craft the sounds that fit that song so well. Even more impressive is that Greenwood still relies on much of that gear today, even after the band has sold millions of records and after his rig started to expand in size only a few years after the release of The Bends. Greenwood’s amp here is a Fender Eighty-Five, a late-Eighties 85-watt solid-state combo with a single 12-inch speaker that was inexpensive when it was new and has remained a dirt-cheap bargain on the used market since the early Nineties.

On “My Iron Lung” Greenwood mainly used the Fender amp as a clean foundation for a pair of pedals: a DigiTech Whammy WH-1 and a Marshall Shred Master. Set to its octave-up setting, the Whammy provides a somewhat harsh, warbling texture that is the product of its primitive 12-bit tracking technology, but in this case what many could perceive as a “flaw” actually enhances the desired effect of the melodic guitar line. The Shred Master is employed for louder and more violent sections of the song to produce aggressive bursts of distortion, although a few overdubs were recorded with just the Fender Eighty-Five cranked up as loud as it could go. The Fender Eighty-Five’s clean tones are also employed on their own for the jazzy chords heard throughout the verses.

**GET THE SOUND, CHEAP!**

- Fender Telecaster Plus with Red-Red Dually (bridge) and Blue (neck) Lace Sensor pickups (bridge pickup setting; volume: 10, tone: 10)

**ORIGINAL GEAR**

**GUITAR:**

- Squier FSR Affinity Telecaster HH
- Lace Sensor Red-Red Dually (install in bridge position)
- Fender Champion 30
- DigiTech Whammy Ricochet
- Joyo High Gain Distortion JF-04

**AMP:**


**EFFECTS:**

- DigiTech Whammy WH-1 (Octave +1 setting; foot pedal 100 percent toe down); Marshall Shred Master (Gain: 9, Bass: 8, Contour: 0, Treble: 6, Volume: 6)

**STRINGS/TUNING:**

- Dean Markley Blue Steel .010-.046/Standard .009-.040/Standard

**PICK:**

- Jim Dunlop .60mm Nylon Standard 44P
“BLESS THE BLACK WINGS AND ALL THAT EARLY STUFF IS TORTEX YELLOW.”

—MATT PIKE