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FEATURES...

28  ANDY SUMMERS: DEAR GUITAR HERO
The king of textures talks Echoplex pedals, recording with the Police and jammin’ with Jimi (Hendrix, of course).

36  BILLY GIBBONS
“Reverend” takes a break from ZZ Top’s big, bad, nationwide tour to break down his gritty new blues album.

42  PAUL GILBERT
The six-string master dishes the dirt on how his audacious new album, Behold Electric Guitar, came to be — and how looking forward can sometimes mean looking back.

54  INTENSE ROCK: PICKIN’ ON PAUL GILBERT
A brief look at Paul Gilbert’s alternate-picking technique and pick-slanting approach, as presented on his legendary 1988 REH instructional video, Intense Rock.

58  ACE FREHLEY
The venerable guitarist discusses the finer points of Spaceman, a new solo album that features his former Kiss bandmate and “rock and roll brother,” Gene Simmons.

TRANSCRIBED

“Spanish Caravan”
by The Doors
PAGE 88

“When the Curtain Falls”
by Greta Van Fleet
PAGE 98

“Blind Man in the Dark”
by Gov’t Mule
PAGE 106

DEPARTMENTS

16  WOODSHED / MASTHEAD

18  SOUNDBOARD
Letters, reader art, Defenders of the Faith

21  TUNE-UPS
Coheed and Cambria, Larkin Poe, Taulk, Power Trip, Welles, Skeletonwitch

69  SOUNDCHECK
69. Boss Katana Air
72. Vox Mini Superbeetle
74. Seymour Duncan Fooz Analog Fuzz Synthesizer
75. EarthQuaker Devices Aqueduct Vibrato
76. Fender American Original ’60s Jazzmaster

78  COLUMNS
78. String Theory
by Jimmy Brown
80. In Deep
by Andy Aledort
82. Speed of Flight
by Richie Faulkner
84. School of Rock
by Joel Hoekstra

86  PERFORMANCE NOTES

122  TONAL RECALL
The secrets behind Pat Travers’ monster guitar tone on the live “Boom Boom (Out Go the Lights).”

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AS THREE OF you might know, I spent more than six years as the editor of GuitarWorld.com, posting literally thousands of stories — and then monitoring live web traffic to see what worked and what didn’t. Let’s just say that Paul Gilbert posts worked. Regardless of the context — a lesson, a song or video premiere, a clip of him playing “Nobody’s Fault But Mine” with John Paul Jones and Steve Hackett in 2004 — Gilbert kicked (and continues to kick) online ass. Few guitarists can rip like Gilbert, but I think what really makes him so popular in the dotcom/social media arena is his off-the-wall sense of humor, his ability (and eagerness) to teach and explain exactly what he’s doing on guitar and the fact that he’s always adapting, evolving and learning, as you’ll discover when we read our fascinating new interview by Joe Bosso.

By the way, I find it just a little weird that this issue’s cover features a photo of Gilbert, a reference to Billy Gibbons and a promo for a transcription of a classic Doors song — just like May 1991 issue (shown here). To make things just a wee bit freakier, the May ’91 mag even features an ad for Gilbert’s Intense Rock instructional video, which we reference in our exclusive Troy Grady lesson on page 54 in this new issue. It’s purely coincidental, I assure you; we’re simply not that clever and/or diabolical!

SPEAKING OF THE DOORS: Be sure to check out Jimmy Brown’s transcription of “Spanish Caravan.” It includes Ray Manzarek’s harpsichord and organ parts, arranged for guitar, which completes the duet with Robby Krieger’s brilliant guitar parts. For more information, see Jimmy’s Performance Notes on page 86. Enjoy!

—Damian Fanelli
Editor
GUITAR WORLD  •  DECEMBER 2018

SOUNDING BOARD

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

Black and White and Read All Over

Thanks for the Jerry Cantrell, Mark Farner, Rich Robinson and Marc Ford interviews in the October 2018 issue! It’s nice to hear musicians talking about their songs, gear, recording techniques, gigs and influences instead of their politics. I’ll be checking these guys out on their tours. Nice job, two issues in a row!
—Dennis

Thanks for the Mark Farner story. I’ve been a fan since the Seventies with Closer to Home. I enjoyed the Jerry Cantrell article as well, and thanks for the tutorials. You’re the only mag I subscribe to.
—Earle Craft

Have Guitar, Will Travel

I was super excited when I saw John Mayer on the September 2018 cover of Guitar World! NOT! What’s up with the neck pillow jacket?!!!
—Scott Blom

I was super excited when I saw John Mayer on the September 2018 cover of Guitar World! NOT! What’s up with the neck pillow jacket?!!!
—Scott Blom

Jank’s for the Memories

St. Charles, Illinois, deemed a custom Ibanez the official guitar of the city. The instrument, inspired by George Benson’s guitar, functions as a key to the city. It represents a musical genre called “jank,” which originated in 2003 and launched globally from St. Charles. It’s passed down to one local student — named Tri-Cities Jank Ambassador — each year for his or her accomplishments in art, leadership and technology. St. Charles pre-dates Chicago and is part of the “Tri-Cities” suburb along with Batavia and Geneva. Named for Abraham Lincoln, Lincoln Park sits in a designated historic district that dates to the 1830s. The guitar monument pictured is the only statue in Lincoln Park and pays homage to jank music and the instrument that represents it — the official guitar of St. Charles.
—George Ressinger

Thanks for the Jerry Cantrell, Mark Farner, Rich Robinson and Marc Ford interviews in the October 2018 issue! It’s nice to hear musicians talking about their songs, gear, recording techniques, gigs and influences instead of their politics. I’ll be checking these guys out on their tours. Nice job, two issues in a row!
—Dennis

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—Earle Craft

Correction

In the October 2018 issue, there were a couple of misinterpreted lyrics in our transcription of the Alice in Chains song “The One You Know.” The correct first-verse lyric above bar 13 (page 97) is “inner compass aligned” and the first line of the Bridge, above bars 44-47 (page 101) should have read “Lay me out with flowered guilt. Watch the explosions falling.”

It’s Raining Requests!

I notice you’ve been encouraging readers to suggest a few songs to be transcribed, so I’d love to throw a few into the ring. I consider myself a guitar novice and I think these songs contain sections that beginners can find interesting as well as being good songs to learn from. I’ve never seen the studio version of “Tweezer” by Phish transcribed anywhere. Very cool riff and I believe the solo is something less-experienced players may be able to work through. Other suggestions are “Fat Old Sun” by Pink Floyd (great solo), “Not For You” by Pearl Jam (another good song for beginners), “Victim of Changes” by Judas Priest and “Rain” by the Beatles. Thank you so much for encouraging your readers to interact, and as always, thanks for bringing something exciting to my mailbox each and every month!
—Don Bucko

A Nice, Gentle Request

Here are my requests for songs I’d like to see transcribed in Guitar World: the Black Keys “Act Nice and Gentle,” the Bahamas “All the Time,” Sublime “Badfish,” Bob Dylan “Nobody Cept You,” the Faces “Stay with Me.” Honestly, a little more Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Kinks and Bob Dylan (he had some great guitar work on a lot of albums) is always appreciated. Thank you!
—Andrew Cassun

Ink Spot

I’ve been a Duane Allman fan since I first heard the Allman Brothers Band’s debut album in 1969. I’m a professional guitarist, a proud Delaney Guitars endorser and Skydog’s No. 1 fan. The tattoo artist is none other than Sarah Miller, runner-up on Season 2 of Ink Master! Enjoy!
—Cheryl Rinovato

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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 GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com with a scan of the image!

MIKE NESS BY NINA TILTON

PETER GREEN BY PAULO DELGADO

DEFENDERS of the Faith

Joshua Foley

AGE: 15
HOMETOWN: Clifton Park, NY
GUITARS: Jackson Rhoads Flying V, Epiphone Zakk Wylde bullseye Les Paul Custom, Washburn Acoustic/Electric
GEAR I MOST WANT: EVH 5150 combo

Ed Shaffery

AGE: 59
HOMETOWN: Streamwood, IL
GEAR I MOST WANT: Gibson Flying V, Fireglo Rickenbacker 4003 bass

Are you a Defender of the Faith? Send a photo, along with your answers to the questions above, to GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com. And pray!
Creature Comforts

ON THEIR NEW ALBUM — VAXIS – ACT I: THE UNHEAVENLY CREATURES — COHEED AND CAMBRIA RETURN TO THEIR PROG-METAL ROOTS, NOT TO MENTION THEIR EPIC AMORY WARS SAGA

By Richard Bienstock

“Our fans are really receptive to all the things we do,” says Coheed and Cambria singer and guitarist Claudio Sanchez. “But I’m sure they’re very thrilled with what we’re doing this time.”

What Coheed and Cambria are doing “this time,” is releasing their new and ninth studio album, Vaxis – Act I: The Unheavenly Creatures. As for why he believes fans will be particularly pleased with the record? Specifically, because it marks a return to their prog-metal roots after a detour with 2015’s The Color Before the Sun, an effort that saw the band exploring relatively concise song structures and a more pop-rock-leaning sound.

In contrast, The Unheavenly Creatures is a massive, incredibly dense musical statement, with 15 songs running more than 78 minutes in length, and a narrative concept that once again dives into the Amory Wars saga — a sort of intergalactic battle between good and evil that has played out across the majority of Coheed and Cambria’s records over the past decade and a half, since the release of their 2002 debut, The Second Stage Turbine Blade.
“OUR FANS ARE REALLY RECEPTIVE TO ALL THE THINGS WE DO. BUT I’M SURE THEY’RE VERY THRILLED WITH WHAT WE’RE DOING THIS TIME.”
—CLAUDIO SANCHEZ

Explains Sanchez, “When I was writing *The Color Before the Sun*, my son was being born and I wanted to capture that time without the guise of a concept. So that album was a product of circumstance. That’s why we took that departure. But I always knew it wasn’t going to be a permanent thing. And what was great was, I think doing that album allowed me some time to understand where we were in the Amory Wars story and find a new and interesting way to continue on with it.”

As for where the story picks up on *The Unheavenly Creatures* (the cover art of which is shown above)? “This record is an introduction to the characters Creature and Sister Spider, who are part of this group of bandits called the Unheavenly Creatures. And Vaxis is actually their unborn son, who is trying to convey a message to them from the future.” laughs Sanchez. “As far as what his ultimate goal is, I can’t reveal that just yet.”

It’s an immersive, multifaceted story, for sure, and one that’s grafted to a similarly dynamic soundtrack. From the epic space-metal opener, “The Dark Sentencer,” to the stomping, anthemic “Toys,” the doomy “Black Sunday” (“the guiding idea was: ‘If Kurt Vonnegut were a musician, what would something he wrote sound like?’” Sanchez says) to the gentle, orchestrated “Lucky Stars,” the doomy “Black Sunday” (“the guiding idea was: ‘If Kurt Vonnegut were a musician, what would something he wrote sound like?’” Sanchez says) to the gentle, orchestrated closer, “Lucky Stars,” *The Unheavenly Creatures* is a wild, varied ride.

“The sonic journey it goes through, we touch on everything,” says Coheed guitarist Travis Stever. “To me the record is most relatable to our *Afterman* albums [2012’s *The Afterman: Ascension* and 2013’s *The Afterman: Descension*] because they explored every aspect of what this band does, and I feel like this one definitely does that, too. In the studio, there was a sense of adding things without limitation and just fully going that cinematic route.”

When it came to the studio, *The Unheavenly Creatures* also marked the first time that Coheed and Cambria, which includes bassist Zach Cooper and drummer Josh Eppard, chose to produce one of their records on their own. “That’s reflected in the sound of the album, absolutely,” Stever says. “There’s this communication you don’t have when there’s someone in the middle going, ‘Well, you know what I think…’ So it made a difference that we did it ourselves.”

As for what comes next for Coheed, fans can rest assured that there’s plenty of epic, proggy music to look forward to. As is stated explicitly in the new album’s title, *The Unheavenly Creatures* is the first installment of what Sanchez reveals will ultimately be not a two-part series, or even a trilogy. Rather, it’s the beginning of a pentalogy.

“Absolutely,” Sanchez says with a laugh. “And I have all the beats. I understand what parts two through five are going to be, conceptually. Now it’s really just about writing the songs to help connect those dots.”

**AXOLOGY**

• **Guitars:** Seventies Fender Telecaster Deluxe, Gibson Les Paul VOS Reissue, black-on-black Gibson SG “that I bought from a kid outside Guitar Center” (Sanchez); Gibson Les Paul Traditional Gold Top (Stever)
• **Amps:** Seventies Orange 50-watt, Marshall Jubilee 50-watt, Mesa/Boogie Mark V, Ampeg Gemini, Fender Blues Junior, Fender Twin Reverb, Bogner Uberschall
• **Effects:** Matic Effects Flex, Electro-Harmonix Big Muff, Electro-Harmonix Op Amp Big Muff, Death By Audio Interstellar Overdrive, many others. “I love warping signal flow,” Sanchez says

**PLAYLIST**

**1. “Hard Time Killing Floor Blues”**
Skip James
Rebecca: “Having grown up as a banjo player, I’m always intrigued by fingerstyle guitarists. Skip James is a legendary hill country blues artist, and his playing on this track is unbelievable.”

**2. “Wouldn’t Want to Be Like You”**
Sheryl Crow
Megan: “We had the pleasure of sharing stages with Sheryl on the festival circuit this year. She rocks and this song rocks. Really enjoy the production and love the feature of Annie Clark (St. Vincent).”

**3. “Best Seat in the House”**
Blackberry Smoke
Rebecca: “Some genuine, Georgia-grown rock and roll. This is from their new record, *Find a Light*. We love these guys; Charlie Starr is the ultimate frontman.”

**4. “Running on Empty”**
Jackson Browne
Megan: “This list wouldn’t be complete without a slide feature — and what slide is more iconic than ‘Running on Empty’? As a lap steel player, David Lindley’s solos here rip my heart out.”

**5. “Little Martha”**
The Allman Brothers Band
Both: “We covered this song as part of our ‘Tip O’ the Hat’ YouTube series. As a sister duo, we revere these brothers.”
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According to Tauk guitarist Matt Jalbert, the Long Island, New York-based four-piece never actually planned on being an all-instrumental band. Rather, the idea arose organically. He explains, “Originally we were thinking, ‘Let’s find a singer that really fits what we do.’ While we were going through that process we would get together to write and play music. and at some point we said, ‘Wait a second — this kind of sounds good as it is.’ We discovered we really liked the freedom and challenge of not having a vocalist.”

Over the course of their career, Tauk have certainly continued to challenge themselves and their growing audience. The band blends rock, jazz, fusion, prog, funk, electronic elements and whatever else captures their imagination into a spacey, jammy stew, and their newest full-length, Shapeshifter II: Outbreak, finds them furthering those cosmic explorations. The new record picks up on the narrative thread of their 2018 EP, Shapeshifter I: Construct, which saw the band tackling the idea of artificial intelligence. It’s a concept that, Jalbert says, “is such an open-ended thing and is creating all these possibilities around us. It seemed like a fun thing to dive into.” Of course, he adds, “The narrative is very loose, because we’re an instrumental band. But for us it was just a cool way to put the music into a different context.”

Putting their music into different contexts has always been at the heart of what Tauk does. “The spirit of our band is we don’t call ourselves any specific style of music,” Jalbert says. “Anything’s fair game, really.” When it comes to his own guitar playing, he continues, “I’m always asking myself questions like, ‘Okay, how do I emulate an Aphex Twin song on guitar?’ That helps me to expand my playing and not stay in one genre or style.”

While their sound may be somewhat detached from genre classification, Tauk have been welcomed with open arms into the jam-band world, where they have become a hot attraction on tours and festivals. “That audience seems to have embraced us really well,” Jalbert says. “And the great thing is, there’s such a wide range of bands that get thrown into that scene that you end up having a lot of fans with open minds. It’s really a diverse group. So we love it.”

 Tauk guitarist Matt Jalbert with his Eastman T186MX

AXOLOGY

Tauk

**SHAPESHIFTER II: OUTBREAK, THE SPACEY NEW DISC BY THIS NEW YORK-BASED INSTRUMENTAL ROCK-FUSION SENSATION, TAKES A MOODY, UNSETTLING LOOK AT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

By Richard Bienstock

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Power Trip

THE DALLAS THRASHERS ARE SHOWCASING THEIR BACK CATALOG ON A HEAVY-AS-HELL NEW RELEASE

By Gregory Adams

ALTHOUGH POWER TRIP are constantly whipping metal crowds into a frenzy at clubs around the globe, it's their 2017 album, Nightmare Logic, that has expanded their fan base far beyond anything they could've imagined when they formed 10 years ago in Dallas.

Steered by the streamlined chugging of their catchy-as-hell “Executioner’s Tax (Swing of the Axe)” single, Power Trip have cleaved their way onto PBS and Fox News broadcasts (though they tweeted out a cease-and-desist to the latter). Rhythm guitarist Nick Stewart tells Guitar World that he’s also heard the mid-tempo track pounding through his hometown’s American Airlines Center during Dallas Stars hockey games, among other sporting events.

“A friend works for the Chicago Bulls and was on the air-guitar cam,” lead guitarist Blake Ibanez adds with a laugh. “They played half our song and he’s head banging to it.”

With ears of all kinds now affixed to contemporary thrash’s latest hope, the band are showcasing their back catalog via Opening Fire: 2008 to 2014, a collection of comp tracks and out-of-print vinyl offerings. “With the comp tracks, they tend to get swept under the rug at some point,” Ibanez says.

Opening Fire uncovers Power Trip’s thugged-up hardcore roots on “Lake of Fire,” from 2009’s Armageddon Blues EP, and “This World,” carbon dated back to the band’s first demo, but it eventually works its way into headier metal territory. While both guitarists note that they’ve grown exponentially since their early days, they admit that the gun-turret down-picking of the original “Hammer of Doubt” — recorded for a 2010 comp before being revamped for debut album Manifest Decimation in 2013 — holds up surprisingly well. “I think that version is better than the album version,” Ibanez says. “It’s just hard to re-record a song and do it better. Usually you catch lightning in a bottle. We got the tempo and everything a little better on the first one.”

While happy to give the fans a taste of what was with Opening Fire, Stewart and Ibanez are gearing up for the next armor-piercing phase of Power Trip. Plans for a follow-up to Nightmare Logic have yet to form, but the pair of guitarists essentially have their plan of attack.

“I play the riffs, and he solos,” Stewart says matter-of-factly of his magnetic musical relationship with Ibanez. “There’s nothing fancy to it. It’s just executing it, playing it right. We’re not some kind of flashy, technical band. We just try to do it the right way and not fuck up.”

AXOLOGY

• GUITARS (Ibanez) Jackson RR1; (Stewart) Gibson Explorer
• AMPS (Ibanez) 1986 Marshall JCM 800 2203; (Stewart) Engl Ritchie Blackmore signature, 1978 Marshall JMP 2203 100 Watt
• EFFECTS (Ibanez) Ibanez TS9 Tube Screamer, Ibanez DE7 Delay, MXR Smart Gate, Boss RC-3 Loop Station, Polytune; (Stewart) Ibanez TS9 Tube Screamer, ISP Decimator, Polytune
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DEAR GUITAR HERO
His inimitable, atmospheric guitar work with the Police helped define the sound of popular music in the Seventies and Eighties, while his endlessly adventurous, eclectic solo work has constantly eschewed convention and artistic boundaries. But what Guitar World readers really want to know is...

I read that you once jammed with Jimi Hendrix in a studio, with you on guitar and him on bass. What was that like?

— Colin Smith

I was in the same circle, had the same manager as Jimi Hendrix at that point, when I was in the Soft Machine. We all lived in Laurel Canyon [in Los Angeles] and Jimi was going to play at TTG Studios. I had met him a few times, and I went with a guy I was working with. We walked into the control room of the studio, and there he was. He was leaning up against the window, playing full on — at fantastic volume — dressed as he was in those days, with a feather in his hat and all the rest of it.

As soon as he stopped, he walked into the control room and we all said hello. I was also friends with Mitch Mitchell, his drummer, and I walked out into the studio and picked up a guitar and started jamming with Mitch. So we were just jamming along, and Jimi came out, picked up the bass and started playing bass with me. We went on for a while like that, then he decided he had to play lead guitar [laughs]. It apparently was recorded, and you can find it on the Internet somewhere.

Q: I love your Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus tribute albums [1999’s Green Chimneys: The Music of Thelonious Monk and 2000’s Peggy’s Blue Skylight.] How did you go about transcribing and arranging such intricate, complex music for guitar?

— Greta Willis

It was a challenge. I’d grown up with the music of Monk; I was sort of a jazzhead when I was a teenager, that’s where I started. When I was 16, I went to London and saw Monk in a big jazz show. It had Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, all these great American jazz stars. When he came out and played, I thought that this was the essence of America, this was what jazz really is. I was so taken with it and it was always a fan after that.

Much later in life, post-Police, I started making a lot of solo records, and it came to me that I should do an all-Monk album. The challenge was to get it all onto the guitar, make it sound good — like it had been written for the guitar — and, obviously, to retain the Monk signature. I spent about six months on it. I must’ve learned every Monk tune there was. I really buried myself in it for a period before I started recording, which was wonderful because there’s so much to learn from the music itself. The compositions are fantastic, really interesting, harmonically. It was a great lesson, just studying that music and learning how to play it all. I’m really glad I did it. Of course, it inspired me to go on and do the Mingus record, which was a really fantastic experience. I was going to do a third one, which I never quite got around to. I thought I’d do Miles [Davis] after that, so I’d have Monk, Mingus and Miles. Maybe I’ll still do it! [laughs]

Q: The Police got their start during the height of the English punk scene. As a veteran guitarist already, what was it like to suddenly be thrust into a punk band, you weren’t going to work. The Police started in the middle of that scene, and none of us were “authentic” punks, we just weren’t. As were a lot of the so-called “punks” — they were middle-class, educated people who put on the uniform! [laughs]

So there was a lot of bullshit with it, and there was some genuine stuff, but it was an exciting moment, and it was kind of fun to be around in a way, but it’s not really [musically] where the Police started.

We were kind of a fake punk band, and once we really started to play together seriously — to try to be a really good band and really rehearse — a genuine, authentic musicality came out, which obviously wasn’t really a punk sensibility, and the rest is history.

Q: You’ve said that your Echoplex pedal played a sizable role in shaping the Police’s sound early on. What else was in your rig when the

Interview by Jackson Maxwell

guitarworld.com 29
band was first starting out?
—Ed Blackmore
Not much, really. When we start-
ed, all I had was a Fender Twin — with bass, treble and middle — because we had no money. As we went on, I managed to acquire more things, but the big move was getting the Echoplex, because I found that I was able to add another dimension to the band in terms of the reverb, and the largeness and scale of the sound. In particular, I found a way of setting it up — I remember it very vividly — where I could play eighth notes and get 16th notes to repeat. [I’d use it when] we’d play “I Can’t Stand Losing You” toward the end of the set, and it became kind of a signature thing. I basically used the Echoplex from the very earliest days — I got it a few months in — right to the very end; I didn’t change it up. I think I got a Roland Chorus, but it didn’t do what the Echoplex did. The original Echoplexes I had were fantastic and magical. I’ve never been able to duplicate them, and it’s been a source of incredible frustration for me. I’ve tried many ways, a lot of digital devices, to replicate that thing that I could get out of the Echoplex, with not a lot of success. Very recently though, my assistant said, “I think I’ve cracked it” — the effect where I can play eighth notes and get repeated sixteenths. MXR makes this little digital pedal called the Echoplex, and it does it exactly! The one thing I want it to do, it does it. I’ve tried this with several other pedals and, dumb as it is, finally somebody made a little pedal called the Echoplex, and the bloody thing works! This fucking Echoplex has been daunting me for half my life!

Q: You recorded Triboluminescence solo in the studio. How does working alone change the songwriting process for you?
—Zakk Farley
Triboluminescence was recorded entirely alone. Well, it was me and my engineer. It’s become a very enjoyable and peaceful process for me. I like being in my studio, working on a bunch of tracks and slowly bringing them all to fruition. It’s a very personal and satisfying experience. Obviously, you can do these things with great enjoyment with a band, but it’s a very different dynamic. Right now, I’m enjoying the solo approach.

Q: When the Police got back together in 2007, you hadn’t played together extensively in more than 20 years. How difficult was it get back in touch with them, musically?
—Zayne Devlin
It wasn’t really a problem, musically. It was more the mental and emotional climate, to be honest with you. Like, we’re three guys who’ve all grown up now, we’ve got to get back and do this like we’ve never left. Musically, it was just pop songs, it was nothing I couldn’t play, and I’ve played them on and off in different situations over the years. In some sense, there was no need for extensive rehearsal. I’ve got this band in Brazil called Call the Police [a Police tribute band of sorts that features Summers, Rodrigo Santos on bass and vocals and João Barone on drums], and they’re fucking brilliant. We just do two afternoons, and we’re off and running, it’s all there. So, I don’t think it was really difficult, musically. It was more just the emotional climate, getting the three of us to all be in the same space and have the camaraderie to go forward with it.

What was your favorite Police album to make, and why?
—Zachary Cordova
That’s a difficult one. For me, I think the second album [1979’s Regatta de Blanc], because we struggled mentally to make the first album [1978’s Outlandos d’Amour]. We didn’t have any money and we could only get into the studio on Sunday afternoons. It took us a few months to make it because we just couldn’t get the time, and then we kept updating what we were doing. The second album, we were already sort of a hit band and we were playing all the time, every night of the week. We were on fire, very much into our playing, our success and our band. We made it in 10 days, because we were so into it! It’s not like modern times where bands take 2 years to make a bloody record — that’s kind of incredible to me. Regatta de Blanc’s my favorite, because there was so much heat in it. It’s got “Message in a Bottle” in it, and I think it’s where we really established ourselves.
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“PEOPLE PRETTY UP the guitar too much,” says singer-songwriter-guitarist Jesse Wells. “I kind of fight when I play, and I want people to hear that struggle of my fingers getting gnawed up on the fretboard. I like to use amp overdrive to get a warm guitar buzz, and sometimes I’ll go straight into the board and crank it. When the guitar sounds big and fuzzy, I know it’s right.”

“Big and fuzzy” is an accurate description of the sound Wells and his band — simply called Welles — make on their superlative debut album, Red Trees and White Trashes. The guitarist, having been raised on a steady diet of early Led Zeppelin and stoner rock, played in a succession of outfits in his hometown of Fayetteville, Arkansas, but it wasn’t until he moved to Nashville that he found a group of players (guitarist Marshall Willard, bassist Davey Nelson and drummer Jordan Rochefort) who shared his gritty sonic vision. Even so, it took some effort. “Nashville is full of great musicians,” he says. “I had to look hard to find guys who wanted to play music that’s a little rough around the edges.”

In Nashville, Wells and his band recorded the bulk of Red Trees and White Trashes with producers Beau Boggs and Bobby Emmett, but he also worked with multiple Grammy award winner Dave Cobb on three tracks. One highlight of their creative collaboration is the heartbreaking grunge-rock anthem, “Seventeen.”

“Dave and I hit it off immediately,” Wells says. “He got the Nirvana and Melvins vibe I was going for, but we also bonded over the White Album and [John Lennon’s] Plastic Ono Band record. We were totally in sync the whole time.”

Wells admits he gets a little out-there and psychedelic when playing leads, and he credits Cobb with never putting the brakes on him. “Dave just let me roam free, which was cool,” he says. “I would love to be a better improviser, so that’s a goal of mine. Every time I pick up the guitar is another chance to play something awesome. Whether or not it makes sense is another matter altogether.”

Welles
BRUTAL HONESTY AND RUTHLESS GUITARS RUN AMOK ON THE SEARING NEW RED TREES AND WHITE TRASHES

By Joe Bosso

“I KIND OF FIGHT WHEN I PLAY, AND I WANT PEOPLE TO HEAR THAT STRUGGLE OF MY FINGERS GETTING GNAWED UP ON THE FRETBOARD.”
—JESSE WELLS

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FOLLOWING A 10-year-plus slog that began with gigs at nightclubs and evolved to middle slots at mid-sized venues and numerous appearances at European summer festivals, shockingly, the members of Athens, Ohio-based powerhouse metal band Skeletonwitch nearly ground to an abrupt halt.

In late 2014, vocalist Chance Garnette, brother of guitarist Nate, was arrested and charged with “assault and battery on a family/household member” and promptly fired, leaving the history of the group uncertain.

Scrambling to finish the shows they had already scheduled, Skeletonwitch hired their friend Andy Horn of Battlemaster to fill in. Once they were off tour, founding guitarists Nate Garnette and Scott Hedrick struggled to decide whether it was time to bury Skeletonwitch.

“We seriously thought about it,” Nate says. “Chance is my brother and we’re close, so it was the hardest thing I’ve ever faced in this band. But, even though I was real upset by what had happened, I didn’t want to just break up after we’d done so much.”

To prove to their fans there was still fresh life in their old bones, Skeletonwitch

“AT FIRST, I HAD ALL THIS SELF-DOUBT ABOUT MAKING THIS KIND OF A RECORD. THEN IT DAWNED ON ME THAT, MUCH LIKE MOST CREATIVE TYPES, WHETHER YOU’RE A PAINTER OR DANCER, YOUAREN’T JUST BORN THAT WAY.”
—SCOTT HEDRICK

DESPITE SOME TURMOIL, OHIO ROCKERS SKELETONWITCH PROVE THERE’S PLENTY OF GAS LEFT IN THE TANK WITH THEIR MULTIFACETED NEW ALBUM, DEVOURING RADIANT LIGHT

By Jon Wiederhorn
hired Wolvhammer vocalist Adam Clemans (ex-Veil of Maya) and hammered out the The Apothic Gloom EP. As much as this move was an effort to regain their equilibrium, it turned out to be a golden opportunity for Scott. Nate was Skeletonwitch’s primary songwriter from their 2004 debut, At One with the Shadows, through the band’s unrelenting fifth full-length, 2015’s Serpents Unleashed. Shaken up by his brother’s personal problems, Nate wasn’t inspired to write, so Scott stepped in and penned three of the four songs on the EP, taking a new and divergent approach, including atmospheric segues and even acoustic guitar interludes.

The EP served as a bridge between Serpents Unleashed and Skeletonwitch’s multifaceted new album, Devouring Radiant Light. While the new album still includes sledgehammer riffs that vary in intensity from Painkiller-era Judas Priest to the more aggressive offerings of Goatwhore, Devouring Radiant Light is far more expansive than any of Skeletonwitch’s other albums. Rather than featuring three-minute-long songs, the new record averages between five and seven minutes per track and contrasts bludgeoning rhythms with far more textural playing. The main riff of “Fen of Shadows” pummels like a heavyweight boxer, yet each stanza ends with an infectious three-note hook. Elsewhere, the title track starts with layered undistorted guitar and builds into a juxtaposition of blasting unmuted chords and a web of individually picked notes.

“It’s definitely the best representation of the entire band that we’ve ever done,” Nate says. “And I have to admit, a lot of the reason there’s different songwriting is because I didn’t do it.”

That’s not totally true. Nate did write three of the heaviest songs on Devouring Radiant Light, but having enjoyed his enhanced role on Apothic Gloom, Scott planted his heels and took on the lion’s share of the writing for Devouring — and he pushed the boundaries of the Skeletonwitch sound out to the limit.

“On past albums, whenever I had an idea to maybe write something different instead of just doing the kind of slamming songs we were playing, I’d always get negative feedback,” Scott says. “I’d suggest something and Chance would say, ‘This isn’t right. This isn’t what Skeletonwitch should sound like.’ So I just thought, ‘Well, Nate is just a better songwriter than I am. I guess I’m just not that good.’ Then I realized that wasn’t the case.”

To prepare himself to write Devouring Radiant Light, Scott underwent an extensive regimen comparable to training for a triathlon. First, he broke up with his girlfriend of seven years — a move he said was a long time coming — then he started getting in shape, both mentally and physically, in order to focus himself to take on such a challenge. He’d wake at 5:30 a.m., write music for six or seven hours and then go on a 10-mile run.

“I started spending a lot more time on myself to improve who I was as a musician and a person,” he says. “At first, I had all this self-doubt about making this kind of a record. Then it dawned on me that, much like most creative types, whether you’re a painter or dancer, you aren’t just born that way. So whenever I doubted myself and thought, ‘I can’t do this,’ I was like, ‘No, motherfucker, put in the time and work. Dig in and see what you can do.’ So I made a concerted effort to focus on all kinds of creativity. When I ran, I listened to other music — jazz, classical, ambient, whatever — and when I wasn’t writing I made edits in my head or took notes on my cell phone and then came home and made the necessary changes.”

While Scott took on the main songwriting role for Devouring Radiant Light, he left it to Nate to track all the rhythm parts when the band entered GodCity Studio in Salem, Massachusetts, with Converge guitarist and producer de rigeur Kurt Ballou. To make the process easier, Scott tabbed out all his parts for Nate.

“Even for songs I wrote, he’s such a better, more consistent, cleaner guitar player than I am,” Scott says. “I’m totally happy to admit that, for us sloppy guitar players out there, everywhere. I guess I’m more of a composer than a rhythm player. That’s why I play the leads — you don’t have to be so rigid. You can try different things and it usually doesn’t matter if something’s not exactly right.”

Both Nate and Scott plug Les Paul Studio guitars into Blackstar Series One 100-watt amps. Nate routes straight through his amp while Scott uses various effects to enhance his leads. And unlike many of their contemporaries, Skeletonwitch play everything in standard A-440 tuning.

“Not that there’s anything wrong with tuning down, but some people use it to create a false heaviness,” Nate explains. “I’ve always said riffs are heavy, tuning isn’t.”

And to make sure he can play as hard as he wants without worrying about going out of tune or breaking a string, Nate uses GHS GBTNT Boomers.

“Having those bigger low strings is great for all the fast and intricate picking we do. It really makes it easy to dig in and not feel like it’s loose. They’re tight as shit, so you can get as crazy as you want. And when we’re up there playing, I tend to lose my mind and just go for it.”

—NATE GARNETTE
CERTIFIED BLUES

For his highly anticipated second solo outing, ZZ Top six-string legend Billy Gibbons returns to his native turf, the blues. In this exclusive interview, Gibbons takes a break from ZZ Top’s big, bad, nationwide tour to break down The Big Bad Blues.

By Richard Bienstock
Photos by Blain Clausen
ever let it be said that Billy Gibbons isn’t honest. When Guitar World calls the legendary ZZ Top guitarist on his cell phone and asks him where he is, Gibbons, who is on tour with the Little Ol’ Band from Texas, readily admits he has no idea. “We were in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and we were pulling up stakes last night but I forgot to ask where we were going,” he admits. “So it’s a bit of a mystery on my end!”

There is at least one thing he’s sure of, however: “I don’t hear the buzz of any slot machines, so I know we’re not in Vegas.”

Of course, anyone who’s been gigging for half a century is allowed a locational lapse here and there. What’s more, Gibbons, now 68, is still moving incredibly fast. Even as he’s out on the road with ZZ Top, he’s gearing up for the release of a new solo album, The Big Bad Blues. The follow-up to his 2015 effort, the Cuban-flavored Perfectamundo, the new album, true to its title, finds Gibbons returning to the sound that has always been at the core of his playing, singing and writing. “It’s a rekindling of our attention on an area from which we came,” he says. “And also where we still live.”

To that end, The Big Bad Blues, in addition to a handful of distortion-drenched deep-in-the-pocket Gibbons originals, finds the guitarist tackling some of his favorite blues tunes from the past, including Muddy Waters’ “Rollin’ and Tumblin’” and two Bo Diddley songs, “Crackin’ Up” and “Bring It to Jerome.” “We were just having a bit of fun,” he acknowledges.

In the following interview, the always-engaging Gibbons talks to GW about the new album, his gear, his favorite current blues player and, curiously, the reason he chooses to sleep on the floor. In a word? “Solidity.”

What led you to do a straightforward blues album?

Well, as you may recall, we had an interesting success with the Cuban-inspired project called Perfectamundo. And that moved the Concord Records president, Mr. John Burk, to step forward and extend the invitation. He said, “I’d like to pick up the option to do another record. How would you feel about doing something blues-related?” And I said, “Well, that’s where we came from. Let’s give it a shot.”

How did you pick the material?

Coincidentally, when Burk was reaching out to us I had returned to our studio down in Texas and I ran into a couple musician pals, namely Greg Morrow, the great drummer from Memphis. And subsequent to that I ran into Matt Sorum, another great drummer. And we started up a jam session, attempting to tackle our favorite blues numbers. And the good news was, Mr. Joe Hardy, the engineer extraordinaire, had the tape machines rolling the whole time. And I guess it was the second or third day where he said, “Hey, why don’t you guys take a listen to some of this stuff you’ve been laying down?” And so we listened and I said, “Wow, the sound is not too far from where we were aiming to go anyway.” And we had a couple Muddy Waters tunes, some Bo Diddley stuff, there were even some Jimmy Reed numbers. That got us started in what we thought was the right direction. And from there I started composing some original material that was also aimed at that bluesy side of things.

What led you to cover the Bo Diddley song “Crackin’ Up”?

That’s one of those songs that’s been covered many times by a number of qualified groups. It unfolded later on in the game because it took the longest time to learn how to play Bo Diddley’s guitar intro. [laughs]

The intro on the original recording is one of those inside-out, upside-down kind of insane compositions. But we were determined to crack the code. So it was an interesting excursion into the unknown.

The Rolling Stones do a great version of “Crackin’ Up” on their Love You Live album. They give it an almost reggae-like feel.

Yeah! That stands out. That’s one of my favorite Stones tracks. They did a bang-up job with it.

You also do “Rollin’ and Tumblin’” on the new album. Of all the Muddy Waters songs to choose from, why that one?

I think we were having a bit of fun. We were kind of “metalizing” blues standards and that one, the tempo is insanely fast. But it has an appeal behind it. We were taken with the way it turned out. We said, “Gee whiz, let’s keep it.” So in addition to all of those original compositions we felt some legitimizing factor was behind including what we thought were some of the favorites of those early jam sessions.

It’s interesting to hear you use the word “metalizing.” One of the things I’ve always noticed about how you approach the blues is that you’re not a traditionalist. Whereas there are some players that try to stick as close to the sound and guitar tones of the originals, you’re not so precious with the material. You do your own thing.

Well, that’s a compliment that I’ll take! We’ve always announced that the closest we can get to the blues is being interpreters. Particularly now, with so many of the originators long gone. So it becomes a challenge of interpretation. But I think another word that has to surround these interpretations is that of “feeling.” If it feels right, then you’re on the right track. And as you point out, we’re certainly not strict traditionalists. It’s more an interpretative stab at the art form.

Do you recall the first blues song that really got you? Yes. I was about 12 years old, and I had a close friend we called Waltaire. Waltaire Baldwin.

Waltaire?
“I wasn’t cracking the whip, saying, ‘You’ve gotta play like Frank Beard on the drums,’ or ‘You’ve gotta play the bass parts like Dusty Hill.’

I think what distinguishes this release from a ZZ Top record is that the personalities were not compromised.”

What gear did you use on The Big Bad Blues?
In the past we’ve experimented with all sorts of contraptions. But this time it just so happened that since these sessions started off as casual get-togethers we weren’t too fussy about what we were plugging into. For amplifiers, we had two. One was a 1965 Marshall 18-watt — one of the rare ones. It runs on 220 volts. It was an original English production piece. It’s got two 12-inch speakers rather than the more common 10-inch. The two 12’s are a little more robust. So this thing’s got a rich, rich tone. The other thing we had on hand was one of the new Magnatone 50-watt amps. A 2x12 combo. So we had the Marshall and the Magnatone running full-steam ahead.

As for guitars, of course we had Pearly Gates, our famous 1959 Sunburst Les Paul that’s never too far out of reach. And we also made use of a 1961 Les Paul — it was the year when they transitioned from the figure-eight body shape to the double cutaway. And our engineer Joe Hardy, he brought out his 1960 Fender Precision Bass that he acquired from [Donald] “Duck” Dunn.

His given name was Walter, but we thought that was too plain. Because even at 12 years old the guy spoke like a poet. So he was not Voltaire, he was Waltaire. [laughs]

Anyway, he had stumbled into the blues quite early on. In fact, he picked up the harmonica and had learned the technique of playing in the cross harp position. He was onto it way, way early. And I remember he found a John Lee Hooker release on Vee-Jay. Of course, it was the classic “Boogie Chillen.” And that led to... well, if we had two days we could extend the list of blues giants that have impacted me since day one.

But John Lee Hooker was the first.
Yeah. Hearing John Lee Hooker, it was like, “Wow, what is this?”

Are there any new blues artists out there that have grabbed your ear?
Gary Clark Jr. We wound up doing some shows together and his playing style... he grew up in Austin, Texas, born and raised there. And he had really escaped my radar until recently. Maybe that’s a good thing, because he’s mastered a technique that is so timely and, I’d like to use the word “believable.” When he’s delivering a blues number he’s surrounded with that thing called feeling. It’s not a put-on. He’s right there with it.
Any main pedals? Yes. The DeArmond tremolo. We’ve been using those for years now. There was also a really odd pedal from Japan, the Shin-ei Companion FY-2 [fuzz box]. It does drastic-sounding things. But we really didn’t stray too far from straight-ahead stuff, just because of how this project unfolded.

Another aspect that might be of interest was that I wasn’t cracking the whip, saying, “Oh, you’ve gotta play like Frank Beard on the drums,” or “You’ve gotta play the bass parts like Dusty Hill.” I think what distinguishes this release from a ZZ Top record is that the personalities were not compromised. Everybody got to play their own thing and their own style. Although what’s funny is, Frank and Dusty, they were pecking in from the other studio where they were busy at work hammering out some starter pieces for a new ZZ Top record. And Frank was particularly flattered in the fact that both Greg Morrow and Matt Sorum were delivering interpretations of how they thought Frank Beard would be playing. [laughs] So it came all the way back around the clock. It was fun.

You’re on tour with ZZ Top right now. I recall reading somewhere that you always sleep on the floor in hotels. [laughs] Very true. To this day.

Why? Well, it gives a certain measure of confidence in this topsy-turvy world we call touring. There’s so many unanticipated events that surround every waking moment. To have the solidity of sleeping on solid ground, I just find it comforting. And you combine that with picking a room that has many right angles. Nothing circular. Avoid furnishings that have rounded armrests, for instance. Because the circles have no definition, whereas with right angles you know where you’re going.

That’s probably helpful, considering you told me you don’t even know what town you’re headed toward right now. [laughs] That’s right!

What about at home? Do you at least have a nice bed to sleep in there? I do, but I find myself making a pallet on the floor and just enjoying... I keep coming back to the world “solidity.”

What else does Billy Gibbons do at home when he’s not playing music? Well, you’ll find me hot-footin’ it back to the West Coast. I’ve got a number of ongoing projects with our hot-rodning automotive enthusiast Mr. Jimmy Shine. Right now I’m working with Jimmy on creating what we’re calling the bad little sister of the famous ZZ Top red car from the video days. We’re doing a fenderless version of a 1934 three-window coupe. It’s got suicide doors, and we’ve yanked off the fenders and dropped it down. The chopped top is radical. Someone said, “Gee whiz, you’ve got mail slots for windows!” So it’s gonna be a barnburner. It’s quite engaging and it gives me great satisfaction.

Next year is ZZ Top’s 50th anniversary. What does that number mean to you? We just came to grips with that unanticipated term. It seems nearly unbelievable. But what we’ve managed to maintain is the enjoyment factor. Someone said, “What has kept you guys together for longer than most marriages?” Quite simply, we still enjoy that we get to do what we get to do. More than anything else we can think of. It’s like the old saying goes — “If you like what you do it’s not a job.”

That’s a special thing. Yeah, man. And we’re gearing up to do something special. A 50-year celebration’s quite a rarity in the rock ‘n’ roll world. But you know, I was talking to Keith Richards recently, I bumped into him in Nashville, and he was grinning. He said, “If we can follow in the footsteps of Muddy Waters and do this ‘til the day we die, then we’re ahead of the game.”
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FROM THE BEATLES TO MR. BIG, SIX-STRING MASTER PAUL GILBERT DISHES THE DIRT ON HOW HIS AUDACIOUS NEW ALBUM, BEHOLD ELECTRIC GUITAR, CAME TO BE — AND HOW LOOKING FORWARD CAN SOMETIMES MEAN LOOKING BACK. STORY BY JOE BOSSO / PHOTOGRAPHY BY TY MILFORD
PAUL GILBERT IS A REALLY BIG BEATLES FAN.
At various times over the past decade, he and ex-Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy satiated their Fab Four jones by playing in a tribute band called Yellow Matter Custard. The Beatles seem to always be on Gilbert’s mind in one way or another, and he references them frequently during our discussion, regardless of the topic at hand.

“My brain has been programmed to listen to music a certain way because of the Beatles.” Even before he picked up the guitar, as a child growing up in in the Pittsburgh suburb of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, Gilbert listened to the Beatles nonstop, and he recalls the devastation he felt when he heard they were breaking up. “I was shocked,” he says. “I was only three years old, but something about their writing was so gripping to me that I couldn’t imagine a world without them.” Although he never ditched his Beatles records, Gilbert eventually found new heroes — six-string monsters like Eddie Van Halen, Jimmy Page, Robin Trower, Pat Travers and Tony Iommi, among others — and after only a few years of emulating their licks, his preternatural skills on the guitar brought him to Los Angeles, where he was quickly hailed a teenage wunderkind. By day he would teach the hottest techniques to poodle-haired axe hopefuls at the Guitar Institute of Technology (GIT), and by night he performed — sometimes wielding an electric drill — with the late-Eighties high-speed shred band Racer X. “I went from wanting to be a Beatle to becoming a ‘widdly-widdly’ guitar player,” he jokes.

With his Nineties supergroup Mr. Big, Gilbert attempted to forge an accord between the two warring factions of his musical brain. While he and bass virtuoso Billy Sheehan never missed an opportunity to hotdog it on jaw-dropping unison runs, Gilbert paid homage to the Beatles by writing hook-filled, psychedelic gems like “Green-Tinted Sixties Mind” and “Mr. Gone.” The band even scored a number one smash with the Beatles-y, acoustic sing-along ballad “To Be with You,” on which Gilbert’s vocal harmonies echoed both John Lennon and Paul McCartney while his sweet guitar soloing recalled George Harrison’s deceptively simple lead style.

Throughout his solo career (which he began after leaving Mr. Big in 1999 and has maintained even after rejoining the group in 2009), Gilbert continued to push the boundaries of synapse-altering guitar daring-do while staying true to Beatles roots; his records often alternate between dizzying instrumentals and Sixties-tinged, pop-flavored vocal tunes. Both sensibilities co-exist beautifully — in fact, at times they seem to merge as one — on his latest album, Behold Electric Guitar, but he even adds some new colors. Many of his riffs and solos feature stinging, bluesy slide work, and a great deal of his licks are informed by his new-found affinity for jazz.

“Listening to jazz over the last few years has really opened my ears to how a melody can be handled by an instrumentalist but still have the authority to be gripping to the listener,” Gilbert observes. “I didn’t hear much jazz as a kid, so it took me a long time to come around to it. It sort of snuck in through the blues door.” Behold Electric Guitar is full of other firsts for Gilbert. It’s his debut album for the online direct-to-fan music platform PledgeMusic, and it marks his first time working with Joe Satriani’s longtime producer/engineer, John Cuniberti. Originally, the two attempted a “crazy concept” of recording the whole band (Gilbert, bassist Roland Guerin, keyboard player Asher Fulero and a rotating cast of drummers) with one microphone, capturing every performance as a listener might hear it, but in the end they opted for individual mics on all the players.

Even so, the album is comprised of all-live takes with no overdubs, and in this way it can be viewed as Gilbert’s Let It Be — a spontaneous “warts and all” document.

“It was a very demanding project because we really had to play well,” he says, “but that’s exactly what I wanted ‘demanding’ to be. I much preferred it to, ‘Whew… We just spent 10 hours editing and mixing.’ I’m in a place right now where doing lots of post-production work just seems like a waste of time. Playing live music and having it finished and sounding great right away makes me feel truly alive. I absolutely get high from it. That’s what music is about.”

Compositionally, what was your overarching agenda for your new record, Behold Electric Guitar?
My initial ideas are just a starting place. As a record goes along, it becomes more about
Gilbert’s white Ibanez FRM200 (one of the company’s many Gilbert signature models) is personally modified with a handy slide magnet.
What brought about the move to PledgeMusic? And how is doing an album for them different than working with a traditional label?

My friend [singer-songwriter] Linus of Hollywood was doing an album for PledgeMusic, and I asked him how it was going. He was really happy with how it was working for him, so I went to the site, and I saw artists like Joe Satriani, Bon Jovi, Black Sabbath and Judas Priest with various products on there. I felt like I was late to the party, so I talked to my manager, and we decided to try it.

The biggest surprise to me is how much I enjoyed getting feedback from listeners during the making of the album. In the past, I’ve always wanted to keep the music top secret until the record was finished. But that can sometimes be a nerve-wracking process, because without any feedback, you don’t get a sense if anyone will actually like what you’re doing. Self-doubt creeps in and makes you second-guess yourself and you become a bit paranoid and crazy. But from sharing small pieces of the songs on my PledgeMusic video updates along the way, I got lots of encouragement from people, and that really made a difference to my level of sanity as I wrote the album.

Was John Cuniberti’s history with Joe Satriani a big factor in working with him? And what made you guys try to record to one mic?

I actually heard about John through his “OneMic” project; I was pleasantly surprised to find out that he had worked with Joe Satriani. John had been doing lots of sessions at the Hallowed Halls studio in Portland, where I now live. I was researching the studio, so I checked out videos that John had engineered, and I thought they sounded great. The idea of recording with one microphone really appealed to me. The OneMic sessions tended to be quieter acoustic bands with vocals, so I was a little concerned that loud instrumental guitar music might not be what he was used to. We did a test session to see how it would go, and it turned out great.

I was really excited to try that approach for the album — one stereo mic pointed right at us — but when John heard us play while tracking he thought that we sounded better by miking the instruments separately. We still set up close to each other and played live with no overdubs. I hope to record with one mic in the future, but I may need to play a little quieter so I’m not overwhelming the band.

You tried so many daring things on the record. And you used a band you had never worked with before, either.

That’s right. Since I moved to Portland, I wanted to meet some local musicians and see what kind of players were there. I had already done some work in a couple of area studios, so I asked the engineers for recommendations, and that’s how I heard about Brian Foxworth and Asher Fulero. Brian’s groove is just ridiculously solid, and he knows the names of about 27 different kinds of shuffles. And, of course, he can stir up some ferocious fills if a song starts heating up.

I originally wanted Brian to play drums on the whole record, but after my sessions he’d play other gigs at night. He got so exhausted that one day we had to call paramedics to take him to the hospital! The studio owner knew a great drummer named Reinhardt Melz, and he was able to come and keep our sessions rocking for a couple of days. But I also had live shows coming up, and Reinhardt wasn’t available for those. So I called Bill Ray, a great drummer from Seattle whom I had recorded with before. Bill came down and did an amazing job finishing the sessions with us, and of course, that gave him a great start for playing the new songs at my live gigs.

Asher plays a really wide variety of music, and after I hung out with him for just an hour, he had already expanded my horizons. I could also tell that his influences were not just keyboard players; he was really looking outside of his own instrument for inspiration. It’s nice to have a fellow seeker aboard.

As for Roland Guerin, I had recently jammed with him at an Ibanez event at Sweetwater Sound, and we got along really well. He’s from New Orleans, and he plays bass with all the legendary blues cats there. He also plays upright bass really well, both with fingers and a bow. I asked Roland to come out to Portland early so we could rehearse and prepare for the sessions, and fortunately he had time.

In your making-of video for “Love Is the Saddest Thing,” you talked about how you “cheered up” your mournful lyrics by turning the song into a fast rock shuffle.

I love writing music from lyrics — it’s like solving a rhythmic and melodic puzzle. So I just take the words and try everything I can think of. The fast shuffle version just had the best energy when I tried it, and I liked the contrast of the “down” lyrics to the “up” music. That’s one of the things I love about the blues. It seems to ease life’s problems with a sense of humor. [Sing] “My baby don’t love me no more, but I still got my guitar, and... maybe her sister will!”

I understand there’s quite a story to the writing of “I Can’t Listen to Music Where Every Snare Drum is the Same.”

I was listening to some Elvis Costello when I got the idea for that song. I can’t remember which album it was on, but Elvis was playing something in a 6/8 groove, like the Beatles’ “You’ve Got to Hide Your Love Away.” The lyric idea was rattling around in my head from a recent trip to Hawaii where the music in every restaurant was bothering me. It was some kind of modern back-
ground music, and it would repeat the same phrase over and over, and the snare drum became like Chinese water torture. In a traditional music composition, from classical to pop, there is a common structure in which a phrase is played, then repeated—often with a slight twist—and then it takes off from there. But the restaurant music was like an endless, repeated phrase. I found myself unable to ignore it.

Asher had a great theory for this. He told me, “You’re looking for creativity in the wrong place.” His theory was that a lot of modern styles are not about melody, chords and traditional arrangement. The creativity is in texture. The sounds themselves are interesting from a purely sonic perspective. This is doubly challenging for me, because it requires me to stop looking where my instincts tell me to look.

Also, because I have severe hearing loss, texture is difficult for me to actually perceive. But it’s comforting to know there is still creativity there. It’s just hidden around a corner, where I can’t get to it. But at least other people in the restaurant could. I was looking around thinking, “Why isn’t there a riot? Doesn’t this annoy everyone else?” Anyway, I’m over 50 now, so maybe I’m just an old man ranting.

You started writing “I Own a Building” as a vocal song, but you turned it into an instrumental. Why was that?
The truth is, I’m coming to terms with the limitations of my voice, but I’m still trying to express the melody with my guitar. When I sing, there is an almost constant struggle with pitch and with reaching notes in the higher register. On guitar, high notes aren’t a problem at all. They’re there for me whenever I need them, and that’s kind of wonderful.

Your bluesy slide playing on that song is quite striking.
When I was working on my last record, [2015’s] I Can Destroy, I discovered I play slide much better when I use my middle finger. Because I’ve been listening to so much blues, I think my ear was also primed for slide. Recently, I had some powerful magnets glued into the lower horn of a few of my guitars. This holds a metal slide in place so I can easily get to it and put it back, even in the middle of a song. So I’ve been able to spend a lot more time with the slide since it’s always within reach. The challenge is that I’m always playing slide with standard tuning and light strings. I keep my action on the high side, which is not only good for slide, but it’s also good for vibrato.
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“Sir, You’ve Got to Calm Down” starts out with a fiery riff, but then eases into a funky groove. Are some of the chords the result of your listening to jazz?

The main “unusual” chord is an Eadd9 with the third in the bass. The guitar voicing looks like a Bsus/G#, but it functions more like an Eadd9/G#. It’s a very moveable shape, so it can get me out of a tangle if I’ve modulated somewhere and can’t find my way back. I think I might have learned it from Pat Travers, Chaka Khan or Steely Dan. Or maybe all of them!

How married to your demos were you in terms of solos? Did you change them up once you actually cut the album?

I rarely make demos anymore — I’m too busy! And I’d just rather trust the band to do what they do. I used to put so much time into demos, and it felt like I was making the record twice. Now I’m a dad and a husband, a teacher at my online school, and I’m the guitar player for Mr. Big, so when I do my solo music, I can’t spend months messing around. I’ve got to get things done quickly and efficiently. For the most part, I think that improves the result.

In the videos you posted, you’re playing various Ibanez Fireman guitars. Were those your main axes for the album?

I’ve become quite fond of my guitars that have the slide magnet on them. I’ve got a white FRM200, a red FRM150 modified with three DiMarzio PG-13 mini-humbuckers and a white PGMM31 miKro, all modified with the slide magnet. Those are the guitars I brought to the studio. I’ve also got a purple custom shop Fireman with a locking tremolo on it. That guitar looks so cool, so I brought it just in case. All are Ibanez, of course. I’ve been with them over 30 years now, and I couldn’t be happier.

Your amps were Marshalls, right?

I used a Marshall Bluesbreaker combo for the whole album. I put it right in front of me, so I could really feel the punch and percussion when I picked a note. It’s so much better doing it that way than having the amp isolated in some other room.

Are there any new effects you’re using?

My main pedals, in order, were a Fulltone Deja Vibe — the old one in the big box — an Xotic Effects AC Booster, a Supro Drive and a TC Electronic MojoMojo. I ended up not using reverb or delay in the studio because John Cuniberti wanted to control them on his end.

Along with Behold Electric Guitar, you’re also releasing Vernon Solos — you back in 1988, playing for an hour straight.

That’s right. Racer X used to rent a rehearsal room at an old building in Vernon, California. It was great because we could leave our gear set up and go in and play at any time of day or night. Playing through a cranked-up, fire-breathing Marshall is a lot different than playing at a polite level in an apartment. So I used to show up to
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rehearsal early to build my instincts on how to control feedback and string noise — and just experience the mild terror you get from being loud. I set up a recorder, plugged in a couple mics and recorded all the scary stuff I was working on at the time. I’m different now than I was then, but I like that kid a lot.

How much tweaking did you have to do to make an old cassette sonically palatable? I had heard that old cassette tape can just fall apart, so I was a little nervous when I put this 30-year-old tape in the machine. But it sounded fine, and the guitar playing was even more face melting than I remember. I sent the audio file to my mastering engineer, Paul Logus, who put a lot more care into his work than I was expecting. It sounded “good enough” from the cassette, but Paul really worked some magic with his gear and ears. I’m excited for people to hear me tearing up the guitar in 1988!

The Beatles continue to be an inspiration to you. Before our interview, you said you read a book on them that you liked a lot. The book is called The Songwriting Secrets of the Beatles by Dominic Pedler, and it’s awesome. Being a Beatles fan has influenced my instincts and my intellect. From going to Musicians Institute and from reading Dominic’s book, I have an intellectual sense of the Beatles’ habits and tricks. But most important are the instincts I have from just listening to the songs and playing them a lot. I should mention that I also play their songs on piano all the time. I’m not a great technician on piano at all, but it’s such a great instrument for listening to chords, and it’s fun to bang out my favorite songs from my guitar memory and translate them to piano.

You moved from Pennsylvania to L.A. as a teenager. What are your memories of the hair/shred metal shred scene back then? Did you fit in? Did you feel like an outlier? I think normal attracts normal. I read an unauthorized biography on Yngwie Malmsteen a while back, and he came to L.A. around the same time I did. But his experiences were so different than mine. I never really saw drugs, alcohol or destructive wildness. I went to music school, practiced a lot, researched and listened to a lot of new music, and I made friends with other musicians.

The big difference from Pennsylvania was that the musicians in L.A. were much more driven to have a career. They didn’t see it as a hobby. They were in it for life. And because of that, they would show up to rehearsals and deliver the goods when they played their instruments. I played with some really talented people in my teenage bands in Pennsylvania, but it was hard to get them to commit to music 100 percent. Maybe it was easier for me because I was young and I never had a job that paid anything.

Finally, is there anything on the guitar you’d still like to do that you can’t? Melodies are still a huge challenge. If I pick up a kazoo, I can play a melody without having to think about it. To play a melody on the guitar, I really have to pay attention. But if I have a chance to practice a bit, I can get more expression and tone from the guitar than from the kazoo. And this is such a new road for me to travel; I feel that it’s only going to get easier. And when things get easier, you don’t have to think about them as much. And that’s when I can go onstage and only think about one concept to get me through the whole night: connect. Connect to the band. Connect to the audience. Connect to the universe, if it happens to peek its head into the gig. And that feels so good.
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A BRIEF LOOK AT PAUL GILBERT’S INGENIOUSLY INSIGHTFUL ALTERNATE PICKING TECHNIQUE, TIPS AND PICK-SLANTING APPROACH, AS PRESENTED ON HIS LEGENDARY 1988 REH INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO, INTENSE ROCK. BY TROY GRADY.

PAUL GILBERT’S INTENSE ROCK WAS THE PERFECT instructional guitar video for the late Eighties. The kids belonging to the WarGames and Back to the Future generation were absolutely convinced they could conquer any physical challenge, including the Cold War and even time travel, through a combination of ingenuity and technology. And where previous guitar instructional videos were, for the most part, a loose collection of phrases, licks and exercises, Intense Rock’s approach was fundamentally technical.

On this seminal REH video release, Gilbert offered a methodical and mechanical breakdown of the challenges you are likely to face when attempting to achieve true fluidity in your lead guitar playing, especially in regard to picking. And he began not with an exercise, per se, but with a premise.

THE LICK HEARD ‘ROUND THE WORLD
INTENSE ROCK’S TECTONIC shift in thinking arrives only five minutes into the discussion, with its very first musical example. And it is less an exercise than an engineering demonstration (see FIGURE 1).

With this simple four-note sequence, Gilbert defined the crux of alternate picking’s most sophisticated mechanical problem — switching, or crossing, strings. His commentary drove to the core of the problem: “The hardest thing about alternate picking is when you have to go to the next string. You have to jump, and there are tons of noises that can happen if you’re not careful.” You have to jump. This is not how we had previously been taught to think about alternate picking movements at all. So what kind of jumping is Gilbert referring to exactly?

Imagine we’re sighting down the strings of a guitar, from the headstock to the bridge. In cross section, the strings would appear as a row of circles, with the high E string on the far left and the low E on the right. Now imagine we want to play Gilbert’s famous example, starting on the B string. We need to insert the pick between the G and B strings so that some portion of its point descends below
the string action height.

Once we do this, we can push the pick through the B string and sound a note. In fact, we can pick back and forth on that string, by way of alternating downstrokes and upstrokes, for as many notes as we’d like. But when the moment to move to a new string arrives, we learn an ironic fact: alternate picking leaves the pick on the wrong side of the string for the string change. For example, in Gilbert’s phrase, we need to play a downstroke on the B string followed by an upstroke on the high E string (closer to the lower strings), not the “treble” side. In order to get to the treble side of the E string without hitting it in the process, we actually need to go up and over the top of it.

On the way back we have the opposite problem. Our E-string upstroke leaves the pick on the treble side of the B string, not the bass side. Once again, we have to go up and over the top of our target string in order to avoid hitting it too soon.

Superimposing these two pathways on top of one another reveals the amazingly sophisticated picking motion necessary to play Gilbert’s phrase cleanly, as graphically illustrated in FIGURE 2.

---

**FIGURE 1**

(\(\rightarrow\) = downstroke \(\uparrow\) = upstroke)

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**FIGURE 2**

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**FIGURE 3**

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**FIGURE 4**

\(\text{\(\cdot\) = downstroke \(\uparrow\) = upstroke}^{\text{\(\cdot\)}}\)

---

**FIGURE 4**

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**TRACING THE CURVE**

**THE TECHNIQUE TO** actually do this is ingenious. By supinating his forearm, or turning it a small amount against the body of the guitar, Gilbert caused his picking motion to operate on an angle with respect to the strings, as illustrated in FIGURE 3. In this pickslanted world, downstrokes now veered off into the air, away from the guitar’s body, cresting the E string without actually hitting it. Upstrokes traced the inverse diagonal, lifting above the B string. Connecting them produced the curvature, less a figure eight in actual practice and more a flat, fast, squared ribbon of efficient motion.

Gilbert’s ingenious mechanical round trip between the strings, and the twin wrist motions and tilted forearm position necessary to achieve it, were not totally fleshed out in *Intense Rock*. But he did mime one of the diagonal movements — the upstroke — in his explanation. And more importantly, he pointed squarely to the problem itself, giving us a clear-eyed view of a practical solution, visible in several of the side-camera shots on the famous instructional video.

**STRING CHANGE AS SEA CHANGE**

**IN OTHER WORDS**, moving to a new string with alternate picking always involves making a motion that goes over the top of whatever is in the way. Even now, 30 years later, this highly insightful observation is no trivial matter!

We’re often told to use small motions, or the smallest possible pick attack, but as long as some amount of the pick’s tip descends below the string height, or crosses that geometric plane, that same mass must come back up again and “hurdle” the lower or higher string in order to perform the string change cleanly. If you don’t do this, you’ll hit something, and, as Gilbert aptly phrases it: “tons of noises” will occur. So the key is to do this as efficiently as possible, like an Olympic track athlete just barely clearing a hurdle.

**FIGURE 4** is an exercise run, inspired by Gilbert, that’s designed to help you in this pursuit of being able to alternate pick across strings quickly, smoothly and cleanly. Try to keep your pick hand as relaxed as possible, use small movements and slant the pick, via the wrist and forearm, as detailed and illustrated earlier.

Watching Gilbert blaze effortlessly across the strings on *Intense Rock*’s iconic intro solo, it is not at all obvious that this graceful ballet of micro-movements is occurring just below the surface. But Gilbert knew it, and his incisive summary of the problem three decades ago shifted the fundamental discussion around guitar technique instruction. By identifying what it is about guitar picking that makes it so challenging, the gifted guitarist moved guitar teaching beyond arbitrary advice from masters and into the realm of empirical observation. With *Intense Rock*, Gilbert was no longer just teaching us guitar. He was teaching us to solve persistent technical challenges.
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ACE OF SPACE

ACE FREHLEY discusses the finer points of *Spaceman*, the new solo album featuring input from his former Kiss bandmate and "Rock and Roll Brother," Gene Simmons.

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAY GILBERT
“I’VE ALWAYS BEEN A ‘FLY BY THE SEAT OF HIS PANTS’ kinda guy,” Ace Frehley says, emitting one of his trademark cackles. “I never sit at home for hours trying to figure out a solo, you know? I like to do things spontaneously and without a lot of preparation. They come out more natural and sincere that way.”

Whatever it is Frehley is—or, as it were, isn’t—doing these days, it seems to be working for him, musically speaking. Since 2009 he’s been having something of a late-career renaissance, receiving induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a member of Kiss and releasing four very well-received studio albums, including his brand-new release, Spaceman.

The new record finds the 67-year-old revisiting the type of sound that made his first solo album, 1978’s Ace Frehley, such a classic, mixing heavy rockers (“Without You I’m Nothing,” “Bronx Boy”) with hookier, more power-pop-inflected tunes (“Your Wish Is My Command,” “Rockin’ with the Boys”). There’s also an instrumental (“Quantum Flux”), an Eddie Money cover (“I Wanna Go Back”) and even an unexpected guest appearance from Ace’s one-time Kiss band mate, Gene Simmons, who co-wrote two Spaceman tunes and, according to the press release that accompanied the album, also contributed his demonic dexterity on bass to those cuts.

“Actually, he only plays bass on one of them,” Frehley says, then cackles again. “Somebody wrote in the press release that Gene’s on both songs. But it’s not true!”

As for how it was working together again? “It was really easy,” Frehley says. “Really simple. I’ve known Gene for 45 years. He’s one of my rock ‘n’ roll brothers. ‘Really simple. I’ve known Gene for 45 years. He’s one of my rock ‘n’ roll brothers. ’”

He came over, sat down, started playing and he came over with the finished track but he actually, [guitarist] Ronnie Mancuso came over with the finished track but he had completely different lyrics that were completely ridiculous. [laughs] The title of that song was originally called “Green Tea.”

Can you give me a sample lyric from “Green Tea”? [sings] “I got my green tea / don’t need no co-caine”... It was hysterical! I looked at Ronnie and I said, “Musically I kinda like what you got here. But you know, the lyrics aren’t gonna work.” [laughs] So I completely rewrote them and changed the arrangement a little, redid all the guitars and bass parts, and there you have it.

In “Bronx Boy” you sing lines like “We’ve got our switchblades / our homemade zip guns / we’re ready to rumble / soon as the night comes.” Was that your experience growing up in New York City?

Yeah. The words definitely hit home. I was doing an interview last week and somebody asked me, “What’s a zip gun?” It’s really just a piece of wood cut in an L shape. And you break off an antenna from a car and tape it around the wood with gaffer’s tape. Then you take a clothespin spring and sharpen it and put it on the end of the wood and pull it back. You put a “bullet” in and just have the clothespin thing hit it like a regular firing pin. Basically it’s a homemade gun.

That sounds pretty dangerous.

Yeah. Sometimes they worked, sometimes they blew up in your hand!

Another great track is “Pursuit of Rock and Roll.” That song’s been kicking around forever. I had a demo of it but I never thought it was

Spaceman

ACE FREHLEY

GUITAR WORLD • DECEMBER 2018

got together?
I called him up and said, “You wanna write a couple of songs with me?” And he said, “Sure.” [laughs] Everybody thinks there’s this mysterious thing you gotta do to get two Kiss guys together, you know? But we all have the other’s cell phone numbers and we just call each other! The same thing happened when I asked Paul [Stanley] to do the video and sing “Fire and Water” on [2016’s] Origins, Vol. 1. It just happened. It was, “Yeah, I’d love to do it!” Okay, great. Let’s do it.

So the secret to getting two former Kiss band members together is just to have one of them actually ask.
Yeah. [laughs] And I’ve got the balls to ask anybody anything.

What was it like to write with Gene Simmons again?
We just sat down with acoustic guitars and he came up with the line “without you I’m nothing.” Then I gave him my Fender Precision and I said, “Let’s lay down a track.” I engineered it in Pro Tools and we got a little demo happening. Then I wrote most of the lyrics and produced it and rearranged it, and that’s what’s on the record. It was easy.

One of the standout songs on the new album is “Rockin’ with the Boys.” I heard that one dates way back to your Kiss days, is that correct?
Yeah. I wrote the chorus to that one in the Seventies, but I could never put together a verse that I thought was good enough to go with it. But I was listening to a demo of it from years ago and I decided to rewrite the chorus, too. The original chorus had that descending line that’s still there, but I decided to have it go up on the second turnaround, which gave the chorus a little more of a kick. Then I wrote the verses six months ago. And the lyrics are all new. They didn’t exist until this year.

I want to ask you about “Bronx Boy,” which has some lyrics that sound pretty autobiographical. How did you come up with that one?
Well, actually, [guitarist] Ronnie Mancuso came over with the finished track but he had completely different lyrics that were completely ridiculous. [laughs] The title of that song was originally called “Green Tea.”

Can you give me a sample lyric from “Green Tea”? [sings] “I got my green tea / don’t need no co-caine”... It was hysterical! I looked at Ronnie and I said, “Musically I kinda like what you got here. But you know, the lyrics aren’t gonna work.” [laughs] So I completely rewrote them and changed the arrangement a little, redid all the guitars and bass parts, and there you have it.

In “Bronx Boy” you sing lines like “We’ve got our switchblades / our homemade zip guns / we’re ready to rumble / soon as the night comes.” Was that your experience growing up in New York City?

Yeah. The words definitely hit home. I was doing an interview last week and somebody asked me, “What’s a zip gun?” It’s really just a piece of wood cut in an L shape. And you break off an antenna from a car and tape it around the wood with gaffer’s tape. Then you take a clothespin spring and sharpen it and put it on the end of the wood and pull it back. You put a “bullet” in and just have the clothespin thing hit it like a regular firing pin. Basically it’s a homemade gun.

That sounds pretty dangerous.

Yeah. Sometimes they worked, sometimes they blew up in your hand!

Another great track is “Pursuit of Rock and Roll.” That song’s been kicking around forever. I had a demo of it but I never thought it was
In one of the lines you sing “Don’t need no rap or disco for eternity.”
Yeah, [laughs] it’s pretty self-explanatory. That’s the way I felt then and that’s the way I feel today!

Why did you decide to cover Eddie Money’s “I Wanna Go Back”?
Oh god, I love that song. It was Eddie Money’s comeback hit. I was watching TV last year and that video popped up, and when I heard it I grabbed an acoustic guitar and figured it out. I just started playing and singing it, and it was in my key. So I said to myself, “I have to do this song.” And I think it came out really well. If you listen to Eddie’s version it’s kind of all built around the saxophone. But my version’s obviously all guitars.

You also have an instrumental on the album, “Quantum Flux.”
Yeah. When it comes to my instrumentals, I don’t really think about them too much. I just play something and try to make it evolve into something else. And you know, I had also recorded a blues song with [current Kiss drummer] Eric Singer for this record, and that turned out well. But when I was picking songs, I’m kind of superstitious, and 40 years ago my 1978 solo album came out and that had nine songs, so I wanted to limit this one to nine songs, too. So it came down to the instrumental or the blues song and I ended up dropping the blues song. Because every album I’ve ever released has had an instrumental on it. So that was the thinking behind that. But you know, the blues track may end up on a bonus edition.

What gear did you use on Spaceman?
There wasn’t one special setup. I have like four or five cabinets inside my shower stall, and then I use different heads — Marshalls, Fenders — and different mic configurations. And I always put a [Shure SM]57 in front of the speaker and then I’ll blend in a second mic. Actually, Blue microphones makes an inexpensive condenser mic that’s orange [the Blue Spark], and I blended that with the 57. I used that configuration a lot on the record.

Did you say you keep your speaker cabi-
"I'M KIND OF SUPERSTITIOUS, AND 40 YEARS AGO MY 1978 SOLO ALBUM CAME OUT AND THAT HAD NINE SONGS, SO I WANTED TO LIMIT THIS ONE TO NINE SONGS, TOO. SO IT CAME DOWN TO THE INSTRUMENTAL OR THE BLUES SONG AND I ENDED UP DROPPING THE BLUES SONG."

nets in your shower?
Well, in the shower in my recording studio, yeah. Not in my home shower! [laughs] My home studio, it's kind of the mother-in-law suite. It's set apart from the house. And then I built the drum room into the corner of the garage, with lots of carpets and soundproofing. Me and my engineer, Alex Salzman, we had a lot of fun building it.

What was your main guitar on Spaceman?
I'll usually record the basic track with a Les Paul — I've been using a lot of the '59 reissues that Gibson gave me. The aged ones sound great — just like an original '59. And then I double that with a Strat or a Tele. And a lot of the songs have an acoustic on the track as well. They're just buried down in the mix.

Do you remember your first formative musical moment?
It was a combination of things. One thing I remember was when I was 15 I played hooky and went down to a [New York DJ] Murray the K show that Mitch Ryder & the Detroit Wheels were headlining. And lo and behold, the Who and the Cream were opening up. That pretty much changed my life. And then a year later Led Zeppelin came out and I saw their first New York appearance. That was the clincher.

Is there any new music that's caught your ear recently?
Not really. I still listen to the Zeppelin and the Stones and the Cream — the same stuff I listened to back when I was a teenager. [laughs]

I've heard you're working on a follow-up to your 2012 autobiography, No Regrets. How is that coming along?
I've probably written about a third of it. But it's all on little pieces of paper and stuff. I'll remember a story when I'm in a restaurant or something, and just write it down on a napkin, you know? It's kinda like that. And it's funny — I just did a show north of San Francisco, in Petaluma, and I realized my old publicity agent from the Casablanca [Records] days lives there. And so we met up and reminisced for about an hour and a half. I went, "This is some good stuff! You've gotta write it down and email it to me so I can put it in my second book!" Because he was telling me a lot of stuff I completely forgot about. And you know, most of the stories are from the days when I used to get loaded. But now I'm in one of the best places I've ever been in. I'll be sober 11 years on September 15.

At this point in your life, do you feel you're still learning things on the guitar?
All the time. I've never taken a guitar lesson and I don't even know how to describe half the things I play. I had a lot of trouble doing an instructional video back in 2009 because I didn't know the terminology of the riffs I was playing. So I had to hire this guy who stood off-camera to try to help me explain to people who are well-versed in musical terms what the hell I'm doing! [laughs] Half the stuff I do, I don't know what it's called. But you know, if it sounds good, I do it.
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UTILITARIAN, BALLER OR AUDIOPHILE

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THE CONCEPT OF a guitar amplifier with a built-in wireless receiver seems so obvious that it’s hard to imagine that no one else thought of manufacturing one before now. Yet, here we are more than 40 years after the first mass-produced wireless systems for guitar were introduced, and Boss announces the Katana-Air amplifier, promoted as “the world’s first totally wireless guitar amplifier.” In addition to the way-cool factor of its wireless operation, the Boss Katana-Air is an impressive compact, portable amp for practice and recording, loaded with features like five different amp models, 58 different types of built-in effects, stereo audio streaming via Bluetooth, battery or AC power and the ability to control, edit and program the Katana-Air via an iOS or Android smartphone or tablet with the free Boss Katana-Air app. With its wireless design, compact, lightweight packaging and ability to operate with batteries, the Katana-Air offers guitarists the ultimate experience in play-anywhere power and convenience.
Thanks to its elongated rectangular shape and carrying handle, the Katana-Air looks like a micro amp head, but lo-and-behold I discovered that a pair of three-inch speakers are mounted below the controls behind the front panel’s black metal grill. When powered by AC, the amp delivers 30 watts of output, which drops down to 20 watts when the amp is powered by batteries to conserve battery life.

All of the amp’s controls are conveniently mounted on the top panel and consist of knobs for amp type (brown, lead, crunch, clean and acoustic), gain, volume, bass, middle, treble, boost/modulation, delay/FX, reverb and master, plus nine buttons for boost/modulation, delay/FX, reverb, tap tempo, Bluetooth linking, power on/off and engaging channel A, channel B or front panel settings. There are also a 1/8-inch headphone/recording output jack and a ¼-inch input should you choose not to use the wireless transmitter. A rechargeable lithium battery is built into the transmitter, which can be recharged via the dock on the amp’s top panel, or with a mini USB cable connected to a transmitter and the amp’s rear panel USB jack or an external USB charger. The amp’s USB jack also can be used to send audio from the amp to a computer for recording and to play back audio from a computer. The rear panel also features a 1/8-inch auxiliary input for an external sound source.

In addition to AC power, the Katana-Air can be powered by eight AA batteries. The amp operates for about seven hours with alkaline batteries and approximately 10 hours when using rechargeable Ni-MH batteries with a capacity of 2,500 mAh. The fully charged wireless transmitter provides up to 12 hours of continuous operation, but in normal use it lasts much longer thanks to its automatic, motion-sensing standby mode that kicks in when no activity is detected.

While the front panel controls are very straightforward and the amp is extremely easy to program, the Boss Katana-Air app is highly recommended as it provides access to additional parameters, such as the type of effects assigned to the buttons for the boost/modulation, delay/FX and reverb sections, detailed parameters for each effect, line out Air feel and cabinet resonance settings for the line output, USB output levels and more. The app can also store patches, download new patches from the Boss Tone Central library and operate as a tuner.

Typical of all Katana products — and Boss, for that matter — the Katana-Air offers a massive selection of rich, expressive sounds and versatile effects. The distortion and clean tones are ideal for any style of music, and the selection of effects is generous and comprehensive.

The performance of the wireless system is flawless. The specs list a maximum effective range of up to 75 feet, but I was able to play through the amp with almost imperceptible latency up to 100 feet away. The transmitter even works reliably through thick walls and floors. It unexpectedly transmitted through the concrete bunker-like walls of my basement to the amp two floors up in my master bedroom. The wireless design combined with the amp’s battery-power option makes it a true “play anywhere” amp. I particularly enjoyed taking it out to the forest and blasting wildlife from atop a boulder a la Ted Nugent (but no loincloth, alas).

The compact wireless transmitter plugs into most guitar output jacks and features a built-in rechargeable lithium-ion battery.

The transmitter can be charged from the amp’s transmitter port, via the amp’s USB jack or with an external USB charger.

The amp provides five different amp types and a selection of 58 different boost, modulation, delay, reverb and other effects.

The free Boss Katana-Air app enables users to program and save patches, access more advanced parameters and download patches from the Boss Tone Central library.

Offering guitarists the utmost in playing freedom, the wireless, compact Boss Katana-Air is truly liberating from a tone creation perspective as well as practice, recording and performance perspectives.
If all of these instruments are under $499.99, just imagine the amazing prices on the thousands of other guitars we have in stock – ready and waiting for you to check out!
IT’S WELL KNOWN that the Beatles appreciated the power and tone of the Vox AC30 amplifier, as it was the amp used on many of their timeless recordings and live gigs. It also wouldn’t be long before the Fab Four’s overwhelming success catalyzed the band from clubs to stadiums, and those 30-watt combos were soon no match for the arena-sized screams of Beatlemaniacs. The need for more power resulted in Vox producing the 100-watt AC-100 Super DeLuxe head with a speaker enclosure (supported by a chrome trolley) for the band until that amplifier was replaced by the Super Beatle head, which was nearly identical in function and cosmetics. History lesson aside, Vox has introduced a Lilliputian recreation of that iconic Beatle amp stack with the brand-new Vox Mini Superbeetle amplifier and speaker cabinet along with its signature chrome-plated stand. What’s even better is this homage dressed as a miniature amp stack sounds just as good as it looks.

FEATURES
The Vox Mini Superbeetle stands nearly two feet tall, but don’t be fooled by its diminutive stature; the amp is more than loud enough. The Superbeetle can pump out 50 watts of output at four ohms, 25 watts at eight ohms and 12.5 watts at 16 ohms. The Mini Superbeetle head is powered by analog Nutube circuitry, which employs a VFD (vacuum fluorescent display) tube that captures the same sound and response of vacuum tubes without any of the inconsistent elements. The compact head features controls for volume, bass, treble and gain, and a mini-toggle standby switch. The digital spring reverb and tremolo each have their own singular control, with the tremolo being driven by Nutube technology. On the rear panel, there’s a flat/deep EQ switch, impedance switch, ECO switch, dual speaker output jacks and a headphones/line out jack. The Mini Superbeetle’s vertical open-backed cabinet with chrome stand (and no, it doesn’t tilt) houses a single custom Celestion 10-inch speaker.

PERFORMANCE
You don’t have to be a Beatles fanatic to love the Mini Superbeetle amp because it truly delivers Vox’s unmistakable sparkle and chime in a pint-sized mini stack. But if you happen to be one (like myself), you may be quite taken aback at how well the amp captures some of the tones found in classic Beatles songs. Turning up the treble gets you pretty close to “Ticket to Ride,” and cranking up the bass with some gain reveals the right amount of grind to nail “Day Tripper.” There’s not a lot of gain here but just enough grit where the amp sounds tube-like, so hi-gain metal folks will need to look elsewhere. The reverb is actually impressive by not sounding too digital, but it is plenty cavernous, so be more conservative with it won’t interfere with your overall tone. The tremolo is also very pronounced, and works well musically, depending on where you EQ the amp and not using too much gain. Personally, I find the amp to be an incredible tone machine when paired with classic guitars like Rickenbackers, Gretsch models and Stratocasters — oh look, those are guitars the Beatles used! Well, if I’m being honest, the Mini Superbeetle delivers those legendary tones and so much more, and you’d be hard pressed to find a compact amp that sounds better than this.

THE BOTTOM LINE
The Vox Mini Superbeetle combines classic looks with sweet jangly tone in a miniature amp stack that includes on-board reverb and tremolo for a striking package that will sit well onstage — or anywhere.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $329.99
MANUFACTURER: Vox Amplification, voxamps.com

- The digital reverb is deep and immersive, while the NuTube-driven tremolo has a musical pulse that ranges from a slow throb to helicopter-chop.
- The Mini Superbeetle’s matching speaker cabinet comes with a custom 10-inch Celestion speaker that channels chime and Beatles-esque grind.
- THE BOTTOM LINE
The Vox Mini Superbeetle combines classic looks with sweet jangly tone in a miniature amp stack that includes on-board reverb and tremolo for a striking package that will sit well onstage — or anywhere.
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.
BACK IN THE late Sixties and early Seventies, when synthesizer technology was in its infancy and the electric guitar was in its adolescence, several ambitious products like the EMS Synthi Hi-Fli, Ludwig Phase II and Maestro USS-1, among a few others, attempted to merge synth-like sounds with the expressive freedom of the electric guitar. Basically, these devices were early multieffects processors that combined effects like fuzz, filters and modulation in a single box to generate various unusual sounds that were more electronic than electric. As synth technology progressed, this approach was quickly forgotten, particularly since the earliest guitar synthesizer effects were quite outrageously expensive.

Fortunately for those of us who love unusual effects and textures, several pedal designers have revisited these designs to offer players cool and unusual electronic sounds that still retain plenty of the electric guitar’s character. The Seymour Duncan Fooz is the latest entry into this growing category, offering a brilliant combination of fuzz, filter/envelope follower and LFO (low-frequency oscillation) effects that generate an impressive variety of analog synthesizer tones in addition to classic fuzz and envelope follower effects. For adventurous players looking for new tonal avenues to explore, Fooz is a cure for your blues.

FEATURES The Fooz pedal’s top panel is divided into separate Fuzz, Filter and LFO sections that will look familiar to experienced synth programmers but aren’t totally foreign to more advanced pedal pushers and effects geeks either. The Fuzz section offers standard level and gain controls plus an on/off switch for using the LFO section for tremolo effects (on) or to modulate the Filter section (off). The Filter section provides frequency and resonance controls as well as a switch for selecting band-pass or low-pass filtering (or off) and another switch for modulating the filter with the LFO or engaging the envelope follower (or off). The LFO section has controls for depth, speed, wave and shape, and if the Filter’s Control Type switch is set to “ENV” a sensitivity control is engaged for the adjusting of the envelope follower’s dynamic response.

Eight mini Dip switches are mounted on the rear panel that allow users to customize envelope control assignments, as well as assignments for an optional expression pedal that is connected to the expression pedal input jack. The Dip switches allow users to set the envelope to modulate LFO depth
Even if you aren’t familiar with synth programming, it’s easy to dial in cool electronic textures on the Fooz after familiarizing yourself with the controls’ functions.

**PERFORMANCE**

Even if you aren’t familiar with synth programming, it’s very easy to dial in cool electronic textures after familiarizing yourself with the controls’ functions. The Fuzz section can be used on its own and sounds quite good that way, but face it — you didn’t spend the extra bucks just for distortion. The Filter section absolutely rocks, producing funky and familiar Mutron III-style textures but also going well beyond that in both frequency range and depth of the filter sweeps. The LFO section is very versatile, and anyone who has used a more advanced tremolo will immediately figure out how to use it effectively.

You don’t have to be an experimental tone destroyer to love Fooz. While it’s capable of creating rich, dramatic envelope follower/synth tones reminiscent of the rare and desirable Lovetone Meatball (and well beyond that), it can also dial in some wonderfully understated but expressive voice-like auto-wah/filter tones that respond dynamically to your playing. Fooz can add new life to your solos or take you to sonic worlds you’ve never experienced before.

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**CHEAT SHEET**

- The Filter section can be set for modulating the filter with the LFO section or to engage a dynamic envelope follower effect.
- Eight Dip switches on the back of the unit allow users to customize envelope and expression pedal control functions.

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**THE BOTTOM LINE**

The Seymour Duncan Fooz Analog Fuzz Synthesizer revives early guitar synth technology by combining fuzz, filter and LFO processing in a single unit while offering the advantage of modern sound quality and reliability.

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and/or rate, reverse the envelope and/or expression pedal control’s polarity, and control volume, filter frequency, LFO rate and/or LFO depth with the expression pedal. And if that’s not enough, other features include bypass and tap tempo footswitches, ¼-inch mono input and output jacks and a standard center negative jack for a 9- to 18-VDC power supply.

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**EARTHQUAKER DEVICES AQUEDUCT VIBRATO**

EarthQuaker Devices has been on a tear lately, releasing a bundle of impressive new pedals. And if you’re at all familiar with any of EQD’s colorful stompboxes, you’d know it’s rare that their most popular time-based and modulation pedals feature anything less than six controls on their topography. So, after receiving the brand-new EQD Aqueduct Vibrato, I was surprised by its minimalistic control set. With a simple rate and depth knob, and a Mode control that allows you to select between eight different modulation modes — from fantastic vintage-sounding pitch modulation to trippy out-of-this-world bending and stretching of notes — the Aqueduct is a real head-turner, not to mention one of the most fun pedals I’ve ever reviewed from this eccentric company.

Vibrato is, no doubt, a squiggly and wobbly effect once engaged. And the Aqueduct makes no apologies for its modulation because it offers eight ways of producing its intense pitch-bending capabilities (Sine, Triangle, Ramp, Square, Random, Env D, Env R, and Env P). It also features a proprietary Flexi-Switch that allows you to select between standard latching-style switching (on/off), and momentary switching where by simply holding the footswitch down holds the effect indefinitely until you release it.

There are so many sounds you can create with the Aqueduct that it’s best for me to give a greatest hits of my favorites. I’m more traditional, so I love hanging with Sine wave mode, which offers that classic slightly out-of-tune yet chorusy pitch bending vibrato that is reminiscent of the Edge’s guitar sound on U2’s Boy album. The Ramp mode is a trampoline of pitch bending, where notes bounce up and down rhythmically as if you were whacking a tremolo bar. Once you get to Random, all bets are off, and the waveform takes notes to warp speed by accelerating and slowing them down — kinda like a mindless driver in the left lane who shouldn’t be there. Env D (depth), Env R (rate) and Env P (pitch) are all envelope-controlled modes where the intensity of your pick attack shapes the modulation. It’s worth noting that Env P is what EQD dubs “The My Bloody Valentine” setting where the modulated vibrato bends is best served using the momentary switch. Here, the spectrum of sounds can run the gamut of extreme detuned chorus and whammy wiggles that peak in an all-out sonic assault, especially if you add dollops of fuzz.

— Paul Riario

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**GOLD AWARD**

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**STREET PRICE:** $199

**MANUFACTURER:** EarthQuaker Devices, earthquakerdevices.com

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**PERFORMANCE**

Even if you aren’t familiar with synth programming, it’s very easy to dial in cool electronic textures after familiarizing yourself with the controls’ functions.
Retro Revival

FENDER AMERICAN ORIGINAL ’60S JAZZMASTER

By Chris Gill

WHILE THE FENDER Strat and Tele will always be timeless classics, the Jazzmaster arguably is one of the coolest solidbody guitars Fender ever produced. The reason is partly due to the fact that its original intended audience — jazz guitarists — mostly ignored the instrument and instead it became the favored ax of various riffraff over the ensuing decades: surf and garage band guitarists during the Sixties, punk and new wave players during the Seventies, alternative rockers during the Eighties and grunge musicians during the Nineties. With the aptly named new “American Original” series, Fender has resurrected the Jazzmaster in all of its original glory with just a few tweaks to appease modern players. Forget spending a fortune on a battered vintage model — the American Original ’60s Jazzmaster delivers the classic tone and look of the real deal with modern playability at a down-to-earth price.

FEATURES With the American Original ’60s Jazzmaster, Fender went all out replicating the finer details of a Sixties Jazzmaster. It has the requisite alder body with a gloss nitrocellulose lacquer finish and maple neck with a rounded “C” profile and gloss nitrocellulose finish, rosewood fingerboard with mid-Sixties style 1-ply white binding, flatter 9.5-inch radius, 21 vintage tall frets, 25.5-inch scale length and even a vintage-style slotted truss rod nut that is adjustable at the heel instead of above the nut. The electronics are equally period correct and impressive, including a pair or Pure Vintage ’65 Single-Coil Jazzmaster pickups and the Jazzmaster’s distinctive lead/rhythm circuit incorporating traditional master volume and tone knobs for the lead circuit and thumbwheel volume and tone controls for the neck pickup only, which is the only active pickup when the sliding switch is set to the rhythm setting. Hardware includes the awesome and under-rated vintage-style floating tremolo with tremolo lock button, vintage-style Fender Deluxe tuners and a four-ply tortoiseshell pickguard. The guitar ships in a brown vintage-style G&G case.

PERFORMANCE The American Original ’60s Jazzmaster delivers all of the classic Jazzmaster tones we all know and love, from the Ventures to Tom Verlaine and Johnny Cash to Elvis Costello. With those big single-coil pickups (which look similar to P90s but are entirely different), the Jazzmaster produces bigger, warmer tones that still generate plenty of desirable single-coil twang and sparkle. The slightly flatter neck radius is much more comfortable to play than the original’s round 7.5-inch radius, and the vintage tall frets are a little meatier and offer more accurate intonation. The tremolo makes deep dives a breeze and never goes out of tune.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $1,999.99
MANUFACTURER: Fender, fender.com

- The Pure Vintage ’65 Single-Coil Jazzmaster pickups and unique lead/rhythm circuit deliver all of the beloved classic Jazzmaster tones from the early Sixties onward.
- Playability upgrades include a slightly flatter 9.5-inch radius and vintage tall frets that facilitate easier finger- ing and more accurate intonation.
- THE BOTTOM LINE The Fender American Original ’60s Jazzmaster is proof once again that Fender doesn’t make guitars like they used to — they make them better than ever. This classic revival certainly will inspire a new generation of players like the Sixties original did.
Yellow Jackets® allow EL84 power tubes to be used in place of more common power tubes like the 6L6 and EL34 for a self-biased class-A configuration.
**FIFTH BASS**

Great applications of a second-inversion chord

**CONTINUING OUR EXAMINATION** of ways in which famous songwriters have employed chord inversions to craft the progressions to some of their most celebrated works, I’d now like to cite a few brief, great examples of well-known songs that feature the use of a second-inversion chord, meaning one with the fifth in the bass. But first, let’s look at some basic and traditional applications of this device.

Classical composers, such as Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, commonly employed a second-inversion major or minor chord to set up a final cadence at the end of a section of a piece. **FIGURES 1a and 1b** illustrate, in the parallel keys of A major and A minor, two examples of this standard move, which has been used so much that it has become a musical cliché, like one of the stock turnaround licks guitarists typically play during the last two bars of a 12-bar blues progression. On the third chord of each figure, the “I” (one) chord is played in second inversion (A/E, or Am/E), which functions as the root of the V chord, E or E7. The V, which is major in both examples, then resolves satisfyingly down a perfect fifth (or up a perfect fourth) to the very stable- and very final-sounding root-position I chord.

**FIGURES 2a-c** demonstrate another standard application of a second-inversion chord in both major and minor contexts, in each case moving from the root-position I chord to the IV, while keeping the same bass note throughout, which functions as a pedal tone and creates a smooth and musically dramatic effect. **FIGURES 3a and 3b** offer another “classical move,” for which a second-inversion major V chord (the E/B) is used to create a linear “bass-line walk-up” or “walk-down,” likewise demonstrated here in both A major and A minor.

These are traditional ways in which second-inversion chords have been used for hundreds of years. I’d now like to cite examples of novel, non-traditional uses of this musical resource in some of my favorite pop or rock songs from the late 20th century. The first is the intro to Elton John’s beautiful ballad “Someone Saved My Life Tonight,” similar to **FIGURE 4**, which has us using open G and C chords and a capo at the first fret to conveniently put us in that song’s concert key of A# major. We begin on the I chord, which is played in second inversion (G/D) and followed by the root-position IV chord (C), with a stepwise bass melody smoothly connecting the two chords in a repeating loop. Again, notice how putting the fifth in the bass creates that “up in the air” sound.

The chorus to “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down” by the Band features a similar move, here in the key of C. To me, this is one of those beautiful, heart-warming musical moments that gives me goosebumps every time I hear it. **FIGURE 5** illustrates the basic chord changes leading up to it.

Two other great examples of a brief but effective use of a second-inversion chord in a rock song are the third chord in the intro to “Something” by the Beatles (again, G/D, as in **FIGURE 6** and the third chord in the pre-chorus to “Angel” by Jimi Hendrix, F, in which bassist Billy Cox plays the fifth of the chord, C, below the guitar voicing, creating the second inversion’s signature harmonic warmth. **FIGURE 7** shows how you can achieve that same sound with just one guitar.

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**Senior Music Editor “Downtown”** Jimmy Brown is an experienced, working guitarist, performer and private teacher in the greater NYC area whose professional mission is to entertain, enlighten and inspire people with his guitar playing.
Tanglewood guitars offer vintage-inspired designs with modern features and playability. Whether it’s your first acoustic, or your next acoustic, your Tanglewood will become your favorite.

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FOUR ON ONE
Superimposing “IV-chord” licks over the “I”

IN JUST ABOUT every style of modern music — from rock to blues, funk, soul, country and metal — there will be occasions where you find yourself soloing over either a single-chord groove or a “I-IV” (one-to-four) vamp. A standard “jazz” approach is to reference chords other than the “one” chord while soloing, which serves to offer the soloist a wide range of musical possibilities and “colors” while also surprising the listener by pulling their ear in different and often unexpected directions.

If you’re wondering, “What is a ‘IV chord,’” and how do I figure out what that is?,” the answer is easily found by examining the major scale. In the key of G, the G major scale consists of the notes G A B C D E F#. A G major triad is built from the first, third and fifth notes: G B D. Just as a triad can be constructed starting from the first note of the scale, six more triads may be formed by starting from each successive scale degree, using the same “one-three-five” formula, relative to that starting note: if we envision the second scale degree, A, as the “one,” the three is C and the five is E. When played together, these notes sound an Am triad.

This is known as the “ii” (two minor) chord. Starting from the third scale degree, B, this process will yield B D F#, a Bm triad, which is the “iii” (three minor) chord; starting from C, we get C E G, a C major triad, which is the “IV” (four) chord; starting from D, we get D F A, a D major triad, which is the “V” (five) chord.

A great, famous example of an extended one-chord jam is the Allman Brothers Band classic, “Whipping Post,” which is played in the key and modality of A Dorian minor (A Dorian mode: A B C D E F G). With Am as the “i” (one minor) chord, the IV chord would be D (or D7). The band’s founding guitarist Duane Allman and Dickey Betts got tons of miles out of sticking with A minor pentatonic scale (A C D E G) and the A Dorian mode when soloing on this tune, but they also ventured into superimposing IV-chord licks — implying D or D7 — over the Am vamp, which provides a wholly different perspective and serves as a doorway into alternative harmonic realms.

**FIGURE 1** is an original 16-bar solo played over an Am vamp, along the lines of “Whipping Post.” Throughout the example, I focus on the chord tones of the IV chord, D7 — D F A C. Starting and stopping on these notes creates a harmonic allusion to this chord, resulting in melodic lines that are more harmonically deep and intriguing than simply playing “on the one.” The lines in this example intentionally stick within 3rd-5th positions.

In **FIGURE 2**, I employ the same “four on one” approach up in 8th-10th positions, offering more melodic range. Now that you have the idea, try devising your own D7-type licks over an Am vamp in different areas of the fretboard.
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GET EXPERIENCED
Studying the playing of the great Jimi Hendrix

AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT in the learning process for every guitarist is to analyze how our favorite guitar players do what they do and figure out how to emulate those sounds ourselves. This can’t happen at a gig, while you’re doing your thing and playing to the best of your ability in the moment. It has to be a separate endeavor, to sit down, listen hard and aspire to work out what our heroes are doing by putting their playing under the microscope, or stethoscope, so to speak. Once you begin to scrutinize every element, it becomes even more fascinating — the way someone might change their picking approach for different phrases, switching between different pickups, string-bending techniques and whatnot. This type of study provided a great education for me in my own development as a guitarist.

For example, what was it about Jimi Hendrix’s playing that made me wonder, back when I was a teenager, “What was that?!” I still don’t know today! It was just a sound that I was attracted to and couldn’t get enough of. As I studied Hendrix more and more, I continually came across little moments of his that still amaze me even now! Sonically, visually — the whole thing. Even when you break it down, the magic is still there.

FIGURE 1 is a guitar riff played in a manner similar to Jimi’s “Killing Floor” intro. It’s based on the A minor pentatonic scale (A C D E G) played in fifth position and is performed with constant 16th-note strumming across virtually all six strings. The riff centers mostly around alternating between the notes G and A on the D string’s fifth and seventh frets. I use my fret hand to mute the other strings in such a way that only the specific notes of my choosing are sounded, while the other strings, when strummed, sound as “dead-string” accents.

The feel here is intentionally very loose and is pure electric blues. It goes straight to your heart and soul. The pick hand has to aggressively sweep across the strings, as shown in FIGURE 2. In bars 2 and 3, I employ a chord shape and voicing for A7b9(no3) that Jimi often used in various keys and positions to great effect on songs like “Foxey Lady” and “Stone Free.” I’m barring my pinkie across the top two strings at the eighth fret. To break this technique down, FIGURE 3 offers a slightly simplified version, played at about half speed. When you play through it at this tempo, it’s easy to identify all of the interesting rhythmic syncopations woven throughout the phrases.

The same approach should be applied to the lead break. FIGURE 4 offers a Hendrix-like solo example, complete with heavy, wide vibratos, expressive bends and overbends, and a overall feeling of unpredictability, which is at the heart of all great blues guitar solos.

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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SUSSING OUT THE G CHORD

Understanding suspended seconds and fourths

HELLO EVERYONE, AND welcome to my newest round of instructional columns for Guitar World. It’s great to be back! As always, I hope these monthly installments will shed some light on a variety of musical mysteries and prove useful to you in your daily playing.

The reality of playing guitar in a rock band is that 90 percent of your time is spent playing rhythm. While the great percentage of guitar instructional material focuses on lead playing, this month I’d like to address rhythm guitar and the incorporation and understanding of suspended chords.

What the heck are “suspended chords,” and, more specifically, suspended second, i.e., “sus2,” and suspended fourth, i.e., “sus4”? Any discussion of music theory is well served by starting with the major scale: bar 1 of FIGURE 1 illustrates the G major scale, comprised of the notes G A B C D E F#. Intervallically, this represents 1 (root), maj2, maj3, 4, 5, maj6, maj7. Major chords are built from the first (1), third (3) and fifth (5) scale degrees of a major scale; in the key of G, those notes are G B D, as shown in bar 2 of FIGURE 1; this is known as a G major triad. Any G major chord voicing, such as those shown in FIGURE 2, are built from the notes of a G major triad.

Suspended chord voicings are created by taking the major third and moving it either down one whole step to the second, which will result in a sus2, or up one half step to the fourth, which will result in a sus4. In the key of G, the sus2 is an A note and the sus4 is a C. The term “suspended” implies that the chord will resolve in some way, meaning that a suspended chord is often resolved, or followed by, a major chord, a minor chord, or a root-fifth chord.

An effective approach to understanding suspended chords is to start on the low strings and work your way up. As shown in FIGURE 3, if I sound a low G on my sixth string’s third fret, the suspended second can be sounded with the open fifth string, followed by the major third, B, fifth string, second fret, as well as the fourth, C, fifth string, third fret.

Let’s use these notes to devise some riffs:

FIGURES 4 and 5 are played in straight eighth notes using pick-hand palm muting (P.M.), and a melodic line is sounded by moving between the three different notes on the fifth string.

Another approach is to pair the second, third and fourth degrees with the fifth of a chord instead of the root note, as shown in FIGURE 6: here, the A, B and C notes on the sixth string are paired with the fifth of G, D, sounded on the fifth string’s fifth fret. In FIGURE 7, the G root note is moved up one octave from where we began, while the A, B and C notes remain in the same lower octave. FIGURES 8, 9 and 10 replicate FIGURES 4, 6 and 7 an octave higher, and FIGURE 11 replicates FIGURE 4 two octaves higher.

New York City guitarist Joel Hoekstra plays for Whitesnake, the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Cher and his own side project, Joel Hoekstra’s 13, whose latest release is Dying to Live.
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“WHEN THE CURTAIN FALLS”
Greta Van Fleet

When performing the strummed octaves in this new hit rock song’s bluesy intro riff (see bar 3, beat one), be sure to angle your fret-hand index finger, which is fretting the low E string, down toward the unused A string, so that the “paw” of the finger lightly touches it and prevents it from ringing. Likewise, angle your ring finger, or pinkie, which is fretting the higher octave note on the D string, to similarly mute the unused G string and prevent it from sounding prematurely. A similar fret-hand muting technique should be employed for the Jimmy Page- and Jimi Hendrix-style “thumbed” F and G chord shapes illustrated in the frames at the beginning of the transcription, which guitarist Jake Kiszka plays in bar 13. Here, you’ll need to use the tips of both your fret-hand thumb and ring finger to “check” and mute the unused A string.

At the beginning of his guitar solo (section H, bar 43), Kiszka launches into a fiery, Chuck Berry-style repetition lick on the top three strings, continuing this three-note sequence throughout the next two bars. Use your ring finger to perform the string bend, supported by your index finger across the top two strings at the third fret to cover the notes played on those two strings. The reinforced bending technique will provide you with added “horsepower” and help you achieve proper bend intonation, while also ensuring that the G string doesn’t slip out from under your ring finger. Also, when performing any push bend, it helps to hook your thumb over the top side of the fretboard, which will provide leverage for your hand.

—JEFF PERRIN

“BLIND MAN IN THE DARK”
Gov’t Mule

Guitarist Warren Haynes employs fingerpicking to play this now classic Gov’t Mule song’s angular intro/main riff (beginning in bar 2), tucking his plecrompt into his palm temporarily and using his pick-hand index and middle fingers to pluck the notes on the G and D strings while thumbpicking any notes that fall on the A or low E strings. This coordinated technique can be a little tricky to perform at tempo, as it’s all too easy for your fingers to reflexively start plucking unwanted higher notes along with the thumb’s rapid 16th-note rhythms. It’s therefore very important and beneficial to initially practice this rift slowly, so that you can observe whether or not you’re fingerpicking the notes correctly, and without inadvertently sounding any unwanted ones. A light palm mute on the thumbpicked notes will help you “feel” the strings better too. Once you get the pattern down (ideally while tapping your foot on each downbeat), gradually ramp up the speed, and rely on your pick hand’s muscle memory to successfully get you through the fingerpicking licks at full tempo.

In bars 68-75, Haynes creates a powerful climax to his guitar solo by performing a blazing series of 16th-note triplets. He sets up the repeating three-note lick by barring his index finger across the top two strings at the 12th fret and using his ring finger to perform the pull-off from the high G note on the 15th fret. The key is to maintain steady, consistent rhythms throughout this repetition lick, so be mindful that you don’t accelerate too much. Experiment with using different pick stroke sequences (downstrokes and upstrokes) or using hybrid picking (pick-and-fingers technique), which Warren employs often, as it lends itself well to playing fast licks that cross back and forth between two strings like this in a smooth, economical way, with minimal pick-hand movement and effort.

—JEFF PERRIN

“SPANISH CARAVAN”
The Doors

This Doors masterpiece, parts of which are derived from a famous late 19th-century flamenco-style, classical guitar piece by Isaac Albéniz called “Leyenda” (also known as “Asturias”), showcases Robby Krieger’s early mastery of fingerstyle nylon-string guitar playing. He displays technical virtuosity and elegance in the song’s instrumental intro, using techniques like tremolo fingerpicking and fluid, one-note-per-string arpeggio sweeps. When attempting to play the first eight bars, be sure to consult the chord frames, fret-hand shapes and fingerings for the chord names indicated above the tabs.

The song’s instrumental melodic theme that begins at section B, bar 10, features what is essentially an eighth-note melody played in rapid alternation with an open B-string pedal tone, resulting in a stream of fluid 16th notes. Pick the fretted notes with your thumb and the open B notes with your middle finger. Also be mindful of the numerous time signature changes that occur, with the switching back and forth between 6/8 and 3/4 meter, both of which include six eighth notes of the same duration, and the brief one-measure change to 2/4 in the fourth and eighth bars of both of the interlude sections.

Our transcription includes Ray Manzarek’s harpsichord and organ parts, which harmonize and complement Krieger’s guitar parts and at times form an unusual counterpoint with them. There’s some bafflingly beautiful polytonality going on in the second part of the first interlude, specifically in bars 24-30, as Manzarek plays major arpeggios against Krieger’s minor-seven ones… yet it works, musically! (The left and right panning of the two instruments in the mix no doubt helps in this regard.) The apparent “disagreement” on which chord to end the song on also adds to its exotic allure.

—JIMMY BROWN
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“SPANISH CARAVAN”
The Doors

As heard on WAITING FOR THE SUN
Words and Music by THE DOORS • Transcription arranged by JIMMY BROWN

Badd4  C  C#m7b5  Badd4b6  Cadd#4  C  B5  C7  Am7  D

Gm7  C  Fm7  B±  F#m7  B  Em  Am  B7  D7

A Intro (0:00)
Freely
Badd4
Gtr. 1 (nylon-string acoustic)
fingerstyle
let ring

C

SPANISH CARAVAN
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"SPANISH CARAVAN"

1st Verse (1:01)

Carry me caravan take me away

Em Am B7 Em

Rhy. Fig. 1

Rhy. Fig. 2

Bass Fig. 2
Take me to Portugal
Em Am

Bass repeats Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 33)
Gtr. 1 repeats Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 33)
Harpsicord

Andalusia
Am Em
with fields full of grain
Bass

I have to see you again and again
Am Em
B7/F#
Harpsicord

Bass repeats Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 33)
“SPANISH CARAVAN”

D7sus2  D7  D7sus4  D7  D7sus2

Freely (1:34)

C

B

Gtr. 2
(elec. w/fuzz)

D 2nd Interlude (1:46)

Faster  \( \text{=} 132 \)

Em

Gtr. 2

Organ (arr. for gtr.)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 10)
E 2nd Verse (2:15)

Moderately Fast \( \frac{\text{d}}{\text{e}} = 132 \)

Trade winds find Gallians lost in the sea
Em Am B7 Em

Organ plays Rhy. Fig. 2 simile (see bar 33)

I know where treasure is waiting for me
Em Am B7 Em

Silver and gold in the mountains of Spain
Am Em B7 Em

I have to see you again and again
Am Em B7 Em

Take me
“SPANISH CARAVAN”

Spanish caravan

D

Yes I

Gtr. 2

Organ

Bass

know you can Freely

C Bm/E B E5

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1. You're Hollywood of hell counting all your rings
2. taken all your rings

F G C  F G Csus4  C  F G

When the curtain falls
Walk the hollow halls

1st and 2nd choruses (0:45, 1:47)

G5  F  C  G5  Dm  F

Rhy. Fig. 1

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 second time

Bass substitutes Bass Fill 1 second time

Bass substitutes Bass Fill 2 second time

babe
Once a valley doll

Gracious substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 second time
2nd time, skip ahead to Bridge (bar 31)

Now you're not at all no

G5    Dm    F    C    Gsus4

Gtr. 2 substitutes Fill 1 second time end Rhy. Fig. 1

E  (1:07)

N.C. (G5)

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A four times (see bar 3)

Well I

F  2nd Verse (1:17)

love you in that movie show Can I have your autograph

It's so funny you have such charm that whole thing made me laugh

Go back to Pre-chorus (bar 9)
“WHEN THE CURTAIN FALLS”

G Bridge (2:07)

Gsus4  G  Gsus4  G

Well

listen darlin’ it’s been real swell What can I say You’ve got it all You’re a

Gsus4  G  F  G  F  G

one-woman show but I’m not gonna lie You could use a little work Well at your age Ah

Gsus4  G  F  D

Bass Fill 1 (1:45)
(F) (G)

Bass Fill 2 (2:00)
(C)
Guitar Solo (2:37)

G5 F C

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig 1 one and one half times (see bar 14)

Gtr. 2

Ah

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 w/ad lib variation (see bar 14)

yeah
When the curtain falls
What you got baby

3rd Chorus (3:07)

Once a valley doll
Now you're not at all

Outro (3:27)

N.C. (G5)

Goodbye baby
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“BLIND MAN IN THE DARK”
Gov’t Mule

Words and Music by WARREN HAYNES • Transcribed by JEFF PERRIN

All guitars tune down one half step (low to high, E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ B♭ E♭).
Bass is tuned down one half step (low to high, E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭).

All music sounds one half step lower than written.

Moderately \( \frac{\text{j} \text{q}}{90} \)

\( \text{Intro Reprise} \) (0:02, 1:59)

2nd time on Intro reprise, at 2:14, skip ahead to 2nd verse (bar 12)

A

Gtr. (elec. w/overdrive)

(Snare drum)

(fingerstyle)

\( \text{D7(no 3)} \)

\( \text{F5} \)

\( \text{No 3} \)

1.

Bass (w/pick)

\( \text{Bass Fig. 1} \)

*Substitute single low E note last time.

1., 3.

2.

N.C.

end Bass Fig. 1

106 GUITAR WORLD • DECEMBER 2018
B Verses (0:32, 2:15)

1. All I ask from anyone is that they ask nothing from me
2. Face to face we meet again but never eye to eye

G5 N.C.
Gtr. substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 second time
(w/ pick and wah pedal)

Bass substitutes Bass Fill 1 second time

Stared so long at the future that I'm blind to reality
Meanwhile in your mania your four wings touch the sky

Rhy. Fill 1 (2:15)

Bass Fill 1 (2:15)
Come a time we’ll watch our lives
Fly to high the wax will melt
And you’ll fall down to your knees

All I ask from anyone is that they ask nothing from me
All I ask from you my friend is that you ask nothing from me

Those of us who let go will be swallowed left here to die

Dreams fly by like a thousand railroad trains
Egos steadfast like mountains in our brains

*Notes played second time only.

*Roll back guitar’s volume knob to clean-up tone somewhat.

108 GUITAR WORLD • DECEMBER 2018
**“BLIND MAN IN THE DARK”**

**D Chorus (1:29, 3:11, 5:26)**

(1.) Do not look to the sky
It won't rain for you

(2., 3.) Do not look to the sky
It will not rain for you

Gtr. substitutes Rhy. Fill 3 third time (see below bar 111)

D5 F G Dm7

Bass substitutes Bass Fill 2 third time (see below bar 111)

Do not look to strangers
They won't help you through

G5 D5 Fsus2 G5 N.C. (D5)

Gtr. substitutes Fill 1 second time (see below bar 68)

Gtr. substitutes Fill 2 third time (see below bar 69)

E (1:44, 3:26, 5:40)

Only chance you got
when you hear the war dogs bark

D7(no 3) F7(no 3) G7(no 3)

1st time, go back to A (bar 2)
2nd time, continue to F (bar 46)
3rd time, skip ahead to A (bar 102)

is to be one up on your brother
like a blind man in the dark

Bb7(no 3) A7#9(no 3) F5 G5

*Omit lyrics and chord slide-off last time*
**TRANSCRIPTIONS**

**“BLIND MAN IN THE DARK”**

**F (3:41)**

\((\alpha = 90)\)

D7 (no 3)

Guitar Solo (4:01)

\((\alpha = 200)\)

N.C. (G5) (E5) (G5) (E5) (G5) (E5) (G5) (E5)

(w/sub-octave effect)

(G5) (E5)

(sub-octave effect off)

Bass Fig. 2

end Bass Fig. 2

110 GUITAR WORLD • DECEMBER 2018
"BLIND MAN IN THE DARK"

(G5) (A5)

(G5) (A5) (G5) (A5)

(G5) (A5) (G5) (A5)

Grad. increase tempo to \( \frac{3}{\text{beat}} = 218 \)

(G5) (A5)

(w/sub-octave effect)

Fill 1 (3:24)

Fill 2 (5:38)
"BLIND MAN IN THE DARK"

(G5) (A5) (G5) (A5) (G5) (A5) (G5) (A5)

(G5) (A5) (G5) (A5) (G5) (A5)

(G5) (A5) (G5) (A5) (G5) (A5)

(G5) (A5) (G5) (A5) (G5) (A5)

(G5) (A5) (G5) (A5) (G5) (A5)
“BLIND MAN IN THE DARK”

I (4:56) (J = 212)

Ah ah
N.C.(G5)(E5) (G5) (E5) (G5) (E5) (G5) (E5)

Ah ah

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 49)

Ah - a - ah

(sub-octave effect off)

J (5:08) (J = 106)

G5 A5 F5 G5 A5 F5 G5

Go back to Chorus (bar 31)

(grad. decrease tempo)

K (5:55)

L Outro (5:58) (J = 91)

Blind man in the dark

G5 D7(no 3) F5

(Guitar)

(fingerstyle)

Bass plays Bass Fill 3
(see below bar 111)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 3)
1. Blind man in the dark

D7(no 3)

Blind man in the dark
N.C.

D7(no 3)

Gtr.

Gtr.

Bass

Bass

100

100

pitch: C

(string noise)

Freely
(w/slow wah-pedal modulation)

w/feedback

Rhy. Fill 2 (2:56)

Fadd9

Gsus2

A5

Fadd9

G5

A5

Rhy. Fill 3 (5:26)

D5

Gtr.

Gtr.

Bass Fill 2 (5:26)

D5

Bass Fill 3 (5:55)

G5
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“BOOM BOOM (OUT GO THE LIGHTS)”

PAT TRAVERS BAND ● LIVE! GO FOR WHAT YOU KNOW, 1979 ● GUITARIST: PAT TRAVERS

By Chris Gill

THERE WERE A lot of great guitar bands in the late Seventies, but one of the greatest to see in concert was the Pat Travers Band. The ultimate lineup — consisting of Pat Travers and Pat Thrall on dueling lead guitars and the rhythm section of Peter “Mars” Cowling on bass and Tommy Aldridge on drums (before he left to join Ozzy Osbourne’s band) — was a powerhouse dynamo, but unfortunately was rather short-lived, lasting only from 1978 through early 1981. This lineup recorded two excellent studio albums together — Heat in the Street and Crash and Burn — but is particularly remembered for their stellar concert album, Live! Go for What You Know.

While I’m going to focus primarily on Travers’ rig for “Boom Boom (Out Go the Lights)” I want to mention a few key details of Thrall’s setup. Fortunately, it’s easy to tell who is who, as Travers’ guitar is panned to the left and Thrall’s is panned right. For most of the first minute, directly after the instrumental intro, Thrall is the only guitarist heard, comping out jazzy chords treated with a deep chorus effect generated by his A/DA Flanger pedal. Thrall also used a Roland RE-301 tape echo, an A/DA Harmony Synthesizer and a Systech Overdrive.

A reader recently pointed out [October 2018 Sounding Board] that Travers used an A/DA Flanger instead of a “phaser,” as mentioned in Jeff Perrin’s [July 2018] Performance Notes. Actually, both are wrong and right. The source of the “slight phaser effect” is a Leslie 147 rotating speaker cabinet, which Travers used 100 percent of the time and blended with two additional tones split from his pedal board going to an overdriven Marshall 50-watt (with a pair of Echoplexes also in the signal chain) and a clean Marshall 100-watt head. Travers does use his beloved A/DA Flanger, but in his live rig he used it only for a deep, jet-like swoosh (heard here at 3:47, and also on the intros to “Hooked on Music” and “Gettin’ Betta”). In the studio he used it for chorus (like Thrall on this song) and even radical “auto whammy” pitch bends. But there’s an actual phase shifter in use as well — an MXR Phase 100 is engaged occasionally for added modulation “grind,” particularly during Travers’ solo. Travers also used the Phase 100 in conjunction with an MXR Blue Box for rumbling, motorcycle-like growls. I’ve added those settings as a bonus, even though it’s not used here.

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TONE TIP: The slow setting of the Lester K pedal (set to about 6) nails Travers’ thick, chewy phaser-like Leslie tone that’s essential to his sound, particularly when it’s placed in front of an amp with a generous amount of power amp overdrive grind.

GUITAR: c. 1963-65 Gibson Melody Maker with mid-70s Gibson “T-Top” humbucking pickups with Alnico 5 magnets (bridge pickup only); volume: 10, no tone controls due to custom wiring


EFFECTS: MXR Phase 100 (Intensity: position 4 of 1-4 left to right, Speed: 5.5), MXR Blue Box (Output: 10, Blend: 7), Cry Baby wah (not used), A/DA Flanger (Harmonics: Odd, Threshold: 6, Manual: 4, Range: 6, Speed: 6.5, Enhance: 8.5), Maestro Echoplex EP-3 I (Sustain: 1.5, Volume: 6, Delay: 4 on a scale of 0-35), Maestro Echoplex EP-3 II (not used — normally set to 16-20 delay setting; Note: both Echoplexes are placed between the pedalboard output and the Marshall 50-watt head only)

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