

LISTEN WITH YOUR EYES

# GEARPHORIA®

a wrightside media publication

ALSO INSIDE: *New Keeley HQ, NAMM '21 axed* and more...



## COVER STORY

### ADAM MILLER

*Aussie guitarist new album* fueled by **big life changes** (Plus the **return of Axe Forensics!**)

## LANTERNS SHINE

UK's *Lanterns On The Lake* dive into their **new album** and gear

## GEAR REVIEWS

CBA/Benson Preamp MKII  
Walrus Audio Julianna  
and more...



## WHAT'S IN STORE?

Brick-and-mortars cope with COVID-19

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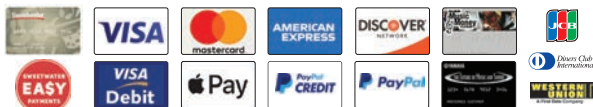
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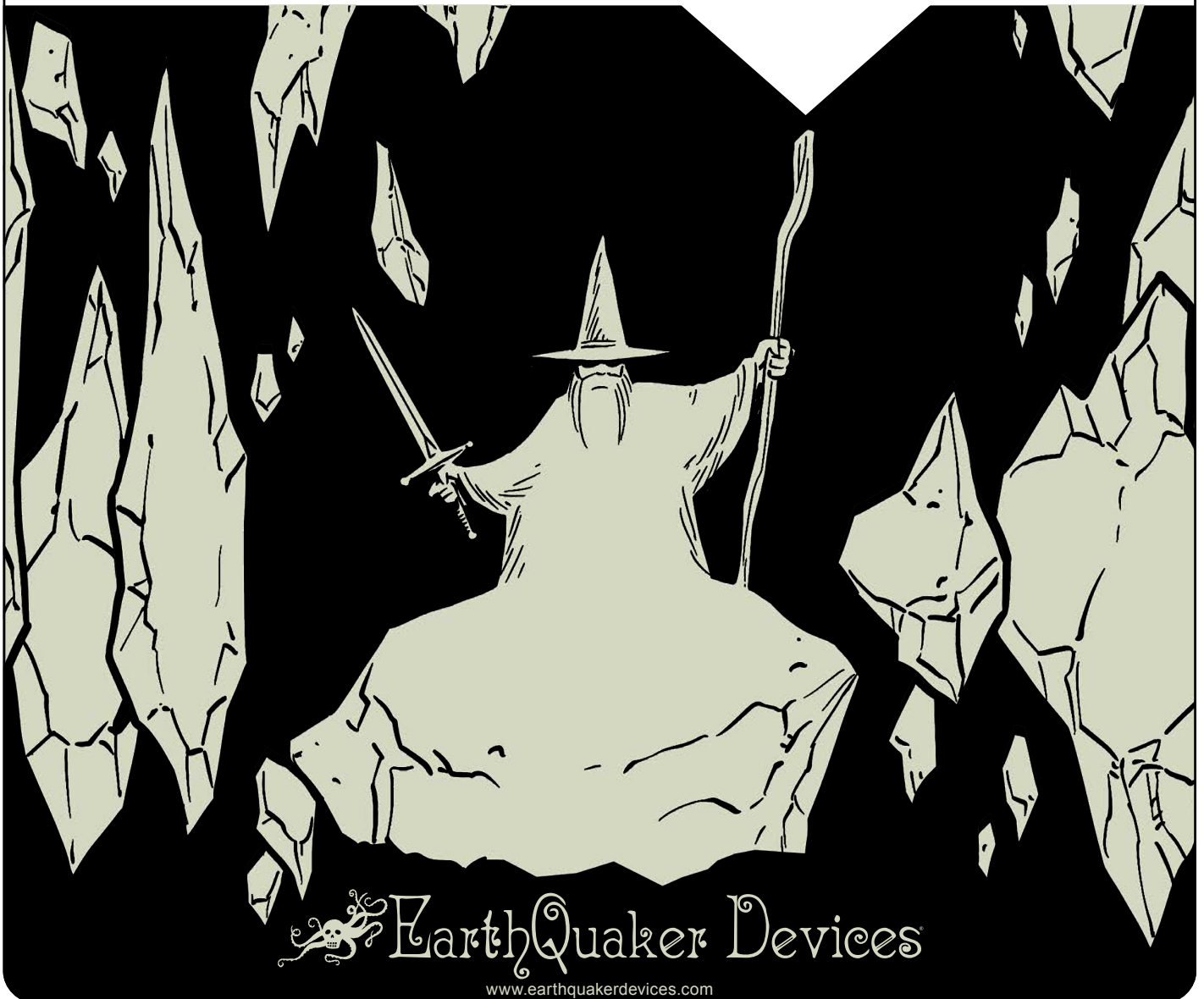
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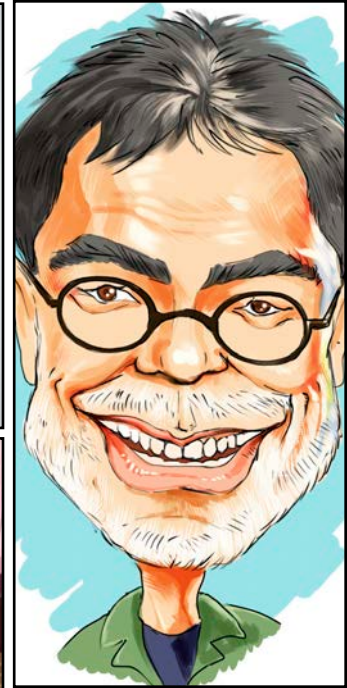
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GREETINGS all! How's your sanity these days? We're teetering here at Gearphoria HQ. After a near-miss from Hurricane Laura, our energy provider decided the rolling blackouts were needed to maintain the integrity of their transmission system, so this Letter From The Editor is coming at you from a hotel room near the big airport in Houston, Texas. Ah, 2020... don't ever change. (Actually, no, please change... like, now.)

Our fall classic has a pair of artist interviews to get you through, including one from our friend Adam Miller. The Aussie-born guitarist just released a new album, *Unify*, which deals with the perils of moving from his homeland down under to the US west coast. We chat extensively about the gear used on the record and also managed the long-awaited return of Axe Forensics, as we take a closer look at his parts-built thinline.

Our man Tom Liskey is back with a brief conversation with UK's Lanterns On The Lake. The group recently released its fourth studio album *Spook the Herd*, and we hear a bit about that process from members Hazel Wilde and Paul Gregory.

Our ongoing virus coverage brings us to the brick-and-mortar retailers, specifically those smaller shops that peddle boutique gear. We get the low

down on the current state of play from four different retailers located in Texas, Colorado, Minnesota and Tennessee. As you'd imagine the struggle is real, but there is a silver lining tucked in all the madness.

On the gear review front we check out the Preamp MKII, the latest from Chase Bliss and their collaboration with Benson Amps, as well as a pair of pedals from Korora Audio and more.

Record albums more your thing? No problem! We've got a handful of fresh reviews giving our take on the latest music from Bob Mould, Grant-Lee Phillips and Old 97's. There is also a Re-Lic'd from 1995 and the debut album from post-grunge outfit Fig Dish.

All of this, plus our normal columns (Dan talks tone, while James talks power.), news, opinions and much more! Ready? Set? Read!

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief, Gearphoria

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PHOTO: HOLLY CLAYTON



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Aussie guitarist fills us in on his wild 2019 and the resulting album, *Unify*. We also get him to break down his parts-built thinline in the long-awaited return of Axe Forensics!



## The Great Guitar Build Off is on!

Luthiers from *around the world* build for charity

THE GREAT Guitar Build Off 2020 is calling all guitar enthusiasts to cast their votes and help name the winner of this charitable competition. The unique contest challenged the most talented makers on YouTube to build the best electric guitars in a limited time frame and using the same base kit. The public now has the opportunity to vote for their favorite build, and each guitar will be raffled off with 100% of the proceeds benefiting charities that the builders have chosen.

The Great Guitar Build Off is sponsored by Crimson Guitars, which provided the luthiers' kits used in the competition. The contest was free of rules, allowing each builder to decide how to customize and complete their guitar. After the guitars were finished, the builders released videos on their YouTube channels to showcase their work.

Each builder has been allowed one week of intense campaigning to their respective social media followers and YouTube subscrib-

ers, and voting is open on the contest website, [www.greatguitarbuildoff.com](http://www.greatguitarbuildoff.com). To ensure a fair playing field, the scoring system will be worked out based on how many views the last video gets of each competitor. Whomever gets the most views will be 100% when calculating the size of the other videos. Then, however many views the next videos get will be divided down to get a percentage of this total. This percentage will then be multiplied by the number of tickets sold to win the guitar.

All makers released a video on September 4, on their YouTube channels to showcase the build. Builders can release as many videos of the build progress as they like on their channels and these videos will also be available to view on the builders' pages on this website.

The voting and donation platform will be active until Saturday, September 12. The overall winner of this build challenge will be announced on Saturday September 26. 🎯



## Keeley gets new HQ, artery repair

**New digs** and **bypass surgery** for effects legend



KEELEY Electronics has a new headquarters, and company top dog Robert Keeley now has an improved circulatory system. Keeley announced on social media that he had purchased a 17,000-plus square foot space in south Edmond, Oklahoma. The front office portion of the new facility is about 5,000 square feet with the rest of the shop making up roughly 12,500 square feet.

“I was so excited to leave after closing, I forgot to get the keys for the place,” he said in a social media post.

Keeley added that the company will do a \$500,000 build-out project prior to move-in. Construction is expected to take between six and eight months.

Meanwhile, the man himself underwent some maintenance by way of double-bypass surgery on August 20. Keeley joked that it was a Super Phat Mod to his ticker that will get him another 20 years at least. According to a social media post by his wife Lisa, the surgery went well and he is currently recovering and getting some much-deserved rest.

While he might be sidelined

for a bit, Keeley did drop some info on the immediate future for Keeley Electronics. Look for a brand new pedal (or two!) to be

releasing “sooner rather than later”. No indications on exactly what or when, but hints are said to be forthcoming. 🌀

# Capturing the Magic...

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## NAMM 2021 canceled

**New, virtual gathering will take place** in lieu of *in-person* tradeshow

THE 2021 Winter NAMM show scheduled for January of next year in Anaheim, California, has been canceled due to the continuing global impacts of COVID-19. NAMM show organizers announced the annual trade show would not go forward in 2021, but instead a virtual gathering dubbed *Believe In Music* will take its place the week of January 18.

The new, online-only event is described as a mix of comprehensive programming and professional education at *BelieveinMusic.tv*, as well as an interactive marketplace to connect buyers and sellers – all

designed to elevate the innovation and inspiration found across the industry while offering support for those most deeply affected by COVID-19. There will not be a virtual tradeshow component to the event.

“While it remains unsafe for us to gather in person in January, *Believe in Music* week will use new, intuitive technology to connect us all to harness the incredible energy that happens when we come together,” said Joe Lamond, NAMM president and CEO. “With a robust marketplace to launch new products and share your brand story, *Believe in Music* will also feature

networking and matchmaking for our buyers and our sellers, education for all segments of the industry, and live music and concerts. And just like at all NAMM events, these activities will raise awareness and financial support to serve our NAMM family across our Circle of Benefits model. *Believe in Music* week will be a critical step for our industry to help us prepare for the new year and new opportunities.”

As of this announcement, NAMM still has plans to move forward with the 2021 Summer NAMM show, scheduled for July 15-17 in Nashville, Tennessee. 🌞

## Postponed Texas guitar show now axed

Dallas show *hits reset*, will *aim* for 2021

THE 2020 edition of the Dallas International Guitar Festival, originally postponed from its early May date to October has now been canceled. The show is an eclectic mix of vintage and new instruments and live acts ranging from country to blues to rock and beyond. According to a post on social media, show organizers concluded that after much consideration and ongoing communication with state and local officials, the 2020 show was canceled, but plans to return April 30th, May 1st and 2nd of 2021.

“This decision is the result of our cooperation with government mandates and our sincere concern for the health and well-being of our attendees, exhibitors, performers, and staff,” the post read. “All purchased tickets for the 2020 festival will be valid for any future Dallas International Guitar Festival. We sincerely appreciate your support, patience and understanding, and cannot wait to see you next year!”

The 2020 show, scheduled for Dallas Market Hall, was set to feature performances from George Lynch, Andy Timmons, Matt Schofield, Ana Popovic and many more. Show top dog Jimmy Wallace is looking to get as many of the 2020 performers as he can back for the 2021 show.

The exhibition has historically be a good mix of vendors including both retailers and manufacturers. Some past MI companies that have made the trek to Texas include Martin Guitars, Gibson, TrueTone, Ernie Ball, Keeley Electronics, Eventide, Wilson Effects, Category 5 Amps, Brian Cole Guitars, Big Joe Stomp Boxes, Homestead Amps and more. 🌀



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- ▶ 3 new Algorithms in 2019
- ▶ 32 total studio quality algorithms

**ZOIA**

- ▶ 6 firmware updates in 2019
- ▶ 80+ Modules

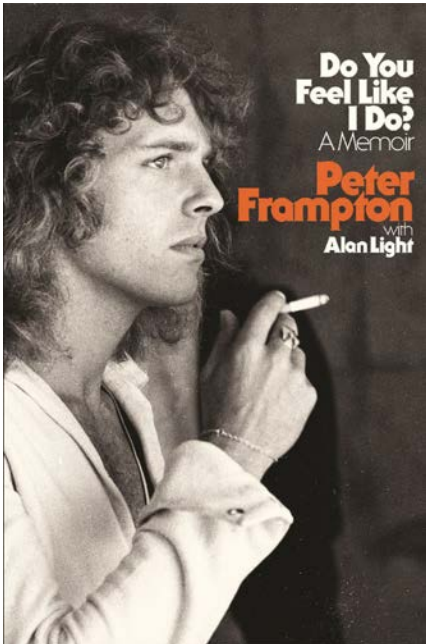
**ECHOSYSTEM**

- ▶ 2 new algorithms in 2019
- ▶ 41 total studio quality algorithms

[www.empresseffects.com](http://www.empresseffects.com)

## Frampton, Kravitz autobiographies en route

Life stories coming from **guitar duo**



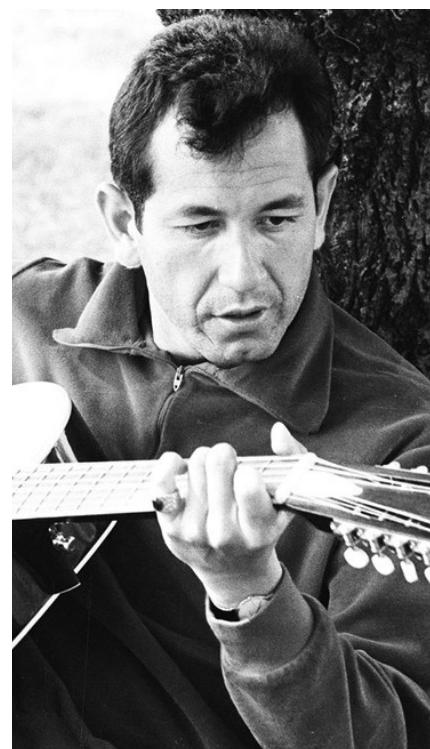
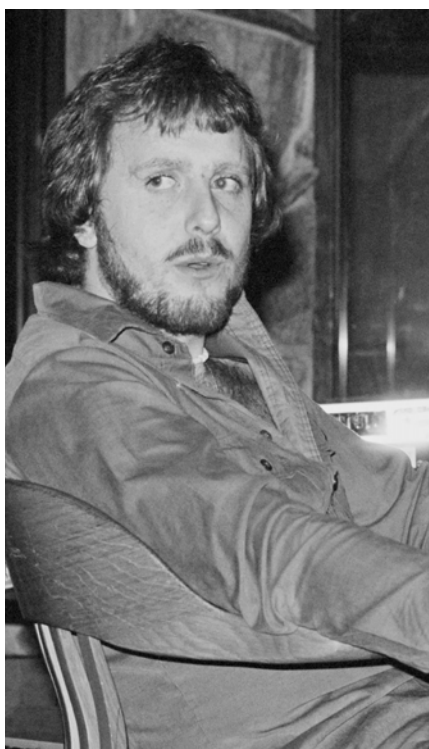
A PAIR OF rock icons have autobiographies hitting book store shelves soon. Peter Frampton's book *Do You Feel Like I Do?: A Memoir with Alan Light* is due on October 20 via Hachette Books. The Grammy-winning artist shares stories of his diverse collaborative work and reveals both the blessing and curse of *Frampton Comes Alive!*, his breakout 1976 live album. He opens up about his experience grappling with fame at a young age, his overcoming substance abuse, and how he continues to play despite an inflammatory muscle disease. Woven throughout is the story of Frampton's favorite guitar, which he thought he'd lost in a plane crash in 1980 but reappeared in 2011, saved from the wreckage.

"This is my journey," Frampton says of the book. "All I ever wanted to do was play guitar and it's taken me many different places—physically and mentally. I've been to the moon and back without a

rocket, but also to the depths of despair. You never stop paying your dues. Failure has been my greatest inspiration. I brush myself off and then I want to 'do it again.' Do You Feel Like I Do?"

Just before the Frampton book, Lenny Kravitz will release *Let Love Rule*, co-written by biographer and songwriter David Ritz. The memoir is due on October 6 via Henry Holt and Company. ⚙️





## Rest in peace, Peter, Martin and Trini

Rock music *loses* a trio of *inspired* souls

GUITARIST and co-founding member of Fleetwood Mac, Peter Green passed away in his sleep on July 25, 2020. He was 73. Green's family confirmed his death in a statement to the BBC: "It is with great sadness that the family of Peter Green announce his death this weekend, peacefully in his sleep. A further statement will be provided in the coming days." Green, along with drummer Mick Fleetwood and John McVie, would go on to become Fleetwood Mac, in the late 1960s. Green was with the band for about three years, but during that time it rose in status to become one of the UK's top blues-rock acts. He left the band in May 1970.

The next several years were turbulent for Green as he battled mental illness. He released a few albums during the 1980s. Green and the other members of Fleetwood Mac

were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1998.

"No one has ever stepped into the ranks of Fleetwood Mac without a reverence for Peter Green and his talent, and to the fact that music should shine bright and always be delivered with uncompromising passion!" said Mick Fleetwood in a statement following Green's passing.

While the name Martin Birch might not ring a bell in most households, any fan of classic 1980s metal and hard rock has certainly heard his work. The renowned, UK-based producer was behind the console for such classic bands as Iron Maiden, Deep Purple, Whitesnake, Rainbow and others during the height of their combined creativity and played an integral role in defining their sounds. Birch died on August 7, 2020, at 71. A cause of death was not disclosed. Iron Maiden collec-

tive called him — "A man of many nicknames... and simply one of the greatest people we have ever worked with."

American singer, guitarist, and actor Trini Lopez passed away on August 11, 2020, from complications related to COVID-19. He was 83. Lopez had hits with renditions of 'If I Had a Hammer' and 'Lemon Tree' during the 1960s, and was an accomplished actor who appeared in films including *The Dirty Dozen*.

Foo Fighters leader Dave Grohl, a big fan of Lopez's signature Gibson guitar, posted his thanks to Lopez on social media — "Every album we have ever made, from the first to the latest, was recorded with my red Trini Lopez signature guitar. It is the sound of our band and my most prized possession from the day I bought it in 1992. Thank you, Trini for all of your contributions." 🎸

# EVEN MORE NEW PEDALS

IF THE VIRUS has been good for anything, it has been the prolific creation of new sound devices to tempt their socially-distant workspaces to good use and churn out some truly inspiring designs. Fuzzes, dirtboxes, hit the market and a few that are coming soon!



## HORROTHIA TEETH

TOM Oakes, the builder behind UK's Horrothia FX, is moving closer to the release of his Teeth low-gain overdrive. According to a recent social media post, the pedal is an original, ground-up discrete op-amp design and has been undergoing trials and tweaks over the past several months. The latest addition to the package is the Breath switch, which adds an 'airy' boost to the signal. The plan is to make the pedal available in small batches with the first lot of around 10 or so available sometime during the second half of October.

**Price: TBD**



## BENSON DEEP SEA DIVER

OK, THIS one is already sold out,

so you'll be looking on the after-market if you are interested, but we still wanted to give a mention that our pal Chris Benson produced a limited run of his Preamp pedal for Seattle-based band Deep Sea Diver. The special edition was pre-sold as part of a package for the band's upcoming new record *Impossible Weight* (due October 16). It's the same Benson Preamp you can still buy, just with a special Deep Sea Diver paint scheme. Only 30 of this special edition were made.

**Price: \$249.**



## MASTER EFFECTS MOTIVS

Master Effects upcoming Motivs stereo chorus pedal is a modern update to a classic EHX Small Clone. Built around a NOS MN3007 BBD chip, Master added a depth pot instead of a switch, a wet/dry blend to go from clean dry signal to chorus to vibrato, as well as a four-position mode switch that controls the intensity from mild to wild. There is also a delay trimmer under the hood that allows you to tweak the

chorus to your taste or just leave it stock. Demos were slated to go live as the magazine went live, and orders are scheduled to open soon.

**Price: TBD**



## IDIOTBOX REPO MAN

THIS one is still shrouded in a bit of mystery, but I'm sure Matt at Idiotbox will spill the beans soon on the upcoming Repo Man. If we had to guess, we would say we're looking at a time-based pedal. The name implies taking something back... a cycle, if you will, so is it a delay, perhaps? Time will tell! (See what we did there?)

**Price: \$275.**



## SOLIDGOLDFX OBLIVION

HOW many flangers are too many

# PEDALS, STILL... OK?

tonal tastebuds of the guitar-playing public. Builders big and small have taken the opportunity to put super flangers -- and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Take a look below at some of the newest stomps to

flangers? Solid Gold is hoping the number isn't four. The new Oblivion quad flanger boasts the traditional Speed, Range and Regen controls, but where the pedal really shines is in the three distinct flange modes available. It started with a classic flanger and throw in Thru-Zero capabilities. A bi-flange mode offsets a pair of modulating delay lines for even more sweeping movement. While the quad-flange mode adds four independent delay lines for massive swooshing tsunamis of ominous textures. We won't lie, it's a lot of flanging.

*Price: \$249.*



## STEAMBOAT RE-CHAMP

THE STEAMBOAT Ampworks Re-Champ is a load box designed to work with a small amp (like a Fender Champ, for example) to route it safely as a pre-amp, dirt-box, overdrive or whatever, into another amp. Instead of futzing around with pedals that promise rich tube amp style overdrive, the Re-Champ allows the user to use

an amp as overdrive. The illustration shown on the Re-Champ is meant to demonstrate its standard hook-up and use. These will be built in batches, so if you find them out of stock patience will likely pay off.

*Price: \$135.*



## JACKSON AUDIO EL GUAPO

A COLLABORATION between Jackson Audio and modern guitar hero Mateus Asato, the Jackson Audio El Guapo pours the sound of a classic high-gain British tube amp into a feature-packed distortion pedal. Extremely versatile, El Guapo (not to be confused with the MojoHand FX fuzz) sports four clipping modes that serve up a range of tones, from blues rock to heavy metal. El Guapo includes Jackson Audio's gain cycle feature with four scalable maximum gain settings to add increasing intensity during a performance. Topping it all off is El Guapo's TS-style overdrive, which pushes the distortion section into heavy clip-

ping and sustain. If you're into MIDI pedals, El Guapo's got you covered as well, with full MIDI control over its multiple clipping modes and gain cycling feature.

*Price: \$349.*



## SKREDDY SUPER 100

THE SKREDDY Super 100 is based on the heavy and throaty sound of a mid-to-late-60's era 100-watt British tube amp. The pedal responds very much like a tube amp would to your pickup volumes and to the impact of running other effect pedals in front of it. Run it by itself or stacked with your favorite drive, boost or fuzz. The Super 100's three-band EQ is flexible and creates a beefy, classic 70's rock voice, while the Sag control tightens up the dynamics at clockwise or permits full, punchy, wall-shaking dynamics at counter-clockwise.

*Price: \$239.*



## Songbirds guitar museum closes

Ongoing **virus concerns** made it **impossible** to continue

SONGBIRDS Guitar Museum, and sister venues, closed their doors for good on August 15 after a three-plus-year run. The Chattanooga, Tennessee-based attraction was home to one of the world's largest collec-

tion of rare and vintage guitars. In a post on social media, the museum said that "due to the unpredictable course and unforeseeable end of the COVID-19 pandemic, limited touring artists coming through our area,

and our lease coming up for renewal in the near future, Songbirds has decided to close our doors."

Guitarist and rabid guitar collector Joe Bonamassa added: "It is simply the greatest guitar collection that will ever be put on display to the public. It is world-class all the way. I am extremely sad to see it go. It has done massive amounts for the guitar community as well as giving artists a stage to play in Chattanooga. It is a lifetime of collecting and a lifetime of passion for America's unsurpassed contribution to the electric and acoustic guitar."

President and Songbirds Foundation Chairman Johnny Smith said the Songbirds Foundation will continue. The foundation is dedicated to teaching guitar to area youth, and will soon have an increased presence in area schools and the music therapy department at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. 🎸



## Waters museum planned

Blues man's **house** to be **converted**

THE FORMER house of blues legend Muddy Waters is slated for renovation and conversion into a museum celebrating the late Chicago-born musician. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has given a \$50,000 grant to transform the six-time Grammy winner's brick house located in the North Kenwood neighborhood of the city into the Muddy Waters MOJO Museum. MOJO is an anagram for Muddy Waters Original Jam Out. Led by Waters' great-granddaughter, Chandra Cooper, the renovation project will include a neighborhood museum attached to a community center. The museum will also include exhibits focused on the artist and his music, a small venue, a recording studio, and a community garden. 🎸





## Gibson goes after Satellite, Collings...

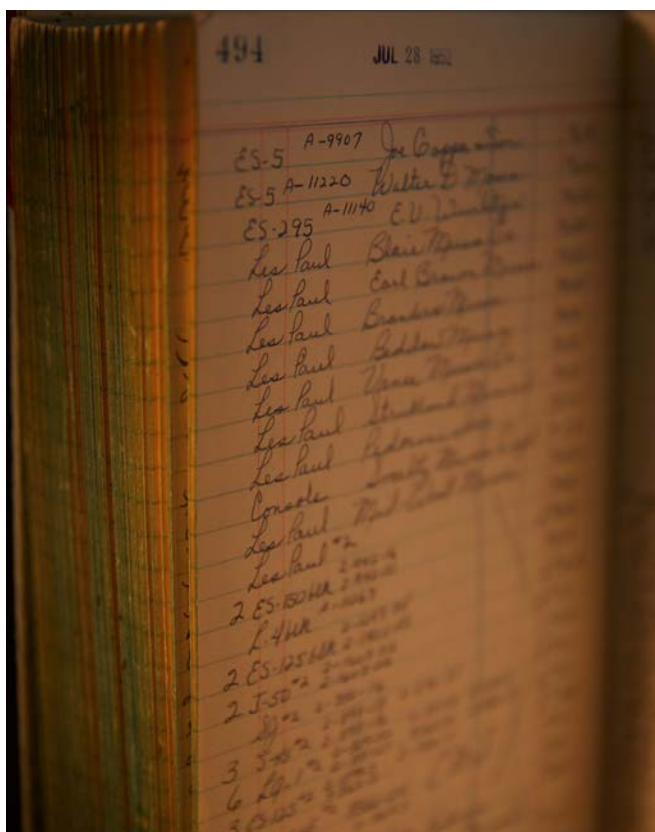
Trademark *tiffs* spark potential *legal* action

GUITAR manufacturer Gibson has moved to invalidate the ‘Coronet’ trademark currently held by Satellite Amps owner Adam Grimm, looking to confirm its trademark ownership on a ‘first-use’ basis. Gibson, under its Epiphone brand, introduced the

Coronet in the 1950s. According to the US trademark office, Grimm filed for the Coronet trademark on July 16, 2016, after presumably finding no active mark covering the name related to the manufacture and sale of guitars. He began offering his

Coronet shortly thereafter. Gibson applied for the Coronet trademark on June 3, 2020. That mark recently got moved to ‘Non-Final Office Action Issued - Clarification Needed’ status. The Satellite mark is now ‘Cancellation Pending’, which means the office is reviewing canceling the mark(s) because of: (1) abandonment, (2) alleged infringement, (3) genericide or (4) a combination of the listed reasons.

Gibson has also opposed a Collings Guitars trademark application for a headstock design citing “likelihood of confusion”. Collings’ trademark application was made on March 31, 2019. Gibson’s opposition was filed on June 17, 2020. Gibson claims the Collings design is too similar to three Gibson headstock designs including the 1963 Epiphone design, which was recently revived by the brand. 🎸



## ...and seeks lost ledger

Reward offered for *company* books

GIBSON has launched a global search for missing shipping ledgers from 1959-1960. These ledgers contain the shipping records of all the Gibson guitars created during that year and documents an important period in Gibson’s history. The 1959-1960 shipping ledgers in question disappeared from Gibson’s archives around 30 years ago and may have never made the move with the company from Kalamazoo to Nashville.

The Gibson family is asking for assistance in recovering the missing 1959-60 ledgers. Upon validation of authenticity, the safe return of the books comes with a \$59,000 cash reward, with zero questions asked.

In addition, Gibson is seeking to recover pre-1970 documents, blueprints, and unique Gibson historical assets. Gibson is willing to evaluate relevant items and individual rewards terms on a case-by-case basis. Gibson reserves the right to validate the information and to authenticate materials as genuine articles prior to issuing rewards for pre-1970 items, which may include cash, Gibson gift cards, instruments, and experiences. 🎸



## Trade show? Guitar show? No show?

*Future gear gatherings will look different... won't they?*

WHEN Dylan sang “The times, they are a-changin’” I’m wondering if this is what he had in mind? No matter what you believe about COVID-19 it’s hard to argue that it has materially changed the way forward for many things, including commerce. Would you want to own a bunch of office buildings right now? How about a company whose business is contingent on gatherings of people, like movie theaters, concert halls, sporting events or convention/trade shows? NAMM has thrown in the towel for the Winter shindig in 2021 and it is hard to see a time when things might go back to the way they were. That’s not to say that I’m not optimistic, but the road map is cluttered with so much misinformation, head fakes and flat-out untruths it makes it difficult to plot a course.

If I had to guess, things will

likely start moving on a local level first. Smaller guitar shows, amp-fests, etc. will crop up here and there. If those go off without a hitch, then larger shows may take their cues and proceed. Things will be different, however -- occupancy limits, face masks and sanitizer stations will be the “new norm”, at least for a while.

This year has been a real shit-show, but just because the calendar flips in a few months doesn’t mean we’re going to suddenly be rid of all that plagues us. And so far, there is nothing I’ve seen on the horizon that tells me that 2021 is going to be materially different, at least early on.

Is it time for show sponsors to go in full hog on the virtual experience? I’ve attended a few virtual events over the past few months and I’m sorry to report that we

are not there yet when it comes to making online conferences/exhibitions worth the time. However, I am sure that folks smarter than me are working on unlocking the full potential of virtual events as I type. Perhaps NAMM will crack the code with their Believe In Music week, the e-replacement for the Winter show this coming January.

Part of what makes the MI industry great is the diverse group of misfits and geniuses that make up the ranks of the makers. It’s a lovely time when many of these folks, who are usually chained to a crowded workbench, can come out and mix with like-minded creators, and for a brief moment, everything is fine.

That’s what I will miss about no in-person Winter NAMM in 2021. It’s a feeling and an atmosphere that no amount of virtual shenanigans can replicate or replace. 🌀

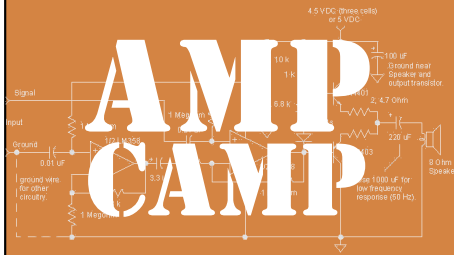


# Whimsical AF. M O O D AF.

M O O D™ is a two channel granular micro-looper / delay. Designed to be playful and immediate, it is a study of interaction. M O O D™ is internally collaborative, allowing audio to freely pass back and forth between its two sides, evolving and transforming over time. Drolo FX is behind the loop channel, a collection of always-listening micro-loopers, and Old Blood Noise Endeavors offer us the wet channel, a suite of live spatial effects. We have three different options for how the channels are internally routed. Run a time-stretched loop through a cloud of delay taps, re-record it and carry on. Overdub, freeze, dissolve, smear. The device's heart is the clock control, which slows or accelerates both sides simultaneously in harmonized steps. Instantly turn a loop into rolling chirps, or divide a reverb down into atmospheric noise.

  
**CHASEBLISS**  
AUDIO

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# Why can't I get that vintage sound?

Hint: It's *science...* and *preference*



FOR ALL guitar players there are phases we go through. Often we're chasing a sound from the past that is exciting us or calling to us. I'm sure anyone who has been playing guitar for more than a year has experienced this phenomenon and have spent a lot of time and money chasing a sound from a certain era. The normal sequence of events is to find similar gear, reissues of amps and guitars, etc and yet it's really hard to find. Unless you buy the gear that was used back then and it's well preserved, it's almost impossible to recreate a sound from the past. There's almost always one element that is overlooked or not taken seriously; the pickups.

There's a couple things to understand about how pickups were made in the 50's or 60's versus how modern manufacturing creates them today. There's a lot more to beyond just getting the impedance right or the magnet compound. I know this may be a bit of a surprise to many of you who have been told for decades that these factors are all that's important to recreating a sound... but you know from personal experience something is missing. Let's dig in a little bit!

Ultimately it's the pickups that tell your amplifier what to do. Every element of the pickups will play a role in making your sound. Many manufacturers want to gloss over this and focus on only what they can control affordably... impedance and magnets, but that's the just the beginning of the story. First example: magnets. We're all familiar with AlNiCo 2,3,4 and 5 magnets. They're all the same right? Sorry to say, no, that's just the beginning of the magnet story. There's a process to making magnets and much of that process can ultimately affect the performance of your pickups. There are many grades of each type of magnet i.e. – AlNiCo 2 is not AlNiCo 2, there's low grade all the way up to primo quality. "AlNiCo" is an acronym for an alloy made from the elements: Aluminum, Nickel, and Cobalt. There are many ways to combine those elements and multiple ways to anneal (cook) the metal to get the desired results.

How much carbon pollution is in the original magnets vs recreations? The annealing process decades ago was a hand process and much slower than modern annealing. Modern annealing is done by computers at high speed

and since magnets are ruined if they boil during the process, modern magnets are doped with Silicon to raise the boiling temperatures and this will change the ultimate character of the magnet. You can imagine the giant rabbit hole we could go down on this subject and all the subtleties and variations that are possible? There are only few pickup makers that have found ways to recreate the exact mix of AlNiCo and the carbon content which can get you closer to that original sound. Most notably Ron Ellis has perfected this aspect of his pickups and gets an instantly recognizable and very authentic sound. Ron is an engineer and performs a Spectral Analysis on old pickups and can determine the exact mix of AlNiCo and Carbon pollution and at what temperature the original magnets were annealed at. It's extremely sophisticated and fun! Other makers have figured out how to compensate for modern materials to achieve equally remarkable results as well.

Another crucial factor in pickup performance is the wire. Not only is the wire composition crucial but the quality of the wire and the correct gauge of wire. It's very easy for a manufacturer to list its components and it looks correct on the surface, but you're not hearing what the quality of those components are. So is the wire Poly coated? Formvar? Plain? Enamel coated? Is it high quality copper? You see where this is going right? It's an endless set of parameters that can all be adjusted, played with, experimented with, etc. to create a pickup. The level of research that a pickup maker can go to is amazing. Some do a great job, some come up with their own recipes, some just copy other stuff; many with excellent results. But let's leave all the above men-

tioned factors alone and focus on just one element, impedance.

Over the decades of the electric guitar's reign, we've become accustomed to the sound and feel of very powerful pickups. However in reality, early pickups were extremely weak compared to even good reissues of old pickups. Early Gretsch guitars had pickups as low as 3K. Fenders and Gibson were flamethrowers with pickups from 6-8k. Modern pickups are very commonly over 10-12K and sometimes as high as 16k! Higher output pickups are more forgiving and will drive an amp into distortion much faster because the bigger signal will slam the first tube (V1) of your amp and compress the signal which makes it very "user friendly". But that is not the sound of old guitars and amps. It was all low output and twangy guitar sounds often into amps that were all the way up because lower output pickups didn't push amps too hard. It's a very different paradigm than we're used to. There's a downside to this, it's a very different vocabulary and set of factors to get that sound.

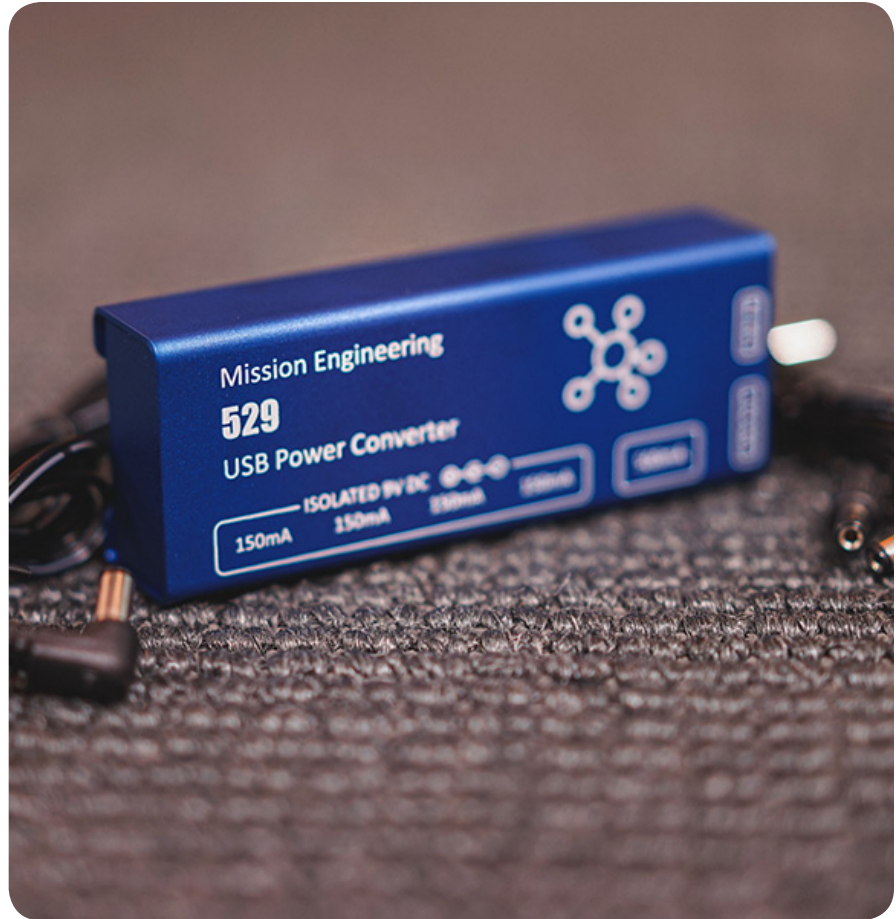
The last element of the old pickups is that they were designed around using heavier strings that we're used to today. Ninety percent of modern guitar players use 10s or 9s... those didn't even exist in the 50's and 60's. Twelves were standard issue and 11s were considered "ultra-light" strings and most strings back then were flat wound as well. Round wound strings didn't become standard until the 70's. Strings of a heavier gauge and flat wound interact very differently with pickups and make a big difference. So take into consideration that Chuck Berry, early Keith Richards, George Harrison, Pete Townsend, etc. they were all playing heavy strings through low gain amps with low output pickups compared to today's guitar players.

One relevant anecdote I'll share that really paints this picture. I have a very well-known acquaintance who writes gear reviews. He and a buddy got ahold of one of SRV's Fender combo amps; it had provenance and everything, it was definitely one of the known SRV amps around and we'd all heard it recorded. When my friend got this amp, he called the shop and told us about it but he was very disappointed as it didn't seem to be operating well and the sound was nothing like what he'd expected; he was really sad. Then out of desperation, he found an old Strat and tried it.. still not what he was expecting but closer. Then it occurred to him to put 13 gauge strings on the guitar and detune it down to E-flat; all just like Stevie and voila! There it was, "that" tone that he expected from one of SRV's amps! But it took getting the correct pickups and the correct strings, etc. and suddenly it all came together. It was getting those elements together that made him realize how crucial these things are and there's no way around it.

So the lesson here is that you CAN find these tones but never overlook the crucial elements of the pickups and how they're setup and actuated or stimulated! It's not just the amp, it's not just the guitar, etc. The pickups have to be made correctly, with the correct materials, with the proper care and construction and you're going to get really close. So if you buy a great vintage amp and plug in your modern guitar with modern pickups, don't be surprised or disappointed if you have a hard time finding "that tone" you're looking for, it's out there. I hope this helps you on your journey to finding audio happiness and good luck! Cheers! 🎸

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**Dan Boul** is the president of 65amps -- a boutique guitar amplification company based in Los Angeles.



## The FYI on USB

Power *delivery* is as *important* as what you're *powering*

USB was originally designed as a replacement for the various serial and parallel connectors for computer peripherals. Back in the mid 1990's, portable computers were becoming more popular and the industry wanted a standard interface that used a smaller connector.

As well as carrying data, USB also added the ability to carry power. A single cable could be used both to communicate and power a device. In the first version of the USB specification, power was limited to a quite small 100mA at 5V. The power limits of USB have been gradually updated with new versions of the specifications, but they have still been quite limited for modern devices such as battery

packs. To address this, the USB standards body introduced a new USB specification called Power Delivery (USB-PD).

This new specification makes USB an attractive alternative for powering audio equipment such as effects pedals, keyboards, audio interfaces, and even small to moderate-sized amplifiers.

Power Delivery brings two upgrades.

**1. Maximum power increases from 7.5W to 100W.**

Although the previous generation has an additional specification called Battery Charging (USB-BC) that can support 25W, this isn't

available on all devices. Even then, PD still brings four times as much power.

## 2. Variable voltages.

Previous generations are limited to 5V, and getting to higher voltages from a USB connection required additional boost converters. USB-PD can support different voltages such as 5V, 9V, 12V and 20V.

Getting here required a couple of significant changes. Firstly, Power Delivery requires a USB-C cable. Secondly, there needs to be some intelligence in the devices, and in some cases the cable too, to negotiate the power features.

Previous to USB-C, you'll recall that a USB cable has different connectors at each end. You usually do not see a USB-A – USB-A cable. One of the key reasons for this is to prevent two power sources from being connected together. A USB-C cable is the same at both ends. To prevent two power sources being connected together, PD devices communicate with each other to determine which should provide the power. The specification provides for role switching which means if your device supports it, it can be both a power source and a power sink. Think about connecting a power bank to a laptop. With role switching, the power bank can either power the laptop, or the laptop can recharge the power bank – with the same cable. Nice.

Voltage is also handled by the Power Delivery negotiation. When you connect a power bank to a charger, the charger communicates its capabilities to the power bank. It may say that it can support 5, 9 and 12V and what its current limit for each voltage is. The power bank then tells the charger what it prefers. For example, it may confirm that it requires 12V @2A. The charger then enables this and the power bank begins charging at

the requested voltage. An important thing to remember here is that although the specification supports a range of different voltages and currents, most devices will not support all of them. 100W chargers are still rare, and most battery packs will only support a subset, depending on their size and price point. When you are choosing a battery or charger, it's important to check that it can provide the voltages and currents that you need to power your device.

The Mission 529M is a USB-PD power converter for guitar effects and similar devices. The 529M performs the PD negotiation with a power source such as a portable power bank or wall charger and provides the power on a 2.1mm center pin negative connector. You select the voltage that you want the 529M to provide on the effects pedal power output using a small switch on the underside. The factory default is set to 9V. The 529M can support five different voltages and you'll need to check these against the battery or charger that you want to use.

- 529 6V – requires USB-PD 5V
- 529 9V – requires USB-PD 9V
- 529 12V – requires USB-PD 12V
- 529 15V – requires USB-PD 15V
- 529 18V – requires USB-PD 20V

If we check the specifications for a typical battery pack we see it supports the following voltages on its USB-C PD output:

- 5 V, 3 A
- 9 V, 2 A
- 12 V, 1.5 A

So, with this battery we can select 6V, 9V or 12V using the voltage selector switch on the 529M. This battery does not support 15 or 20V so we won't be able to use those. If we request a voltage on the 529M that the source does not support,

the output will remain at the nearest voltage level below that it does support. In this case if we select 15V or 18V, the output will remain at 12V.

Also, be aware of the current limit. We can see that this battery pack supports 2A at 9V, so we would need to make sure that the total current draw from our connected devices does not exceed that.

If, we want the 529M to provide higher voltages or more current at the output, we'll need to use a battery that can support it. Let's take a look at a large battery that has the following specs:

- 5V, 3A
- 9V, 3A
- 12V, 3A
- 15V, 3A
- 20V, 3A

So, this battery would support all of the available 529M voltages up to 3A. It's larger and costs a bit more, so you'd need to decide if the extra cost and weight are acceptable. If you are building a small fly rig and don't use any pedals that require anything other than 9V, then you may choose the smaller battery. If you are building a large pedalboard and need 18V or 3A, then the larger battery is likely the better option.

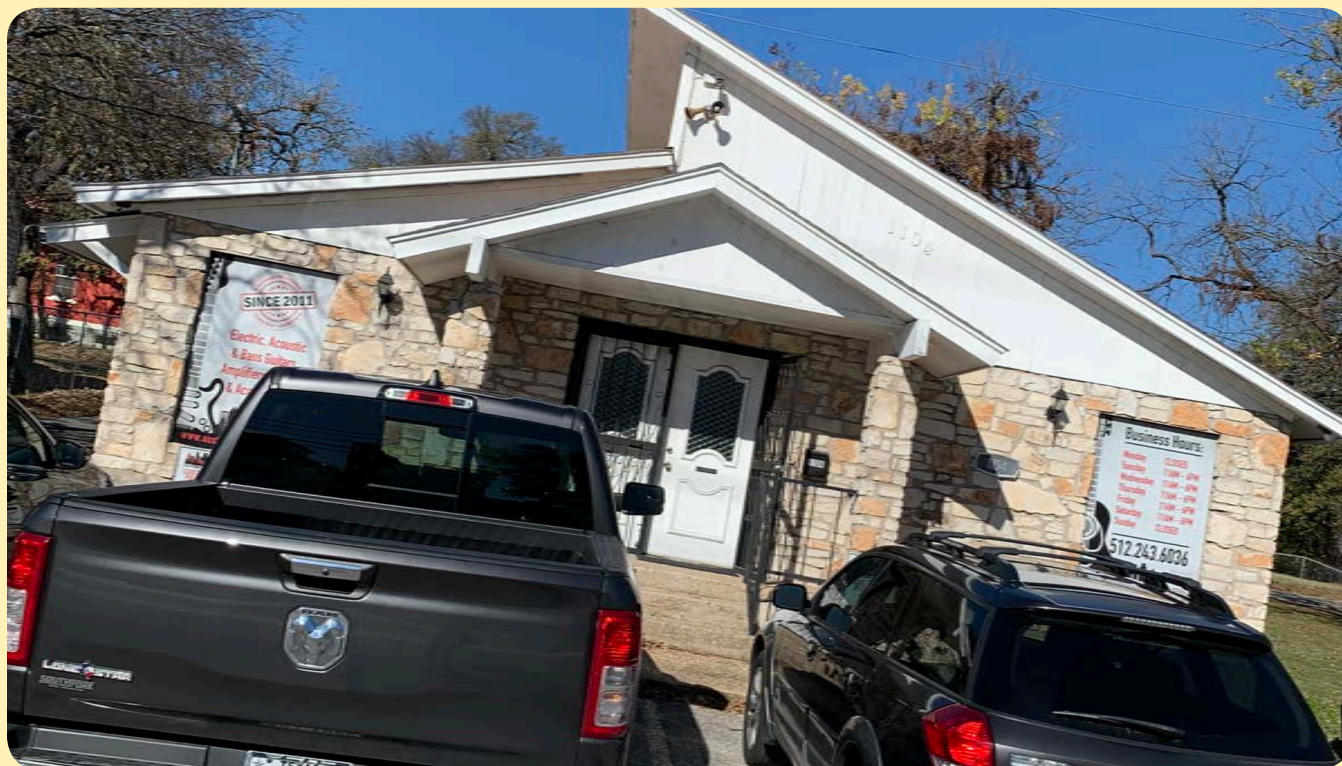
Before you buy a power delivery battery pack or charger, just remember to check the specifications to make sure it meets your requirements. Hopefully, this arms you with the information to choose the best one for your needs. One of the great things about USB batteries is the features keep increasing and the price keeps lowering, so if your needs change in the future, all you'll have to do is just swap out the battery. ⚙️

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**James Lebihan** is the owner of Mission Engineering in Petaluma, California. See his handiwork at [www.missionengineering.com](http://www.missionengineering.com).

The virus lockdown forced boutique gear brick-and-mortar stores to adopt ways of en

# RETAILERS



THE DAYS OF virus quarantine brought news of a surge in online purchasing across many industries, including the musical instrument space. With folks faced with a prolonged period at home, many sought to use that time to forward projects ranging from landscaping and repairs to conversion and additions. While we don't have figures on how many home studios were created during this time frame, sales figures from places like Sweetwater, Reverb and American Music Supply would suggest many. Sweetwater told Rolling Stone earlier

this spring that sales of audio interfaces were off the charts — as well microphones, headphones, monitors and more, everything you would need to set-up or upgrade your home studio.

But what about the traditional brick-and-mortars? Those retailers that were dependent on foot traffic to come in, test drive and then purchase new gear suddenly saw that traffic dry up. Local laws shut most of these stores down for a time and only recently have many been able to reopen at limited capacity with limited hours. The prolonged period of

closure forced some to throw in the towel, but others look to adapt as fast and as frugally as they could.

Austin Guitar House has been a staple in the central Texas boutique gear scene for about nine years. Within the past year, the shop upgraded locations and expanded its product range. Life with the virus has impacted sales of certain items, according to owner Oz Hofstatter, but a refocus on online sales has kept some revenue flowing into the business.

“We are open with reduced hours, between 12 to 5pm, but



gaging customers -- online sales, virtual demos, curbside pick-up... but *is it enough?*

# RETRENCH

working internally between 10am to 6pm,” he tells Gearphoria. “Only 10 people (with the staff) are allowed inside the store. Face masks and hand washing is the new ‘norm’. We do offer free shipping and curbside delivery. Online, sales are as good as before, if not even better. We are selling more big items like guitars and amplifiers. Pedals are selling well too, but unfortunately, accessories like strings and others are not selling as well. We are focusing more and more on “online sales” and just launched a new user-friendly website with better pictures, more info, and better SEO. That was our goal.”

Nashville’s Eastside Music Supply is a small boutique shop that caught a glimpse of what 2020 had to offer back in early March when a tornado ripped through the area, and while it didn’t cause damage to the shop itself many of the store’s friends lost their homes, businesses, jobs, cars, etc. in the blink of an eye. Not long after, the virus dug in. Gatherings were being canceled. No concerts. Tours were being postponed or just axed. Once the stay-at-home order was in place,

the doors were shut and Eastside was effectively closed.

“Our primary income is based off of our physical store,” explains owner Blair White. “We built our shop to bring the old fashioned support of a brick and mortar for the local music com-

not an online megastore with the ‘website and a warehouse’ business model.”

Sales dropped but so did operating expenses as most of the shop’s crew were effectively furloughed and could collect unemployment. However, the bills kept coming... and the clientele was effectively locked out.

“We’ve adapted by putting more focus on our online presence, as well as changing some of the day-to-day routines at the shop so we can still have people come inside and feel safe getting what they need,” says White. “If anyone is paying attention nationally you’ve probably seen that Nashville was one of the top cities where the virus was not decreasing, but the opposite. So trying to follow the ordinances given by the city, in a tourist town where people think they are

invincible to the virus has been interesting, to say the least.”

Through the adversity, White remains optimistic that things will work out for Eastside, even without a war chest or a deep-pocketed backer to lean on.

“We do have an incredible local scene that has come together to



community. A place where you can put your hands on the gear and try before you buy. A place to network with other musicians, to ask questions, to learn and so on... We’re not a museum where retired doctors and lawyers come to buy \$30,000 Strats or ‘so and so’s old Les Paul’. We’re also



support each other during these times and that has been very encouraging,” he says. “I guess overall I tend to be somewhat of an optimist and I truly think that we will be able to push through the crap and continue to do what we set out to do seven years ago when we opened our doors.”

Flipside Music has been doing its thing in Denver for the past half-decade or so. The store, located on the city’s south side, boasts one of the state’s largest selection of effects pedals and also hosts amp and guitar brands like Fender, Reverend, Supro, Vola, Dr. Z and more. Owner Anthony “Ike” Iacovangelo Jr. likens the current virus situation to a guitar with a twist in the neck — “You can still do something, but forget about shredding face-melting licks without some serious trickery.”

Flipside saw the writing on the

wall a bit early and was able to prepare some for the stay-at-home order in Colorado. Once the lockdown started, the showroom closed and like many others, the retailer took a hard pivot to online sales.

“We tossed every used piece of gear we had and stuck it on Reverb,” says Iacovangelo. “Much to our surprise gear was selling, and pretty fast. We also saw our website traffic triple, which was great. Then we started seeing an increase in our website orders, even shipped a bunch of stuff to other countries. We thought, well shit, we might just get through this thing. We weren’t lighting the world on fire, but the ship wasn’t sinking either.”

Store sales have normalized, but with a different online/in-house split than before the virus. The shop has reopened and has seen more focus by its customers on purchasing rather than browsing.

“I think people just have had a lot of time to do research and narrow down what they want and like,” he says. “We are also taking the necessary steps to keep people safe. Masks are required and hitting the hand sanitizer is a must before entry. We also limited the number of people in the shop at one time, but we also have turned our lesson rooms into testing areas. Customers feel comfortable having a space all to themselves. We do clean the area after, and also have a UV light as an extra step. We decided to put lessons on hold for a bit.”

Flipside has also taken this time to expand their digital presence via demo and other video content. The crew commandeered some space in the back showroom for new media purposes and continues to reimagine what it means to be a MI retailer in the current and future climate.



“All in all this is a squirrel, bull riding a raccoon,” says Iacovangelo. “No idea how it’s gonna go, but we’re gonna ride this thing out and give it the best we can.”

Minneapolis-based El Diablo Amps & Guitars has been part of the gear scene in the Land of 10,000 Lakes for about eight years. A boutique specialty shop, El Diablo hosts brands like Benson, Milkman, New Vintage, Caroline Guitar, Chase Bliss, Whale Hazard, Zenner and more. Owner Alan Estevez admits he was a bit unprepared for the full impact of the virus lockdown. He has some cash but had also just placed a number of large orders for new merchandise at the NAMM show in January.

“New merchandise would arrive, but there was no one to sell it to, as the phones had gone dead silent, and Minneapolis had turned into a ghost town,” he

recalls. “With my cash reserves dwindling rapidly, I had to furlough my guys, and I called the landlord, the bank, and my suppliers and explained the situation. Thankfully, everyone that I spoke with was gracious and understanding, and I was able to work out deferment plans with each. I continued to show up to work daily, hoping against hope, shipping out the occasional order, or working on repairs. The dark days were peppered with heartwarming phone calls, as a number of long-time clients took the time to call and see how we were doing.”

By mid-April, the shop’s website had shown a considerable uptick in traffic and orders from its *Reverb* portal were streaming in. With many of the big box national retailers shuttered as well, Estevez believes that shoppers had no choice but

to dig a little deeper to satisfy their gear appetites.

“Sales really picked up once the Government stimulus checks went out,” he says. “Thankfully, I was able to rehire my guys, and we’ve been humming ever since. June sales were the highest in the store’s history, and July sales were about 25% higher than last year. If I had to guess, I’d say our record sales were due to a combination of pent up demand, and folks engaging in a bit of retail therapy.”

The way forward is still a bit muted, and the holiday season will be the next test for many brick-and-mortar retailers. El Diablo is running leaner with inventory levels due to the virus and has temporarily halted taking on new brands.

“We’ll continue playing it safe until the future becomes clearer,” says Estevez. 🍀

Checking in with...

# Lanterns On

PAUL Gregory and Hazel Wilde, two of the founding members of the UK-based Lanterns on the Lake, concede the band took its time to record and release the group's first studio album in five years. But they could have never predicted that the record release would coincide with a virus so deadly that the world literary stopped.

*Spook the Herd* hit store shelves in late February 2020 even as the COVID-19 pandemic punished economies and left hundreds of thousands sick and dying around the globe.

The virus's deadly grip prompted world governments to limit social interaction and travel in hopes of blunting the spread of the disease.

That meant the critically acclaimed band couldn't take to the stage in support of the new

album. Dates were canceled, and the band wondered if its finely wrought album would languish in the shadows.

Yet despite the shutdown, *Spook the Herd* has gained the praise of both critics and fans alike. The album was just recently nominated for the prestigious 2020 Mercury Prize.

Sequestered in their home in the north of England with their first child, Alice, Gregory and Wilde spoke with *Gearphoria* about the new album.

The pair described *Spook the Herd* as the band's most purposeful record since they began playing together over a decade ago.

"We really never had a release date in mind, we thought we'd take our time with this one. We spent a long time making sure every note played had a purpose," explains Gregory.

*Spook the Herd* is leaner than

some of the band's earlier work, yet without being barebone. Instead *Spook the Herd* offers listeners an album that is both intricate and intimate.

"We didn't add a lot to the songs this time," explains Gregory. "I think when you listen, the first thing your ear is drawn to is Hazel's vocals, and the words she is singing."

To be sure, Wilde's lyrics act as a keystone in the sonic architecture created by this five-member group, which also includes Ol Ketteringham, Bob Allan, and Angela Chan.

"The lyrics that Hazel writes could stand up as bits of poetry themselves," adds Gregory.

Both the music and words fit together like clockwork, such as in the song 'Every Atom'.

*"I took your cigarettes to our secret place*



# n The Lake

*I knocked on every door in your estate  
I've seen the cavalry march for peace  
But I haven't caught a glimpse of you in weeks  
If I have to split every atom,  
Just to find a trace of you  
That's what I'll do"*

"When we came to work on (*Spook*), Hazel had already written the majority of the album herself," explains Gregory. "So, it was a question of how we best serve the songs, versus what we had always done before: throw sonic stuff at the song to see what stuck. This time we spent a lot of the time making sure everyone's part really served the song, and really fit what Hazel was singing about."

Wilde agrees.

"If we had done (this album)

like we had in the past, some of it would have been drowned out. We just made sure things were stripped back so that you could have the magic moments shine through," she says.

*Spook the Herd* always speaks to the malady of political and social manipulation in the world today. Other themes emerge from addiction to grief.

"When you put a new record out, I think it takes on its own life in the context of its day," says Wilde.

The band's latest offering is also a rabbit hole of wonderful noises, underpinned by some stunning, yet subtle lyricism. Yet neither the music nor the words stand alone.

"It's really special when a certain lyrical line comes together with a melody in just the right way," says Wilde. "It communi-

cates something the melody (or lyric) could not do on their own."

Gregory and Wilde recently celebrated their daughter Alice's first birthday.

"She's a pretty wonderful piano player for a twelve-month old," jokes Gregory.

Much of *Spook the Herd* lyrics were written after the release of *Beings* in 2015, and before the birth of their child.

Wilde and Gregory reckon parenthood will nudge the words and music in a new direction. In the meantime, both musicians, like all new parents, are trying to keep their head above the water with baby Alice.

"I imagine what I write will change," says Wilde, before a thoughtful pause. "I think there will be more hope in what I write." 🎸

- Tom Liskey



## PAUL'S GEAR

The electric guitars on *Spook the Herd* were all Eastwood / Airline guitars, mostly the Coronado 59. That said, "I've just got a Fender Jazzmaster which is now my main guitar, can't stop playing it."

On the amp front, Gregory uses a Motion Custom Works amp, built in the UK. "It's the best amp I've used."

"The never-ending search for the right pedals continues."

Gregory currently is using lots of Strymon pedals... Timeline, El Capistan and the Big Sky. He also uses the Way Huge Green Rhino overdrive and a Fulltone 70 for fuzz duties. Most recent "get"? -- A Hudson Electronics Broadcast.

# COAST TO COAST

INTERVIEW BY BLAKE WRIGHT

ADAM Miller was on the move. The Australian-born guitarist made the decision to move to the States in early 2019 after years of touring the region and the level of opportunity present had endeared him to the country. When he came over for the 2019 Winter NAMM show, the motive was two-fold -- hang out with like-minded gear fanatics and players and put down new roots. The trip was rewarding on many levels.

It was at a jam one night after the conference (at Mason Stoops' famous Guitaco gathering) that Miller would meet his future bandmates and lay the groundwork for his new album *Unify*. It was also a formal introduction into the LA session players' scene. Friends were made. Plans were drawn up. He spent 2019 touring and wrangling schedules, all the while jetting back and forth to Australia, planning the relocation.

He recorded *Unify* in Los Angeles in December 2019. After the session wrapped, he returned to Australia once again. And then... the world stopped. The global pandemic took hold and has effectively frozen him out of his adoptive home. Now, settling back in Down Under, the upbeat Miller isn't letting the situation get him down. Sure plans change, but he sees the opportunity in the situation as well.

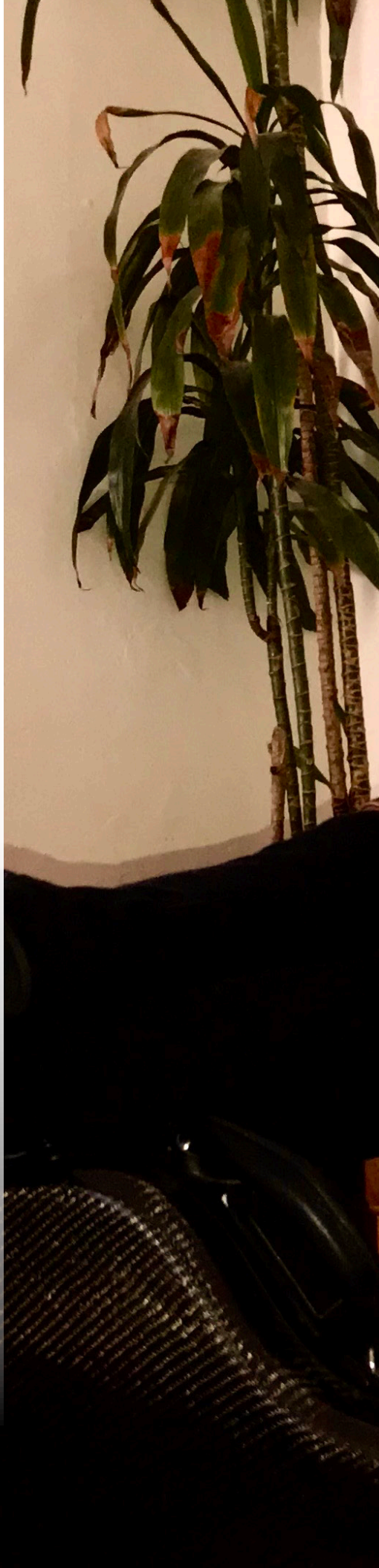






PHOTO: B.E. BIXBY

**GEARPHORIA:** Let's go back to Winter NAMM 2019 and the Guitaco party. That's where the journey of the new album kind of began, right?

**ADAM:** Yeah, that was the start of the whole year for me. Mason (Stoops) organizes those things really late. That was on the Friday night. I got the call on Tuesday afternoon. It was a voice mail left because I had flown into LA that morning to basically move to the US. So, yeah... super last-minute and sort of thrown together. It was just an insane night. Just to be able to be there around all of those great players, and some of them I had only really properly met that night. Guys like Ariel (Posen) and Horace (Bray) as well... we'd only met a couple of times. It was an amazing opportunity just to get to meet everyone and hang out. The

really cool thing was, Mason had used this guy that he had worked with, Justin Glasco, on drums, and we just got along really well. Mason likes to prepare things by having songs ready to go. That's evident in most of the things he does. He asked everyone to submit two songs before the night, but I was the only one that did. I think, especially more for Justin because he works as a producer more these days. He really liked the songs that I submitted for us to play. We sort of instantly connected through that because he put the work into learning them and those songs came out great on the night. The network sort of grew out of that one evening.

**So after that evening, the wheels start to turn and the band starts to come together?**

What developed from Guitaco

was that I had essentially moved to LA that week. That was the idea. There wasn't too much of a plan. I had touring dates, like over the next six months. So I had work and traveling to do in the US, but the idea was to be predominantly based in the US. So I got in there and it really introduced me to a scene that I really didn't know, and sort of like the session musicians in LA. I knew a lot of the guys that do their own stuff. We've done shows together. But the people that are just sort of sitting in the background a bit, it was a chance to meet a lot of those guys. It was awesome. So I went out to another jam thing, kind of like Guitaco, but it was just in someone's shed and not public. It was just making music for the fun of making music. These bunch of LA guys get around and they've got a songbook they set out and it's



filled with sort of quirky current pop songs and old R&B and soul... everything with cool chord changes. We just played through the songs. That went for a few hours. It was at Joel Gottschalk's house, who is the bass player (on the new record). Once again, Joel and I just got along really well. Musically as well. It was instant and I was like, yeah, this guy's insane. Hanging out and chatting, we got on like best friends. It was really good just to have that opportunity to be welcomed into that whole scene.

**How do you approach songwriting? Do you take a lot of "audio notes" over time or do you make a concerted effort to sit down fresh and create a record from scratch?**

I generally don't take recorded notes, because I just lose them. I actually, weirdly enough, I was talking to someone yesterday about the Music Memos app that Apple has that's sort of crazy. So you can put something down and it extracts the chords you've played and puts them above and you can add drums and bass to it. It extracts your timing on the guitar you played. It's crazy. I found like a whole record in there that I must have recorded years ago and just forgotten about.

When I'm writing, usually it is just sort of an idea, and in my head — if it is good enough to remember then it's good is my thinking. That is sort of what I'll do, and often I'll have a spurt of writing before a big show, especially if it is going to be with a trio and not solo. I'll be writing

chord charts down for it so that'd sort of remind me of the whole thing. For this particular record, I had a couple of songs. I had one song written. It was 'Leaving', obviously a lot do with leaving Australia for an extended period of time. Then it just kind of got inspired as it went. A lot of the music came from the guys I was playing with. I was finding inspiration in my surroundings. Hanging out in America. Gigs I was going to see. So it all came together in that time and I just



slowly introduced bits and pieces to the band as we did shows. We didn't get that many shows in. Maybe as the actual trio, we might have had three or four shows last year. There were a couple where I just had one of the guys then a different drummer or bass player, just trying to work out things. Each show I would try to bring at least one new song. We did go and rehearse and jam, so that gave us some time to knock those things out and talk about intent and the way things were going to be.

**One of my favorite tunes on the new one is 'Shipping'. Can you walk us through that track? What gear did you use on it?**

That was initially inspired by getting a guitar smashed (in transit), which happens. It was a pretty sad story actually. It was this Ryan Thorell archtop I have... this beautiful small archtop acoustic guitar. My friend Ryan Thorell built it. He's based out of Utah. My parents came to visit me in the US and I hadn't brought the guitar with me, and I got them to bring it over. They were going on a holiday through Canada and me and my wife met them early one morning at LAX and picked the case up. They flew to Canada and we flew to Portland and I did a run of shows through Portland and the Bay Area on that guitar. It was great. I shipped it out to Ryan from LA to sort out some repairs and then I was going to pick it up when I was playing in Utah a couple of months later. So it gave him time to work on it. In the process of

it going, he pulled open the case and the ebony tailpiece was shattered. It was in a flight case, in a cardboard box. In packing material, the shipper still managed to drop it hard enough to smash this piece. I think at that stage as well the touring in the US and the hustle had started to get a little bit tedious. Things weren't really working out the way I had dreamed in a way. So this song... it's just this really basic finger-picked idea just sort of came out. That sort of beautiful little low

voicing. The rest sort of transpired from there. I sort of had this melody idea for it. I guess it would have been for like a cello or something like that in an ideal world. I can hear the song being played by a string quartet rather than a bass, drums, guitar trio. The melody I couldn't physically play by myself so the other instrument is the bass, so the bass took the melody in it. It came out quite spectacular that way. On the album, I recorded that finger-picked line on the Thorell, because it needed to be played there now that it was all fixed and better and amazing. I did double the melody on my Nik Huber Rietbergen Adam Miller signature guitar I have with them. That's over the top and then played the solo over the top. So in my mind it does become sort of an orchestral thing. Justin is playing these things on the toms. The idea was to build this sort of orchestral thing out of a bass, drums, guitar trio.

**Another is the rocker of the set, 'Hustle'. What was the inspiration for that one?**

That was heavily influenced by Ariel Posen. In January, just before my coming to the US he had just put out his first album and I listened to it non-stop. I had done a bit of traveling in Australia and it was constantly on in the car and I absolutely loved it. I wanted something that sort of had that influence of these sort of clashing, low voiced chords... that baritone kind of sound. And the melody, especially in the 'verse', is a low octave thing. It is a lot lower than you would normally voice an instrumental song. Because the song sort of changes from hopeful and expectant to twisting on itself and goes to a minor four chord, and then gets happy again, then

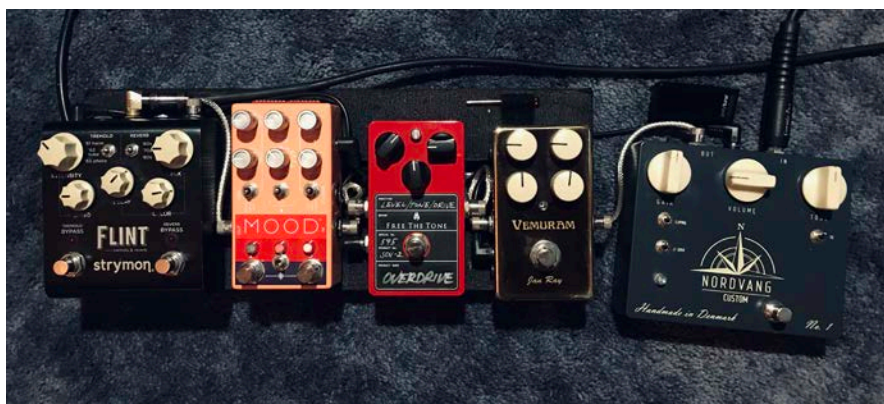


PHOTO: HOLLY CLAYTON

confused — that was pretty much my year. Going from “Yeah, this is all going great!” to “Ugh. It's not! But keep fighting through it. Keep going! Keep hustling!” That was the inspiration.

I had a lot of trouble not going full “Ariel-mode” on it. I remember when we were recording it I did at one stage, the guitar solo was this full-on fuzz tone. It was sort of off the deep end. So I

scaled it back a little bit just to maintain some consistency to who I am as a guitar player, but it's still pretty rocking. On the track, I did play a guitar set up like Ariel's as one of the rhythm parts sort of in the background. So it was tuned B-to-B standard through a Hudson Broadcast pedal, through a harmonic trem, just so there is a little hint of it in the background. For the most part on that song,



the main guitar part is my thinline Tele that I built from parts years ago. It's been eight or nine years. It's an ash thinline body. It's got a solid one-piece rosewood neck, which I think is a big part of the tone of that guitar. It's got a Seymour Duncan SM-1 Firebird mini-humbucker in the neck. For this song, it is on that. That pickup is really cool because it kind of sounds — Is it really a humbucker

or is it a single-coil? It really depends on how you hit it. It's awesome for that. I think I had the Jan Ray on for that one. And the whole album was recorded through my Two-Rock Classic Reverb signature. It's a pretty sweet tone, if I do say so myself!

**How long did it take for the record to emerge once you were all in the studio?**

We didn't get long. The guys were just so busy. I'd been in the US from January to July. I had to go back to Australia for some things and I was back on tour through September and October in the US. I was trying to record it then, but I just couldn't get the guys available on the same day at all. I finally managed to get a hold of them each and we worked out three days in early December we could do it, but it was going to be tight. Joel was playing Love, Actually the Musical. He was having to leave at 4pm. So we literally had like 10-to-4 each day for three days to try and get all of this done. We got it all done. There were even two songs that didn't make the record that we got done too. It was pretty rushed and I basically was doing the back-and-forth between LA and Australia at the end of the year. I just flew into LA for a week. I came in, did the record, and flew back. I was hoping to fly back and have it all done, but I think just racing around, the tiredness... I ended up re-recording all the guitar here in Australia.

I have a Two-Rock that lives in LA, the studio signature. It is sort of the 35-watt version of the big amp that I have in Australia. One of the reasons I did what I did is that I got a new overdrive pedal about three weeks before we recorded the album and I got super-excited about it. I ended up using it on every song in LA because I was so excited. When I got home, it just didn't sound like me. So it was the classic gear things of going "New gear! New gear! Yes! It's the best"... and then going "Yeah. I probably shouldn't have done that." I had to go back to the three overdrive pedals that I knew and loved — the Jan Ray, the Free The Tone SOV2 — there is only a couple of songs that pedal wasn't on, because I record at

low volumes, then the Nordvang Custom #1 is the other, which is sort of a Klon thing.

**Are there any “gear surprises” on the record? Something that you utilized and was taken with?**

There were two things. Finally getting to record with the Thorell archtop. I got that guitar for a very specific purpose. I have a real love for archtop guitars. Musically, sound-wise... they are this beautiful compromise somewhere between being an acoustic and an electric. That has always intrigued me, but I had never been able to capture it on recordings properly. So, on ‘Shipping’ that rhythm part, the picking that goes throughout, its the Thorell with a ribbon mic pointed at the soundhole and it was also mic’d up and played through the Two-Rock. So you are hearing the blend of all of it. If you listen close, you can hear it but you can’t tell if it is acoustic or electric. It’s that blend in-between. While you can’t really hear this, because I was actually so into it I didn’t hear it until later. I was right next to the Two-Rock while playing it. I wasn’t in a separate room. The guitar starts feeding back actually as the song goes on... this sort of cacophonous thing. Some of the strings, especially the B-flat, were taking off. It would swell with the passage because of that slow feedback. It was fun to have that. I used that same set up on ‘Citrus’. That song was initially written on a loner archtop from Ken Parker. He’s a good friend. I wrote the song on that. It was about a house we lived in on Citrus Ave. in LA. It was really similar to a house that we lived in Australia for a long time. It was sort of eerie. The same, but different. I remember when I was recording it I was



loving the sound of it so much I did like 40 takes worth of overdubs... just because I was loving what was going on. I’m pretty sure I used Take 1 in the end.

I’m a massive Bill Frisell nut. I probably listen to more Bill Frisell than any other music and have done so for the last 12 years... since I really discovered him properly. So I use the loopers like he does, like the Line 6 DL4. They are notorious for failing. So I moved on from that years ago and moved to a Strymon Timeline, which can do similar loops with the reverse and half-time. But it always sounded too good. I didn’t really want to have the standard sort of looping anymore. I try to tour with a Pedaltrain Nano, which is tiny. The Timeline with a midi-controller takes up most of the board. I wanted to get something smaller, so I got hold of a Chase Bliss M O O D pedal.

It does all of the looping and stuff, but it’s not like a normal looper. It kinds of hears the last few seconds of your playing and then depending on how it is set, it just throws that into chaos. After I had recorded all of the main parts of the album, I used that pedal a lot as just sort of a sweetener and random different things on a lot of the tracks. On ‘Shipping’ there are the two main guitar parts — the acoustic part and the main lead electric part. Then, there are three other parts that are going. I just played little arpeggiated lines through the chord and hit that pedal and it would throw out these little magical artifacts. It is just sort of played through the song like that to create those things. On ‘Adam Levy’, it just has the main guitar part and an acoustic strumming in the back. I found this preset on it — it is sort of like the Electro-Harmonix



**THE BAND (R to L):** *Justin Glasco, Joel Gottschalk and Adam Miller*

Freeze. It takes a micro-second of a chord and stretches it out so that it is almost unrecognizable. There is a clock on it that changes the sample rate. As you do that it changes the pitch and the octave that it's on. It sounds like there is a Hammond in the background of 'Adam Levy', but it is actually just me playing C, a few octaves of C, and then I played with the pedal throughout the song.

One of the things I've liked to do over the last few albums is to see how many noises I can make in the background that is just guitar. Instead of trying to find someone to play Hammond on something or do that. My love has always been guitar music. It is very rare that I listen to something that doesn't have guitar in it, so if I can create sounds that can give it that feel but are still essentially made by a guitar, I really love that exploration

exercise. That was sort of the bonus one on this record. It really evolved with each song creating different and unexpected things. That is what is really cool about that M O O D pedal. I still really don't know how to work it! When I hit buttons on it I'm not really sure what is going to happen.

**What is the latest/most recent gear add to your arsenal?**

I got a Collings archtop last week. Like I said before, I love archtops. I had quite a few things here that I just wasn't using, even though I was at home all of the time they just weren't coming out or inspiring me to play. So I sold off about 20 pedals and a few guitars and made the transition to that. All of the archtops that I've owned have been more in the acoustic vein. They are all about being acoustics first and foremost.

I wanted to try something that was laminated, that was plied, to see what this thing was about. That was the idea. I think also it was something that was still acoustic sounding but I could still string with 12-to-52, especially for solo playing. It's a guitar that can do the electric trio gig and do the solo gig, and if I had to do a radio interview I could jam a mic close to the F-hole and get some sound out it. I've had a Collings acoustic for years now and it sort of feels the same as that. They just sort of go hand in hand. The two Collings are the only two guitars I've ever bought off the shelf in the past 20 years. Others had been orders or specially made for me. Both of these guitars had been hanging in the stores for a while for some crazy reason. They didn't gravitate to anyone but me. So it was like they were waiting there for me.

**The album title *Unity*, and the tricycle on the cover. Where did those come from?**

Firstly, the title... I had these long, stupid title ideas. I'm not even going to go into them now, but they always ended up with negative connotations. It was moving, being out of your comfort zone, displacement — all of those sorts of things, and every title ended up negative, and I think offensive to some people who are in real dire situations unlike me that's just a musician that travels around. While I don't make much money and struggle sometimes, I'm not in any real danger. So the title came from throwing those out the window... that everything was really bad and saying no, actually everything is really good. I've had this incredible opportunity to bring two worlds together, two sides of my life because I've spent so much time in the US touring over the past 10 years and being able to actually bring that all together and be there, and sort of be considered a little bit like one of the LA guitar players for a little while. That was really amazing. The whole record in general has a positive feel.

I write music in the hope that it will inspire and brighten. There's not really any other reason. I don't want to drag people down. When I was finishing the record off, the whole world had already shut down. It was already quite obvious that I'm not going anywhere near the US I'm guessing for at least a year now. That's my best prediction. So, the title really needed to be positive. Trying to bring people together... and the way things started to come together for me in the US. From that Guitaco night last year to being able to end the year with an album recorded like this that guys

that I only met that year but felt like old friends, that was just the perfect title for it all.

Now, the tricycle. That's a little bit more random. Things are good. Don't focus on the bad things. I get to play music with cool people and that's amazing. I have been a bike rider my whole life. I was a pro downhill as a teenager. My little sporting claim to fame, I was ranked first in downhill in Australia for a couple of weeks. So I love bikes... and the engineering of it. That tricycle on the cover... I was hanging out with Joel (bass player) one day and we were picking up his son from daycare. It was this very traditional Jewish school daycare thing. The play yard was filled with these super cool tricycles. They were aluminum. They were so sleek and awesome, and I just took a photo of one. I just thought it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen.

As I was thinking about things that make me happy and about things that make people smile, I was like yeah... a kid's tricycle. I do all my own artwork for my albums. I've always found that fun. So I digitally enhanced the photo so it looks more graphical or hand-drawn, and that was it. That was the cover. People that know me will be like, oh, of course you put a bike on the cover.

**What does the balance of 2020 hold for you?**

Not much. It's a little funny. Last year and a lot of this album was about the uncertainty in travel and really just turning your life upside down in your late 30s. Alright... I'm not going to buy a house. I'm going to move across the world and continue to play guitar and release my own albums of instrumental music, which really isn't a good career path.

This year it is like everything is in chaos again, but for a totally different reason. I think what makes it a little easier is that as a musician everyone is in the same boat. It is really hard not to be competitive, especially through social media where you see that guy got that gig or he's playing there. How come his video has a million views and mine has two? These are things that go through my head and so many of my friends' heads these days.

Having that competitiveness out of it is great right now. Not having to think about booking shows is awesome because that's been one of the biggest stresses of my life, going alright — who am I going to email today and who is going to get back to me? For this year, I've done a couple of shows in Australia. Where I live I think there might have been one new case in the past week, and that was the first one in months. It's relatively safe, but that can change at any time.

I'm really keen to create more. I think a lot of people might say that given the circumstances, but I've just got this real desire to make more music and maybe have a little bit more time to spend in the studio here. I'm not really sure yet. I've got to get this album out and see how that unfolds.

Other than that, I've just really got to get my life in order. We're living in very temporary accommodations still. It may mean setting up my life again here in Australia instead of focusing on the US, which is definitely a bit sad, but that could be the case. And hopefully getting out into the world and touring at some stage. I think this year will be about getting better at guitar playing, better at writing music, better at sharing this stuff... and just lots of bike riding. 🚲

## AXE FORENSICS

ADAM Miller built this Thinline in late 2012 while he was waiting on a custom guitar to be built to similar specs. That guitar was delayed so Miller took matters into his own hands. Inspired by Bill Frisell, who was playing a similar-looking guitar at the time, Miller married a white blonde, body with a black guard, a dark wood neck and unusual pickups resulting in a familiar guitar with a unique voice.

"I'd built a couple of guitars from parts before, but this one came together way better than I could ever imagined and quickly became my number one."

The neck is a Warmoth one-piece Indian rosewood neck with a '59 Les Paul shape. Miller rounded the fingerboard edges a little more and finished it in a light beeswax. It contributes a lot to the acoustic sound. You can hear the sound emanate from the neck when you play it, he says. The frets are stainless steel 6105s, and despite years of abuse now, they're still almost perfect. The decal on the head is Miller's initials, though they have rubbed significantly over time. Strings are D'Addario NYXL 11-49s.

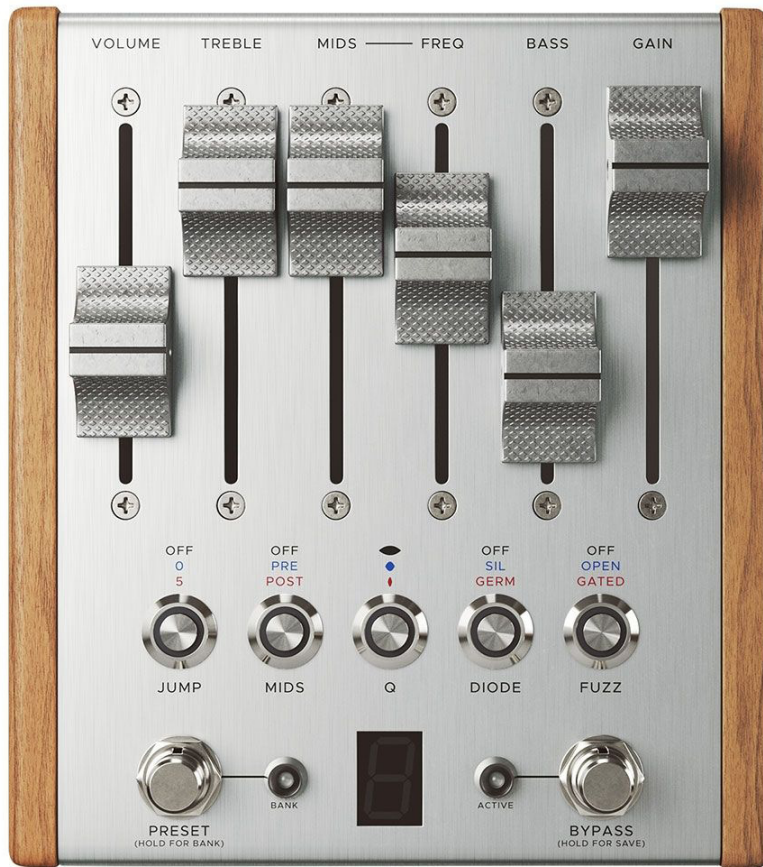
That's a Seymour Duncan SM-1 Mini Humbucker. Miller had been back and forth between single coil and humbucker guitars for years, but knew he wanted something quiet in the neck. The alnico bar magnets close to the strings give it the feel and bounce of a single coil, with more fatness. He routed the body to fit it himself and tried to bend the tabs of the pickup to fit. They broke. As a result, the pickup is glued to a few slabs of Indian rosewood that are glued to the body. He says this is the secret to its woody tone!

The Australian Dollar was on par with the US dollar at the time (it's usually much lower value) and so Miller jumped on the light relic Blonde Swamp Ash MJT thinline body on eBay as soon as he saw it. It's super light-weight!

Miller has had a few bridges on this guitar. The last one rusted out. This is a Mastery bridge and it has been on it for a year and a half and shows little sign of decay. It also further enhanced the acoustic sound.

The guitar has a single volume knob. Tone is in the hands, after all!

ADAM MILLER'S PARTS-BUILT THINLINE



## Let your faders fly

The **Preamp MKII** is *worth* your **attention...** and your *money*

BY WADE BURDEN

*FLYING Faders! Wood paneling! 750 bucks!* No, I'm not trying to sell you a used station wagon, I'm trying to tell you about the Chase Bliss Audio Preamp MKII. And it's the best thing you can spend \$750 on that isn't a 1984 Chevrolet Caprice Classic. But you probably already knew that.

So what makes this thing worth 750 bucks? Did I mention flying faders? I'm kidding - but not entirely. Those are studio-grade faders, with automation like you see on the big boy consoles. Servo motors and faders sturdy enough to be mounted on a pedalboard.

That sounds expensive enough as it is. But that's not exactly the type of thing pedal companies have expertise in, so my guess would be an outside engineer was needed to get this right. And here's the kicker, they aren't just flash. Yes, they look great, but you will be amazed at how easy it is to see exactly where you are at and make small adjustments as needed. And this pedal does a ton, so the visual clues and large layout are helpful.

Ok, you get it. It comes with flying faders. What else do you get for the money? You get Chris

Benson's updated preamp, which started life as his Chimera circuit, then morphed into the Benson Pre-amp pedal when he plugged JFets into the circuit instead of tubes. Now pair that with the mid control circuit from CBA's Condor, and just for the heck of it, shove a silicon fuzz in front of it and toss in some clipping options. Combined with the CBA usuals on steroids - full midi control, 30 banks of savable presets, expression controls, etc - what you get for the money is a very versatile studio tool that would also be at home on the stage.

I wish I had something bad to




say about this pedal. I think it's a more interesting read if I give you good points and bad points. But the only bad point here is the price. And honestly, I think it's a pretty great price for what you get. Compare the price of the MKII to the H9 Max. Everyone finds a way to spend 700 bucks on the H9. And the H9 is an amazing pedal. But it's a jack of all trades and a master of none. Its value is in its amazing versatility and the tech that brings it to you. The Preamp MKII sounds better in its limited space than anything the H9 can do. And in its area of expertise, the MKII does it all. Let's compare the MKII to the Gold Horsey Boy. (Don't worry, I'm not going to knock the sacred cow; I won't deny that The Klon Centaur is special.) But for about a third of the price, the MKII can nail a version of the old golden calf. So use the MKII to find your sweet-

ly compressed transparent pre-amp tone, save it to a preset, and move on. Because you still have so much more the MKII can do.

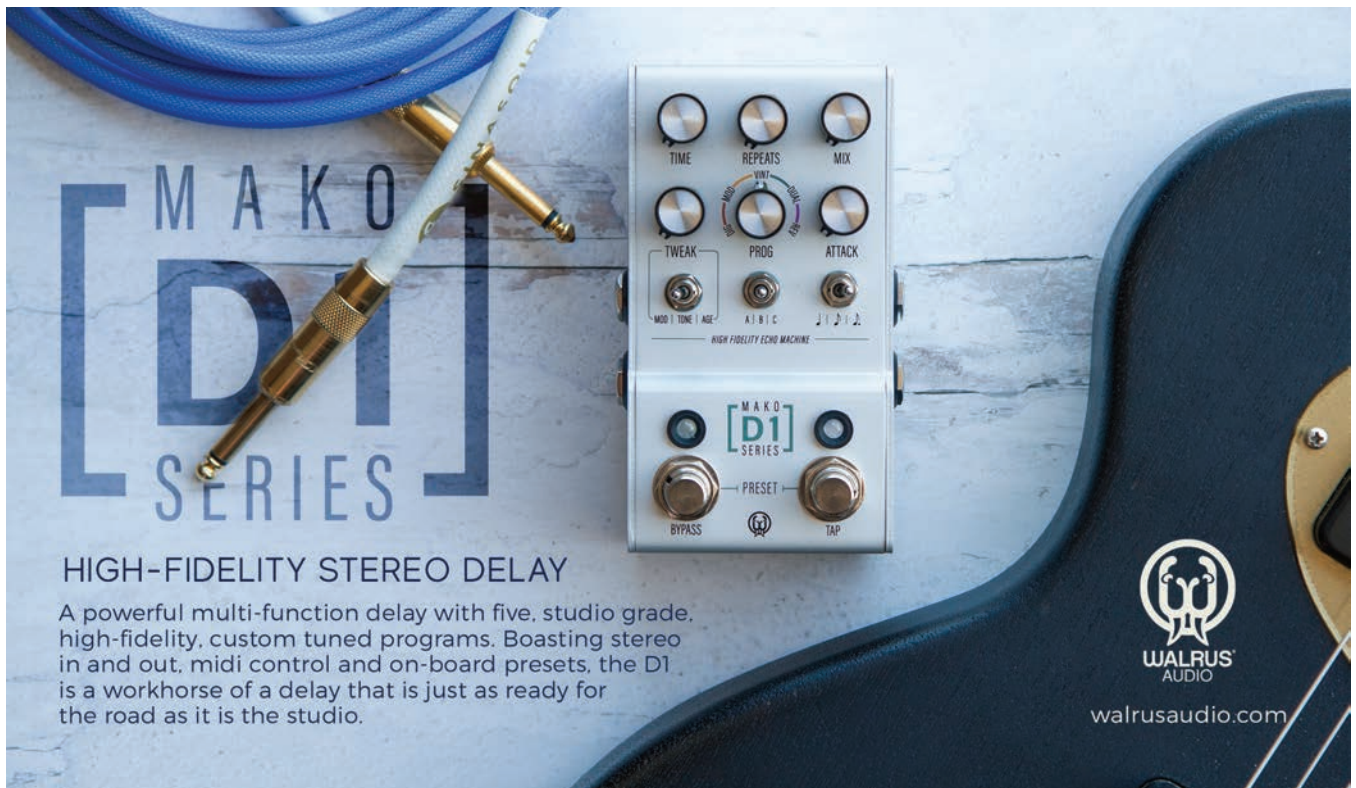
Here is the main thing about the Chase Bliss Audio Preamp MKII: it sounds amazing. Seriously. I watched a few videos; they don't do it justice. It sounds better in the room than any of the videos you are going to watch. Does everyone need a \$750 drive pedal? Nope. Would I throw it in the back of a van and do a tour full of shitty dive bars? Nope.

It's just too pretty for that. And in my mind, too valuable. But if you can afford one, or if you do studio work of any kind, I think you will find it to be an indispensable tool. Every feature has been lovingly dialed in over the last two-plus years. Chris Benson's ear for tone and Joel Korte's eye for innovation has created what might be a perfect pedal. I'm not saying I've never imagined the two of them having a baby before. I just expected it to be much much uglier. 🐼



**CHASE BLISS/BENSON AMPS  
PREAMP MKII**

Controls: Volume, Treble, Mids, Freq, Bass and Gain faders. Jump, Mids, Q, Diode, and Fuzz buttons. Preset footswitch  
Price: \$749

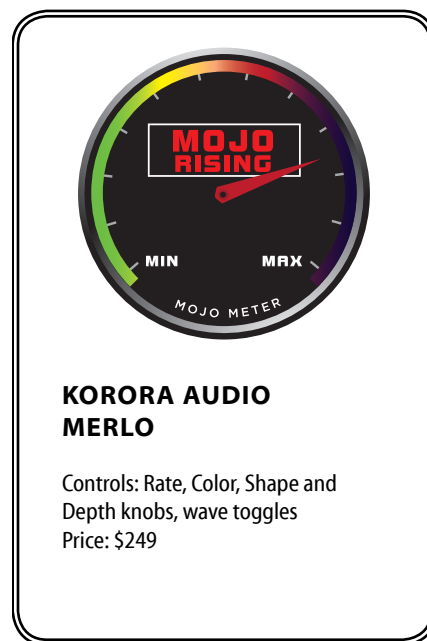


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**HIGH-FIDELITY STEREO DELAY**

A powerful multi-function delay with five, studio grade, high-fidelity, custom tuned programs. Boasting stereo in and out, midi control and on-board presets, the DI is a workhorse of a delay that is just as ready for the road as it is the studio.

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## Tremble theory

Korora pair *solid tools* for wavy, warblery tones

BY JORDAN UPTON

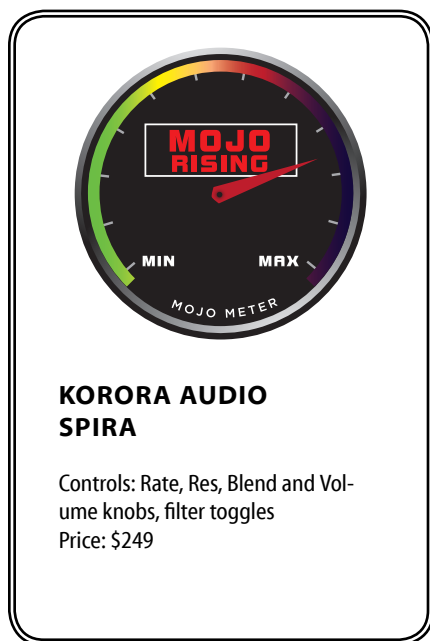
TREMOLO has been a soft spot in my heart for many years. It was one of the first pedals my parents bought me when I was much younger and at that time I thought “Of all things, why did you guys buy me a tremolo pedal?” I never did ask them why, but I also never got rid of that pedal.

Simple in design with a tough-as-nails enclosure, the Merlo by Korora Audio is a highly flexible box. Not reduced to just being another tremolo copy-cat pedal, the Merlo gives clear cut toggles for sine, triangle, and pulse envelope options with a particular nod to a tone all its own. You

can go from a soft vintage pulse to a jagged throb quite easily. The top toggle switch changes how the effect itself ramps. The small graphics, once again, really save the day for playability. While a lot of us understand all the words I just used to describe sound waves, I prefer to turn off that analytical part and just twist knobs and flip switches.

Korora’s standard design with four control knobs come with a bit of built-in surprise. Going through the controls, the Rate knob is as simple as always in that it changes up the general speed. The Color knob seems to be more of a tone knob that works

primarily with the harmonic profile of the effect which for me isn’t such a typical tone knob. The Shape knob is unique in that, working with the Color knob, the variety of tonal possibilities is impressive. Needless to say, my other tremolo pedal can only change the rate and wave shape but nothing else. The Depth knob alters just how strong that pulse dips. The Tap tempo footswitch is a crucial addition to the Merlo, without it I wouldn’t care for this at all. Tapping in your speed though won’t drastically change the rate, rather the Merlo glides into your new setting. The real secret is the internal DIP switch



for an output boost. Using dip switches 3 and 4, you can select from the stock 0 (zero) dB boost all the way up to an additional 3dB boost. Now, with headphones on, I could not really hear a difference, but through an amp I was able to hear a warmer low end, with of course, an increase in volume. Like their Spira pedal, the other dip switches allow you to change up the engagement of the footswitch as well as the LEDs.

I don't think there's any guitar player out there who hasn't listened to "Rumble" by Link Wray and swooned over that vibe. "Gimme Shelter" by The Rolling Stones, "Born on the Bayou" by

Creedence Clearwater Revival, or even "Howlin' for You" by The Black Keys would make any guitar player realize how much they need tremolo in their life. So for me, if your boutique amp doesn't have a built-in tremolo channel then I think the Merlo should be your choice.

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WHILE I've never had any formal music training, I can typically listen to something and figure out how to play it or understand how it's been made to sound like it sounds. I see music in shapes if that relates to you at all, but still there are sounds that I can't see

in my head. I hear the music from a band or a soundtrack to a movie and think "that's gotta be made with a computer" or it's something done in post. But as they say, you learn something new every day.

Glissando is not a word I typically use, but nevertheless describes quite well what this pedal is doing. If anything, it's exactly what this pedal is doing but I do want to dive deeper into that and explain. Korora Audio states that this pedal is inspired by the "Shepard Tone" first described by Roger Shepard in 1964. Now what is that exactly? In a lot of ways, it's an auditory illusion. In truth,



it's a simple thing: the note being played is swept up into a modulation that continually ascends or descends (glissando) the top, middle, and bass pitches but in fact isn't going anywhere. This effect has been used for decades but is usually only reproduced by those with a pretty high functioning level of music theory, until now. The Spira by Korora Audio based out of Seattle is a filter modulation pedal that can play a lot of different roles. You can dial in anything from flange style, to synthy pads, to a warbly mess with just a few turns. With four simple knobs, two toggles, and two footswitches, the Spira has the same user interface that Korora has become known for.

Rate will change the speed of the waves themselves while the Blend knob shifts your wet/dry signal. Naturally, the Volume

knob is to help the transition of volume when engaged or disengaged. The RES knob controls the oscillation resonance which will help to deepen the intensity of the effect or vice versa. The filters themselves can sweep up or down using the UP/DN footswitch. What makes this pedal into something very musical and sheds light on a musical theory that I couldn't have replicated myself until now are the toggle switches in the center. The top toggle changes the wave frequency, thankfully with the addition of some small graphics to help you visualize how the waves will sound. The bottom toggle is for dB density selection. Choosing from 6, 12, or 18dB will audibly change the density of the waves you hear. Every control on this pedal interplays with everything else so if you make a switch, you

might need to roll back a knob to hear the nuanced change. Oh and lastly, be sure to take the enclosure apart and play with the internal dip switches. You can change whether this pedal is always on, ramps up or down at power on, or has pulsating LEDs.

I love how ethereally creepy this pedal can make a riff sound. Both beautiful and unnerving through my Korg synth, the Spira helps to create a lush vibe of your choosing. I'll be honest, when I first looked at it I did not think it was going to be as magnificent as it is. As far as guitar pedals go, there are very few others making an effect that can do this. Sure, you can attain these sounds through synthesizers or compounding a few others, but for all in one package that doesn't bombard you with too much octave theory, this is it. 🌀

8

*Happy Birthday*

GEARPH<sup>OR</sup>IA<sup>®</sup>



## Big sis

Walrus *Julianna* offers **watery, stereo** experience

BY WADE BURDEN

THE WALRUS Julianna Stereo Chorus/Vibrato pedal is the big sister to the Julia. Just like Julia, Julianna opens an inky black hole around your notes and pulls them underwater. Part chorus, part vibrato, it allows you to blend both and run the pedal from just a barely-there touch of movement, to crazy seasickness, where every chord is drowning in modulation. But if you've played any of the Julia versions you'll be prepared for the Julianna - aside from a series of subtle changes from one version to the next, they sound the same. What Julianna brings to the table is some updated features, such as

stereo in and out and expanded control over the LFO.

Julianna is made up of an analog signal path and a digital LFO. Your signal remains warm and lush sounding, but the LFO can be manipulated in a ton of new ways. The familiar controls of Julia are still present: Rate, Depth, Lag, Shape, and D-C-V. For those not familiar, Rate is the rate of the modulation. Depth is the depth of the modulation, pretty standard stuff. Lag is a fun one. Lag is like a delay that the LFO oscillates around. (That might not technically be true, but use your imagination here.) This allows the LFO to move

from crisp and clean modulation, to sickly and detuned as it gets more delayed. The Dry-Chorus-Vibrato knob, or D-C-V as it's labeled, allows you to choose how much Chorus, Vibrato, or blend of both you want. You can also run it Dry, but I don't want to be your friend if that's your thing. What you could do is blend some dry signal into your chorus so it's not overwhelming you with a pale makeup and dark eyeliner on suspiciously old British dudes kinda vibe all the time. That I'd understand.

The Shape switch allows you to choose between Sine, Triangle, and Random. In theory, Sine

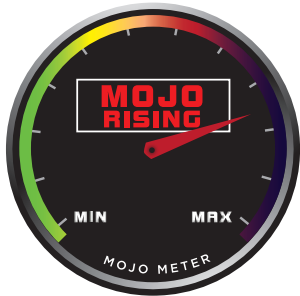
will sound best for Chorus, and Triangle will sound best on Vibrato settings. Everything sounds best to me in the Triangle setting. Random sounds good, but I didn't realize it was Random, and I couldn't figure out why the reverse Sine setting was so sloppy and weird until I read the manual and learned that the tiny reverse ramping Sine Wave symbol wasn't a reverse Sine Wave at all. Might explain why Julianna's LED's were going nuts... read the manual, kids. Lastly, we have a Division, or Div switch for the Tap Tempo crowd.

Julianna has some new tricks since the last time she came to visit me as Julia. The LFO can now be controlled by Secondary features. So you can do nifty stuff like use your Rate knob to set your bypass switch's Momentary setting to a different rate than

your active setting. Think of it as a preset for when you just need a touch of something crazy for a second in a solo. The Depth knob also has a secret. Its secondary feature is called Drift and can be used to cause the LFO's rate-setting to bounce up and down. These new features, combined with Expression control or the stereo in and output, add a whole host of new sounds from Julianna that Julia just couldn't give us.

Here is a secret that I've probably written about before... I hate chorus. I just do. But I don't hate Julianna. Ringing endorsement, right? Well I'll say this, I sold my Julia and I've regretted it ever since. It's one of Walrus' best pedals and they have a lot of good pedals. So when Julianna arrived on my doorstep I was excited to get a second chance. Am I going to be starting up a Cure cover

band anytime soon? Nope. But Julianna is a very useful, easy to use pedal, and if you wanted to dig into a little bit, it can make some very unique sounds you won't find elsewhere. ⚙️



**WALRUS AUDIO JULIANNA**

Controls: Rate, Depth, Lag, D-C-V knobs, Div and Shape toggles  
Price: \$249

“Simply the **greatest** pedal ever made.”

– longtime anonymous industry observer



Retailers, artists, and demo clips at [carolineguitar.com](http://carolineguitar.com)



BOB MOULD is pissed. He’s pissed about a lot of things, but mostly the state of play in the good ol’ USA, who’s bright light has dimmed a bit in recent years. On *Blue Hearts*, Mould channels his anger and concern into bit sized chunks of guitar bluster and punk rock rage. The album boasts 14 tracks, but only one tops three minutes. It is quite the departure from the sing-song optimism of Mould’s last album, 2019’s *Sunshine Rock*, but the times they are a-changin’.

‘Heart On My Sleeve’ is the gentle yet raw acoustic opener, where Mould sets up the rest of the record’s theme with simple strums and a cracking voice. The tone of the opener soon yields to a sonic battery of swelling distortion and fiery lament in songs like ‘Next Generation’, the incendiary first single ‘American Crisis’ and ‘When You Left’. The second single, ‘Forecast Of Rain’, is a brilliant piece of pop, while the lyrics dissect the current state of the religion in America.

Mould has said the album comments on parallels between the politics of today and that of the Reagan era in the 1980s. Spoiler alert: He’s not a fan. Check out ‘Baby Needs A Cookie’ for more thoughts on this topic.

*Blue Hearts* is raw, angry and timely. It’s spontaneous feel and hyper focus make it a true snapshot of America in 2020. And while album’s like this sometimes have trouble aging well, I’m comforted by the fact that Bob doesn’t give a shit about that. 🎸

THE troubadour of Stars Hollow returns! Grant-Lee Phillips has been one of my favorite singer-songwriter types since his days in Grant Lee Buffalo. He weaves tales with the acoustic guitar full of dark humor and hopefulness — a sort of gothic balladeer that leaves you hanging on every whispered verse. His latest, *Lightning, Show Us Your Stuff*, is a 10-track serving of road songs steeped in the wonder of wander. The bounce-and-strum of the defiant ‘Ain’t Done Yet’ tells the tale of one-against-many and inspired by those that would see you fail then feast on your bones.

That’s what you get with Phillips, and he’s good at it.

Need something a little more upbeat? Try ‘Leave A Light On’, another ode to movement and the sweetness of returning home. ‘Gather Up’, one of the album’s early singles, is stomping, electrified gospel with roots in Phillips’ visits to his grandparents as a kid and their Sunday rituals. ‘Straight To The Ground’ is told through the eyes of a young woman longing for life outside of her small town city limits. This the peak storyteller mode for Phillips.

*Lightning, Show Us Your Stuff* closes with ‘Walking In My Sleep’, a song built around a newly-inherited parlor guitar and a failing street light outside the window of Phillips’ house. The walking arpeggiated riff coupled with the sort of cock-eyed optimism of better things coming (but when?) is a great closer to a great record. 🎸

ARTIST: Bob Mould  
 ALBUM: Blue Hearts  
 LABEL: Merge Records

VERDICT:

ARTIST: Grant-Lee Phillips  
 ALBUM: Lightning, Show Us Your Stuff  
 LABEL: Yep-Roc

VERDICT:



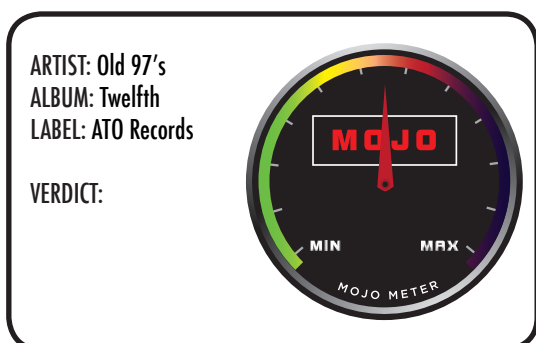


THERE IS something to be said for consistency. Old 97's have been a staple in the Texas music scene for years. They shuffled to some national popularity in the 1990s, but never really blew up nationally. The momentum afforded them the luxury to do their thing mostly on their terms. That thing is a steady dose of alt-country/Americana that's both hummable and danceable. So I'm perfectly good with everything that's happening on *Twelfth*, the band's 12th studio album since their first back in 1994.

From the thundering toms that open the album on 'The Dropouts' to the demo-in-a-closet vibe of the closer 'Why Don't We Ever Say We're Sorry', the band delivers everything they're known for — slabs of rootsy, sing-alongs delivered with equal parts of grit and twang.

Highlights this time out include the reverb-drenched relationship ode of 'I Like You Better', the feedback scold and propulsion of 'Confessional Boxing' and double-time stomp of 'Bottle Rocket Baby'. Each tells a story that is uniquely Old 97's and thus hand-dipped in Texas lore and metaphor.

Exploration is cathartic for a lot of bands who have stood the test of time, however there are some I'm happy have stuck to their guns and hung their hats on delivering the most consistent version of themselves. AC/DC is one... as is Old 97's. *Twelfth* is everything you'd expect it to be, and I expected it to be good. 🎧



HAILING from the Chicago-area, Fig Dish was a rock quartet swept up in grunge fever as record companies looked to gobble up bands representative of the popular sound outside of its origins in the Pacific Northwest. Fueled by the twin guitar attack of Blake Smith and Rick Ness, the band was signed to Polydor and within three weeks produced *That's What Love Songs Often Do*, a 13-track mash of crunchy guitars and frat-rock angst. The album failed to gain much traction out of the gate, but there are some catchy tunes here — 'Seeds' (the single you never heard), 'Nimble' and 'Resistance Is Futile' fall into that category.

While the band came up running in the same circles as Smashing Pumpkins, Liz Phair, Urge Overkill and Local H, they were at times their own worst enemy via drunken gigs and a general ambivalence towards the music biz in general.

The band recorded a follow-up, *When Shove Goes Back To Push*, which landed in 1997 with a resounding thud and no push from the record company. The band would break with Polydor soon thereafter. The group wasn't planning to call it quits, and had another 20 or so tracks recorded for a third album, but ultimately the players splintered into other projects and left Fig Dish behind them. That third 'album', dubbed *Onanism*, never saw official release, but can be yours after a quick Google search. 🎧

