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The Player's Guide to Ultimate Tone
\$15.00 US, December 2013/Vol.15 NO.2

Truth

"Three chords and the truth – that's what a country song is." – Willie Nelson

Pressure is being asked point-blank which guitar, amplifier or pickup to buy. This happens frequently enough that we have learned to pose probing personal questions in search of an answer... Well, what do you think you might want and why? We don't always know what we want until we want it, and we still couldn't always tell you why. Sometimes the things that last seem to materialize out of no where with little forethought or insight, as if we were meant to have them, and that's the truth.



We also must confess that we don't always understand what motivates guitar players when it comes to choosing amplifiers today. This is nothing new – most of the amps we own are immensely toneful classic keepers that were ignored by potential buyers due to stripped or recovered original cabinets or a replaced transformer. Well, except for our '67 Ampeg Gemini II – no one wanted that and it's dead mint with the original dolly. That we do understand... Ampegs just aren't considered 'cool.' The truth is, we routinely search the entire pre-1984 category in guitars for all the vintage amplifiers listed on eBay. Yeah, it takes some time, but it's also the best way to find things you would have otherwise missed or not even thought of searching for.

So, we're trolling eBay in October and we find a 1964 blackface Fender Pro, first production run, March '64 – the non-reverb 1x15 model that was discontinued the same year – essentially a non-reverb Vibroverb, as the circuits are nearly identical minus the verb. What would you pay for a blackface Vibroverb today? Surely something north of \$4,000. We sold one 12 years ago for

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\$3,000. We have reviewed the blackface Pro once in the past, but you have forgotten all about that by now... No one wants the non-reverb blackface amps, and 1x15 combos remain mysteriously if not stupidly overlooked. Why? Does a 15 inch speaker look as if it can't rock? Stevie Ray rocked two 1x15 Vibroverbs with sequential serial numbers now, didn't he? You may recall that we had one of Stevie's original Vibroverbs here after Mr. Valco bought it from 'Methboy', who had stolen it from Jimmie Vaughan's storage locker in Texas. See the August 2007 issue of TQR titled "Double Trouble" for the full sordid story. Here's a shot of Riverhorse supervising with a gin & tonic on our deck as Mr. Valco kneels in reverent supplication... Dude with the hat is an acolyte who accompanied Valco from Indiana to assist in guitar strangulation and burning T-bones on rest stop grills along I65.

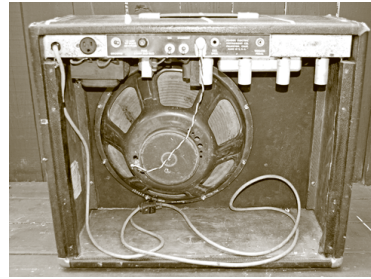
The Kansas Tornado



The seller of our Pro was located in Hiawatha, Kansas, which sounded vaguely familiar, and then we remembered having bought a '60s Silver-tone 1482 from Hiawatha – same guy of course.

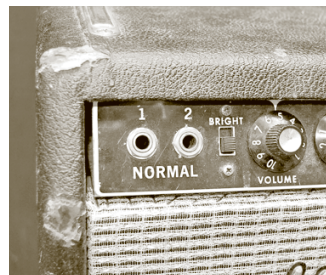
We'll call him Farmer John... The '64 Pro looked fairly clean online, the caps and resistors on the board, power transformer and choke were original, the electrolytics had been replaced with Sprague Atoms, and the original output transformer had been replaced with an old drop-in replacement dating to 1966 with an EIA code identifying the manufacturer as Midwest Coil and Transformer Co. Chicago. The speaker was a JBL D-130F 15", but Farmer John added that he had a Jensen C15N with a 1964 date code if we would prefer it. We did.

Farmer John was feeling ambitious, having listed the Pro for \$1200 with no takers or offers. We offered him \$1,000 which he accepted, and a week later the Pro arrived in a big old dusty corrugated box that looked as if it had been stored in a barn or a storm cellar for 20 years. The packing material was also covered in a dingy film of the sort that lives in basements and barns. Hoosiers



know this kind of stuff. Eventually the Pro emerged looking a little rougher than the pictures on eBay had revealed. Did Farmer John have Photoshop? The cabinet had never been cleaned and 40-plus years of accumulated spooledge clung to the tolex, although an earnest dumb ass had attempted to fill in a few honest corner tears and scrapes in the tolex from the amp being giggered with rubber cement. The grill cloth had been replaced with the correct repro silver sparkle, and the back panels did not appear to be original. The old Jensen C15N worked and actually sounded OK, but it too had been repaired with a single long tear in the cone sealed with more rubber cement. Unphased, we got on the phone with Farmer John and cordially suggested he send us a refund of \$150 to cover the issues he had overlooked, and why not send us the JBL D130F as well? He agreed, happiness ruled the day in Hiawatha and Decatur, and it was time to get to work.

One thing about rubber cement – it's *rubber*, and easily peeled and cut off with a sharp paring knife. "Honey, my Gala apple slices taste funny... Don't worry, it's just a little rubber, all organic." We had the rubber cement patches off and the bare golden pine exposed as it should be from the Pro being



dragged in and out of Chevy trunks on countless Kansas Saturday nights, fireflies twinkling, the pungent mix of skunk and cow shit peppering the damp summer air. How many dances had the Pro seen when couples slow-groped to "Soul and Inspiration" or boogied to "Land of a 1,000 Dances" doing the Mashed Potato... the Swim... the Dog... the Watusi... the Frug... the Hully Gully and the Alligator?

We pulled the chassis and speaker and broke out a bowl of hot water and dish washing soap and began to scrub the funk off the tolex with a heavy wash cloth. It works. We did not neglect the black and silver skirted control knobs (who knows what might be lurking on them?) or the blackface control panel, and we scrubbed out the inside of the cabinet too, which turned from sooty black to the deep, sappy mahogany hue of that fine old aged Fender pine. With the cabinet clean, we hit the tolex with the Armor-All and stepped back to admire our work. If you haven't experienced the satisfaction of cleaning up an old amp with so much unknown history and future potential, when? *What? You wouldn't have cleaned it?* Read on...

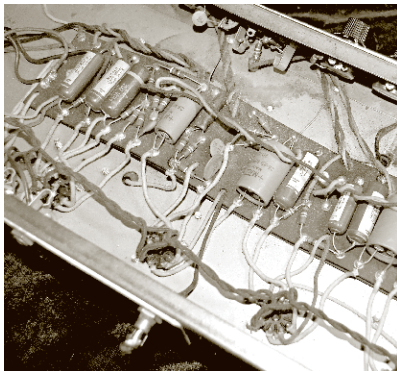
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Farmer John had packed a pair of boxed Ruby 6L6s and a Sovtek 5AR4 in a plastic Ziplock bag, and as we were about to open it we noticed several mouse turds rolling around in the bottom of the bag. *We told you this thing had been stored*

in a barn... Mindful of the deadly rodent-borne Sin Nombre Hantavirus that killed three campers in Yosemite and was also found in southwestern Kansas, we gingerly chucked the bag and its contents into the trash, vowing to do the same with the shipping box and packing materials *pronto*.

Now, as you surely know, significant variances exist among otherwise 'identical' vintage Fender amps, and this is what makes finding them so fascinating and potentially rewarding. With accepted variances in actual component values of plus or minus 10% - 20% at the time the amp was built and random component drift over 40 years, you can never be sure what you are going to get. Some of us love the gamble and intrigue that comes with buying old amps, others just can't handle it, fearing the worst. We have never bought an old Fender



amp that wasn't working, and most of them haven't needed much in the way of fixing or maintenance – tubes, yes, maybe filter caps or the caps replaced in tremolo circuits, but by and large, vintage Fender amps

from the '50s and '60s are remarkably bullet proof. We simply avoid those that have been heavily modified or swept clean of too many original parts on the board. That is a decision we would prefer to make on our own.

Well, the Pro sounded good right out of the box once we had biased a pair of our RCA 6L6GCs and installed an Amperex GZ34 rectifier and good USA preamp tubes. Even the beater Jensen speaker sounded pretty good – a little tired perhaps, but tired in a good way. The bass pot in the Vibrato channel was dead, and we found that it had been replaced with a 500K split shaft Alpha pot. We replaced it with a proper 250K solid shaft CTS, and we decided to replace the existing tremolo intensity pot with a 50K reverse audio pot and switch that will enable us to bypass the tremolo, adding more gain in the vibrato channel. You can get these switched pots from Weber VST. Interestingly, this Pro didn't seem to lack the overdriven



character that is often missing in non-reverb blackface amps, and we suspect that the replacement output trans-

former made by Midwest Coil & Transformer Co. in Chicago may have something to do with its gutsy sound. Midwest Coil also made transformers for Hammond organ amps, and they can be found in some tweed Fender models and Vibro Champ amps circa 1966.

By the time you reach 5 on the volume control the Pro will begin to growl in either channel with a hard pick attack, while a lighter touch still produces beautiful Fender clean tones. This is where a dual 6L6 40 watt amp really struts its stuff, ya'll... The Vibrato channel is a little brighter, the Normal channel almost British in tone. Increasing volume beyond 5 steadily produces a formidable roar as only a Fender can, and the Pro loves pedals, too. The clean tones below 5 are classic blackface, and with our optimized '63 Fender reverb with



NOS tubes and the MOD tank, here we sit gloating over our piece of shit \$850 blackface Pro that no one was the least bit interested in. Honestly, we don't understand,

and that's the truth. But we weren't finished...

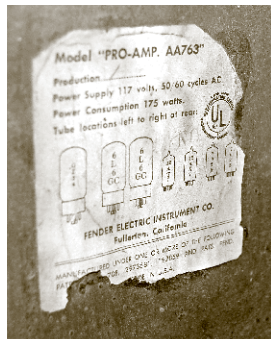
We have wanted to try the 75 watt Warehouse G15A alnico speaker for a while, so we asked for an received one from the great crew at WGS in Paducah, Kentucky. The G15A isn't cheap at \$269, but trust us, its worth every penny. Quoting the description on the website, "*We have created a truly awesome 15" alnico guitar speaker! Now you can play a 15" with quick, articulate response, an aggressive mid-range, and fat low end.*" Amen to that. The G15A sounded strong and bright when we first began playing, but after a few rela-



tively short sessions with the Pro we began to hear the speaker break in with the mids and bass unfolding and the speaker seeming to open up and breathe as we played. Amazing, really, but we could actually hear it blossom and bloom as even

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the overdriven tones acquired a more complex and deeper character. Our first and only '64 Vibroverb didn't sound like this... For whatever reason, this old Pro was giving up the goods with all the intensity of a blackface Deluxe or Vibrolux Reverb, and we couldn't be more thrilled.



Some of you might think that finding these old relics is too much work, too risky, or perhaps you don't want to deal with the uncertainty of buying an amp that was built 48 years ago... Understood, but the potential payback cannot be underestimated. There are lots of very talented designers and builders of guitar amplifiers working today, but the truth

about old tubes and pickups sounding so much better than many of the best contemporary alternatives can be applied to amplifiers as well. We won't pretend to understand why these old amps can possess such a beautiful tone that new ones rarely achieve – it seems logical to assume that it is a result of the sum of the parts, how capacitors, resistors and transformers were made and the materials used, the circuit design and layout, and the aged pine cabinets. Ultimately, determining why an old amplifier sounds good doesn't seem as important as simply experiencing the magic they create, and you can do so for a fraction of the cost of a modern production amplifier. Our '64 Pro proves the point – if we can do this, you can do this, and that's the truth. *Quest forth...to*

RICHARD GOODELL &...

The History of the Super 17

We have spoken with a lot of interesting and creative people over the years in these pages – musicians, and the talented people that build the instruments and gizmos that musicians use to make music. Some people have a story to tell that pours forth in a steady stream from an uncorked bottle with no back tracking, hesitation or uncertainty. These people do not resort to muttering 'uh' or 'you know' to buy time, they resist weak-kneed equivocation, mindlessly leaning on 'sort of' to dilute the potency of their thoughts, and this ability to speak clearly and coherently with conviction for two hours with no script seems to have become a rare art... Yes, it has – just refer to our past interviews with Peter Frampton, Nalle Colt, Ken Parker, Joe Bonamassa, Elvin Bishop or Eric Burdon... Not only are these characters unfailingly lucid (and not because of clever editing – they edit themselves on the fly), but the reader is also left with no doubt that they have been told the absolute truth (often resulting in a second read – who among us is not

starved for the truth?) The truth is a gift, rarely given in these times, and so it must be recognized with the profound appreciation it deserves.



Five years ago the unthinkable occurred in the United States with very little warning – our economy tanked, investment banks too big to fail vaporized, and a dirty secret was revealed about sub-prime mortgages, mortgage-backed securities and collateralized debt obligations that had made it profitable to bet on America to fail. Suddenly the carefree lifestyle that allows most Americans to remain clueless and disconnected from the world, oblivious to the economic troubles in Japan, Greece, Spain and Ireland seemed to have gone poof overnight – a quintessential WTF moment like no other in our lifetime.



Meanwhile, Atlanta amp builder Richard Goodsell had been enjoying a steady roll. Business was good,

he had expanded, added employees and looked forward to ascending to the next level as a custom builder with a strong following among working musicians and guitar enthusiasts. The tangled bundle of tour laminates hanging in his shop from backstage visits suggested he had arrived, and a global network of eager Goodsell dealers wasn't far behind. But in September 2008 all of that came to an end. Orders suddenly evaporated as even the most affluent guitar buffs felt the winds of impending doom blow caution into their lives. Goodsell resorted to keeping the company afloat with his American Express card while he waited out the storm, but the bad news just kept on coming. Smelling blood, the media was finally on the case now, ramping up the up the panic with what they sell best. Fear does not sell guitar amplifiers.

Goodsell survived by downsizing, moving to a small industrial space and working again as he had begun, alone, building one amp at a time. If you want a Goodsell amp today, you call and he will build it. His latest is the Mark IV featured here for review. We asked Richard to share the evolution of his amplifiers and his company over the past decade. Rather than dutifully providing a dry dissertation in a veiled attempt to sell you an amplifier, Goodsell delivered the compelling story

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of a small American company striving to survive in the midst of change and uncertainty by not standing still. In other words, the truth. It's a fascinating story, culminating in an expanded vision for Goodsell's exceptional amplifiers. Enjoy...

TQR: The Mark IV is a modern classic with a great sound and all the practical features you could want crammed into a portable 1x12 cabinet. Can you describe how this model has evolved from your earlier work in terms of design, component selection, tone stack and other features? Is this the most 'evolved' Goodsell to date?

The evolution of the Super 17 from its humble beginnings on recycled organ chassis to the current (and probably final) Mark IV iteration was a fairly linear path that reflected my maturation as a builder. I was about 40 units in to what would be retroactively be known as the "Mark I" before it occurred to me that amp building could be a viable career alternative to wrenching Hammond organs. It would be another 60 or 70 amps before the Mark 2 showed up, which was the solution to the erratic and inconsistent supply of organ parts. It was an off-the-shelf aluminum Marshall 18-watt kit chassis with all of the holes drilled in the right places, and I continued to build the exact same 3-knob Super 17 on this platform, which would soon find its way into the Marshall 18-watt style birch-ply combo cabinet that many other small builders have embraced over the years. This combo was the launch pad for most of the innovations that would define later models – it could be a 1x12 or a 2x10, the same chassis could be adapted to the 33-watt models, and it facilitated features like reverb and tremolo, which went through their own process of evolution.

Reverb and Gibson Bias-vary Tremolo

From the beginning, the secret sauce has been in the simplicity, including the single tone control, and I was loathe to add



any feature that would detract from the purity of the original signal path. I found I was able to inject the reverb signal on the *ground side of the phase inverter*; and avoid the signal degradation from doing it

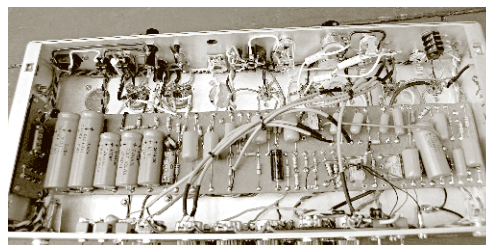
the "normal" way, and while it sounds different, it's effective with its own personality. Soon after came the late '50s Gibson-inspired *bias-vary tremolo*, which begs the question why anyone would ever use any other method. Like the reverb, it is not in the signal path, manipulating the bias voltage on the power tubes instead. These two features could be viewed as "modular" additions as either (or both) could be added to any push-pull amp with a long-tail phase inverter with virtually no alterations to the original circuit.



Within a year, 90% of the Super 17 Mark II combos featured both reverb and tremolo, while most of the heads continued with the basic 3-knob set-up.

Several hundred Mark 2 amps were made before any other changes were contemplated, although during that period there was a 10-piece "Clairmont Classic" re-issue of the original amp as I cleaned out a storage unit that still had a few original cabinets and organ chassis. Since I had another 26 Hammond AO-35 chassis available, I needed an enclosure that would work, and turned to the solid pine 5E3 tweed deluxe box (with some modifications) to complete the series that came to be known as the Limited Edition. With only enough space on the chassis for a pair of 12AX7s, the Limited Edition did not have reverb or tremolo, but it marked the debut of the "5/17" (triode/pentode) switch which created a dual power feature.

Mark III



The smaller, lighter Limited Editions sold out immediately, but

being completely out of organ hardware at this point, I had to develop a new smaller aluminum chassis from scratch, as the Marshall 18-style was too large to fit into the 5E3 box. The result was the Mark III. Available only as a 112 combo, it was more than 10 pounds lighter than its predecessor, and featured reverb, tremolo, and the 5/17 switch as standard equipment. For the first 3 years, the Mark III had a solid-state rectifier in order to make the same plate voltage with a smaller power transformer to save space and reduce heat, but later ones were wired for a tube rectifier, and eventually the GZ34 became standard. At about the same time, a moderate revision to the reverb design eliminated an entire 12AX7, meaning

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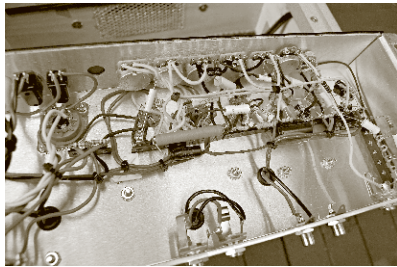
only two 12AX7s (besides the phase inverter) were required for pre-amp, reverb return, reverb send, and tremolo oscillator. Since the pre-amp had always consisted of only a single triode (one-half of a 12AX7), you could take a Sharpie and still trace the original circuit exactly as it was drawn on Serial Number 0001. Despite a major change in packaging and the addition of several new features, the touch sensitivity, responsiveness, the heart, and the soul of the Super 17 remained fundamentally unadulterated.



And so it was for nearly five years – the Super 17 Mark III was the bread-and-butter amp of the entire product

line, and to date is the most prolific of all Goodsell amps with more than 500 copies built. The Mark II soldiers on as the basis for every model above 20 watts, including the 33 series, Black Dog, and any build that needs to be a 2x10 or a 2x12, as well as all heads across the board. The larger chassis still requires alteration for every build, including adding and/or enlargement of tube sockets. Meanwhile, the smaller Mark III chassis turned out to be highly adaptable – variations on the 17, the Unibox, the Dominatrix, and finally the Valpreaux are all built on the same piece of aluminum with no additional drilling required.

'59 Bassman cathode-follower driven tone stack

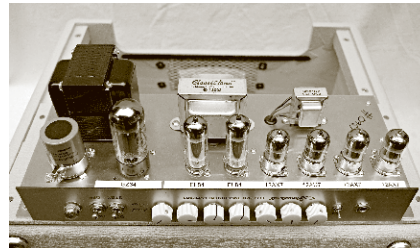


Last year, while preparing to build myself a '59 Bassman clone (with reverb and tremolo tacked on) I became intrigued by the tone stack – it had always been

there – we've all looked at it a million times, and I had already been using similar Treble/Mid/Bass stacks on the Black Dog and Dominatrix. Whereas these amps had the tone stack in between two gain stages, the second to make up for the inherent losses in complex tone controls, the '59 by contrast had a cathode-follower stage pushing the stack from behind. Now at this point I'd been building guitar amplifiers for 8 years, Hammonds and Leslies for 12 years before that, and I never had the occasion to delve into the virtues of a cathode-follower. With single-stage pre-amps, single tone controls, and no effects loops I had no use for a current amplifier or impedance coupler/buffer – but wait a minute... Is it possible that

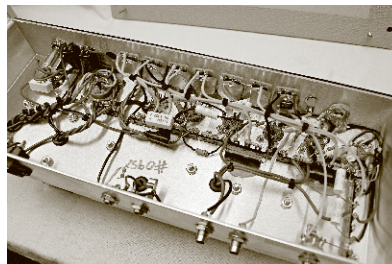
a cathode-follower-driven tone stack would allow the secret sauce to pass through relatively unscathed? Could I get tone modification without radically altering the signal amplitude (a philosophical mandate) between a single-stage pre- and the phase inverter? Turns out the answer is yes, yes you can, as the cathode-follower amplifies current, not voltage. I'm sure that most senior amp builders have known this fact since their days at The Academy, but to me, it was a revelation, and it would eventually change the way I build amps and how I run the amp business...

Super 17 Mark IV



So at this point, the Mark III chassis still had the vestigial tube hole from the reverb re-design, and it was getting a

stainless steel plug for the sake of safety and aesthetics, so the necessary real estate was already there, at least internally. Externally there was two inches of blank chassis on both sides, most of which went underneath the edges of the cabinet's chassis cutout. I would need to re-claim some of that space in order to expand beyond the six control holes that I had to work with, so a call to the cabinet shop and three weeks later, I had a modified 5E3 with a 13.5" opening. I moved the pilot light an inch or so to the right, and in doing so I returned to the Fender-style pilot light jewel for the first time in five years – thus silencing forever the shrill screams of an entire market segment that had been demanding this change for years (maybe some day I'll have a light-up logo, too, but not today) and I am absolutely certain that I have sold a number of amps based solely on the fact that they were furnished with a violet jewel. So I moved the input jack the same distance to the left for symmetry, lost the 5/17 switch (hallelujah, I never liked the triode mode) making room for bass and treble controls and a 3-way mid- switch. Behold, ladies and gentleman: The Super 17 Mark IV. Adding the cathode-follower was literally cut-and-paste straight from the '59 – it fit right between the pre-amp stage and the phase inverter without any changes at all, except I used a 12AU7 for the cathode-follower instead of a 12AX7.



At the end of the day we have the most technically complex and feature-laden version of the Super 17 ever. It would be hard to imagine a

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practical reason or way to add anything else to this amp, but a Peavey Classic 30 looks like the space shuttle in comparison. Not being confined by any PC boards, we can do anything we want – if you wanted to draw a box around each individual element in the schematic of the Mark IV – the preamp, cathode-follower, phase inverter, reverb, tremolo, output – you could find similar “chunks” individually in amps from Vox, Traynor, Gibson, Matchless, and Fender. There is nothing really new under the Sun in Tubeland. The difference is in the execution – what element goes where and how. Technique, transformers, topology and the accumulation of experience learned from the individual assembly of over 1,000 17-watt amps in the last 9 years is neatly summed up in the Mark IV, and I don’t believe it can be taken any further without compromising that intangible sparkly thing that lives in each one of them.

TQR: It appears that you have adopted an “anything is possible” approach in accepting custom orders and variations on your base models. Rather than building four static models, for example, you seem to be willing to consider different head and combo configurations and design features that aren’t limited by a template... Can you elaborate?



Well, almost anything is possible. It is true that I am accepting orders now that I wouldn’t have considered a couple of years ago – I was quick to remind customers and dealers that I wasn’t Burger King

– you get it my way or maybe you should look somewhere else. But times change, and after five years of an unbelievably challenging and hostile economic environment, I have downsized to the point where I am pretty much a one-man shop. It is no longer the goal to see how many identical black amps I can build to stock dealer shelves, and I am not looking to take on any dealers at this point. There’s a small, and I mean *very* small handful of dealers that still provide a useful brick-and-mortar presence, but the tide has turned to where more and more of my business is the end-user calling me or e-mailing to ask me exactly what is possible, not just in terms of color and features, but also weird, one-off, and highly personal builds.

There still is a template in terms of the limitations of the two chassis I use. I will go pretty far off of the menu as long as the aluminum and iron parts don’t change. That means a total of no more than two octal-socket power tubes, or four 9-pin mini tubes like the EL84 and 6973, so the most powerful amp I can or will build is about 45-50 watts, but the sweet spot is the



30-35 watt range, which can be achieved with a number of different power tube configurations. The customers impose their own limits as well – nobody wants to spend a ton of money on something that can’t be quantified or auditioned, though return customers have a lot more latitude based on their previous experiences with me and/or the amps.

What this means is I am not in the business of saying “no”, however, if you need 100 watts or channel-switching, we’re probably not going to be a good fit. I’m amazed by the ever-growing number of customers who call and want to be personally involved in the building process, yet still respect my boundaries and understand what is technically possible. They tell me what they want, I give them a price and a turnaround time, and they wind up with an amp that they can’t get anywhere else. I’m currently building an amp on the instructions that it be “...a Super 17 only with 6V6s instead of EL84s...” Why not? I’ve never even tried to compete in that category, but evidently a lot of players overlook me because I don’t, so maybe I should. The outcome of that particular build may spawn a brand-new model. The same thing happened after I was commissioned to build an EF86-driven 17. That one is a keeper for sure.

The bottom line is this – I can build only 90 or 100 amps in a year, so it no longer makes sense to go to trade shows looking for dealers or spending a ton on advertising. I already have all of the work I can handle, and I’m not merely selling amps – I’m offering *access*, the experience, and involvement, which has led to a degree of diversification in the product line, without changing the look or compromising my “simple is better” mission.

TQR: What was your target when you developed the signature speaker?



There are actually three “signature” speakers, but by far the most common is the Goodsell RGH, which, like

the others, is assembled for me by Warehouse Guitar Speak-

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ers (WGS) in Paducah, Kentucky. The RGH, like WGS' own Reaper, is pretty much a drop-in replacement for the G12H30, and that has been my all-time go-to for years. It's soft parts (cone, etc.) come from Mueller in the UK, and while their steel baskets are stamped overseas (as is everyone else) the assembly takes place here in the USA, and I can actually talk on the phone to the guy who assembles my speakers. I can get a one-off or a prototype in a matter of days – that, along with super-compet-



itive pricing, and OEM branding in the modest quantities that I use is a winning combination. They also make a special light-weight ceramic 16-ohm speaker just for the Unibox, and for high power applications or if I need to darken things up a bit, I have my own Rola G65-inspired model

(called what else - the RG-65) that I also use with the RGH in a mixed 2x12 application. I'm very fond of the WGS Black & Blue for my AlNiCo Voxy-sounding builds as well.

TQR: An overdrive pedal seems like a natural extension of amp building, but it is a very crowded and fickle market. How did your OD pedal take shape, what can you tell us about any unique design features, and how would you describe its sound?

One would think that pedals come naturally to amp builders, but not many have done much with them compared to contemporary pedal-only guys like Brian Wampler. It's really a different skill set, almost always PC boards, which have to be designed and manufactured, and you're using solid-state if not digital technology. The Goodsell Overdrive, on the other hand, is a direct extension of the amps, and in fact two-thirds of the pedal's parts are shared with the amps. There's a terminal strip in there, full-sized chassis mounted pots, and all of the resistors and caps can be found in the amps as well. There's a single NPN transistor that provides the gain, and in concept it is very similar to the pre-amp on a Super 17. It's all wired point-to-point same as the amps. The Super 17 loves this pedal because it "thinks" that it's the first gain stage in the amp, with the same Gain/Tone/Volume controls performing the same functions that they did on the original 17. It is not a re-invention of the wheel, but it is optimized for use with a Super 17, 33, or Valpreaux. People who buy it thinking it will make their amp sound like a Super 17 will probably be disappointed – that wasn't the design intent. It provides clean boost to moderate overdrive, and to me, at least, it avoids the need for a second "lead" channel. It interacts with the knobs on the amp to raise or lower the distortion threshold so seamlessly that together they function as if they were a single device.



\$2,000-\$3,000 amp. It is likely that I'll make a MOSFET version with considerably more gain on tap, but I have no plans to go any further.

TQR: A lot of 'boutique' pedals nudge the \$300 price point. How are you pricing yours for nearly half that?

There are a lot of great pedals out there. The Timmy and the OCD, for instance list for around \$169 or so and they are extremely popular. There is a lot of pedal activity between \$140-\$170, but when you head north of \$299 I think there's a huge increase in expectation. My pedal simply doesn't do enough to command that kind of price, and very few do. My production costs are modest; I make them myself one at a time as they're ordered.

TQR: What's ahead for you, Richard?



Well, right now business is very good – perhaps as good as ever at this scale. I really enjoy talking to the customers and players who will actually be using my amps, and (within reason) I enjoy the challenge of incorporating their ideas into the builds. This is exactly how the EF86/EL84/EZ81 GC-12 series came to exist. I've just started building 1x15 combos for the first time, as well as two channel amps. I'm heading in the direction of becoming a true custom shop.

Goodsell Super 17 Mark IV

If you are remotely considering a new amplifier and you don't know what you want, we do. Well, at least we know what the overwhelming odds would dictate in 2013 – a small, lightweight 1x12 in the realm of say, 25 watts, maybe less or a little more, with exceptional tone and optional reverb and tremolo if they don't jack up the price too high or compro-

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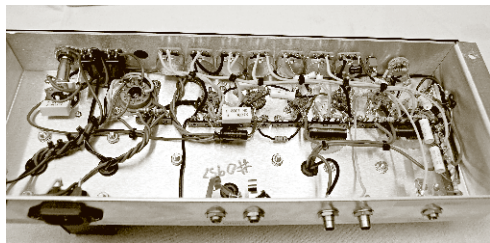
mise tone. That's the 'new normal' among custom-built guitar amplifiers, and it's been trending this way for years. Why? Sound and monitor systems have steadily improved, high stage volume kills the mix, and most guitar players with cash are too old to lift a 65 lb. amp into the cargo bed of an SUV, let alone wrench it across the parking lot of a bar. In February... On ice... Wearing their best gig boots...



If this new demographic suits you, you may want to seriously consider a Goodsell Mark IV. Why? Because you can lift it, it has plenty of volume and personality that belies its size, and because the Super 17 Mark IV just sounds

so damn good. Among all the smaller combo amps we have reviewed, the Mark IV qualifies as a true desert island amp. If you are playing gigs in small to medium sized rooms you can use it without a mike, yet it will certainly hold its own on larger stages miked... If you pretty much play at home the Mark IV could easily become your favorite go-to amp thanks to the exceptionally versatile nature of the gain and volume controls that allow you to dial in high-headroom clean tones and beautifully overdriven sustain and drive at low *and* higher volume levels. Yes, you can do it all with the Mark IV. There may be seven knobs on the control panel, but this amp still defines the value and appeal of simplicity at its best.

A quick look inside the chassis confirms Goodsell's penchant for keeping things simple. Seeing how a small number of



electronic components and a couple of tag strips can produce such a

big, complex sound, you begin to consider the simple circuits of the past in a new light. Perhaps the secret sauce in classic vintage tone was knowing when to stop, and not piling on features that only diluted the end result. Do you *really* need 16 knobs to play blues or rock & roll?

The Mark IV utilizes dual EL-84 power tubes with a GZ34 rectifier, yet this amplifier does not seem to compress down or lack the headroom of many dual EL-84 amps. The tone stack is also far more nimble and effective in adjusting EQ, and the reverb and tremolo effects are both outstanding. The sole 'extra' features consist of an 8 ohm extension speaker jack tucked

underneath the chassis next to the speaker jack, and adding an additional 1x12 cabinet creates a much more formidable soundstage should you need it. You'll also find a 3-way mini 'Mid' toggle switch on the control panel described by Richard:



The "MID" knob on most amps that you are familiar with is

25k ohms with a linear taper. On amps like the blackface Bassman, where there are only Bass and Treble controls, there is a fixed mid resistor, usually 8.2k or 10k. I could have gone that route, but it was almost as easy to offer three values at that junction, so here they are: Switch "up" =11k; switch "center" =22k; switch "down" =3k. This is electrically identical to the mid knob being set at 12 o'clock, 3 o'clock, and 9 o'clock, respectively. You can roughly look at it as flat/bump/scoop in that order. There is a small but noticeable change in the response of the bass and trebles knobs between the mid-positions. Conceivably, if one were to order the Mark IV with reverb or tremolo deleted, (perish the thought) they would get a fully sweepable MID knob.



The three midrange toggle options are all very usable, with a fat boost in perceived volume and gain from the center position 22K setting. The

effect is similar to adding a 25K midrange pot on the back panel of a blackface Deluxe Reverb as we have often described here. We should also note that the Mark IV doesn't look like a designer booteek amp shoved in a cheap generic box. Our review model covered in optional rough white tolex with gold grille cloth, gold metal control panel and creme knobs creates a timeless 'modern vintage' appearance that we like a lot. For our money (or yours) there simply isn't a better sounding, more versatile or toneful 1x12 amp being built by anyone today, but the Super 17 Mark IV is also just one of many models found on the Goodsell web site. If you need or just want a new amp, make the call, and *Quest forth...to* Super 17 Mark IV as reviewed: \$2099.00

www.superseventeen.com, 678-488-8176

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REVIEW

Goodsell Overdrive Pedal

Overdrive and boost pedals surely must be the most sought-after and prolific guitar effects in existence. Hundreds new and old have been built with more introduced every year by big, small and one-man operations. For the hobbyist or aspiring designer the barrier to entry is low, and because pedals are so much more affordable than guitars and amps, guitarists can afford to freely experiment with their overdriven mojo.



It seems easy enough to whip out a review on an overdrive pedal – plug

several guitars in to a few different amps, evaluate the effect of the controls individually and in varied combinations, listen for noise and any changes in EQ and tone from the unaffected sound of the guitar and amp...

These are all important considerations, but you buy an overdrive effect for the quality of the overdriven

sound. The difference between a smooth, musical, natural sounding effect with a good range of variable intensity and one that is less pleasing or too confining is the difference. In reality, some pedals sound better with single coil pickups, others with humbuckers, and it can be difficult to make sweeping generalizations, although most manufacturers would have you assume that their pedal sounds equally good with whatever gear you play. Stevie Ray Vaughan was known for his use of old Arbiter Fuzz Faces (modified by Cesar Diaz) and Tube Screemers, but that doesn't mean you're gonna get Stevie's tone from your rig. The big variable – the bogey, if you will, when it comes to chasing tone with pedals is the fact that your rig is probably somewhat unique, and perhaps very different in sound from whatever gear the builder and designer may have used to prototype their pedal. In the Quest for tone, one size very often does not fit all...

The Goodsell Overdrive sounds very, very good, producing smooth, rich, natural sounding distortion, and it should, since it is basically a circuit borrowed from a Goodsell amp. It can behave a bit differently from other pedals, however – especially when inserted in a pedal board, and we would be derelict to gloss over such details. We know for a fact that when guitarists find themselves resorting to unfamiliar control settings on an amp or effect, a common reaction is to feel that something is 'wrong.' We once had an amp here for review that required us to turn the bass control way up while leaving treble set very low to get a good tone, and it did seem strangely counter-

intuitive. Like a vintage wah or fuzz, the Goodsell Overdrive wants to be first in the chain, or better yet, connected directly to your guitar and amp. You will also notice that unity gain is achieved with both the volume and gain controls at 12 o'clock. As you turn one or both controls above this setting sustain and distortion gradually increase from a greasy grind to full burn, and the overdrive effect is outstanding – very organic and realistic – this pedal just functions a little differently from what you may be used to...**TQ**

MSRP \$169, but the first 100 pre-paid orders will be \$139 + UPS Ground shipping.

John McGuire Guitars

If you aren't familiar with John McGuire, perhaps you have heard of his father, Mike, one of the original co-founders of Valley Arts Guitars in Los Angeles, and production manager for the Gibson Custom Shop in Nashville from 1993 until his recent retirement. John's brother Mike Jr. is also an extremely accomplished artist who works in the finishing department at the Gibson Custom Shop in Nashville. Mike Voltz, production manager at the Gibson Custom Shop in Memphis initially introduced us to John McGuire, he sent us one of his Tradition guitars for review and we asked him to share his story. Enjoy...

TQR: Well John, being the son of Mike McGuire who just recently retired from running production at the Gibson Custom Shop, we can kinda guess how you got into the guitar building business, but give us the details. Where did you grow up, did you start out by learning to play the guitar, did you pursue music first, and when did you initially become interested in doing repairs and building?



I grew up in Southern California, and I used to go in to work with my dad pretty often. I bugged him with new designs all the time that were just not for the Valley Arts

brand. You could say I was into pointy guitars back then. He allowed me to pull some scrap parts and I reworked and built my own guitar (with help of course) when I was 12 years old. I guess you could say that was when I figured out that I really

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liked working on guitars, and I would help friends out with mods. After that guitars became my life at Gibson Custom, First Act, and now with my own company. As far as playing goes, I have messed around with guitars since I was five, but I never really got into theory or anything. I was always just interested in having fun. I got bored initially with the whole practice thing, so I can play, but I have no idea what I am doing.

TQR: Describe your early adventures and most memorable experiences working with guitars.



I guess the first CNC program I wrote and ran at the Gibson Custom shop was pretty memorable. It was a Flying V pickguard and truss rod cover – not so awesome an accomplishment to most, but I was pretty impressed with it. There was also a time I crashed the CNC pretty seriously there as well, very memorable, but not such a

good memory (laughing). Other than that, while I was at First Act I met with High on Fire's Matt Pike to talk about his first custom 9 string and he ate a steak with his bare hands. That sticks out in my mind....

TQR: His guitars must have some funky spoodge on them... Have any mentors played a significant role in your life as a builder?



Well, my father of course. Other than that I would have to say Matt Klein and Lynn Mathews at Gibson Custom. Matt taught me a ton of stuff, even when he thought I wasn't listening or watching. Lynn also taught me a lot about keeping a level head throughout production

issues and would also make sure that I would correct myself and get jobs done the right way. I would also have to credit my brother, Mike Jr. He is probably the most knowledgeable guitar finisher with the skills to back it up. I can't tell you how many times I had to ask him how to do certain types of finishes, what coatings can go over other coatings, etc. I would also have him show me techniques over and over. Growing up with him was definitely helpful in my guitar building career.

TQR: Which guitar models from the past appeal to you the most and why?

If you're talking about models I have worked on, I would have to say the Flying V Custom I worked into production in 2002. That, and the 9 string (DC-9) we did for Matt Pike and a few artists at First Act. It was something I thought nobody would really get or play until they were done, and Matt used it as his main guitar for a long time. It had become a pretty popular model for our shop. In general I am really into the standard stuff like the Les Paul, Strat, Flying V, Explorer, and I also like a lot of the strange looking models that came out in the sixties....

TQR: When did you begin building the guitars we see today, what was your vision and what did you want to accomplish as a designer and builder?

I started building the Tradition, in late 2012. What I wanted to accomplish was a design that can be perceived and appreciated as just a straight ahead, good guitar that feels like it will play itself – as simple as that. I wanted to create a guitar that guitar players and enthusiasts would appreciate for its feel, sound, and playability. I have incorporated some improvements that you really have to look for, and some not so hard to find. I am one who believes that as cool as the improvements and innovations might be, if it makes the guitar look silly, then it is just a silly looking guitar. So it is important for me to not stray too far from tradition, finding ways to incorporate new innovations with established concepts .

TQR: Do you have any particular favorites among specific pickup designs?



The Vault pickups are just amazing. My father and I actually went to their shop in Kennewick, Washington and they put us to school. We spent a lot of time

discussing different pickups, sounds and possibilities. We also played through various amps and guitars and just about every combination. The coolest part was they were able to show us how the pickups were made and why they sounded a specific way. It all seemed to make sense.

TQR: How about wood – what do you like to use and why?

I am pretty traditional when it comes to wood. There is nothing like a good light piece of mahogany with P-90s or hum-

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buckers. I also use a lot of swamp ash. I just don't think you can beat the weight and sound of it, and the grain can look pretty awesome as well. I also like a nice piece of figured maple. I tend not to get too crazy with other exotics. Afterall, it's a guitar...

TQR: What role does the weight of a guitar play in its tone and resonance?

Well a lighter guitar tends to be a bit more live acoustically, and I believe you can tell a lot about what your guitar is going to sound like just by playing it unplugged. Weight up or down alone however doesn't always make for a better guitar. Everything you do makes a difference.

TQR: Regarding the guitar we received, what inspired the Tradition design?

Well, a few things actually. I wanted to appeal to the guys who are really into the way the guitar feels. I wanted them to feel like they could play better on my guitars. I also wanted them to look and sound somewhat familiar. I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel.

TQR: You have developed a very interesting design for the bolt-on neck. Please describe its construction and how it functions.



Yeah, the "Tone Socket." I always dug the way the ol' interlock worked and wanted to do it in a way that would be a bit easier to use and a bit more of a traditional wood to wood joint. It consists of brass pieces that are placed flush in the neck and body,

male on the neck and female on the body. It goes together like a dead bolt almost. They are inset so that the wood is making a connection, but the socket keeps it secure. It also allows for fast removal, adjustments, and replacements (multiple times) without having to worry about stripping any holes.

TQR: What type of P90s did you use?

Vault Pork Chops. I did have them wound just a bit hot, however.

TQR: The hardware on this guitar is also unique – the design of the bridge and tailpiece, and the open back tuners.



OK, the Hip Shot open back 18:1 classic tuners are just phenomenal. I have worked with Dave Borishoff at Hip Shot for a while. When I told him I was wanting to do my own thing he sent me out samples of those tuners and I was sold. They're just a completely cool looking and precise tuner,... The bridge... I had been looking for a bridge and tailpiece combo that was just the right fit for a

long time. I came across the Gotoh 510 TOM and stop combo and decided to try it. In my opinion it is really slick. The adjustability of the bridge is amazing and the design of the posts and stop bar is very smart. It will actually adjust itself to your string angle off the bridge. The weight of the stop bar and bridge is amazing as well.

TQR: How many different models do you build and can you briefly describe them?



Right now The Tradition is the only one in production. I have multiple bridge and pickup options though, including a T-style, a double humbucker TOM/stop bar, a double P-90 TOM/stop bar, and a humbucker with 2 single coils and a Hip Shot tremolo. I am also working on a few designs for some new models to come out soon.

TQR: What kinds of optional finishes are available?

I will pretty much do any traditional finish including metallics and specialty jobs. I also have a burnt finish that looks fantastic, where I actually burn the wood and finish over it. I do that with color or without and it gives it a really striking, rustic look. It really makes the grain pop, especially with ash. Other than that there is not much I won't do upon request.

TQR: How does your ordering process work?

You can order from any of my dealers: Music Machine Guitars in Kennewick, WA, Carter Vintage Guitars in Nashville, and in Europe you can contact QGuitars.nl. If you are interested in becoming a dealer you can contact me through sales@johnmcguireguitars.com

TQR: What would like to accomplish in the future?

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I would definitely like to keep the McGuire name going as it started with my dad in the guitar world. I would also like to someday bring John McGuire Guitars to a level where the name is common knowledge to guitar players and enthusiasts as being a solid high quality instrument.

McGuire Tradition



In a traditional sense, it is hard to be uniquely different as a guitar builder when the majority of your potential customers remain attracted to familiar shapes from the past. Guitarists are very finicky about what they will play – perhaps more so today than ever before. Some builders choose to unapologetically render their take on classic Fender designs. It's the obvious path of least resistance, and that's fine, just don't wander

too close to the Fender peghead shape if you don't want to receive a 'cease and desist' letter... Set neck guitars typically require more tooling, time, skill and imagination, but it is also difficult to create a distinctive body style that won't resemble classic Gibson shapes with contrived departures. In this regard, making guitars is tough enough, but designing a unique guitar with visual appeal may be the most elusive trick of all.

John McGuire's Traditional certainly won't be confused with another design, and this is a good thing. The body shape suggests inspiration from both Fullerton and Kalamazoo, but



the appealing shape is McGuire's to claim as his own, and we like it a lot. McGuire's slogan reads "Guitars for the working musician," and we like that sentiment, too.

McGuire currently builds one Traditional model with plenty of pickup, hardware and finish options on a mahogany or ash body. The 24.75" scale length maple neck features a very comfortable, round and full shape with a beautiful Indian rosewood slab fingerboard and perfectly dressed

6105 frets. We also really liked the 18:1 Hipshot open gear tuners, and the traditional nylon 6/6 nut is the very same slippery stuff originally used on late '50s Gibson electrics. The Gotoh 'tune-o-matic' bridge and stop tailpiece are modern variations on the original concept. Easily adjustable and a practical change from the usual vintage design, the unique Gotoh hardware looks like it belongs on McGuire's guitar. The 7.5 lb. Tradition we received for review was eventually headed for Belgium, displaying a nicely figured ash body and a beautifully executed cherry sunburst finish. From a builder's perspective, the Tone Socket is an innovative and simple approach to joining neck and body, and the string energy transmission from neck to body was excellent.

Tone

It's a given that human beings tend to 'eat with their eyes,' so when guitarists see a couple of P90s, assumptions and preconceptions create varied expectations based on past experience. If you are one of those players that associates P90s with every track on the *Mountain Climbing* album, think again. Well, wait a minute... perhaps we should hit pause here and



strongly suggest that you reacquaint yourself with that album cranked if only to be reminded how lame and repetitive "rock & roll" has become. How about playing "Silver Paper" at your next wedding party? Now back to those Vault P90s... The 8.1K bridge P90 on the ash Tradition sounds closer to a fat Telecaster, very spanky and bright with good clarity and an equally great tone through overdrive pedals or an amp turned up. McGuire's guitar with the Vault P90s seems to have a lot more *lift* than a typical mahogany Junior with a P90, with more air and shininess in the tone.

The 8K neck P90 is heavy and thick but not muffled or indistinct – a great neck pickup tone. Overall, you can expect a bright and lively classic single coil tone on the bridge, a very useful combined tone that is both bright and deep on the wound strings, and a fat and smooth, wide glide vocal tone on the neck. Very agreeable and equally unique among other styles of guitars loaded with P90s. The top and back contours, light weight and single cut body style create an extremely comfortable feel for an uncomplicated and well-made guitar entirely built by the man whose name is on the headstock. [to](http://www.johnmcguireguitars.com)

www.johnmcguireguitars.com

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DALLAS GREEN SIGNATURE

Eastwood Airline Jupiter Pro



Mike Robinson's Eastwood Airline guitars continue to offer innovative retro designs, unique tones and excellent quality at an affordable price. The Dallas Green Signature Jupiter Pro we requested for review really caught our eye, and if you would enjoy venturing beyond the familiar meat & potatoes tones of a Stratocaster, Telecaster or Les Paul, this cool guitar definitely deserves your consideration... Here's the official description from the Eastwood web site: *This design is based around the early '60s Silvertone Jupiter H49 which was also available with the*

Airline brand. Here we have upgraded our existing Airline Jupiter to create the Jupiter PRO. We've added a unique blend control that lets the player dial in a wide variety of tones. We have also replaced the wooden bridge with a Tone Pros Tune-o-matic, upgraded the bolt-on neck with a set maple neck and upgraded the hardware to create a solid, tour worthy guitar for today's modern player.

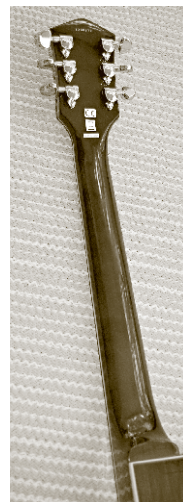
We agree, and 'tour worthy' is entirely accurate. The Jupiter Pro is a full hollowbody built with a maple top and back, mahogany sides, and a bound maple neck with rosewood fingerboard. We love the big 'honeyburst' body, and the mahogany-finished 25.5" scale neck is a very comfortable moderate C shape with rosewood fingerboard and nicely crowned medium jumbo frets. The Grover tuners and TonePros bridge make tuning easy and precise, and we found tuning stability to be very consistent. Craftsmanship, cosmetic details and the honeyburst top and deep mahogany finish on the back and sides are outstanding. The 8.6 lb. Jupiter Pro just feels right in every way – a substantial thinline hollowbody entirely free of the feedback issues of a traditional f-hole design, it offers exceptional playability and some very cool 'old' tones.

The Eastwood 'Argyle' pickups are somewhat reminiscent of DeArmond gold foils, but they produce a stronger, rumbling character and upper-midrange emphasis without sacrificing too much treble on the bridge pickup. The overall tone on the 7.1K bridge is evenly balanced with good clarity on the top, but the treble frequencies do not dominate on full chords.



The wound strings are robust, but lack some of the focused intensity of a Tele or P90 pickup, and this unique character is what we refer to as the kind of 'old'

tone you can also hear in many '50s guitar amplifiers. Classic Ry Cooder comes to mind... The 6.8K rhythm pickup is thick and animated, with muted treble presence but an interesting and imposing voice. We wouldn't relegate the Jupiter to the status of a slide guitar, but man, does it sound good in open tunings with a slide... In addition to independent volume and tone controls for each pickup, the combined setting features a blend control adjacent to the bridge pickup. We really liked the tone of both pickups together, but we found the blend control to be limited, with a steep taper that cuts highs too severely and quickly.



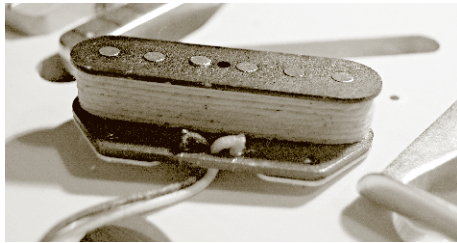
We must also mention that single string leads develop a percussive response to pick attack that isn't so apparent within chords, almost as if you are playing two different guitars when alternating from rhythm to leads. But the Jupiter's secret sauce is most apparent when playing through an overdriven amp or when using an overdrive pedal. The Argyle pickups seem to be made for mild to intense distortion, producing (here we go again) an unforgettable old and funky tone that just doesn't sound like anything else. What could be better than that? Once again, the comparatively lower output of the Argyle pickups seems to create a deeper, more complex and colorful overdriven tone. For \$999.00 with a plush Airline tweed hardshell case, the Jupiter Pro rocks with a decidedly different yet very appealing vocal vibe. Highly recommended for those who are willing to depart from the mainstream.**To**

www.eastwoodguitars.com, 905-702-8291

The Great Pickup Quest

The most formidable obstacle in your quest for the next great set of pickups is one of sheer magnitude... There are just too many 'custom' and production pickups being made today for anyone to possibly sift through, digest and evaluate. No matter what you do, you'll be missing more than you can ever

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hear. So we return to the mighty leap of faith, but there is no need to leap blindly with both eyes

squeezed shut. Consider these suggestions and observations:

It is always helpful to try and identify the tone and character you want. If your Telecaster needs fattening up on the bridge, try to narrow your search to pickup winders who in no uncertain terms explain how they have created a pickup to solve that very problem. If your Stratocaster bridge pickup is too shrill and thin, take the same approach and look for a replacement that is described as you want your bridge pickup to sound. Slightly higher resistance readings can suggest less



treble and a fuller sound, but taken to extremes, clarity and dynamics can be lost to muddy, middy razor tones. And remember, vintage Fender pickups were rarely 'hot' by today's

standards. We can't recall anyone ever complaining that their Fender pickups weren't bright enough, so if like most players, you want to add some warmth and roundness to your single coil guitar, focus on pickups that are specifically described as being designed to accomplish that. Examples would be the Fender Custom Shop Custom '54 or Fat '50s Strat pickups described as, "The sound of a '50s Strat but with a little more attitude! Fat '50s pickups deliver enhanced bass response without the harsh mid-range." We have favorably reviewed both of these sets, by the way, and we like them a lot. Lollar Special Tele pickups are also excellent for a rounder Tele tone.



In regard to P90s, a 5-10% underwound neck pickup will offer more clarity. Contrary to popular belief, most vintage P90s display fairly moderate output, and a 9K P90 is an aberration. Don't get sucked into thinking that more output assures better tone. If you want more power and volume, try the knob for that on your amp. Cleaner, clearer pickups tend to sound better through overdriven amps and overdrive effects. Lindy

Fralin's P90s are among our favorites.

Humbucking pickups have never been more popular, and the number of custom sets being made today is impossible to fully grasp. Just a few years ago the best way to nail stellar humbucking tone was to dig deep and buy vintage Gibson pickups from the '50s and early '60s. That was very revealing and a lot of fun for us, but the supply has evaporated, which means that prices have also rocketed into very thin air. We were buying PAFs for \$1800 and early '60s patent number pickups for \$900 as recently as 2009. Ebay still seems to be the best source, but prices have gone up, and you must buy from a reputable seller with impeccable feedback.



Many contemporary neck humbuckers remain lame and virtually useless for anything but jazz. Getting treble on the unwound strings is a nifty trick known by few, apparently. In our experience, the best sounding vintage Gibson neck humbuckers have been those with lower resistance readings, around 7.2K - 7.4K. Some pickup winders will tell you that resistance readings mean nothing, but our extensive

experiments with vintage PAFs consistently verified the apparent link between lower resistance and clarity in the neck position. Various makers' 'low-winds' may help, but there is a trick to winding them low for better string definition and treble presence without losing too much volume and being out of balance with the bridge pickup.

A few remarkable bridge humbuckers have emerged recently as more builders seem to realize that clarity, string definition, harmonic content and dynamic 'bloom' in response to pick attack cannot be had from overwound coils. Ten years ago it seemed that players coveted custom bridge humbuckers with



higher output that made their amps distort faster and produce more of a midrange-heavy tone. Now perhaps

people are beginning to understand that the PAFs they have been hearing about for so long actually sound very much like a P90, because aside from the presence of the extra slug coil, they were the same pickup! We find, however, that many contemporary bridge humbuckers still possess more power and output than our favorite vintage Gibsons. Everything matters, and when you jack up output you lose other things we find very desirable in a humbucking pickup.

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From Ron Ellis

More Humbuckers



In addition to the LRP (Lee Roy Parnell) signature pickups featured in the September 2013 issue, we have received two additional sets from Ron Ellis for review – the Bette and Bette ‘MHW’ (machine

hand wind) sets (since renamed ‘Betty’). Ron describes the Betty set named for his mother as his personal concept of the ultimate PAF-style pickup. The MHW variation involves the use of a winding machine set up to replicate a handwound pattern for a slightly different sonic signature. We have been living with these two sets now for several months, noting the subtle differences in both alternately mounted in a pair of Historic Les Pauls and our Epiphone Dot 335 now equipped with an RS Guitarworks pot and wiring harness that allows easy pickup swaps without pulling the entire harness each time. Recommended for all your hollow and semi-hollowbody electrics if you want to experiment with different pickups.

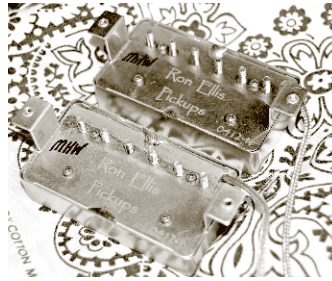
Betty



While the overall tone and dynamic character of Ellis’ LRP and Betty sets clearly share the same DNA, the Betty pickups sound slightly less compressed and brighter in the style of a P90, while still retaining the fuller

character of a humbucking pickup. The bridge pickup produces the harmonic content and sweet top end that typically defines a great vintage Gibson humbucker, but the Betty version also sounds just slightly more penetrating in the style of a Telecaster bridge. The differences are subtle but clear, and exceptional clarity on the wound and plain strings is common to both sets. If you are tired of hearing us constantly refer to ‘clarity’ in our pickup reviews, we won’t be apologizing any time soon... Clarity simply separates exceptional pickups from the rest with better and more interesting clean tones, and a superior overdriven tone and voice that retains depth and complexity when played through a distorted amplifier or distortion effect. Overwound pickups tend to be more confining, with a narrower, more linear sound and grit. If that’s what you like it’s OK with us, but it isn’t the tone we are chasing or describing here.

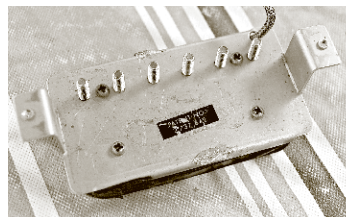
The Betty neck pickup is nicely animated, meaning that rather



than a muffled, indistinct tone with the highs rolled off, you get more treble lingering on the plain strings and better definition and string separation on the wound strings. We have yet to hear a humbucking pickup in the

neck position that fully equals the best PAFs we have heard, and only a small fraction of all the PAFs we have evaluated had that magical mojo in the neck position. We can’t tell you why, either, except that resistance measurements were lower, in the range of 7.1K. Whether this was because there were fewer turns of wire on the coils, a weaker or different type of magnet or something else we can’t say. Still, the Betty neck humbucker is an improvement over many contemporary neck humbuckers .

The ‘MHW’ version of the Betty set gets closer to the sound of early Gibson patent number pickups by degrees. They aren’t quite nailing the sound of the early ‘60s pickups we own that were pulled from a Barney Kessel and an SG, but they are close. The bridge MHW reveals a more direct and brighter tone, but still loaded with vivid harmonic overtones. Clarity is excellent, but this is a bolder sound, less finessed with a sharper, faster response to pick attack. No one ever seems to mention it but Clapton was playing a stock 1964 ES-335 loaded with “patent number” Gibson humbuckers on the classic live recording of “Crossroads” should you need a reference. You can hear the difference.



The Betty MHW neck pickup doesn’t stray too far from the standard Betty, but it does share the more direct character of the MHW bridge with excellent clarity and bet-

ter string definition from top to bottom. If enough players were to try the Betty MHW set and experience their bold character and exceptional clarity, we think they would become very popular as a desirable and distinctly unique alternative to the typical ‘PAF’ set. As so often happens when guitars and classic humbucking tones are discussed, the conversation usually revolves around pre-1962 PAFs, completely overlooking the excellent patent number pickups made from 1962-1965. While the wire changed and the magnets were shortened by 1/8 inch, the tone of patent number pickups is generally far more consistent due to Gibson having acquired new winding machines with accurate counters. The earliest patent number humbuckers can be identified by the presence of two black lead wires visible inside the tape at one end of the pickup. Some time after 1962 they changed to one black and one white lead wire.

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Today these early patent number pickups sell for \$1200-\$1800 each. The Ellis MHW set is an excellent alternative.



Inevitably we will receive calls asking which humbucking pickup is 'the best.' The best advice we can give is to make a decision based on what you've read and just do it! Granted, you won't know until you know, but the result of doing nothing is absolute. You'll never hear every pickup that has been or will be hyped online, and whatever may be hoisted as 'the best' this year

will be replaced by something else next year. The good news is that we have outstanding choices today among all the classic pickup designs that originated with Fender, Gibson, Gretsch and even the more obscure pickups originally made by DeArmond, and we have favorably reviewed pickups by Jason Lollar, Jim Rolph, Lindy Fralin and many others in past issues. As difficult as it may seem to make a decision – especially when some custom pickup sets are approaching \$600, that's what you have to do. The odds have never been better that you'll find your voice as long as you are willing to Quest forth...**To**

ronellispickups@gmail.com

Ronnie Earl Just For Today



Ronnie Earl is among the greatest blues guitar players in history. Not the most visible perhaps, but definitely one of the

all-time greats. If you play the blues and you haven't acquired Ronnie's deep catalog, you are missing way too much, and his latest CD "Just for Today" absolutely deserves your attention. Featuring entirely live tracks from recent performances, Ronnie is one of a very few players who can be instantly identified within the first bar. For tonefreaks, this is doubly significant, yet the joke is on us, since Ronnie hasn't strayed from playing one of his vintage Stratocasters and an old Super Reverb for decades. That's his rig, he isn't going to change, and why should he? He always reveals a wide range of colorful tones

from song to song, but most of them come from varied pickup selections, pick attack, the genius of Leo Fender and Ronnie's heart and soul. Mambo Sons guitarist Tom Guerra recently interviewed Ronnie on our behalf. Now, get some of Ronnie's music, if you live in the Northeast catch a show, and Enjoy...



Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters have just released an excellent new live album, "Just for Today" that is bound to please hardcore devotees while attracting legions of new fans. Considered by critics and musicians alike to be one of the

most fluid electric blues guitarists ever, Ronnie recently sat down with ToneQuest to talk about the new album, and his own journey and quest for tone. For over thirty five years, Ronnie's playing has embraced warmth, soul, and power. B.B. King once said of Ronnie "I feel the respect and affection for him that a father feels for his son. He is one of the most serious blues guitarists you can find today. He makes me proud."

TQR: Congratulations on "Just for Today", the new live album featuring performances taken from three recent gigs. How do you think this compares with your previous efforts, including the 1993 landmark album "Blues Guitar Virtuoso – Live in Europe"?

It's a different time, and I don't compare it to anything. It's what we were playing on those three nights. If I was playing tonight, I'd probably sound different, because we don't really ever do things the same way, and we don't always play the same songs. I just wanted people to hear things live versus what we could do in a studio.

TQR: You've got a song dedicated to Hubert Sumlin on the new record...what do you think was his contribution to modern music?



It's just my tribute to Hubert, I don't really sound like him. I'm not playing anything like Hubert on that song, but I just love Hubert, who was like a brother to me. I wanted to dedicate this song to him... I believe

he was an influence on every blues guitarist. I didn't try to sound like him at all, and he knew that about me, that I have always tried to have my own sound. I was just trying to show my love for him.

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TQR: Many would argue that like so many of the greats, you have a signature sound. So, how did you become you? No one else sounds remotely like you – Five seconds and there is no mistake who’s playing... How did that happen?

I don’t know... I’m a strong believer in a higher power and I just believe that after years of playing, somehow that transpires spiritually as well as musically and artistically. I’m not thinking about anyone else’s playing, I’m just trying to play my way. Ultimately, you have to forget about all the guitar players that you’ve loved over the years and just play yourself.

TQR: Ronnie, the music industry has changed so much over the past few decades, some say for the worse, while others have claimed that these changes level the playing field. Care to comment?



I’m not really aware of the music industry... I really don’t tour nationally, I’m not on the computer, I don’t even own a computer... I just feel that I go out and I’m blessed that every show is sold out or almost sold out, and through the grace of God that’s been happening for me. I really don’t have much of a comment on the music industry though.

TQR: From the sounds of the new CD and your live shows, this version of The Broadcasters have really gelled and are firing on all cylinders. Can you tell us a little about the current lineup?

Sure, Dave Limina, Hammond B3 and piano, Lorne Entress, drums, and Jim Mouradian, bass. We’ve been together for 12 years and that’s the longest I have ever had a band. We’re a family band, we love each other and we care about each other. Everybody’s sober, which is very important to me. I’ve been sober for 24 years now and that’s my greatest accomplishment. You’re right, everybody is firing on all cylinders and everybody listens to each other.

TQR: You and Dave are the melodic voices of this band... how do you feed off each other?

It just happens, it’s being musically empathic.

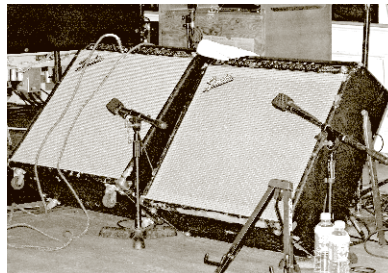
TQR: You’ve often spoken about music in terms of healing power. How does music heal?



Well, that’s a very good question, and I think it can heal in many ways. I definitely feel it’s very healing for both the listener and

the artist... It can take people into another level of consciousness, forgetting about their everyday concerns and bring them into a state of light and also bring them closer to the artist and feeling what the artist is doing. If the artist is having divine intentions with their music, the audience can really feel when that is happening. I think a lot of that to me comes with sobriety too, because when I was using drugs and alcohol, I feel like my playing was blocked and my playing was very gray... I feel like I’m able to use a lot of colors now.

TQR: What guitars and amplifiers did you use on the new record?



I used an old (black-face) Super Reverb and an old Strat... That’s it. I don’t really get too hung up on gear. It’s just the best thing for me. It feels the most comfortable and the

Stratocaster is like an extension of me.

TQR: Do you still have that old Stratocaster that you call “Mahalia”?

Yes I do. Mahalia is one of my favorites – a fiesta red 1962 Strat. I play it live all the time, but I have always believed that it’s the person and not the guitar...



TQR: Ronnie, you’ve played with just about everyone. Can you tell us about some of your highlights in terms of jamming with some of your heroes?

I loved playing with Otis Rush, B.B.

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King, Buddy Guy, and of course, Hubert. Also, Dickey Betts, Carlos Santana, and saxophone players like Hank Crawford and David "Fathead" Newman. I loved playing with all those guys. As far as others, I never got a chance to play with Earl

Hooker and I just loved him.

TQR: Thinking back to the old days, what drew you to guitar, and were you always on a quest for tone?

I saw B.B. King and Albert King at 17 or 18 and I was really drawn to that, but I didn't start playing until I was in college, about 21 years old.

TQR: Many people have said that they get a feeling of warmth, depth and soul when they see you play live, like a spiritual experience. How do you achieve this?

I think once again, it's the grace of God. You really can't put it into words. I'm not trying to impress anyone – I'm just trying to feel it.

TQR: You're also a veteran teacher of guitar clinics, sharing techniques and styles. Do you believe you can teach someone how to play with soul?

Yes I do. It's less about the technical and more about playing from the heart. It has to come from a very deep place, but you have to learn how to tap into that.

TQR: How do you think your playing has evolved since your days with Roomful of Blues?

It's just different, I don't even know if I've improved. It's just that I'm coming from a different place now and I hope that I'm a little bit more enlightened. We don't have vocals, so the music is different now.



TQR: Is there anything else you'd like to mention or anyone you'd like to give a shout out to?

I think that in every interview,

in every conversation you have a chance to talk to someone about music, it's important to always mention young people to get the word out, to help the younger generation come out. There's a great young guitarist down in San Antonio called Jose Alvarez, and a great young guitarist who plays on the new album whose name is Nick Tabarias. There is Nick Moss from Elgin, Illinois and his singer Michael Ledbetter... There is a lot of great young talent all around – the Racky Thomas Band, also the lady who sings on the new album, Diane Blue. So many people that deserve mention...**To**

www.ronnieearl.com



'Happy Holidays!

It's not too late to fill your stocking or a friend's with the gift of tone! The ToneQuest Archive on CD is still on sale at just \$219.00 until January 1, 2014. You'll receive every issue of TQR from November 1999 - November 2013 in PDF format with a keyword searchable Back Issue Index in MS Word.



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Amplified Parts was created to serve musicians who wish to optimize their sound or simply repair, restore or optimize their amplifiers and guitars. Amplified Parts is a new entity itself, but as a DBA of Antique Electronic Supply, LLC (tubesandmore.com), it is backed by over 25 years of experience serving the electronic hobbyist market. We are a member in good standing of the Better Business Bureau.

Amplified Parts is intended to serve the needs of the musician who may not possess a technical background, but wants to create his/her own sound or tone by modifying their existing amplifier or guitar. Our wide range of products include JJ, TAD, Electro-Harmonix and Winged C vacuum tubes, Jensen and Celestion replacement speakers, a comprehensive selection of guitar and amplifier replacement parts that include, pickups, effects, bridges, saddles

and tuners, potentiometers, capacitors and our exclusive MOD authentic, vintage-correct reverb tanks, plus tools and supplies for amp and guitar repair and maintenance, reference books, and accessories.

We believe that every musician is unique, and deserves easy access to the equipment, tools and resources necessary to create his/her own tone. Amplified Parts is dedicated to helping you sound your very best.

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Analogman (Mike Pira) is one of the premier guitar effects dealers and manufacturers serving professional players worldwide. Analog Man is unique, since it manufactures, modifies, buys, sells, and repairs vintage and new guitar effects and accessories - they have everything you need between your guitar and amp. Specializing in vintage and high-end effects, you won't find cheap Taiwanese "happy meal" style, toy effects there. Analog Man is dedicated to helping you successfully pursue your quest for tone, and every customer is treated as a prospective friend. There are now Analog Friends all over the world with the common interest of vintage guitars and effects. Analog Man can meet all your effects needs, including: Buying and selling vintage, new, and custom built effects, and modifying pedals to sound and function better. A full repair service, including referrals to specialists. They specialize in creating the best new effects with vintage values. FREE help with effects problems by e-mail, plus professional consultation and technical services.

Analog Man was the pioneer in pedal modifications for Ibanez and Maxon Tube Screemers and several Boss pedals (TR-2, GE-7, SD-1, DS-1, BD-2, DD3, etc). They also modify DOD overdrives and Fuzz Faces to vintage specs and do true bypass mods on many effects. They also build custom switch boxes with effects loops, AB switches, buffers, channel switchers, tuner switches, etc. Analog Man hand-built pedals include chorus pedals, compressors, distortions, delays, and fuzz pedals. Three chorus pedals are available, with several options. Five versions of compressors are available, based on the Ross style and/or the Orange Squeezer style of compression. Several Sunface versions are available for germanium or Silicon fuzzface sounds, plus the Astro Tone, Peppermint, and Sun Bender fuzz pedals. The Beano Boost is a crunchy treble booster and is also avail-

able along with a Sun Face in the Sun Lion pedal. The Bad Bob booster is now made by Analog Man. The King of Tone dual overdrive has been incredibly popular and a Prince of Tone was developed in 2012 for better availability. The ARDX20 dual analog delay is also available with a tap tempo/modulation/preset controller for the most features in any analog delay. The BIG-T Telecaster pickup was developed with Jim Weider and is available at Analog Man.

Other hand-made pedals available from Analog Man include FOXROX, Teese RMC wahs, Z Vex, Black Cat, and Sweet Sound, plus production pedals from Boss, Dunlop, MXR, Wah Huge, EHX, Eventide, VOX, Xotic, etc. Power supplies for nearly any effect are available, plus cables, pedalboards, and other accessories. Mike maintains excellent relationships with these manufacturers to insure that quality and service standards are high. Please check the web site for more information.
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cally treated Fralin vintage Tele pickups, compensated brass bridge saddles, bridge plates, knobs, jacks, tuners and string trees! The only thing better than Callaham parts is a Callaham guitar. We said that, and you can take it to the bank.

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Carr Amplifiers Like you, all of us at Carr Amplifiers are guitarists. We share your love of the guitar, and we feel very fortunate to build amplifiers for a living at our shop in Pittsboro, North Carolina. And although we are understandably proud of our unique circuit designs, meticulous point-to-point construction, premium components and hand-crafted cabinets, our success has ultimately been the result of one simple fact; discerning guitarists continue to enthusiastically embrace the tone, reliability and versatile nature of our amplifiers. Perhaps it's because we view guitar amps as being as much an instrument as the guitar itself, and we truly believe that an amplifier should become a personal extension of every player. To that end, we strive to design and build amps with a distinct character and sonic personality, and the flexibility and practical features that will inspire you to create your very own signature sound at volume levels appropriate for home, studio and stage. Models include:

The Bloke – Macho 70s to 80s overdrive with a stripped-down, super-usable feature set. For those who crave honest, dynamic tube crunch with firm low end, we salute you!

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Collings Guitars: Bill Collings' story provides a classic example of what can be achieved with an engineer's brain, a machinist's hand and an experienced repairman's eye. After dropping out of medical school in Ohio to work in a machine shop, ColliRDngs moved to Texas in the mid 1970's where the experience he gained repairing and restoring guitars guided his design of the first Collings guitars. His understanding of the flaws and shortcomings found in production instruments was instructive, and he set out to eliminate those shortcomings with the very first Collings guitars. Collings instruments have grown to include 32 different acoustic guitar models including the famed dreadnought and OM models, seven award-winning mandolin models in both lacquer and varnish finishes, three arch-top guitars, and a new line of seven electric instruments crafted to inspire rock, blues, jazz, country, and your music, too.

Bill Collings work is respected by professional and amateur musicians alike... anyone on the quest for quality. Some of these include artists: Keith Richards, Lyle Lovett, Pete Townshend, Emmylou Harris, Andy Summers, David Crosby, Chris Hillman, Joni Mitchell, Don Felder, John Sebastian, Lou Reed, John Fogerty, Tim O'Brien, Pete Huttlinger, Kenny Smith, Brian May, Joan Baez, John Prine, Nigel Tufnel of Spinal Tap, and Steven Spielberg to name a few. We invite you to play a Collings today.

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6, Matchless, Victoria, Bad Cat, and Dr. Z, plus hundreds of guitar effects, and after-market pickups from Joe Barden, Seymour Duncan, and more. Due to their inventory of over 1,000 guitars, amps, and accessories, Dave's is an excellent resource for top of the line Custom Shop and Historic reissues, to intermediate new and used gear. Unlike some dealers' out of date stock lists on the web and in print, Dave's inventory is updated daily. The selection of new and used instruments is truly exceptional, and you can often select among several models of the same new guitars to find that special instrument that was meant for you. Dave's staff is friendly and extremely knowledgeable about the instruments and gear that they sell, because they are players, too. Please check the web site for current inventory, and you are welcome to call for more information or an accurate, in-hand description.

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Fishman: Widely recognized as the premier designer and manufacturer of acoustic amplification products, Fishman is committed to making acoustic musicians heard while faithfully maintaining their own natural tone, for the best possible sound.

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BP-100(tm) acoustic bass pickup, originally developed to meet founder and president Larry Fishman's own jazz performance needs. With a track record of quality engineering, reliability, functional simplicity and - most importantly - the natural tone it enables, Fishman firmly established a reputation of excellence that consumers have come to expect from the brand.

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As Fishman celebrates its 25th year as the leader in acoustic amplification, the company continues to redefine the benchmark of acoustic sound. For more information, please visit www.fishman.com.

Fishman Transducers Inc.
Wilmington, MA
www.fishman.com 978-988-9199

Jensen Loudspeakers Changing speakers in your amplifier is the easiest and often the most effective 'modification' you can do yourself in the quest for inspiring guitar tone.

The complete range of Jensen speakers reflects the heritage of the vintage C and P series ceramic and alnico speakers used in so many classic amplifiers from the '50s and '60s, as well as the modern Jet, MOD and Neo Series that offer a variety of tones and power ratings to suit virtually any type of music and application imaginable. You will also find Jensen speakers in all the sizes used today for electric and acoustic guitar amplification, including 5, 6, 8 10, 12 and 15 inch models.

With so many excellent choices available to guitarists today, we also understand that choosing the right speakers for your unique needs can be a complex, and even daunting decision. To assist you in making the right choice the first time, our web site offers a comprehensive library of sound files for each speaker, video demonstrations, user reviews, a detailed tone chart, and wiring diagrams for virtually every speaker configuration used in combo amplifiers and extension cabinets. Best of all, you may also utilize our exclusive Tone Generator program to determine the best speakers for your needs. Simply enter information such as the rated power of your amplifier, the number of speakers and size, playing style and musical taste, volume requirements and other relevant factors and the Tone Generator will develop recommendations for specific speakers based on the specifications and information you provide.

For detailed information on the entire line of Jensen Vintage, Jet, MOD and Neo speakers and a list of dealers, please visit our web site.

www.jensentone.com, 480-820-5411

Jescar Fretwire Securely pressed into the fingerboard, the fret wire is the gateway between the musician and the instrument. It is one of the most critical components in the playing quality of the guitar. The interaction between the strings and frets determines the feel of the neck as much as

the neck contour, fingerboard material, or finish.

There are many different fret wire profiles available, from small to large, low to high, narrow to wide, oval to round to triangular, all affecting the playing characteristics and feel of the instrument. Brass frets from days past have given way to today's standard material, 18% nickel silver, also called "German Silver." Our highly refined nickel silver consists of 62% copper, 18% nickel and 20% zinc. But even with 18% nickel silver, there are differences in hardness, tensile strength, surface quality, grain size, and other metallurgical properties that influence a fret's quality, performance and feel.

Beyond 18% nickel silver, new alloys have been employed in the production of modern fret wire that dramatically improves the performance and aesthetics of the guitar. Our stainless steel, with its greater hardness and tighter grain structure has much higher wear resistance for greater fret life. In addition, string bending is much smoother without the friction or grinding felt with traditional fret material. We have selected a stainless steel alloy that provides the best combination of fret life and installation ease.

Most fretwire is manufactured in coils for ease of installation. Our FW39040 and FW37053 are only offered in 24" straight lengths to prevent twisting if coiled. Pricing is based on orders of one pound minimum quantity per size, plus shipping via UPS, FedEx, or USPS. Gold colored EVO wire is available on selected sizes only. Individual frets cut to size, straight cut or cut and notched tangs, are available upon request. Minimum order quantity for pre-cut frets is 2000 pieces.

CAUTION: Jescar Fretwire will improve the tone and playability of your guitar.

www.jescar.com 877-453-7227

Just Strings.com: Now more than ever, guitarists are reaping the benefits of technical innovations in string making that have led to the widest selection of guitar strings ever available. JustStrings.com is dedicated to providing guitarists with the largest selection of acoustic, roundwound, and flatwound strings, complimented by exceptional personalized service and outstanding value. Trying different types of strings often

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Resource Directory

results in amazing new discoveries that not only improve the sound of your instrument, but dramatically enhance your playing enjoyment. From traditional hand-crafted strings to high-tech exotics, JustStrings.com exists to help you get the most out of your instrument. Try a new set today, or order your favorite acoustic or electric sets and SAVE! Juststrings.com offers the best prices on all of the major and specialty brands, promptly delivered to your door. Shop online at JustStrings.com, or place your order by:

fax at 603-889-7026 603-889-2664.
JustStrings.com, Nashua, NH
info@juststrings.com

Keeley Electronics – Check out the new Keeley Katana Preamp! ToneQuest subscribers receive 10% off on all pedal mods and the Keeley Comp, Java Boost and Time Machine boost: Keeley Electronics recently won a Guitar Player Reader's Choice Award and Keeley is now the exclusive distributor for Framptone! Robert Keeley's Time Machine Boost, Keeley Compressor, and his custom, state-of-the-art modifications for vintage pedals continue to receive rave reviews from guitarists around the world. Keeley pedals are used by Aerosmith, Abbey Road Studios, Steve Vai, legendary producer Bob Rock, George Lynch, Peter Frampton, James Burton, and many, many more guitarists and music pros around the world. The Time Machine Boost is a versatile 2 channel, 3 mode pre-amplifier designed to drive your amplifiers into overdrive or saturation. The two channels are labeled "Vintage," and "Modern," with the "Vintage" side inspired by rare germanium boosts like the Dallas Rangemaster. The "Modern" channel is a new +23dB gain, dual JFET transparent signal amplifier. The Keeley Compressor is a superb audiophile and studio grade compressor with true bypass switching and premium metal film resistors and capacitors for the cleanest Ross clone compressor ever available. Available with a standard Ibanez/Boss style adapter jack and/or battery power, you can say goodbye to that old red Dyna Comp!

Robert Keeley pedal mods include 2 versions for TS9's – the TS808 mod, and the "Baked TS9" for searing hot Tube Screamer tone. Keeley uses the original TI RC4558P chip that appeared in the early TS808's, while increasing the bass response and overdrive range. The result is a perfectly voiced 808 that's cleaner when turned

down and produces twice the drive/gain when turned up, with all of the stock 808 character in the middle. The Keeley modded BD-2 is not a fuzz pedal but has the best characteristics of a fuzz pedal, and it's much smoother and more realistic sounding. Other exclusive Keeley modifications include the Boss Blues Driver BD-2 Tube Mod, the PHAT Switch BD-2 Mod, Rat Mods, Boss DS-1 Seeing Eye Mod, Boss SD-1, and Boss Chorus CE-2. For detailed specs, user comments, dealer information, sound clips, and ordering information, please visit the Keeley Electronics website.

Keeley Electronics, Edmond, OK
405-260-1385, www.robertkeeley.com

Lollar Custom Guitars & Pickups:

According to Jason, he never really set out to become a custom pickup designer and builder. Jason Lollar is a guitar builder on Vashon Island, Washington (near Seattle) who originally began building pickups for his own guitars and a few friends when he couldn't find the tone he was after. The word spread, and now Jason custom builds over 30 different pickups, including Strat, Tele, humbuckers, P90's, custom steels and Charlie Christian-style pickups, all personally designed and wound by Jason. He is especially well known for his P90, Imperial Humbucker and Tele replacement pickups, but he has also designed pickups for many unusual applications...

Recently, Jason was acknowledged by gonzo pedal steel player Robert Randolph for having wound the pickups in his two custom Fessenden pedal steels. And the list doesn't end there – Jason has wound pickups for guitar greats such as Billy F Gibbons, Peter Stroud, Kevin Russel, Rick Vito, Elliot Easton, Duke Robillard, and the Beastly Boys, among others.

Jason is always happy to personally consult with his clients via phone and e-mail to determine the pickups that are right for each player, and TQR recommends Lollar pickups without exception. His Lollar Special Strat pickups are standard equipment in our custom built ToneQuest guitars.

Call Jason or check out all the options available on his web site.

www.lollarguitars.com, 206-463-9838

Mercury Magnetics: The basis of every tube amp's characteristic sound is the unique design of its transformers. Mercury transformers are legendary for their stunning tonal superiority, build quality, consistency, and reliability. We believe in old-world customer service and single-minded focus. Transformers are our only business, allowing us to concentrate on providing you with the best-sounding guitar amplifier trannies in the world.

If your amp is suffering from bland and unexciting tone, then it's time for a transformer upgrade or repair. Here are your options:

ToneClone™: Best-of-Breed Series Transformers: Behind every great-sounding vintage guitar amp is a piece of transformer history. Within any amp line there are usually a large number of transformer variations, inconsistencies and just plain ol' building errors that affect their sound (good or bad). At Mercury, we seek out, study, blueprint and replicate only the best-of-breed transformer designs (including their all-important anomalies) and add these discoveries to our catalog. And we make these incredible tonal selections available to you through our ToneClone™ line.

Axiom® Series Next-Gen Transformers: Next-generation guitar amplifier transformers. The Axiom series are in a class by themselves. We've taken our advanced knowledge of modern transformer design and mated it with historically best-sounding designs of the past. Axiom trannies are hybrids that take vintage tone to the next level! More bloom, more overtone color, and awesome tonal depth. If you ever needed convincing as to how outstanding transformers affect your sound, Axiom trannies will astonish you.

Mercury Vintage™ Transformer Service: Most vintage transformers have already outlived or are nearing the end of their life expectancies. That's the bad news – now for the good... Mercury will restore, rebuild or rewind your valuable original transformers. Or, we can clone your originals so that you can continue to play your old amp without fear of further "wear and tear."

Free Transformer Testing And Evaluation Service: Do you think there might be something wrong with your transformer? Send it to us. We'll test it in our lab and report back to you. Our evaluation proce-

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Resource Directory

dures are thorough, complete and reliable, and always free. The only transformers that come with a 10-year Manufacturer's Warrantee and a Money-Back Tonal Guarantee. Made entirely in the U.S.A.

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RS Guitarworks: You can depend on RS Guitarworks as your source for the finest custom guitars, expert guitar finishing, refinishing and aging, complete guitar assembly and repair, custom electronic upgrade kits, pickups, pickup covers, hard-to-find hardware, and more.

Located in Winchester, Kentucky, RS Guitarworks began as a small repair and shop in 1994. As the word spread among guitarists, business rapidly grew for RS, and today they receive guitars from around the world for restoration, finishing, aging and custom voicing with specialty components and exclusive pickups wound to RS specs by Lindy Fralin.

RS's Old Friend, SolarFlair, Stepside and custom guitars can be seen in the hands of many top players, and offer build quality and hardware second to none. Every guitar RS Guitarworks builds is meticulously crafted with wood personally selected by RS, finished in nitrocellulose lacquer, assembled with premium components, and individually voiced in final assembly as a true custom instrument.

RS Guitarworks also offers many hard-to-find aged, vintage replica parts and other specialty accessories for vintage Fender, Gibson and many other guitars that in many cases are exclusive to RS.

The RS Guitarworks Premium Wiring Kits offer a dramatic improvement over the factory electronics found in even the most expensive guitars. During extensive research and development in creating RS Premium kits, they tested over 20 different tone capacitors and nearly every type of potentiometer made before developing the RS SuperPot™. All the RS upgrade kits feature measured RS SuperPots™, that have a 5% tolerance for volumes, and CTST™ audio pots within 10% of their specified value for tone controls. Also in the RS kits are a wide variety of tone caps for single coil and humbucking pickups

made by Jensen and vintage-correct replica caps by Luxe. RS Guitarworks™ also feature caps made here in the USA exclusively for RS called

GuitarCaps™. RS Guitarworks wiring upgrade kits impart a fuller, clearer tone than standard factory components, with a smoother, more even and responsive taper from each pot. Additionally, each potentiometer is tested on a digital meter, checked for the proper sweep pattern, sorted and labeled as a neck/volume, neck/tone, bridge/volume or bridge/tone control.

Wiring Upgrade Kits are available in Vintage, Modern and Reissue styles for various Les Paul type guitars, as well as 335/345/355, Telecaster, Stratocaster, PRS guitars, and Explorer and Flying V types in both kit and pre-wired versions. Custom wiring and nearly any other configuration can also be built by calling RS Guitarworks™ directly at (859) 737-5300. Please call or visit the RS Guitarworks web site for complete information on finishing, refinishing, restoration and aging of new and used guitars custom wiring kits, vintage repro parts, pickups and repairs.

RS Guitarworks
859-737-5300, www.rsguitarworks.net

Stewart MacDonald: Stewart-MacDonald offers a complete line of hard-to-find tools, parts, accessories, instructional videos and books for building, repairing, setting up, and optimizing the playability and tone of stringed instruments. Whether you are just getting started or you're a seasoned luthier, you'll find everything you need in the Stew-Mac catalog, including: fret wire, finishing supplies, glues and adhesives, wood, bodies, necks, binding, tuners, nuts and saddles, inlay, bridges, tailpieces, electronics, pickups, and free information sheets and professional advice! Their friendly customer service and technical support staff are trained to help you make the best product choices, and they also offer an Unconditional Return Guarantee. If you're not satisfied with an item for any reason, simply return it.

Stew-Mac is the leading supplier of innovative products for guitarists and repair pros, and every thing they make is guaranteed to work well, because every product is tested by the professional luthiers at Stewart MacDonald first! The master builders and repairmen on staff include Dan Erlewine –

well-known author of guitar repair books and magazine articles, member of the ToneQuest Report advisory board, and a regular contributor to TQR. Dan and all of the experienced luthiers at Stew-Mac personally develop and test every product the company offers, and they are also dedicated to education. The Stewart MacDonald catalog is packed with helpful tips, and the company produces an extensive series of training videos at their facility in Athens, Ohio.

For more information on the entire range of products available, please visit the Stewart MacDonald web site. In addition to their free online help service, your telephone call is also always welcome.

Stewart MacDonald
www.stewmac.com,
1-800-848-2273

Swart Amplification: Long before the first Swart amp ever appeared, Michael Swart had been playing through vintage amps for decades at live gigs and recording sessions as both a guitarist and recording engineer in Wilmington, NC.

Despite his access to countless vintage Fender, Vox, and Ampeg amps, Swart always felt the quintessential small recording/home use amp had yet to be built, thus begin the quest for the best tone via a small, manageable package. After a slew of suitcase amp wannabees, emerged the original Space Tone 6V6se, a Class A, 5 watt, Single-Ended, tube rectified beast with an über simple circuit revolving around the soulful 6V6. The amp delivered big sound with unmatched musicality along with amazing distortion. The 18w Atomic Space Tone soon followed to wide acclaim, and Swart amplifiers were quickly embraced by working pros and guitarists who shared Swart's appreciation for truly exceptional guitar tone.

Today, six different Swart models are hand-built to serve the needs of guitarists for live performance and recording:

Space Tone 6V6se - The amp that started it all. 5w, Class A, Single-Ended, Tube Rectified, 8" Weber, finger-jointed, lacquered tweed pine cab. Amazing STR-Tweed - Another BIG Class A, Single-Ended 5w w/extra stage, Swart reverb, and 12" speaker. Atomic Space Tone - Perhaps the amp that REALLY put Swart on the map. Considered one of the

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Resource Directory

finest made. 18w 6V6 or 6L6 with tube reverb & tremolo AST Pro: AST circuit w/ slightly larger cab, recessed knobs, 12" of choice AST Head MKII - AST in a head w/defeatable master volume and choice of cabinets Super Space Tone 30 Head (SST-30) 30w of soulful 6V6/6L6/EL-34 mother of tone beauty. Richer than chocolate. Matching, custom tweed 2 x 12 Space Tone Cabinet Head to Swart Online for the latest news, rants, photos, raves, artists, events, and dealer locations. Michael answers every call. Kelly responds to every mail. Personal service is #1 priority.

Swart Amplifier Co., Wilmington, NC
www.swartamps.com, 910-620-2512

Toneman: Veteran working guitarist Don Butler is an experienced tech who specializes in servicing, restoring JMI-era and modding Korg era Vox Amps to vintage specs. These, of course would be valve (tube) amps. As well as servicing & upgrading any '62-'89 era valve Marshall amps. He also services most other Golden era British valves amps like HiWatt, Selmer, Orange, Laney's and Sound City's. Also included are Tweed, Blonde, Brown and Blackface era Fender Amps.

Don offers a number of standard mods for reissue Vox, Fender and Marshall amps to bring them into "Vintage Spec" and achieve that original tone/sound that reissues sadly lack. These have earned him a solid reputation throughout the country for dramatically improved, authentic Vintage Tone from reissue amplifiers. Don has used the hand-made Mercury Magnetics Axiom/Tone Clone transformers for over 20 years along with vintage spec Sozo Premium caps (both the Iskra/"mustard caps" replicas and Blue Molded Fender types) and Carbon Comp resistors in the signal path to bring reissue amps to Vintage specs. We also mod reissue Vox and Cry Baby Wah Wah's to original 1967 specs, Ibanez TS-9's and Upgrade Vox "Valve Tone" pedals.

Don is equally at home working on Gibson Historics and Standard Production guitars, Fender guitars, Rickenbacker, and of course, Gretsch Guitars. This applies to both Vintage models and current production guitars, electric and acoustic. Anything from re-frets & fret dressing, rewiring, etc. to simple set-ups and adjustments.

Don was also the first dealer for German

made Pyramid Strings, starting in 1995. Don does attend the NAMM Show and the Frankfurt Musikmesse for Pyramid. Providing his input, Pyramid has re-introduced the Round Core, pure nickel flatwound "Pyramid Golds" and the exceptional Round core/round wound "Nickel Classics". All Pyramids use a silver plated core of German Steel and pure nickel wire wrap. All plain strings are pure silver plated German Steel.

Also available now are the Bronze Wound/Round Core Acoustic "Pyramid Western Folk". These strings are reminiscent of the strings from the '50's & '60's before most manufacturers went to Hex cores and smaller wrap wires. Strings can be ordered securely online through the website!

Toneman is open 10 am to 6 pm (Pacific Time), Tuesday thru Saturday!
661-259-4544, de1b@earthlink.net,
www.tone-man.com

Visual Sound Founded in 1995, Visual Sound continues to grow and expand, while remaining true to their core commitment of "real tone for real people".

Visual Sound is pleased to announce the introduction of its newest pedal, the VS-XO Premium Dual Overdrive.

The right channel has pronounced mids without being honky. In addition to Drive, Tone, and Volume knobs, it also has a 3-way Clipping (diodes) switch, a 3-way Bass switch, and a Clean Mix knob. The left channel also has Drive, Tone and Volume knobs, along with a Bass knob, but with flat mids, making it sound very amp-like. The VS-XO is a tone-experimenter's dream pedal. The sound options are nearly endless. On top of that, the VS-XO is the first Visual Sound pedal to incorporate True-Bypass, but done the Visual Sound way. Bob Weil invented new foot-switches which look traditional, but interact with gold-plated relays, and will last forever. RG Keen invented a circuit to keep them quiet. You also have the choice of internally switching the Pure Tone buffer on or off with each channel.

Founded in 1995, Visual Sound continues to grow and expand, while remaining true to their core commitment of "real tone for real people".

That commitment has become more than just a marketing slogan or mission statement. In 2012 Visual Sound was proud to announce its revolutionary Lifetime Warranty for all of its V2 and V3 series of pedals.

Bob Weil, founder and president, explains it this way: "We've worked hard for many years to make our products not only sound great, but also hold up to the demands of the working musician. The test procedures and quality control standards that R.G. Keen and I have developed are extremely thorough. On top of that, we designed our switching system to pretty much last forever, and we're very picky about our critical parts suppliers, too. When it comes down to it, we hate to have our gear go down in the middle of someone's gig, so we've gone over the top with reliability. To prove it, we're now offering a lifetime warranty on most of our pedals. And since we've been around since 1995, you can be confident we'll be around to support that warranty."

This "covered for life" promise extends to all V2 pedals, which includes the critically-acclaimed Jekyll & Hyde, Route 66, H2O, Double Trouble, Son of Hyde, Liquid Chorus, Route 808, Angry Fuzz, Open Road, TrueTone, and Van's Warped Distortion. In addition, the warranty applies to the still new (and growing) line of V3 pedals, which currently includes the Dual Tap Delay and Tap Delay pedals.

Expect to hear about new additions to the V3 Series in the very near future!

We're also happy to say that we continue to receive excellent reviews from Guitar Player, Guitar World, Premier Guitar, and Vintage Guitar magazines, as well as continuous compliments online, by phone, e-mail, and postal mail, for our unparalleled customer service and tech support.

To find out more about all of the pedals and ISPO power supplies, and for more information about Visual Sound, sound samples, videos, artist endorsers and product information, please visit the Visual Sound web site, Facebook page, Twitter, or contact Bob Weil personally.

Visual Sound
www.visualsound.net
www.facebook.com/visualsoundpedals
www.youtube.com/visualsound.usa
931-487-9001

Wampler Pedals: There are a lot of pedal makers around that are just very ordinary. An overdrive, a distortion, maybe a fuzz thrown in, but nothing that really stands apart from

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Resource Directory

the rest of the gear world. Maybe there's nothing terrible about being ordinary. Ordinary is safe and ordinary is comfortable, but the cost of being ordinary is living inside a box with all the other ordinary companies and builders who are doing the same old ordinary things and selling you the same old ordinary tones. But who wants to be ordinary? More importantly, who wants to sound ordinary?

Wampler Pedals makes effect pedals that are anything but ordinary. Guitarists like Wampler Pedals because they want to sound extraordinary. They want something that inspires them... to play better, create music better, and sound better.

While other builders play it safe selling products they've been making for decades, some of them reissuing designs that deserve the label "antique," Wampler has constantly pushed the envelope with new and exciting products designed to inspire guitarists to break out of the safety of the ordinary and into true excellence. Providing extremely high quality components and genuinely forward-thinking designs at prices that compete very well with anybody in the boutique industry, Wampler Pedals has a product to fit virtually every need.

Brian Wampler didn't invent the distortion pedal, but anyone who has used a few of his products can tell you he has done at least as much as anyone to make sure that the sound in your head can come out of your speakers. Best of all, it doesn't stop with what's available. With Brian Wampler continuing to wield the soldering iron like an artist's paint brush, the future has some serious tone in store. Wampler Pedals rocks today, and will rock tomorrow as new tonal options continue to be made available: definitely affordable, certainly competitive, and tonefully extraordinary.

Wampler Pedals
www.wamplerpedals.com
Brian Wampler
brian@wamplerpedals.com

Warehouse Guitar Speakers® LLC: is an Internet-based retail speaker supplier and manufacturer based in Paducah, KY – an area of the country with a long history in speaker manufacturing that includes the original CTS company, Credence Speakers, Voice Communication Coil, and Hawley Products – the oldest cone manufacturer in

the world. When an OEM speaker manufacturer needed to clear warehouse space in 2006, WGS was born and began manufacturing and selling American-assembled guitar speakers to the public.

Today we build a wide range of high-quality and reasonably priced 10 and 12-inch Alnico and Ceramic magnet guitars speakers that celebrate and reprise the golden era of speaker manufacturing in the USA and England during the '60s and '70s, including the 15 watt Alnico Black & Blue™, 50 watt Alnico BlackHawk™, 60 watt Veteran 30™, 25 watt Green Beret™, 80 watt British Lead™, 65 watt ET65™, 30 watt Reaper™, and 75 watt Retro 30™, among others. WGS also builds high-power bass and PA speakers, and we are constantly developing and adding new speaker models to meet the demands of today's guitarists.

Why should you consider buying WGS speakers? At a time when speaker manufacturers have moved production to Asia, compromising quality and reliability while prices continue to increase, our speakers are proudly assembled in the USA by a team with decades of speaker design and building experience, at a reasonable price. Our employees take pride in building the very best speakers available anywhere. Selling direct via the Web enables us to keep prices low without compromising quality. You buy direct from the manufacturer, and we proudly stand behind our products with fast shipping and exceptional customer service. For information on the entire range of WGS guitar and bass speakers, please visit our web site today.

Warehouse Guitar Speakers
www.WarehouseSpeakers.com
270-217-0740

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For the past thirty years WD® Music Products has been providing quality service and parts to satisfied working musicians, discriminating builders and OEMs. WD® pioneered the field of aftermarket pickguards and continues to lead the way in the niche we created in 1978. We have

manufactured thousands of pickguards and if you need a replacement or something you envision yourself we can make it happen. For many years WD® Music has also carried a full line of replacement parts for just about any stringed instrument.

WD® Music is proud to continue the legacy of Kluson® tuning machines, one of the most respected OEM and replacement tuners for decades. Replace or restore your vintage instrument with genuine Kluson® tuning machines from WD® Music. We stock Kent Armstrong® pickups, L.R. Baggs® acoustic gear, Q-Parts® custom knobs and accessories, Bigsby® tailpieces, Graph Tech® products, Wilkinson® bridges, Grover® tuners and accessories, Big Bends® maintenance supplies, Guitar Facelifts, effects and much more.

History is repeating itself with genuine Kluson® tuners, continuing with WD®'s customer service, and...Stromberg® Jazz Guitars. No one can attempt or claim to reproduce the prestige of the original archtop Stromberg® guitars. But with history in mind WD® is also proud to distribute Stromberg® Jazz Guitars. With six models to satisfy everyone from the serious working jazz musician to the rockabilly king Stromberg® offers an affordable, quality instrument for almost any taste or style. Stromberg® jazz Guitars is a small, limited production archtop guitar company whose main goals are quality, playability and affordability. Play one and see.

WD® Music Products. Thirty years of knowledge, service, quality parts and accessories waiting to serve you. Everything from pickguards, tuning machines, pickups, electronics, necks, bodies, bridges, prewired assemblies and hard to find hardware—if your guitar or bass needs it, chances are WD® Music has it. Old fashioned customer service, genuine Kluson® tuners, classic Stromberg® Jazz Guitars, and so much more.

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The ToneQuest Report™ (ISSN 1525-3392) is published monthly by Mountainview Publishing LLC, P.O. Box 717 Decatur, GA. 30031-0717, 1-877-MAX-TONE, email: tonequest1@aol.com. Periodicals Postage Paid at Decatur, GA and At Additional Mailing Offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to: TheToneQuest Report™, PO Box 717, Decatur, GA. 30031-0717. The annual subscription fee for The ToneQuest Report™ is \$89 per year for 10 issues. International subscribers please add US \$40. Please remit payment in U.S. funds only. VISA, MasterCard and American Express accepted. The ToneQuest Report™ is published solely for the benefit of its subscribers. Copyright © 2013 by Mountainview Publishing LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter may be reproduced in any form or incorporated into any information retrieval system without the written permission of the copyright holder. Please forward all subscription requests, comments, questions and other inquiries to the above address or contact the publisher at tonequest1@aol.com. Opinions expressed in The ToneQuest Report™ are not necessarily those of this publication. Mention of specific products, services or technical advice does not constitute an endorsement. Readers are advised to exercise extreme caution in handling electronic devices and musical instruments.