

# INSIDE

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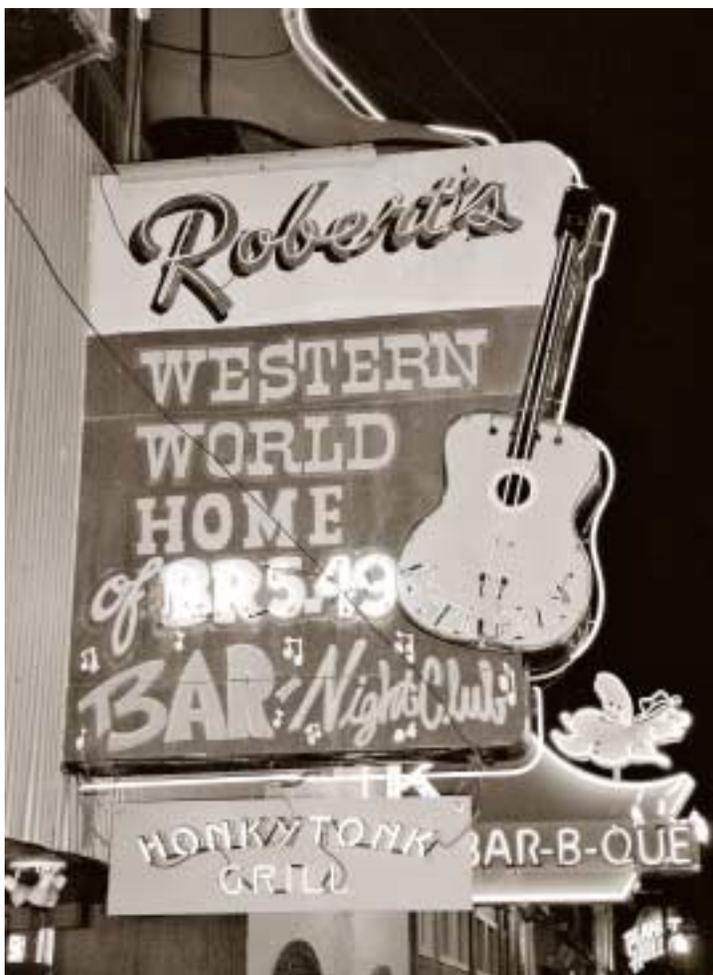
John Landgraff's Dynamic Overdrive

# the ToneQuest

*The Player's Guide to Ultimate Tone* Report™  
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## Visions of a Dream

*Are you chasing your dream, or has it faded to a vague memory that jolts you awake when another birthday passes or someone nearly as young as you suddenly leaves this world? To live without a dream is the cruelest cut of all, yet life can imperceptibly derail our dreams by inches every day. Years pass, and the day may come when you realize that the dream that once seemed to define your life is gone – snatched from your grasp not by the passing of pivotal events or crushing failures – but inch by inch, day by day, through nothing more sinister than benign neglect and good intentions.*



*This issue is dedicated to guitarists that refuse to lose their dream. The featured players in this edition of the Quest will be completely unknown to you; they can't claim hit recordings or tours with super-groups, and they haven't made anyone's pathetic list of the top 100 guitarists in the world. As if we could know... And this is as it should be, for many of the most accomplished and recognized guitarists in our time have made their bones and moved on to charity appearances, producing, guesting, cutting brilliant new tracks that aren't getting the play today that they deserve, and generally just living the life of a 'known' guitar*

*player who hit some memorable licks back in the day. Dream fulfilled.*

*The guitarists in our spotlight this month are a work in progress. Both are brilliantly talented, if*

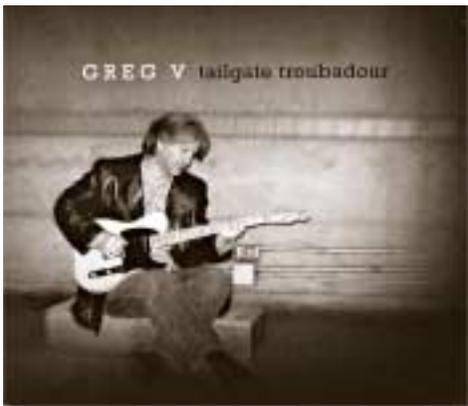
coming from entirely different places, yet they are working with the same tools – wood, wire, vacuum tubes, and the most important tool of all – the vision of a dream.

Greg ‘V’ is an old friend whom we first met at Atlanta’s Tabernacle playing in Double Trouble, featuring Malford Milligan on vocals and Tommy Shannon and Chris Layton from Stevie Ray’s band. Greg’s independently produced instrumental CD “Tailgate Troubadour” features twelve intricately-woven melodic tapestries that combine his trademark Telecaster with dobro, lapsteel, acoustic, baritone and mando guitar, a funky Gretsch Corvette, classic Fenders, and a few boutique amps for flavor. Listen to Greg’s full track at [tonequest.com](http://tonequest.com) and you’ll appreciate the lush and vibrant melodic landscapes he skillfully creates with strings. There is much to appreciate and learn from within “Tailgate Troubadour”...

We predict that Guthrie Trapp will be well-known to us all in the not-to-distant future. The man is a master of Jump and Swing (although hardly limited to those styles by a long shot) who just seems to play the right notes with the right feel all the time, and he has the tones absolutely nailed. Once heard, you cannot get him out of your head, but we’ve noticed that some guitar players can be a little ‘funny’ about new talent... Playing the guitar is not a competitive sport, yet there is some truth to the joke about how many guitar players it takes to screw in a lightbulb... It takes 20... one to screw it in and 19 to comment on how they could have done it better.

If you want to learn how to do anything at the highest level, whether it be playing the guitar, making meade from honey, or making people laugh, keep an open, inquisitive mind, seek out and study those that inspire you, then put your personal stamp on it and roll, always mindful that your life will be defined by the journeys you take rather than the intended destination. Chase your dream, and at the very worst, your cares and regrets will be smaller for it. *Quest Forth...*

**TQR:** What inspired you to record your CD?



I had wanted to record a solo instrumental CD for sometime – maybe 3-4 years. For my entire musical career I’ve been hired to play the

songs of the artists I work with or occasionally co-writing on various recording sessions. The variety can be a lot of fun since the musical scenery is always changing, and that keeps things interesting. I’ve always enjoyed writing, but since I don’t sing, most of my ideas stayed locked away for my own amusement. In the last few years I kept getting into different instruments like lap steel, baritone, mando guitar and dobro, and then I got my first ever recording setup in early 2003 – the Akai DPS24 – a fantastic sounding self-contained studio. With my new home studio in place and inspiration as my guide, I was ready to create my CD. Everything came together pretty quickly. Taking all my instruments and musical ideas, I wrote fourteen tunes in eight months. Two of them, “Porch Swing” and “After All The Miles” had been kicking around for five or six years, but they were never fully developed until I focused on this release. I ended up with twelve songs – just under an hour of music.

**TQR:** What were some of the most significant challenges you faced in completing this project?



I was full speed ahead and two weeks away from recording bass and drums with Lucinda William’s drummer, Jim Christie, and Jackson Browne’s bassist Kevin McCormick, when my wife Kathy was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Nothing realigns your universe like cancer does, so I was going to stop everything, but Kathy said I should get the bass and drums finished since these guys were always out on tour and another window to record with them might not happen. She has always been incredibly supportive of my music, even though life at that moment was a blur. With her support, I was able to record the bass and drum tracks during the confusion, then normal life and everything else stopped for six months while Kathy had two surgeries and started her recovery. Her amazing strength and positive attitude helped her to recover quickly and we decided it was best to just try and resume normal life. I was like a gyroscope with a severe wobble, though. While I recorded my guitar parts alone in a warehouse, I found myself performing an exorcism of the pain and helplessness I felt from Kathy’s illness. I set up my Akai DPS24 and a few of my amps and turned them up loud and started recording all the guitars. I named that warehouse “Concrete Confessional Studios,” since I confessed my musical soul in those hard, cold walls. I recorded all the guitars in about a month and a half.

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**TQR:** What was your vision for *Tailgate Troubador* and how did the music evolve?

My approach musically was simple – to be a timeless Americana-inspired road trip with Telecasters, Gretsches, Dobro, Lap Steel, Baritone, Mando-guitar and glowing vintage amps as the passengers. I wanted to be free and honest with who I am as a player and composer, all the while serving the song. The variety of guitars I own inspires me to play and think in different ways. For example, when I started to play lap steel it changed my approach to regular guitar. It really got me into drones and trying to be more liquid. Now I hardly ever play long, single note scale-based passages. I'm always shoving in open strings, double-stops, peddle tones



and drones. I like the richness and self-harmony they provide, especially during a solo.

Recently I started playing more with my fingers only – no pick. So much big tone is in the flesh. I still need a pick to do some things, but I'm mixing it up with my fingers in a hybrid approach. There is so much nuance and detail revealed when your DNA touches the strings and wood. Another example of a particular guitar influencing me is my version of the traditional tune, "Amazing Grace." I had just purchased a 1964 Gretsch Corvette and did a rough demo at home to see how well the guitar recorded. I had been messing around with



"Amazing Grace" on acoustic for fun and I'd try the Gretsch on this tune. I dialed up a grinding tone and laid it down quickly using the Corvette's Burns tremolo to add a nice ethereal quality and shimmer. I don't use whammy bars much anymore and will usually bend my Tele neck for a subtle choral effect, but the Burns tremolo made the notes feel different to me – more airy. I played the rough demo for a few friends and they all said I should put an arrangement on my CD... I thought, "Who needs to hear another version of "Amazing Grace?" It's such a beautiful melody, and I juxtaposed an aggressive, mournful solo that represents a grieving loss, almost like a primal scream.

**TQR:** How would you describe your influences?

Growing up in Virginia had a really deep impact on me – the southern influence in general – plus, it's Telecaster country – my favorite guitar. There was a wealth of great music around me in Virginia – I even went to the same high school as



Mark Goldenberg

Emmylou Harris. She's phenomenal... her voice and music are stunning to me, and her guitarist, Buddy Miller, is one of my absolute favorite musicians... Along with Buddy, I should also mention Mark Goldenberg – Jackson Browne's incredible guitarist. They both are so inspiring. I've become

friends with Mark and he also mixed *Tailgate Troubador*. His great ears pick out every detail. I've always loved rootsy, organic singer/songwriters. That's where my playing fits best and I wanted my CD to also be textural and cinematic. I learned to appreciate and love the value of playing very sparsely doing sessions. Doing three seasons of the television series *Baywatch* and *Max Headroom*, I learned a lot. Sometimes, a TV show music cue might be three seconds long and only need one note to tell the truth of that scene. Studio work often requires you to come up with inspiring parts quickly, play those parts with emotion and have a variety of good tones. I try to hear parts as layers. On my CD, I wanted to orchestrate the variety of instruments I used to give the right mood to each song. Different guitars, amp tones and pedals are just tools to me – fun tools to color with. It's all about finding the right combination of those tools to roll your eyes into the back of your head and be inspired, hopefully while the red recording light is on! So all the different instruments I used provide a lush, varied soundscape and keep things interesting for the listener.

**TQR:** How was your project put together in terms of the players, the recording platform and mixing?

I borrowed Lucinda William's drummer Jim Christie and Jackson Browne's bassist/producer Kevin McCormick for all 12 tunes. I wanted to have a consistent feel and vibe through out my CD, and these two guys just played great. I first heard them playing together in a trio with Mark Goldenberg. The bass and drums were recorded with Digital Performer at Kevin McCormick's studio. We never had to do more than three takes for each song, and they tracked their parts to my basic home demos. I then took the bass and drum tracks and loaded them into my Akai DPS24 recording setup and went

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to a big warehouse and started re-tracking all the guitars by myself. It was my first engineering experience and I learned as I went along, really trying to get tones that fit the mood of the songs. Then I went to Mark Goldenberg's studio where we mixed with his ProTools setup. I was going for a really simple and lively mix approach of organic sounds, somewhat under-produced. Finally, I wanted a mastering engineer who would keep the mixes dynamic and open sounding. I chose Gavin Lurssen at The Mastering Lab in Los Angeles. He won a Grammy for the "O Brother Where Art Thou" soundtrack. Too many new CD's are compressed to death and it kills dynamics – the very life of music. Many people think because it's mastered loud, it's better, but to me it's so fatiguing to listen to. It's like someone yelling at you in a quite conversation.

I learned so much doing my own independent self-release CD. I had to be composer, musician, artist, producer, engineer, record company and I even did all the artwork and layout for my CD packaging. Often switching those mental hats in a matter of seconds, now I know why record companies were invented! I'm grateful to have music in my life and hope others feel some connection to my tunes. That's just the best I could hope for.

**TQR:** One of your favorite amps is a '66 Blackface Pro Reverb – still under-appreciated and one of our all-time favorites, too. You've played just about every thing ever made – what do you like about the Pro, in particular?



I really do love my '66 Pro Reverb and find it hits the sweet spot, volume wise, a bit sooner than my Super Reverb. For me, it's impor-

tant to have my setup "dancing" together. The synergy of guitar-amp-output transformers-speakers is critical and you need to turn the volume up on your amp. It's as if my rig is like a giant spider web, where even a subtle dynamic change of my picking attack brings forth an explosion of notes and all the life-giving harmonic overtones. Since the Pro Reverb has 2x12" speakers, the feel is also a bit greasier. The larger diameter speakers means the notes travel longer on the cone and those few milliseconds of delay affect the sweetness. The 4x10" Super Reverb has more spanky bass response in comparison. Also, my Pro Reverb has the Celestion Alnico Blue 15-watt speakers. I love how the Alnico speakers compress a bit and then push back at you, like squeezing a rubber beach ball.

**TQR:** Let's review all the instruments, amps and effects used to record your CD...



Guitars were all factory stock: 2000 Fender Custom Shop Nocaster, 1964 Gretsch Corvette with a single Hi-Lotron pickup and Burns tremolo, Fender Custom Shop Bajo Sexto Baritone, TEO Mando guitar that was custom made for me by Terry Ousley with Dimarzio Virtual Vintage pickups ([www.teoguitars.com](http://www.teoguitars.com)), late 1930's Bakelight Rickenbacker lap steel with the big Horseshoe pickup, Martin acoustic HD28-VR, and Tut Taylor Virginian Square-neck dobro. I use .010-.046 Gibson strings, Gibson .012-.052 on the Martin Acoustic. If I use a pick it's a standard shape heavy. For regular

slide I use a brass pinky slide by Rock Slide and a Dunlop Lap Dawg bar for Lap Steel and Dobro.

Amps: 1966 Fender Blackface Pro Reverb with reissue Celestion Alnico Blue speakers, 1965 Fender Blackface Super Reverb with Mojo Tone MP10R Alnico speakers, Victoria Double Deluxe 2x12 with Jensen C12N speakers. I also borrowed a Bogner Metropolis 1x12 combo and a Carr Hammerhead 1x12 for a few parts. For microphones, I close-miked using a Shure SM57 and Sennheiser MD421 on the electrics and an Octava MCO12 on acoustic and dobro.

Effects: Fulltone Fulldrive II Custom Shop version, Line 6 DL4 delay, Guyatone Flip Tremolo, Arion SCZ1 chorus for



B3/Leslie effect only, vintage Italian Gretsch Playboy Wah (with Fasel!) inductor, Voodoo Lab Pedal power supply.

## **TAILGATE TROUBADOUR TRACK INFO:**

**Rusting Soul**

Martin acoustic HD28-VR, Tut Taylor Virginian Square-neck

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dobro, Pre-war Bakelicht Rickenbacker lap steel, Fender Bajo Sexto Baritone, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster, '65 Fender Super Reverb for the Baritone and lap steel w/ vintage Gretsch wah, '66 Pro Reverb for the guitar solo. SM57 and MD421 mics on amps, Octava MC012 on acoustic and dobro.



### Sunset To Moonrise

Martin acoustic HD28-VR, Tut Taylor Virginian Square-neck dobro, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster, Bogner Metropolis 1x12 for tremolo parts, '65 Fender Super Reverb for low note swells, '66 Pro Reverb for guitar solo. SM57 and MD421 mics on amps, Octava MC012 on acoustic and dobro.

### Porch Swing

Martin acoustic HD28-VR, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster into '66 Pro Reverb for the main guitar, '64 Gretsch Corvette into '66 Pro Reverb for the guitar

solo, Pre-war Bakelicht Rickenbacker lap steel into '66 Pro Reverb, SM57 and MD421 mics on amps, Octava MC012 on acoustic.

### Tailgate Troubadour

Martin HD28-VR acoustic, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster into '66 Pro Reverb for the main guitar, '64 Gretsch Corvette into '66 Pro Reverb for the regular slide guitar, Fender Bajo Sexto Baritone into Carr Hammerhead for baritone/slide baritone solo, SM57 and MD421 mics on amps, Octava MC012 on acoustic.

### Amazing Grace

Fender Custom Shop Nocaster into '65 Super Reverb and Victoria Double Deluxe for the main guitar, '64 Gretsch Corvette into '66 Pro Reverb for the higher pitched second guitar, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster into '65 Super Reverb with custom made fuzz for solo, SM57 and MD421 mics on amps.

### Inside The Rain

Intro is a '64 Gretsch Corvette into Bogner Metropolis 1x12, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster into Victoria Double Deluxe for the main guitar, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster into '65 Super Reverb for clean guitar, Pre-war Bakelicht Rickenbacker lap steel into '66 Super Reverb for solo with Gretsch wah, SM57 and MD421 mics on amps.

### Autumn Kiss

Fender Bajo Sexto Baritone into '65 Super Reverb and



Victoria Double Deluxe, Pre-war Bakelicht Rickenbacher lap steel into '66 Pro Reverb, SM57 and MD421 mics on amps.

### Valley Voices

TEO Mando guitar into '66 Pro Reverb for intro and solo, Martin acoustic HD28-VR, Fender Bajo Sexto Baritone into '65 Fender Super Reverb and Victoria Double Deluxe for the main baritone, SM57 and MD421 mics on amps, Octava MC012 on acoustic.

### 6 Strings 7 Lonely Nights

Martin acoustic HD28-VR, TEO Mando guitar into '65 Super Reverb, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster into '66 Pro

Reverb for solo, SM57 and MD421 mics on amps, Octava MC012 on acoustic.



### Bend The Dusty Road

Fender Bajo Sexto Baritone for clean rhythm, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster into '66 Pro Reverb with Arion SCZ1 chorus for B3/Leslie effect, '64 Gretsch Corvette into

Victoria Double Deluxe for grinding dirty guitar, SM57 and MD421 mics on amps.

### Cottonmouth Pass

Martin acoustic HD28-VR, Tut Taylor Virginian Square-neck dobro, Octava MC012 on acoustic and dobro.



### After All The Miles

Martin HD28-VR acoustic, Fender Custom Shop Nocaster into '66 Pro Reverb, SM57 and MD421 mics on amps, Octava MC012 on acoustic. **To**

[www.gregv.us](http://www.gregv.us)

# Guthrie Trapp

**TQR:** You mentioned growing up in Lillian, Alabama... When were you born?

February 3, 1979.

**TQR:** How were you initially introduced to the guitar? Was there someone in your life that took you under their wing?

Well, my dad's youngest brother taught himself how to play guitar and banjo on Norman Blake and Doc Watson records, and at the same time, Bob Dylan and John Prine stuff. He was the only one who played music in the family, but my entire family were huge music lovers. There was a lot of



music being played and when I was a little kid, friends and family would have pickin' parties where they would all sit around

and play bluegrass and Celtic music. Rather than getting a babysitter, they always took me to those parties, so I grew up around a bunch of musicians.

**TQR:** What kind of music were you hearing?

A lot of bluegrass, folk and Celtic... but at the same time Allman Brothers, Santana, Jean Luc Ponty and even Van Morrison. But I also went to a *lot* of bluegrass festivals.

**TQR:** Way beyond typical Top 40...

Really no Top 40 at all – but really *good* stuff.

**TQR:** When did you get your first guitar?



I got my first real guitar when I was about 10 or 11 – an Alvarez Yiari Acoustic – but I had other guitars around because of my uncle, like an old Gibson



ES347, an old '70s Martin, and a Dobro round neck. I would get off the school bus at my grandmother's house and my uncle and I would play

music after school. I really started out playing harmonica when I was about seven or eight, but I never took lessons. I always had my uncle around and later on some other guys began showing me the ropes here and there.

I started picking out lead notes before I learned any chords. I kind of learned it backwards. What I did was pick up the notes I knew on the harmonica and then play them on the guitar. It seemed like I picked up on the blues stuff first, even though I was hearing a lot of different kinds of music. Later on I began playing bluegrass. I loved flatpicking and different people would help me out at times. I had a guy give me a Tony Rice video and I picked up a good bit from that. I think I got my first electric guitar from George Gruhn's – a three-quarter size electric.

My dad also promoted a band called New Grass Revival – a great band with Sam Bush, Bela Fleck, Pat Flynn and John Cowan. He promoted those guys in the mid to late '80s, so I got to meet and hang with them when I was a little kid. I was only seven or eight years old when I remember hearing those guys play live. That was a major, *major* influence and I can remember getting chills, they were so good.

**TQR:** At what point did you start playing out?

I kept playing bluegrass and flat picking guitar as well as jamming on the electric to records, and I was also just getting into the mandolin. I don't know how I got into that, but I picked it up. I think I knew three or four chords – G, C and D and maybe an A minor or something. This bluegrass band that we knew played down on the Gulf Coast and they called me when I was about 12 or 13. Their mandolin player had left and they wanted me to play, even though I only knew three or four chords. I told them that I played the guitar, too, so I went over to a rehearsal at their house and did a little bit of mandolin and played the guitar and they said, "Come on out and play!" That was my first real paying gig. We played festivals and stuff, but still living at home made it easy to just play for a living. I knew by then that music was definitely what I wanted to do. There was a guy that played fiddle in that band that was a real good friend of ours who showed me different things on the mandolin and I got better with that.

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## cover story

**TQR:** But it sounds as if you really got your start playing bluegrass.



Yeah, that was the first music I played out regularly. But before that, me and my uncle Jerry Trapp did some informal gigs when I was real

young, playing blues harmonica. I was real shy. At home I would crank up the electric guitar and play to The Allman Brothers, Johnny Winter, and even some Paul Butterfield records – stuff I could just wail on but learn from also. And then I'd play flattop along with Tony Rice records, too.

**TQR:** That explains why you seem so versatile and fluid in so many styles. I have seen Don Kelly's show before, but you were throwing a lot of different influences into your playing with Don. It wasn't the usual generic stuff you hear on Broadway in Nashville – the country licks. You just seem to be so grounded in so many different styles. Talking about having come up playing bluegrass music, I can see where it played a big part in your ability to absorb a lot of different styles. It's unusual for someone to be able to grasp it all at one time – most people go off into one thing and live there.

I picked up a few things about those different styles here and there, but I never really heard any traditional country growing up. When I got turned on to Danny Gatton, I heard that you could chicken pick on a Telecaster on any style of music, and I dug that. Then I got into Jump Blues and the West Coast Swing stuff. I jumped into that pretty big because I just loved it so much. ...Hollywood Fats, Junior Watson, Kid Ramos, L.A Holmes, and all those great jump blues and swing guitar players, and there are usually some killer horn players on those records to learn stuff from... I love listening to those guys, man. If you haven't heard of Willis Jackson and Bill Jennings, check them out too!!

**TQR:** How did you get turned on to Jump and Swing?

Well, I got tired of playing in that bluegrass band and I wanted to play something a little different. It's a long story, but that's when I met Gove Scrivenor. We ended up meeting at a New Year's Eve party down in Alabama. We had some guitars and we all started playing and after that Gove asked me to come out and play a couple of gigs. We started playing



John Prine, Gove & Guthrie

the fairly traditional bluegrass band I was in earlier.

**TQR:** And how would you describe the music that you played with Gove?

Well, it was all his original music and some blues that we would do like, "Walking Blues" and things like that. We did all kind of stuff, you know, ballads – he writes great instrumentals, too. We had the mandolin and auto harp and acoustic guitar and we had different combinations of those. I learned a lot from him and we had a great time playing together. Then, let's see, I met Nick Branch... He would swap out sets with me and Gove at the Flora-Bama Bar till 3 a.m. Then I started sitting in with Nick on the acoustic guitar and Nick said, "Man, do you have an electric? Why don't you bring it out?" I had recently bought a G&L Legacy Special and I played that through his amp – he let me borrow his old Deluxe Reverb that was just beat to hell. It's one of the best



ones I have ever heard. It had a Celestion Vintage 30 in it and all or most of the original tubes. It no longer has a Fender logo on it – he replaced it with a chrome logo from an old Ford.

**TQR:** We've seen that done before. Leroy Parnell has a Marshall Plexi with a chrome Eldorado logo from a Cadillac on it. So he loaned you the Deluxe and you were using your G&L Legacy...

Yeah, and he turned me on to all kinds of stuff... Louis Jordan and a lot of swing... We played a bunch of Nick's originals, a lot of old blues, some rockabilly, and even Latin influenced stuff – all really fun stuff to play. We played down on the Gulf Coast, and we even went to Europe for two or three weeks. We had a great following and we made four CD's as a band called The Filthy Rich.

We also had an incredible harmonica player named Mark

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'The Harp' Cassidy. He got me in to the jump stuff even deeper with Hollywood Fats and Junior Watson, who I actually got to play with last year in Louisville. I had just never heard of that stuff, you know? I didn't get that till later – really about four or five years ago or so. The jump blues is my favorite, man. Anything that swings... it's a fun feel to play. Around the same time, Nick had turned me onto Danny Gatton, so that's when I got into playing Telecasters. I was still searching for some sort of voice, I guess. I had no clue what the jump guys were playing, and I was just trying to figure stuff out.

**TQR:** Prior to that were you still just playing the Legacy?

Yeah, I played that Legacy and then I bought a G&L ASAT Tele. There was a thing about the Tele that I loved right away. I think it was closer to playing an acoustic – no tremolo or middle pickup. There's something about a Tele... There's just something about it. I have been through a *shit load* of guitars just trying to find something that works for me, and I'm still looking for one or two good Teles! But I do love the amps that I have now. I try new stuff every once in a while but always go back to my Blackface Fenders. I think the first real good amp that I had was that Pro Reverb you saw me playing in Nashville. It's a '66 or something like that. It had the original speakers in it



and I took those out and put in Vintage 30's. That Pro Reverb is my favorite amp, but for some things it's too big. Like that gig last night...

The Deluxe Reverb is good for most small rooms, and I usually don't mike the amp in a small to medium club. That way you can turn your amp up between 4 and 6 and you get the sweet spot going. Playing outside, you normally have to mike the amp, but everybody knows that. It just depends. With Patty Loveless we use in ear monitors, so my amp is as far from the stage as they can get it – sometimes almost in the dressing room! That's OK. The ear monitors took some getting used to after playing clubs for so long, but they can sound great – especially on our acoustic bluegrass part of the show.

**TQR:** What instruments are you playing now?

I have been using a Guild X170 with P94's on some stuff, as well as a Tokai Strat with Fralin pickups that I got from Don Kelley. I love that thing, and Don has a knack for finding killer guitars. I've been using the Guild for the jump and



swing stuff, but I've got a Gibson 135 with P100's in it coming that I bought on eBay, so we'll see how that works out. Still searching!! But mainly what I use now with Don Kelley and Patty Loveless is the Pro Reverb and the Teles. That combination seems to cover all the styles that I like to play and it works well for me and my attack.

**TQR:** Well, you can work it many different ways, and you do. That was another thing that nailed us.

Thanks. I enjoy playing different styles as authentically as I can, but also with a little of my own flavors and interpretations. I also like blending all the traditional tones and feels with my own. I don't know... Maybe it just depends on how you feel before your gig or playing a solo or whatever... I really don't have any *old* guitars. All my guitars are new and all my amps are old. I just can't afford an old guitar, or maybe I just haven't found a good one... But I *could* afford to buy these old amps when I was a teenager living at home, and I kinda got into buying clean ones when I saw them.

**TQR:** Are you running your Deluxe with 6V6's or 6L6's?

It's set up stock. Todd Sharp does all the work on my amps here in Nashville. He's great... He and Jeff Hime are great amp guys and great players, too. ([www.toddsharp.com](http://www.toddsharp.com))

**TQR:** What's on your pedalboard?

Let's see... an old Boss DM 2 delay... Let me go open it up... I'll tell you one thing I really love is the Vox Wah. I had to take it out of my pedal board when I moved to Nashville because I don't use it much here. I used it a lot when I was playing with the other band, but there isn't much call for a wah-wah pedal up here. I have used it a couple of times with Don when I could kind of squeeze it in and they all looked at me funny (laughs).



I have a Maxon OD9 and 808 overdrive, and a John Landgraff Dynamic Overdrive that I don't really use much anymore, but it is a great high-gain overdrive – more like a

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Marshall sound. It's a real good pedal. I use a Sparkle Drive on some chicken pickin' stuff for kind of a clean boost with a little hair on it, and I've also got an old Dynacomp and a Keeley compressor, but I use them very little. It seems like I just can't get used to a compressor.

**TQR:** That's funny, because you know how big compressors are in Nashville.

Yeah, I know. I just can't get used to one. I think I kinda like the notes to jump out. Plus, I think Fender amps have a nice natural compression. I also have a Boss Tremolo and a Boss DD-5 with a tap tempo for more ballad-type stuff. If we are doing like, classic blues, I turn the delay off and crank my reverb. I have people come up and say, "Man, you have lot of pedals," but I use very few at one time. I basically leave that delay on and sometimes I use the reverb and then I use one overdrive pedal at a time. I do have a lot of stuff on my pedalboard, but I only use one or two at a time – that's the secret to keeping the tones clean and clear, to me anyway. But everybody's attack is different, which to me, is the big difference in tone. I don't know if it is so much what you want to hear or feel, but it's all about how the notes jump out of the amp with your attack.

**TQR:** Well, your tone is absolutely great through the Pro. Have we covered all of your guitars?

I have a little Jimmy Vaughan Strat that is in pieces right now, and I've got a Fender Tele that Dennis Galuszka built for me. It's a Masterbuilt Custom Shop guitar that's really cool and light, but he's building me another neck for it. I use a 'parts' Tele all the time now but I still have a few G&L ASAT's that I'm probably going to sell. I've got a Lararvee OM9 acoustic and a great Collings D1 dreadnought. I've also got an old early '70s Fender P-bass that sounds great, and I do an Indie-rock gig on bass every once in a while for fun. I've also got a Phoenix Mandolin and a National M2 resonator with the mahogany body. I was kind of holding out for an old one, but this one just sounds and plays great. I think that's about it. Oh... I've got a nylon string just in case I need one for a session or something.

**TQR:** What prompted you to move to Nashville?

Well, I had come up here in the past to record with Gove and I had always thought you had to be a Brent Mason to make a living here. I didn't think I was good enough. But some guys I was talking to at one of the Frank Brown songwriters festivals at the Flora-Bama Lounge said, "When are you going to move to Nashville?" I said, "What am I supposed to do, just pack up and move?" and they said, "Well, yeah!" So that got me thinking. I also thought about Austin or New Orleans, but Nashville was the right choice. I played the bars on the beach

down south where I grew up for a long time, and I was partying a little too much. I knew I wanted something more, and to have more people around to learn from.

**TQR:** Typical beach scene?



Yes, but there were some great talents down there also, and I learned a lot. That club had music all day and night long, seven nights a week – the World Famous

Flora-Bama Lounge and Package...I played there all the time. Hundreds, maybe thousands of gigs... Seemed like thousands! But fun. It really is 'world famous' – the last real American roadhouse. They are also known for their famous fish throwing contest, and the Frank Brown international songwriters fest. The owner of the place, Joe Gilchrist, is a huge music fan – he loves music – and the place was only 20 minutes from my parents' house. I met a guy that played there from Mobile – a great, great blues guitar player – Luther Womble, who toured with Gatemouth Brown for a few years. He was down there at the Bama and he would get so messed up that he couldn't play the last set, so I would go out and play it for him. One time I picked up his old Tele and there was fried chicken and grease all over the fingerboard (laughs). He taught me how to turn up and play with confidence. I just picked up whatever I could from pickers there. It's a great, great place, but if you don't get out of those places, at some point it seems like you never will. The 'Bama just got wiped out by hurricane Ivan... There have been so many encouraging things happen in the past two and a half years since I've lived here in Nashville that I really feel I'll be here for a good while, and I love it. A lot of my heroes are here and I've been able to play with many of them already and also meet some new ones!

**TQR:** What kind of music would you ultimately like to wind up playing? You are definitely capable of playing just about anything.

Any music, as long as it's good and real!! Last year I got the gig with Patty Loveless and that was one of the greatest things that's happened to me. I'm playing lead electric, acoustic, and some mandolin on that gig. Patty and everybody involved on that tour is incredible, from what they do professionally to simply who they are as human beings. They are already like family to me and the music is a pleasure to play every night. And I'm still playing with the Don Kelley

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Band at Robert's on lower Broadway here in town. It's great material and I get to play to my heart's content for four hours a night, Wednesday-Saturday when I'm not out with Patty.

I feel like I've been very lucky to continue playing great music and be establishing myself in this town. I'm very happy where I'm at, and

I really couldn't ask for anything better... except for those great guitars I know are out there for me somewhere! It feels great to play music that I can stand behind and be proud of.

**TQR:** And typical pop-country wouldn't be it...

Well, not all new country is bad, but there is plenty of pop I can do without, new or old, country or otherwise. I love roots music and music that has a thread in it somewhere to the old stuff. The Patty Loveless and Don Kelly gigs are things that I love to do because the material is good. And the stuff we do with them is the real stuff. There is some great new music out there, and I just love all good music – that's what inspires me. Somebody said there's only two kinds of music – good and bad! I think it was Louis Armstrong.

**TQR:** So you would like to be able to continue to mix it up?

Yeah, I like to mix it. You know, I love playing bluegrass, jump blues, and others, but I wouldn't want to play anything all night long. It's just too much fun to blend it all together if you can get away with it.

**TQR:** Well, how does that culminate in a career? Most players tend to categorize themselves, or the public does it for them...

I think as long as you have a feel for the type music you are playing and try to fit the song, you'll be fine. I just don't want to be categorized into one style. I would like people to feel that if they want a certain style, I could play it and play it convincingly. You just have to find what works for you. Every once in a while you might play on something you don't particularly like, but you have to make a living as well. Then put your own project together on the side or something like that. I just want to be a well-rounded musician and keep playing music I love. Maybe that's why it's taken me so long to come up with material for a solo recording project. I want to show all my favorite styles on it. One is soon to come I hope!

**TQR:** I guess what I'm trying to figure out is... Danny Gatton mined a lot of ground stylistically, and brilliantly so, but it never really developed in to much of a career for him commercially, and that eventually killed him – Roy Buchanan and Rory Gallagher, too.

I'm flexible with all that. I'm not trying to just do my own band or original music, so its different to me. I won't turn down any gigs – I know I have to make a living – but I'm saying if I had to put a band together or if I was going to be out promoting what I might want to do, it would be a lot of different things – an eclectic mix or something that people would hopefully want to come out and hear and not leave after two songs... Take David Lindley, for example... He does that great, bizarre stuff that he does so well, but then he will go out and play with Jackson Browne and back him up on more straightforward stuff.

**TQR:** Right, and he tore it up.

Yeah, that's part of the deal I guess, and to me that would be the best of both worlds. I love being a sideman, and maybe I'll have my own project some day as well. Right now I'm happy with how things are going. I just love not knowing what's around every corner.

**TQR:** Bring us up to date on what you're doing now.

Well, I'm still playing downtown in Nashville at Roberts with The Don Kelley Band Wednesday-Saturday, 6-10 p.m. with Artie Alinikoff on drums and Dave Roe on upright bass. I also recently played on five songs on Patty Loveless's new record, two of which were with Albert Lee. That was quite an honor, and I'll be going back on tour with her and her great band in a few months. I'm really looking forward to going back out with all of them. We had a great time last year doing Patty's show as well as about 15 or more Opry road shows with Patty, Vince Gill, Rebecca Lynn Howard and the Del McCoury band. That was great getting to play with all those people. Vince let me play his white Tele at sound check one day.



Wow! I'm also doing more and more sessions here in town, which is very encouraging. I'm also trying to get some original material together for a long overdue solo project, but we won't hold our breath

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(laughs). I played a few gigs with Nanci Griffith as well as Vassar Clements and his Little Big Band, but we only play about 2-3 gigs a year, one of

which was with Taj Mahal. I still want to put together a jump blues band to play locally for fun sometime real soon, and start practicing more and continuing to learn new things on guitar and mandolin. Moving up here is the best thing I've ever done, and things just keep getting better, so I'm grateful for everything!

I want to express my gratitude to GHS strings, Trailer Trash pedal boards, Todd Sharp and Jeff Hime at Nashville amp service, Joe Glaser and Dave Lunn at Glaser instruments, Jimmy Johnson for my new music library!, the Trapp family for encouraging music, Don Kelley for putting up with me, Dave Pomeroy for being a great dude and a big help to me, and everyone who took the time to read this! **To**

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## *Fender Professional Series* from the early 60's **BROWN TOLEX AMPLIFIERS**

by Mike Letts



Talk with any guitarist about Fender amps and the subjects are likely blackface and tweed. That great Super

Reverb... the Deluxe Reverb that's the ultimate club amp... The legendary tweed Bassman, said to be the best amp ever, and let's not forget the tweed Deluxe. These are the prized examples, and for good reasons. But another category of Fenders has been lost in the shuffle, even maligned a bit over the years: the brown-tolex amps, built for a few short years in the early 1960's. The neglected brown-era amps represent a wellspring of innovation and unique tones from the mind of

Leo Fender, and to overlook them may mean missing some of the coolest vintage amps ever. Grab one of these vintage sleepers and own the tone that might make you leave your blackface alone!

Let's have a look at these amps... Cloaked in subtly varying shades of chocolate-brown with matching faceplates, even the logos had a tail in matching color, and the knobs were coordinated with the all-brown scheme. If you said these were the best-looking amps Fender ever made, I wouldn't argue. Back in the day when blackface was the way, some of these old girls got the Jagger treatment... "paint it black"... but now it is time to repent, to even up the score, to make reparations and be rewarded by Leo's brown beauties.

Tone is no excuse to dismiss these amps, either. While not so ubiquitous as their tweed and blackface cousins, I am sure we can come up with many examples of great tones recorded with brown amps. Ted Nugent is said to have recorded some of his most popular music with a brown Deluxe. Tony Joe White's swampy "Poke Salad Annie" is the brown Concert with that unique tremolo. There must be more... the amps are out there and have obviously been played, and played a lot.

In one published 'shootout' a brown Pro came in near the bottom of the heap against its tweed namesakes. Perhaps this has contributed to a bad rap on the brown amp tones, but guitarists on Internet discussion boards are now beginning to acknowledge brown Fenders. A few knowledgeable cyber-surfing amp gurus have even begun to call them the best sounding amps Fender ever made. That opinion can be supported by the siren song and brown bark that has resonated from 1960 right on up to now.

These amps pioneered innovations that remain Fender and industry standards to this day. Responding to input straight from the bandstand, Leo moved the controls to the front for the first time. Fragile tweed was not holding up well on the original Fender line; enter the idea of tolex, another feature that was copied by other manufacturers. Brown Fender amps have a place in history as the first appearance of a fully-evolved version of the modern tube amp designed for the guitarist. Not a whole lot has changed in this ergonomic design since Leo laid it down for us back in 1960, and to own one of these amp is to possess a relic from the very beginnings of tube-and-tolex magic.

### *A Brief Evolution of the Professional Series*

An example of the first "Professional Series" brown Fender amp made its appearance at the summer NAMM show in 1959. Production continued through 1963, when the transition to black tolex was complete. Along the way, the brown amps went through many changes in appearance and circuitry. This was a time of profound experimentation and evolution at the Fender factory. Along with the "official" changes

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in the line during this period, subtle variations and unique specimens can also be found. We could fill a book with all the details of this evolution and all the variations that have surfaced.

When shopping for your own brown Fender, be aware of some key details. The earliest tolex was a lighter tan color, often called “pinkish” brown. These amps would be accompanied by the same maroon grille cloth with yellow stripe as the tweeds. By 1961 most of the amps already have the darker oxblood grille cloth along with a deeper brown colored tolex without the pinkish tint. By the end of 1961 and into ‘62, a transition was made to a different grille cloth – the much lighter “wheat” colored cloth. Amps from late ‘61 and into ‘62 could have had either the wheat or oxblood cloth, as Fender transitioned to the wheat cloth and used up old stocks of oxblood. Faceplate colors changed as well, from a lighter brown early on, to a darker shade on the later examples. The handles on the amps likewise changed from a lighter to a darker brown during this time. All these variations overlap in time, and it takes an experienced eye to identify them and verify originality. The earliest examples are more rare and collectable, but for the brown tone, let your ear be your guide, because any of them can be good.

Circuits evolved in this era as well. Some changes were readily visible, some not. Some were consistent, and some were unique. The earliest brown amps are obvious, due to a unique control arrangement with the volume knob in the center of the panel, *after* the bass and treble controls. These “center volume” amps also have the lighter, copper-colored faceplates. These are rare, and more desirable from the collector’s standpoint. Players may notice that the center-volume amps have a slightly different circuit and tone. In 1960, the change to the “volume first” arrangement was made, (volume knob on the left, followed by the tone knobs). While the center volume amps are very cool, you will find very toneful examples of the later amps without paying a premium for the more rare, early examples. I’ve played both a center-volume Concert and a later, volume-first example from early 1962. The earlier Concert sounds a bit more warm, mellow and complex than my ‘62, but some of the difference could be in the speakers as well as the circuit. The ‘62 Concert is still great, one of the best sounding Fenders I have heard.

So, when looking for a brown amp, let your ears be your guide, and watch for the obvious differences. Original speakers are a very desirable part of getting the authentic tone, but you can save a lot of money on an amp without them. There are new speakers available that will still sound very good. I owned a brown Super that was a little odd; it had a factory original solid-state rectifier. Keep a sharp eye out for these kinds of “one-off” variations that can affect the tone you’re seeking. Look for original transformers; these will be harder

to replace. Despite the hype, modern replacements will not sound the same. This goes for the circuitry as well; any extensive replacements of caps and resistors can have big effects on the tone. You will find that each amp is tonally unique, even those that are the same model and year, so again, let your ears be your guide. There are good ones and some not-so-good ones in existence, but the best of these are truly great amplifiers.

### The Brown Sound



So how can the sound of the brown amps be described? It varies a bit, but we can make some general observations.

One common generality is “midway between tweed and blackface.” There is some truth there, but they really are unique. They will have some of the mid-emphasis of the tweeds, but they do not have the scooped mids, sparkly clean tone and high-trebles of the blackface amps. They will not break up as quickly or as much as the tweeds. What they do have is a round thick tone, very fat and warm, and very old-school, of course... A classic tone.

The tone will not get thin like blackface amps can on single note lines. It will not lose definition and clarity when pushed hard, and won’t mush out in the lows like some other types of Fenders can. Think nice solid mids, treble voiced a bit lower than the blackface amps, and huge lows second to none. I think the brown amps – especially the larger ones – have more bass than any other Fenders. My old diode-rectified Super would just about shoot a voice coil across the room from one of those little 10” speakers! The brown Fenders from 1960 also give you the benefit of a presence control, and this control was maintained for all the larger Fenders (bigger than the Vibrolux/Tremolux) throughout the production of the brown amps.

Some players report that these amps will give a nice Fender clean tone up to about 6 on the volume, and then morph into Marshall tones at 7 and above. And sure enough, they do want to stay clean until pushed hard, then they growl like a big fat bear, with an authority not heard in the more popular blackface amps. It may take some adjustment of your ears and playing if you are only used to tweed and blackface amps, but the rewards are some of the nicest Fender tones ever. The tone controls are very effective. It can be critical to find just the right settings to get the most from the amp, and small tweaks can make a big difference. The controls have a wider range of adjustment than blackface controls, and they are voiced at slightly different frequencies. It takes a bit of

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getting used to playing them, but once your ears are tuned in to the sound of the brown, it can be very rewarding.

## Models To Look For:

In your search for your own brown amp, you will find a few different models coming up for sale on a regular basis. Here is a guide to some of the more commonly seen models. The more rare models will be discussed in Part 2...

### Concert



This is the big cat-daddy of the line! Heir to the throne of the 4x10 Bassman, precursor to the famed Super Reverb, it is the 4x10, dual 6L6 (5881) beast that can cover most any gig. This amp is very loud and will stay clean until cranked to 7 or above; at that point it gives up a powerful old-

school overdrive that is sweet and punchy, firm and tight like an old 50-watt tweed Twin. It has what many have said is the best tremolo ever. Trem freaks will want the earliest 5-preamp tube model just for this extra "swampy" feature. It is a unique, all-tube tremolo that affects highs and lows separately and does not drop the volume levels like some other tremolos. This amp is a great choice for jazz or jump blues. Also great for other rootsy styles, like Texas and Chicago blues, R&B and Stonesy rock, but it is going to get quite loud if you want much OD. There is a simple, reversible mod that can open up the overdrive a bit. Look for original speakers, but these can be real bargains if the originals are not there, and the cheap Eminence blue Alnico speakers do a fine job, as do the Jensen reissues. Look for original transformers. Many of these will have the same output transformer as the tweed Bassman. You'll have a hard time getting a new transformer to match the tone of that classic chunk of iron! This amp is diode rectified, which contributes to the tighter, louder tone. These are often priced well under current prices for the blackface Super Reverbs. Add an outboard Fender reverb unit and you might find you like the tone better!

### Super



This is one that some have called the best Fender amp ever. It has the cool tremolo in a compact 2x10, dual 6L6 combo. The tube rectifier in this one will tame the volume and soften the tone a bit compared to the

Concert. It will have the same tonal attributes as its big brother in a package more players might find useful – still loud, but more club-friendly. The amp will give the range of Fender-to-Marshall tones at just the right volumes for many gigging players. Their desirability leads them to often be priced a bit above the Concerts, but they are still a bargain compared to many vintage and comparable boutique amps.

### Deluxe

Although too small to be included in the Professional series, it has to be mentioned, as the overdrive is deceptively huge. Here is the one if you like overdrive! The tone is fat and creamy, fatter sounding than a tweed Deluxe and nastier than the blackface – just right for club gigs when you want overdrive. Like all these amps, it will clean up nicely when you turn the guitar down. These are sought after for studio use as well as smaller live gigs, so prices seem to run a bit higher. But you won't find a better amp in its class, and bargains are out there on fixer-uppers that are not all original and need service. This is the classic Deluxe package: 1x12 and two 6V6 tubes – a very versatile little performer. I've seen pictures of Keith Richards playing one of these. This is as classic an amp as its tweed and blackface cousins and deserves the same attention. Some say it's the best of the breed.

### Other models



The new flagship Vibrasonic introduced the Professional series, a 1x15" dual 6L6-powered combo that competed for the top of the line with the more traditional nameplate of the Twin. With a JBL

driver, this remains a great choice for country and steel players in search of clean tone at almost all levels. The 3x10" Bandmaster continued in the line and remains very desirable. It might just be the best in the whole series for blues club gigs. If you get a chance to own one, you'll be one lucky player! The Pro amp also remained in the line and could be a bargain choice in a 15" combo amp.

### Conclusion

The early 60's was a time of huge innovation and evolution at Fender. Changes in these amps were happening quickly. History was being made, along with some very cool amps. The variety and evolution of this significant period has been under-documented, and we have assembled a small group of aficionados with the goal of collecting as much information about this period as we can. Our research over the past two years could fill a book, and more questions remain unanswered. We began our research with the goal of assembling a collection of at least one of each model of the earliest brown

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amps we could find in order to discover and document the evolution of the amps. We still seek information on every center-volume brown amp we can find in order to have a complete survey and document firm conclusions and timelines during this fertile period in Fender history. We welcome input from like-minded collectors of early brown amps.

Players should seriously consider grabbing an example of these great amps. You can use them for many styles. They will excel at the old-school stuff, of course. That they have been a bit overlooked has been good for players in the know, keeping prices reasonable. Well-known users include Keith Richards, Mark Knopfler and Ted Nugent, so you can see they can produce a range of very happening tones. With a low bias set-up and properly voiced preamp section, blues harp players will *love* these amps. Boutique amp makers have begun to wake up to the tones of these great amps as well, and I've seen a couple of builders making new amps based on a brown Fender lineage. Finally, we're beginning to see these amps garner the attention and praise they've always deserved. **To**

*Next month: PART II – The early 1960 Fender Small-Box, Brown Twin Amp: The Birth of a Myth*

## the Vibroclub Deluxe

What's this? A booteek Fender 'clone' inspired by another solder jockey's hopeless infatuation with circuits by Leo? Nope. Leo Fender & Co. built this one, and among the entire lineage of Fender amplifiers, the brown Vibrolux qualifies as the only 1x12 combo ever built in Fullerton with two 6L6 output tubes. That's right... the onliest one!



Consider the implications of this amp carefully... Aside from being comparatively rare, the brown Vibrolux fills a supremely attractive and practical void in the Fender line. The less powerful brown amps running 6V6's offered limited distortion-free headroom, and the 1x15 Pro, Vibrasonic, and the 4x10 Concert are louder, cleaner, and they don't always produce much overdriven grease and grind without modification. This was all pointed out to us by 'The Bendmaster,'

pedal steel boy Page Waldrop at Midtown Music as we oggled a 1962 brown Vibrolux that had just been traded in. Most of the time you can depend on getting some very useful and entertaining insights from Page, except when he's enjoying his favorite lunch of salmon and rice (which we fondly refer to as 'trailer sushi'). We usually just point to an interesting item on the floor at Midtown while copping a quizzical look directed at Page, to which he will respond with, "I hear Fender makes a good amp..." or "You might want to play that one..." When we pointed to the Vibrolux we got the short explanation of its significance and, "I really wish you, of all people, would take that one home." So, of course, we did.

You've noticed that our Vibrolux is no collector's fantasy amp... It sports some righteous wear and tear, assorted mystery stains, an unoriginal speaker, an unoriginal (and 50W of *just plain wrong*) Hammond power transformer, and a completely un-



mo-  
lestet  
chassis,  
including  
the original  
Astron  
electrolytic  
caps. None of  
this bothered  
us in the least,

but it did affect the selling price in our favor by at least \$800 off the typical price tag for a clean and original brown Deluxe or Vibrolux. Many Fender junkies will wring their hands over a brown Deluxe while completely overlooking the Vibrolux simply because, as we all know, the Deluxe is the *coolest*. All fine and good until you take the Deluxe to the club and discover that you can't quite hang with the band without turning it up to *full dirt* mode...

The Vibrolux cabinet is slightly larger than the brown Deluxe (18x23x9 versus 17.5 x20x9.5) and the tone is killer indeed. We replaced the Hammond power tranny with a Mercury



Magnetics *Tone Clone*® transformer and the amp immediately recaptured the signature harmonic content, dynamic character and smooth, punchy, creamy tones that had been lacking with the big

Hammond. The previous owner had installed an Eminence Legend V12, identifiable by its felt dustcap. Rated at 120W, our first choice would have been the 50W Legend GB12 or the Eminence Private Jack for the 35W Vibrolux, and after swapping out several replacement speakers we settled on an Alnico Tone Tubby

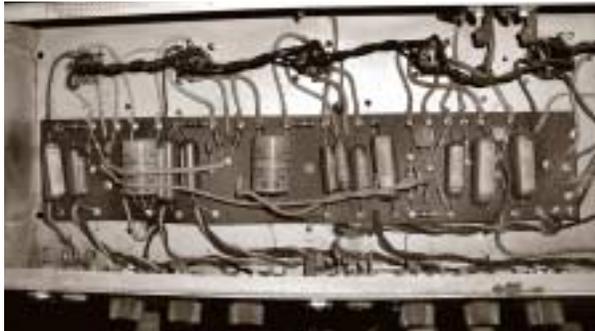
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with the latest 'Clapton coil.' Man, what a sound... Either of the previously-mentioned Eminence speakers would also be a fine

choice – they both sound great in just about everything (that's a hint, gang). Stay tuned for our review of the new Eminence line...

Brown Fender amps are generally cleaner-sounding than tweeds at comparable volume settings and they possess a more subtle attack with less high frequency emphasis and power than the blackface amps. Our amp sounds incredibly smooth and organic – less raw and raucous than a Fender tweed and warmer and rounder than our blackface Deluxe. It's *browner*. The Vibrolux stays big, clean and lusty-brown to about '5' on the chocolate volume knob and steadily climbs into progressively fatter overdriven tones all the way to '10' without the low-end collapsing, and the amp never sounds as if it's about to hit the wall at high volume. Moderate volume settings are clean, clear, rich and full – just like a Fender ought to be. We have also noticed that very



slight tweaks to the bass and treble pots produce dramatic changes in tone and EQ emphasis that we rarely hear in new amps today. The Vibrolux thrives on overdrive pedals, yet it is very common to find brown amps with at least one replaced transformer and a replaced speaker, leading us to conclude that these amplifiers were not designed to be used as rock blasters with the gain and volume controls on overdrive or distortion devices fully cranked. Our amp absolutely roars with a Dynamic Overdrive pedal by John Landgraff, but we don't turn the volume on the pedal above 12 o'clock. The Vibrolux also cleans up beautifully in precise, incremental steps when you cut the volume on the guitar – something else we don't always hear to the same degree in new amps. This amp is also perfectly suited for all pickup types...

Humbuckers are fat, with impressive pick-sensitive dynamic compression and they push the Vibrolux into earlier breakup than single coils. Strats and Teles are magic, with big low end, stout mids and smooth, musical highs. We generally boost the treble with humbuckers to 6-7 with the bass set on 3. With Fender style guitars we knock the treble back to 5-6 and the bass up to 4-5. And of course, the 'brown' tremolo is the bomb.



Our beater came loaded with JJ 6L6's and EH 12AX7's and we experimented with various NOS and current production tubes. An old but fresh pair of NOS RCA black-plate 6L6's won the tone test for output tubes, although we also liked the grittier sound of Sovtek 5881's *a lot*. All simply a matter of taste, but if you don't try you'll never know...

For preamp tubes we consulted with Mike Kropotkin at KCA NOS Tubes and sampled a range of currently available 12AX7's, including the new GT12AX7 'M' Mullard reissues (\$21), NOS Philips ECC83's made in Holland (\$65), NOS Brimar 12AX7/CV4004's (\$60) and NOS JAN GE 12AX7WA's (\$42). Sure, we could have run through far less expensive Electro-Harmonix, Sovtek, Ruby and JJ tubes – all familiar, solid choices for good tone and dependability, but they won't roll your eyes back in your head and curl your toes, either... We were questing for hot, steamy amp-sex from the Vibrolux.

Shoving \$240 of NOS preamp tubes in an amp isn't necessary – it's the gain stages in V1 and V2 that we're concerned with, and despite recent efforts to re-create the magic of NOS Mullard, Tung-Sol, RCA and Amperex 12AX7's, we can still hear the NOS difference in our Fender and Marshall-style amps. The GT's are pretty good – warm and smooth – but they lack the liveliness and bounce of the Philips and Brimars we tested, and the NOS JAN GE's produced a clarity that was clearly lacking in the other tubes. Bottom line: strategically-placed NOS tubes are icing on the cake that we prefer not to live without whenever possible. If you're going to take the time to find and fine-tune an amp like a brown Vibrolux, why not invest an extra \$50 in at least one NOS preamp tube while they are still available? **To**

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## the Fortunate TROLL

Now, scoring a moderately-priced vintage beater is a good day indeed for most of us, yet there are still those who lust for sheer perfection... The most discriminating vintage freaks among us experience near-orgasmic anticipation at the sight of a cherry piece of old gear, and perhaps you've watched this delicate mating dance unfold as a real gear troll discovers true love in a music store... The initial sighting rapidly progresses to an intense clinical examination as the piece is skeptically probed from every possible angle, inside and out. When no fakery is detected, the experienced troll reigns in his fervor, realizing that further prolonged attention may tip off the clever fellow slyly pretending not to be watching from behind the counter. The fortunate troll casually moves on to other merchandise, all the while scheming over how he might make such a luscious piece his own while paying \$200 under 'book' value to maintain his dignity (which also allows him to lie to his friends, boasting that he shrewdly snagged the cherriest cherry of them all for \$500 less than he actually paid).

Negotiations ensue, the fortunate troll's feeble trade gambits are rejected, and he winds up paying market price for this most excellent vision of his dreams, knowing full well that he may never behold another so fine.

There are also plenty of trolls on eBay, where the above scenario is slightly altered... The store is much bigger, the trolling is nearly always promising – at times astonishing – and the prices don't necessarily go up the longer you drool at



your keyboard... After we acquired the brown Vibrolux, we ran a search for brown Fender amps and found several minty examples, including a stunning, absolutely perfect '62 brown Vibrolux that hadn't sold by the auction's end. We contacted the seller, worked out a fair price and bought the Vibrolux for two reasons – it was indeed one of the cleanest original old amps we had ever seen, and we were curious to discover just how such a pristine and original vintage amp might compare to a modified old war horse with replaced speaker and transformer, old caps, beer stains and smokey funk. Afterall, this *is* the Quest for Tone...

After we acquired the brown Vibrolux, we ran a search for brown Fender amps and found several minty examples, including a stunning, absolutely perfect '62 brown Vibrolux that had-

The brown '62 Vibrolux appeared in all of its time-capsule splendor as anticipated, and our conversation with the seller revealed that the original owner was an accordion player in Chicago. Clearly, our pious polka-monster had taken great care in shlepping his precious Vibrolux from one VFW hall to another for over four decades in the The City of Big Shoulders. Polka Monster rolled *clean*, brah. Clean indeed.



The seller had replaced the original power cord and electrolytics. Would we prefer the softer-sounding, 'tired' original Astrons in our brown beater? Would the brown Oxford speaker with the Fender spaghetti logo sound as good as it

looked? How would the mojo of the Mercury Magnetics Tone Clone transformer compare to the original Fender? Do big-legged women really got no soul? These are burning questions that deserve answers. *Next month: Definitive answers and big surprises... To*

## Robert Cray SIGNATURE STRATOCASTER

We first documented our quest for affordable Fender Stratocasters with "400 of Blues Power," Volume 1, Number 3, January 2000. Veteran Fender exec Dan Smith graciously provided invaluable background on the development of these guitars at a time when they could be found for \$300 or less. Today, they sell for \$600 or more, and Fender has surpassed the quality of the Japanese reissues by a mile with the Robert Cray Signature Stratocaster built in Ensenada, Mexico.



The Custom Shop edition of the Robert Cray Signature Strat was introduced in 1990, and in January 2003 the

-continued-

Cray Signature model built in Fender's Ensenada, Mexico facility debuted at the Winter NAMM show. We recently acquired a barely-used, 3-tone 2004 Mexican Cray Strat for \$400 and we were stunned by the quality, feel and tone of this guitar. We were so stunned, in fact, that we bought a violet 2004 Cray Strat just to satisfy ourselves that the quality and tone of the 3-tone wasn't a fluke. It wasn't.

We'll always remember spending a solid hour playing an autographed Custom Shop Cray Strat at the Arlington Guitar Show a few years ago, and while we weren't prepared to hand over the \$1400 asking price that day, we left impressed, and we've kept an eye out for one ever since. Imagine our surprise when two Crays appeared on eBay for under \$500... The descriptions revealed that they were both made in Mexico, so we jumped over to Musician's Friend, where we found *new* Mexican Cray Strats selling for \$580.00 (\$615.00 for the 3-tone) with free shipping and a decent Fender gig bag. We bought the 3-tone on eBay immediately and went to work.



Unlike the '90s Japanese reissues, our 7 pound, 3-tone Cray Strat body is built with beautiful 2-piece solid alder and the early '60s 3-tone burst is as good as anything we've seen from Corona. The polyester finish is comparable to those found on typical USA vintage reissues, and the resonant character of the Cray

exceeds many of the Custom Shop Strats we've owned in the past. In addition to the unmistakable mojo of a hardtail Strat, another big plus are the standard medium jumbo frets. We have refretted every single Strat and Tele we have ever owned because of Fender's affection for small 'vintage' fret wire, and the Cray needed nothing... The frets were perfectly dressed and the nut was cut right, with no telltale string binding. A



beautifully figured, dark rosewood slab fingerboard was also a nice surprise.

The Custom Shop USA pickups on the Cray Signature models are unique to this guitar alone, and we like them a lot. They have more bite, snap and pop than any other Strat



sets we've ever heard (listen to a few Robert Cray tracks and you'll hear what we mean) and

they feature staggered pole pieces in the neck and middle pickups with flat poles in the bridge. The Mexican Strats are wired with brighter-sounding Teflon insulated wire and CTS pots, but the Cray pickups are reverse-wound with the familiar cloth-covered push-back vintage wire used on all Custom Shop pickups. We compared the two sets in the 3-tone and violet Cray Strats on our multi-meter and the resistance meas-



ured as follows: Neck: 6.21/6.07 Middle: 6.30/6.28 Bridge: 6.88/6.95. These high measure-

ments might lead you to believe that the Cray pickups are dark and nasty, but not so... The sharp tone of the bridge pickup is key to the exceptional quack of the 2 and 4 positions, and the neck pickup is stunningly good. We even liked the middle for a change, and we have always struggled with the typically vanilla, lack-luster tone of the middle pickup on a Strat.

The Cray is wired in true vintage fashion with a 5-way switch and no tone control for the bridge pickup. With as much treble as the bridge pickup kicks up, a tone control is



definitely desirable if you want to move beyond Robert Cray's stinging tone, so we installed an

Acme wiring harness with a neck/bridge blend pot and a global tone control for a more versatile range of tones. Making this change didn't diminish the unique tone of the Cray pickups, but we did notice that the Acme cloth wiring seemed to cut the high-end slightly compared to the original Teflon-insulated wire.

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Don't think for a minute that the Cray Strat is limited to the blues... We urge you to strap one on with confidence no matter what style of music you play. As you might imagine, the Cray sounds absolutely killer with darker, midrangey British-

style amps and it matches up perfectly with Fender amps, too – just knock down the treble on your amp a bit if you prefer. The violet Strat exhibited all the attributes of our 3-tone, although it did sound lightly brighter after the wiring change. We can't be positive that the Inca Silver and Violet Cray models are always built with the same high-quality 2-piece alder found on the 3-tone, but our inspection of the violet Cray didn't reveal anything like the basswood bodies made from multiple (as many as 7 or 8) glued-together pieces, which was often the case with solid-color Japanese reissues.



Basically, the necks and bodies appear to be sourced from USA stock in Corona and finished and assembled in Mexico.

Did we find any flaws during our reviews? A few, beginning with the imported tuners. The posts were a little too loose for our

taste, so if you plan to gig heavily with your Cray, you may eventually need to replace them. One of the string ferrules had fallen out of the 3-tone body in shipping, and we couldn't find it in the gig bag – a minor aggravation if you happen to have a spare ferrule (we did) – major if you don't. Both guitars arrived with a slight bow in the neck that required a truss rod adjustment. The truss rods both felt very tight and stiff, even after removing the nut and applying a few drops of 3 in 1 Oil to penetrate overnight. We were able to squeeze enough travel out of both rods to eliminate any undesirable relief, but each truss rod felt as if it had reached the absolute end of its range of travel (*real*



tight). On the other hand, we've seen necks on far more expensive guitars that couldn't be made straight without resorting to planing the fingerboard... Overall, the Mexican Robert Cray Stratocasters are extremely well-made guitars and *exceptional* values ready for worry-free gigging. Get yours now. **To**

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

## John Landgraff's DYNAMIC OVERDRIVE

If steady rockin' with mucho attitude in the spirit of David Grissom, Joe Bonamassa and Doyle Bramhall II is your kind of party, you *need* a Dynamic Overdrive. It's one of the smoothest and richly detailed overdrive pedals we've ever heard.



Now, when we say *overdrive*, we're referring to the Big Wooly... very tube-like, panoramic, wide-glide sustain and harmonic distortion...

*not* fuzz, where the character of each note can seem dramatically altered, artificially intensified and reformed... but more of a huge, organic overdriven sound that is easily attained with even the smallest amplifiers. The Dynamic Overdrive adds variable levels of gain and volume with a nifty tone control for color, yet the fundamental character of your rig remains intact. And this is good.

The DO is compact (another good thing), features true bypass, and it's simple to use, with just three controls and a

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3-way mini-toggle that delivers maximum compression and distortion with a slight volume detente in the 'down' position, BIG, LOUD AND WIDE in the 'middle,' and a very

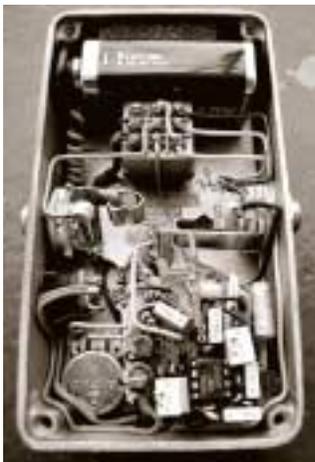
authentic, natural-sounding, Marshallly crunch in the 'up' position. Humbuckers roar with sophistication, single coils thicken up and cry, and the degree of overdriven tones you create are all very manageable from the volume pot on your



guitar. The DO doesn't do subtle variations of 'clean boost' as well as the Klon, for example – it isn't intended to – but the distortion tones are uniquely and oh-so pleasingly pure, rich and detailed. Reminds us of a Dumble Overdrive Special as heard on Stephen Bruton's recordings or much of David Grissom's excellent work with a Dr. Z... Or you can push it into the Hendrix-influenced territory often mined by two of our all-time favorite guitarists – Joe Bonamassa and Doyle

Bramhall II. This is a very clean and detailed overdrive that we immediately appreciated after just five minutes, and it is a pedal that will bring the good things out of you that lurk way down deep – the ultimate mark of a great instrument.

Each Dynamic Overdrive sports a different hand-painted enamel paint job by Arlon Prince covering a stout, roadworthy steel box. The DO runs on a 9 volt battery or external power supply, and John Landgraaf tests and selects every component as he personally builds each unit.

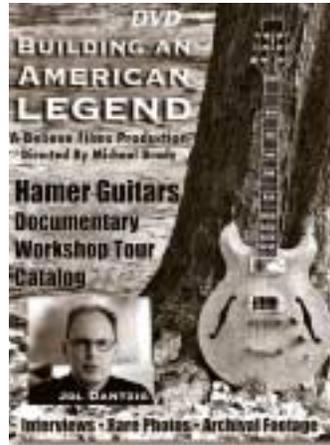


The internal workmanship is meticulous, as it should be; John is a veteran amp builder and tech with deep experience and a talent for all things related to amplified guitar tone. He builds the Dynamic Overdrive today simply because people

have demanded them – in fact, the demand exceeds his ability to make them. You might say he is living his dream, one pedal at a time.

Blues Angel Music in Pensacola, FLA is the exclusive U.S. distributor for the Dynamic Overdrive, and it sells for \$379.00. *Rock On... To*

[www.bluesangelmusic.com](http://www.bluesangelmusic.com), 1-800-823-6302



## EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR... TONEQUEST SUBSCRIBERS ONLY!

Want to learn more about Hamer guitars? The first 250 readers responding to this offer will receive the Hamer documentary DVD "Building an American Legend" FREE! To order your

free copy, please send your request to Frank Rindone, Hamer USA Product Manager, e-mail: [frindone-kmc@kaman.com](mailto:frindone-kmc@kaman.com). Please remember to include your name and shipping address. *To*

## ToneQuest Gear Sale on eBay



For the past five years we have been quietly selling many of the used guitars and amplifiers we buy for review on eBay, and we have often been asked why we don't notify our readers when gear is

being sold at auction. In the future, that is exactly what we're going to do, as well as entering all of our readers automatically in future ToneQuest Giveaways.

Our next gear sale on eBay will begin on Sunday, April 3rd at 9 p.m. EST. Our auctions can be located by our user ID, "tonelux." Items included in this auction will include Gibson Historic Reissue goldtop Les Paul models with our usual upgrades, two vintage brown Fender Vibrolux amplifiers, and other very special treats. Now you know... *Quest forth! To*

# Resource Directory

## Sound Better Play Better™

Don't miss your opportunity to save 10% on selected products offered by members of your ToneQuest Resource Directory!

Look for exclusive ToneQuest discount offers in gold and reference TQR when placing your order.

**A Brown Soun** The all-new Hemp E Cones, Bass 10's, and 10's for guitar are here! In addition to A Brown's original hemp cones, John Harrison has created a new "E" cone that is a bit brighter than the original hemp cone. Killer tone for Fender amps, or in combination with the original Hemp Tone Tubby speaker. The bass 10's have received rave reviews from none other than Tommy Shannon, and the 10's for guitar will knock you out in your Princeton, Vibrolux, or Super. A Brown Soun was founded in San Rafael, California in 1974 by John Harrison – a working musician who refused to settle for the few reconing choices that existed when he first needed speakers repaired in the Bay Area. Since then, John has been recognized by artists such as Carlos Santana, Neil Young, Pearl Jam, Van Halen, and many others as California's top speaker reconer. In addition to its famed reconing services, A Brown Soun also custom builds speakers and cabinets for virtually every application. The renowned Tone Tubby speaker developed by A Brown Soun has received rave reviews from top professionals around the world. Brown's recently released series of speakers for guitar and bass featuring hemp cones is setting a new benchmark for guitar and bass speaker performance, with dramatically improved clarity, note definition, frequency response, durability, and power handling. Whether you need new speakers, custom built cabinets, or vintage speakers rebuilt and sounding right, A Brown Soun is your professional resource. As the Tone Tubby logo says, "We're committed to tone," and that means yours.

*A Brown Soun Inc. San Rafael, CA  
www.abrownsoun.com 415-479-2124*

**AllParts** Top players and guitar builders rely on Allparts for the right guitar and bass parts they need, in stock and ready to ship. AllParts offers a complete range of finished and unfinished guitar bodies in a variety of premium tone woods, including alder and swamp ash, with optional highly figured maple tops. Finishes include all of the most

popular vintage colors, including see-through blonde! Premium necks are also available with maple, rosewood, and ebony fingerboards in a variety of neck shape profiles, with or without binding. Custom design your next guitar with AllParts, including tailpieces, tuning keys, bridges, nuts and saddles, pickups, pickguards (that really fit), knobs, hardware, and electronics for many popular models. Bass players and lefties can also find the parts they need at AllParts! You can also rely on Allparts for hard to find parts, along with vacuum tubes and amplifier hardware.

*AllParts, Houston, TX  
www.allparts.com 713-466-6414*

**Analogman TQR readers are invited to save \$25 on the Sunface NKT with Sundial Fuzz, or receive free shipping on all handmade Analog Man brand pedals, Foxrox, Teese wahs, and the PedalPower2!** Mike Piera is one of the premier guitar effects dealers and manufacturers serving professional players worldwide. Analogman is unique, since it manufactures, modifies, buys, sells, and repairs vintage and new guitar effects. Specializing in vintage and high-end effects, you won't find cheap Taiwanese "happy meal" style, toy effects there. Analogman is dedicated to helping you successfully pursue your quest for tone, and every customer is treated as a prospective friend. Analogman 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. Creating the best new effects with vintage values, schematics, and original owner's manual copies. FREE help with effects problems by e-mail or in our Web Forum, plus professional consultation and technical services. Analogman specializes in pedal modifications for the Ibanez and Maxon Tube Screamer and several Boss pedals (SD-1, DS-1, BD-2, DD5, etc). They also modify Fuzzfaces to vintage germanium specs. Analogman hand-built pedals include the Clone chorus, Compressors, and Sun Face fuzz pedals. There are 3 versions of the Compressors available, based on the Ross style and/or the Orange Squeezer style of compression. Other hand-made pedals available from Analog Man include the FOXROX Captain Coconut and TZF flanger, Teese RMC wahs, Z Vex, Black Cat, Tubester, Ultravibe, Pedaltrain and George L cables. Jim Weider recently collaborated with Mike on the *King Of Tone* overdrive pedal, which is being introduced in December 2003! Please check the web

site for more information, and e-mail if possible. If you must call, please mention ToneQuest and they'll make time to help you.

*Analog Man, Bethel, CT  
www.analogman.com 203-778-6658*

**Antique Electronic Supply** Antique Electronic Supply carries the largest selection of parts for guitars, amplifiers, high-end audio, antique radios and amateur radios.

Looking for an obscure vacuum tube? Antique Electronic Supply has the world's largest inventory of NOS vacuum tubes, carrying hard to find tubes from such companies as RCA, GE, Sylvania, Tung Sol and others. They carry a great selection of currently produced tubes from JJ/Tesla, Winged-C (which are manufactured in the JSC Svetlana Factory in St. Petersburg, Russia), Valve Art and EI. In addition they stock Groove Tubes, Ruby Tubes and other current production tubes from both Russia and China.

Along with vacuum tubes AES has a wide range of parts for Ampeg, Vox, Fender and Marshall amplifiers, carrying such items as speakers from both Jensen and Celestion, tolex, handles, grill cloth, reverb tanks, resistors, capacitors, transformers, knobs, switches and other much needed parts. Antique Electronic Supply also carries Korg keyboard parts, as well as components for Leslie cabinets and a variety of books, software, test equipment, soldering supplies and chemicals. Antique Electronic Supply has a great selection of parts for guitars and basses. They offer a full range of parts for both Fender and Gibson, stocking such items as bridges, pickguards, knobs, potentiometers, and tuning knobs. They have recently started carrying Badass Bridges, and they also sell Pro Co and Maxon effects pedals. Information and images are available for all of their items on [www.tubesandmore.com](http://www.tubesandmore.com).

For 22 years Antique Electronic supply has been in business and they know how to please their customers, offering same day shipping on orders placed before 2:00 p.m. MST. Catalogs are available upon request.

*Antique Electronic Supply, Tempe, AZ  
www.tubesandmore.com, 480-820-5411*

**Budda Amplification** Budda Amplification is a pioneer in the design of analog instrument amplification and effects processing. Founded by Scot Sier and Jeff Bober in 1995, Budda has

## Resource Directory

dedicated itself to the development of tube amplification and effect products that offer players the tools to create a signature sound. We believe that an amp and effect should bring out the natural harmonics and personality of the instrument and the player's finger and pick attack. With over 30 years of experience in pursuit of the art of sonic perfection, we provide a level of quality and craftsmanship that will last a lifetime. From the hand-wired point-to-point construction of our 10th anniversary Twinmaster Series amps, from the hand-wired point-to-point construction of our Twinmaster and Verbmaster Series amps, to the ultra-modern Superdrive Series II, we offer features and tones to satisfy every musical style. We have developed a sound that is unique among analog circuits and our prestigious artist list is an example of the many converts. Every amp and effect is meticulously engineered to the highest standards and hand-built in the US to assure superior performance. For the complete Budda story and product lineup, visit our website. For a tone consultation, call us toll-free to find out how we can help you find your signature sound.

*Budda Amplification*  
[www.Budda.com](http://www.Budda.com), 877-tone4dz

**Callaham Vintage Guitars & Amps** Bill Callaham is a builder of exceptional electric guitars that exceed the original quality, tone, and beauty of the vintage models that inspire his work. "Better than vintage" is an apt description for the Callaham "S" and "T" model electric guitars that feature premium light-weight ash and alder bodies, custom hand-shaped rock maple necks, and cryogenically treated Lindy Fralin pickups specially wound to Callaham's specifications for true vintage tone. Bill also offers cryogenically treated, pre-wired vintage pick guards for Strat style guitars, and his exclusive formula for cold-rolled steel alloy tremolo blocks continue to delight players around the world with improved resonance and sustain. Callaham vintage saddles also improve sustain while minimizing string fatigue and breaks. Additional Strat parts include stainless steel trem arms, string ferrules, bridge plates and mounting screws, and string retainers. **Attention Tele Players!** Callaham now offers a complete line of custom Tele parts. Please visit their web site for information on pre-wired control plates with premium pots, capacitors, and cloth-covered wire, specially wound and cryogenically 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.

*Callaham Guitars, Winchester, VA*  
[www.callahamguitars.com](http://www.callahamguitars.com) 540-955-0294

**Carr Amplifiers** Check out the ALL NEW Carr Mercury! As we said in our recent review, "the Mercury is destined for greatness." No surprise... Since our review of the entire line of amplifiers built by Steve Carr and his merry band of tonefreaks in Pittsboro, NC, Carr amplifiers have continued to receive high praise from reviewers and players throughout the country. Plug into any Carr amp and you'll immediately understand why we said, "Finally, somebody got it right." Right, as in the perfect marriage of classic Fender balance, clarity, and headroom, with innovative overdrive features that produce natural and oh-so-sweet tube distortion, but never at the expense of the tone you've worked so hard to capture in your instruments. Lots of small-batch amp builders use premium components and labor-intensive, point-to-point construction, and Carr is no exception. The Solen filter caps used in Carr amps alone cost more than the sum of the parts in many boutique circuits! But in the end, it's the design that counts, combined with quality parts and consistent craftsmanship. We've been to Carr, we've played every amplifier they build, and one year and dozens of reviews later, our opinion hasn't changed. **Carr amps are professional tools and works of art that will inspire you for a lifetime.** Check out the many stellar reviews and dealer locations for Carr amps at their web site, and contact the boys at Carr for more information about which Carr model is best for you.

*Carr Amplifiers, Pittsboro, NC*  
[www.carramps.com](http://www.carramps.com) 919-545-0747

**The Chicago Bluesbox by Butler Custom Sound** is a series of amplifiers built with the blues player in mind, but is also compatible with virtually any style of music — from traditional to progressive blues rock. The Chicago Blues Box delivers clear, clean, harmonic complexity with headroom to spare, to thick, authentic, in-your-face crunch.

The flagship of the Chicago Blues Box series is the Roadhouse model, an all-tube, point-to-point, hand-wired, single-channel 50-watt tone machine hand-built in the USA right in Chicago. The straight-forward design makes this a favorite among players seeking

authentic, full-sounding tone across the entire sound spectrum.

Over 60 hours of hand-built assembly goes into every Chicago Blues Box. Butler Custom Sound starts with a sheet of rubber impregnated fiber board, drills and tapes over 150 solder eyelets. The board is then assembled with electronic components and soldered from the bottom side for a reliable connection. The custom-wound, paper bobbin transformers, pots and switches are installed into the 16-gauge steel chassis which provides road-worthy strength. BCS then installs their proprietary Magic Wand ground bar system and the final wiring process begins. Before any tube is installed, each undergoes a stringent hand-selection process. The boards are vibration-tested for intermittent connections, lock-tight is applied to hardware, and wires are twisted and bundled.

Before any amp leaves the Butler Custom Sound factory, each undergoes 60 hours of sound and quality testing. "We're players, not only engineers and technicians, so part of our job is to plug in to each amp and test for output noise levels, vibration and most importantly, tone," says BCS president, Dan Butler. The Chicago Blues Box has captured the elusive 3-dimensional, harmonic rich tone that is missing from so many of today's new amplifier designs. This amp is alive and ready to help inspire any player's art form.

*Chicago Bluesbox,*  
*Butler Custom Sound*  
[chicagobluesbox.com](http://chicagobluesbox.com).630-832-1983

**WCR Guitar Pickups** Jim Wagner has devoted years of research in his relentless quest to capture the classic tones of our guitar heroes. The review of his Crossroads humbucking pickups in The ToneQuest Report and enthusiastic testimonials from WCR Guitar Pickups' players leave no doubt that Jim has indeed cracked the code on the elusive tone found in the best vintage Humbuckers and Stratocaster pickups. What's his secret? Using his own unique combination of wire type and gauge, magnets, tensions, potting technique, etc. Each set of WCR pickups is custom wound by Jim and voiced to precisely produce the tone guitarists have been chasing for decades, such as: **The Fillmore Set** Humbuckers that capture exactly the smooth, airy, open tone of Duane and Eric's live Fillmore recordings, with musical highs, balanced mids and with no muddiness or screeching treble bite! **The Goodwood Set** This pickup is a "hybrid" between the Fillmore Set and the Crossroads Set. It has a thicker tone than either one, with

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## Resource Directory

a good bottom-end bite, smooth top-end roll-off, great harmonics, wood, and sustain. More balls! If a "Patent-Applied-For" is not enough, and 70's style hard rock is too much, this is the set of pickups you need.

### The Crossroads Set

The new refined "Patent-Applied-For" version. This set of pickups was built to replicate the tone from the song "Crossroads" from Cream's "Wheels of Fire" album. They have been tested extensively in an SG, a Firebird, and a Les Paul. They absolutely NAIL that sound!

### The Herc Set

The un-bucking, ceramic power-lifter of the metal world. The new un-defeated champion. Tremendous bottom crunch, perfect mids and cutting yet not shrill top end.

### The SR Set

Finally, the perfectly balanced, not too weak, not too hot sounding Stratocaster single coil set, available with classic cloth-covered wire or shielded wire. Please visit our web site to place your order or listen to the sound bites available for all WCR pickups. Have any questions? Jim is available by phone or e-mail to answer your questions about WCR pickups and re-winds.

[www.crcoils.com](http://www.crcoils.com), 209-588-0621  
E-mail: [jim@crcoils.com](mailto:jim@crcoils.com)

**Dave's Guitar Shop** offers Fender, Gibson, PRS, McInturff, National, Taylor, Gretsch, Guild, Rickenbacker, Martin, Santa Cruz, Lowden, and many other fine new and used instruments, plus new and used amplifiers such as Fender, Marshall, Line 6, Carr, Matchless, Victoria, Bad Cat, and Ampeg, plus hundreds of guitar effects, aftermarket 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 they sell, because they're 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.

*Dave's Guitar Shop, LaCrosse, WI*  
[www.davesguitar.com](http://www.davesguitar.com) 608-785-7704

**DC Developments** make high quality valve amplifiers under the CORNELL logo. We take great pride in producing amplifiers to suite all type of playing styles for the guitarist and bassist.

Please study our web site for a wide range of options. The amplifier contributes considerably towards your sound and in turn fuels inspiration. Whatever sound or visual image you are looking for, we can design under our custom built service. With history that goes back to the 60's, we have years of experience.

Our amplifiers use traditional along with unique circuit designs that make CORNELL amplification one of the most interesting to use and toneful to hear. A typical example of this is our Plexi range. Yes, the word 'Plexi' tells you just what type of amplifier this is, but try one and you will wish the original sounded as good. It is with this knowledge that together we design the Plexi range.

Plexi 45/50 and 18/20 are available now! The Plexi 10 combo will be launched in September.

[www.dc-developments.com](http://www.dc-developments.com)

**Dr. Z** Check out The Doctor's new amps, including the "Mini Z" 8W Combo featuring a single EL84 power tube and 8" speaker, and the high-powered custom rig built for Michael Burks!

**Tone** — Is there a substitute? Absolutely not, and that's why Dr. Z was at the top of our list of essential ToneQuest reviews and interviews when TQR was launched 5 years ago. Today, Dr. Z celebrates 15 years of providing professional musicians with affordable, road-worthy amplifiers and Z Best cabinets that are the choice of renowned players like Joe Walsh, Vince Gill, David Grissom, Anson Funderburgh, Brad Paisley, Audley Freed, Walter Becker, Buddy Whittington, and Michael Burks, among many others.

As the prices of "boutique" amplifiers have continued to climb, the value of every hand built Dr. Z has never been more apparent, proving that you don't have to spend \$3,000 to acquire inspiring tone, great looks and solid dependability in a custom amplifier. Whether you're a bedroom player looking for a solid low-power amp, a weekend player working small to medium-sized rooms, or a touring pro who needs big stage punch, Dr. Z amps are universally regarded for their unique, character-

istic touch-sensitive dynamic response, brilliant overdriven tone, and their ability to "clean up" with subtle adjustments to your guitar's volume control. Dr. Z's wide range of birch-ply combo cabinets and extension cabs are loaded with your choice of Celestion speakers. Z knows speakers, and he'll gladly recommend the best combinations to go with every amp he builds...

Current models include the Carmen Ghia, KT45, MAZ18 Junior, MAZ38 Senior, the new Mazerati, Prescription, Route 66, SRZ-65, Z-28, and the 6545. For more information on all of the Doctor's fine amplifiers and cabs, please visit the Dr. Z web site or call Dr. Z. Everything he builds is ToneQuest approved!

*Dr. Z Amps, Maple Heights, OH*  
(216) 475-1444 [www.drzamps.com](http://www.drzamps.com)

**Eminence** Eminence is proud to present the Patriot and Redcoat series of guitar speakers. Incorporating both British and American cone technology into speakers that we manufacture in the USA gives us the ability to provide you with virtually any tone you desire. Be it British or American, clean or dirty, big bass or screaming highs, we have a speaker that will allow you to "Pick Your Sound". Choose from one of seventeen new models! Eminence has been building speakers to custom specifications for nearly every major manufacturer of guitar amplifier and sound reinforcement products since 1967. Their new Legend Series of guitar speakers captures the essence of the vintage American and British speaker designs that are held in such high regard today by so many discerning players. The Legend Series includes classic British and American designs for 6," 8," 10," 12," and 15" speakers utilizing ceramic and AlNiCo magnets, British or American cones, and Kapton polyamide voice coils for superior heat dissipation and durability. Best of all, because Eminence has been successfully competing for years with other speaker manufacturers as an OEM supplier, the Legend Series speakers are priced far below those of many other popular manufacturers of "reissue" and custom speakers. The Eminence Legend Series delivers all of the tone and durability you need, at a lower price, with no compromises in quality. To locate genuine Eminence dealers in your area, please visit their web site or call Eminence Speakers.

*Eminence Speaker LLC, Eminence, KY*  
[www.eminence.com](http://www.eminence.com) 502-845-5622  
Contact: Chris Rose

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## Resource Directory

**Evidence Audio** was founded in 1997 by Tony Farinella to supply the MI and Studio community with performance-based cables at reasonable prices. The most well-known cable is the Lyric HG (High Gain) guitar cable. Readers of *Guitar Player Magazine* voted the Lyric HG as "Best Accessory of 2004" supporting the opinion drawn by editors of magazines from around the world.

In simple terms, cables from Evidence Audio are built different; as a result, they sound different. The Lyric HG features two solid core high grade IGL copper conductors and a braided shield that is grounded at the amp end only. This is the correct way to "drain" spurious noise. By using solid core conductors strand interference is eliminated as well. Designed to be neutral and honest, the cables don't actually "improve" your tone, they simply replace a cable in your signal path which was likely destroying it. What you hear is a tighter more muscular bottom end, a clearer more complex mid-range and a sweeter more detailed high end. Dynamics and harmonics are improved and sustain is no longer masked. Overall the guitar becomes more three-dimensional sounding, cuts through clearer and at the same time takes up less space in the mix.

The Siren Speaker Cable and The Source AC Power Cable compliment the Lyric HG. They offer a solution to distortions cause by cables in other areas of the signal path and power supply. The effects of the speaker and power cable are consistent with that of the Lyric HG: you hear the guitar and amplifier, not the cables.

While not inexpensive, cables from Evidence Audio are still one of the most cost effective ways of improving your tone. It's like changing pickups or a bridge – a small detail with big results. Please visit the Evidence Audio website to locate a dealer near you and demand a demo!

*Audionova Inc., <http://www.audionova.ca/>  
514-631-5787 ext. 22*

**Fishman TQR** is honored to welcome Larry Fishman to our advisory board! Since 1980, the Fishman name has been synonymous with acoustic amplification, continually improving and creating innovative products to meet musicians' changing needs, Fishman's commitment to innovation has created a reputation of respect and reliability throughout the industry. Fishman's product line began with the BP-100 Acoustic Bass pickup, which was developed to meet Larry Fishman's own needs while performing Jazz. Besides their broad assortment of pick-

ups for acoustic instruments, Fishman also manufactures an extensive line of complimentary electronics, including portable, battery operated preamps, jack-style preamps, and onboard preamps with a wide variety of features. The Fishman Powerbridge is a piezo-equipped replacement bridge for Strat and Tele-style guitars that is currently used on tour by Pete Townshend, among others. These bridges enable a standard electric guitar to produce acoustic-like tones, and the best application of the Powerbridge can be heard on Parker Guitars. Fishman's impressive artist roster includes Dave Mathews, Pete Townshend, Doc Watson, Lisa Loeb, *Barenaked Ladies*, Arlo Guthrie, *Fuel*, and Sheryl Crow, among many others. Watch the Fishman website for exciting new product announcements.

*Fishman Transducers Inc.  
Wilmington, MA  
[www.fishman.com](http://www.fishman.com) 978-988-9199*

**George L's** Clean, clear sound is their business at George L's! George Lewis is a seasoned veteran of America's rich musical heritage and an original co-owner of such respected companies as GHS Strings and Sho-bud Steel Guitars. For the past 30 years, George has been dedicated to producing his legendary line of guitar cables, pickups, strings, and steel guitar accessories.

Judged Best in Sound Clarity by *Guitar Player* in 1997, George L cables were also recently elected to the Guitar Player Hall of Fame in December of 2001. George L cables will enable you to eliminate line loss with low-loss cables rated at 19 pf per foot capacitance. George L cables require no stripping or soldering, and with a choice of straight, right angle, or stretch jacks, guitarists can customize their rigs with traditional black or vintage red cable and sound great the very same day! We can think of no tougher critic than guitarist Eric Johnson, who said, "It's my favorite cable ever made for guitar." George L cable is available at fine music stores worldwide, and we invite you to visit their website for the complete story about their products. **NEW! Gold plugs, right angle plugs for George L's .225 cable, RCA plugs for all cable sizes, and the George L's pocket cable checker!**

*George L Cables, Madison, TN  
[www.georgels.com](http://www.georgels.com) 615-868-6976*

### **GHS – The String Specialists**

Who plays GHS strings? Artists as diverse as Eric Johnson, Martin Barre,

Charlie Sexton, Will Ray, Warren Haynes, Tom Morello, Ritchie Sambora, Steve Howe, Brent Mason, Junior Brown, Zakk Wylde, Tommy Castro, Rene' Martinez and *TQR* advisory board member and AC30/Telecaster stud Mr. James Pennebaker, to name just a few! GHS has been manufacturing guitar strings since 1964, and whatever your musical tastes, GHS has the right string for you. You're invited to try a set of **GHS classic Boomers, brilliant Nickel Rockers, Burnished Nickel strings** for a warm, vintage tone, **Compound Nickel** strings for electric archtops, and the recently introduced **Infinity Bronze** coated acoustic strings for extended tone and brilliance. All GHS strings are available in a wide range of gauges to appeal to every player. Refer to the GHS "Brightness Bar" found on select packages of strings and at our web site. It's your guide to determining which strings will produce the specific range of tone you're seeking. Please check out the all new GHS web site at [www.ghsstrings.com](http://www.ghsstrings.com) for expert information about GHS strings, including technical documentation on the entire GHS line of strings for fretted instruments, tech tips, string tension calculations, the "Brightness Bar," and a comprehensive list of the top artists who play GHS strings. All GHS strings are manufactured to continually exceed your expectations.

*GHS String Corporation  
Battle Creek, MI  
[www.ghsstrings.com](http://www.ghsstrings.com)  
1-800-388-4447*

**Hands On Guitars** Informed and inspired by a 20 year friendship with James L. D'Aquisto, Eric Miller has been building, repairing, and customizing instruments for over 18 years, and has taught guitar repair and construction courses at Boston's Berklee College of Music and the Evergreen State College. Eric is best known for impeccable craftsmanship, extreme attention to detail and client's needs, and an almost clairvoyant ability to bring out the best in an instrument. Meticulous fretwork is done using tension jigs and asymmetrical planing techniques for ultimate accuracy, and Eric has pioneered fingerboard preparation and finishing methods that enhance tone and playability as well as duplicating the look and feel of the finest vintage patinas. He is a dealer for **Tom Anderson, Robin, Gretsch, D'Aquisto, Breedlove, Stromberg, Everett, Larrivee, Rainsong and Garrison instruments**, as well as crafting his own **Eric Miller Custom Guitars**. Eric stocks and is extremely

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## Resource Directory

knowledgeable about most brands of aftermarket and original equipment pickups, both electric and acoustic. Hands on Guitars also carries designer pedals by Roger Mayer, Zachary Vex and Frantone, and maintains a large inventory of guitar "pro" products such as fossil ivory and wooly mammoth nuts, saddles, and bridgepins; Tone Pros locking bridges, tailpieces and studs; and Virtuoso Guitar Cleaner and Polish.

*Hands on Guitars, Chehalis, WA*  
*handsonguitars@juno.com 360-740-9158*  
*Contact: Eric Miller*

**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 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 or telephone at 603-889-2664..

*JustStrings.com, Nashua, NH*  
*www.juststrings.com*  
*info@juststrings.com*

**Klon** Since its inception in 1994, Klon has been a one-product company, and given the overwhelming success of that product, the Centaur Professional Overdrive, it's not hard to see why. Designer Bill Finnegan, assisted by two circuit-design specialists, set out in 1990 to create an interactive and ultra-transparent overdrive, one that doesn't put its own stamp on your sound, but rather brings out in a very organic way more of what your rig was already giving you. Bill's premise was that there were many players who, like himself, had great guitars and amps, and who, as he likes to put it, "were not looking to reinvent the wheel," and the fact that he

has sold some four thousand Centaur units (as of November 2002) attests to his intuition, as well as to the perfectionism that led him to spend over four years developing a single product. That perfectionism, of course, is also evident in the production unit: Bill builds every Centaur himself, by hand, using only the finest components and assembling them with meticulous care. Each unit undergoes a series of rigorous tests before shipment, and each is backed by a comprehensive ten-year warranty. Given the ongoing demand for the Centaur and Bill's disinclination to let anyone but himself build them, expect a wait of several months for delivery, but also expect your Centaur, when you receive it, to manifest a sonic superiority, a construction quality, a physical beauty, and a conceptual rightness beyond your expectations.

*Klon, Boston, MA 617 666-1551*  
*www.klon-siberia.com info@klon-siberia.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*

**K&M Analog Designs — Two Rock** K&M Analog Designs, LLC, was formed in northern California in 1998 by Bill Krinard and Joe Mloganoski. The company brings a combined 65+ years of experience in tube amplification and guitar tone to the boutique amp market. As talented designer/engineer and seasoned guitarist (respectively), Bill and Joe have developed a uniquely toneful, dynamic and affordable line of hand built vacuum tube amplifiers that are instruments designed to completely complement your individual playing style. Each amp is equipped with proprietary custom transformers and coupling caps, the best available new and NOS tubes, and each model has unique build architecture and layout not found in other modern hand built designs. Early K&M customers such as Carlos Santana helped launch the company to the forefront in its earliest days. Current K&M and Two-Rock devotees include John Mayer, Steve Kimock, Mitch Stein, Barney Doyle, Mark Karan, Michael Kang, and Volker Strifler, among others. The company launched its line of Two-Rock amps in the summer of 1999. Past models include the Amethyst Special Indoor Storm Model, Emerald 50, Sapphire 100, Emerald Pro and Topaz. Current models include the Custom and Custom Reverb, Onyx, Opal, and Ruby and LTD recording amplifier. Recently Two-Rock introduced their Signature series of amplifiers, by far the most popular of any Two-Rock series to date. Future models will include a single channel clean amp in various power levels. A number

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## Resource Directory

of customized versions of the aforementioned have also been built for players seeking the ultimate personalized tone machine.

*K&M Analog Designs, LLC.  
www.Two-Rock.com  
707-584-TONE(8663)  
In Japan: www.Two-Rock-jp.com*

**Koch** Guitar Amplification was founded in 1988 by Dolf Koch in the Netherlands and are known worldwide as a manufacturer of high end boutique guitar amplifiers. They have many models for all styles of music from the new 20W Class "A" Studiotone combo to the 120W Powertone II head.

All amps are channel switching with two or three extremely versatile channels. They are recognized for having both sparkling clean channels and wide ranging drive/gain channels. They were the first to utilize trim pots on their heavy duty circuit boards enabling anyone to adjust bias with only a screwdriver and voltmeter. Speaker damping switches which when toggled from high to low alter the tone to a more scooped sound. Rhythm volume switch on the footswitch (included) which when engaged drops the level to a predetermined "Rhythm" level. It's the opposite of a boost and does not alter the lead tone as a result. It so useful guitar players tell us that they're surprised that no has done this before. All amps have Accutronics reverbs and Koch designed speakers that have a sweeter more extended high end. These speakers also handle more power and have a better bass response than almost any guitar speakers available. They are an integral component to the KOCH sound.

Other products include the Loadbox which attenuates a tube amplifiers output without destroying its tone, i.e. no huge loss of high frequencies. The Pedaltone is a semi-four channel, foot operated preamp which has four 12AX7 preamps tubes. One of these tubes acts as a .5W power tube! It has many patch points and output options for almost any application.

Some famous people that use Koch are: Paul Reed Smith, Al Di Meola, Randy Bachman, Buzz Feiten, and Jimmy Bruno to name a few. KOCH also manufactures the 300W EDEN VT300 all bass head and the 200W Sadowsky SA200 bass head on an OEM basis.

*Audionova Inc.  
www.audionova.ca/  
514-631-5787 ext. 22*

### Lollar Custom Guitars & Pickups

According to Jason, he never really set out to become a custom pickup design-

er 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 Beastie 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*

**Midtown Music, Atlanta, GA** is one of our very favorite sources for guitars, amplifiers, effects, and accessories. Midtown offers great deals on new amplifiers by **Dr. Z, Victoria, Savage, Two Rock, and Roccaforte**, all in stock! They also carry the complete line of Blackbox effects, Wha Whas by Geoffrey Teese, and new Jensen and Celestion speakers. **Midtown Music is now a Fender Custom Shop and Master Built and Gretsch dealer!**

The staff at Midtown is experienced and helpful (they're all great players), and Midtown has been the choice of working guitarists in the southeastern U.S. for decades. Highly recommended, and definitely ToneQuest approved! See their web site for the full inventory or call (404) 325-0515 for prices and availability.

*www.midtownmusic.com  
404-325-0515*

**Nash Guitars** Have you ever thought, "If they would just make a Tele with..." , "I love my Strat but it just doesn't..." "Why don't they make a Jaguar that could...?" Well, you've come to the right place. From exotic woods, custom paint, unlimited neck types, custom designed logos, pickup selections, Timewarp aging, or any other feature imaginable - Esquires with hidden neck pickups, Strats with interchangeable pickup assemblies, Custom Shapes - *whatever*... If you can dream it, we can build it. Each guitar is a unique work of art, handcrafted by me. The use of 100% nitrocellulose lacquer, high quality vintage hardware, superior woods and a wide variety of pickups and options produce magical instruments that have thus far not been available "off the rack". The level of aging on our Timewarp guitars can be adjusted from "played it once a month at church" to "used to break open a window during a fire in a Louisiana roadhouse."

Offered only at Nashguitars!! A dedicated client webpage that lets you watch and approve all work as it goes. This is truly a unique and enjoyable way to become involved in the exciting process of building a custom guitar. Please visit our web site for inspiring examples of client pages past and present.

To get a quote or discuss options and time frames, please email or call Bill Nash.

*Nashguitars  
Olympia, WA  
www.nashguitars.com  
1-877-484-8276*

**Mojo Musical Supply** is the all-inclusive amplifier parts supply house. **ToneQuest readers receive an exclusive 10% discount on all Mojo products! Just reference the "MojoQuest304" discount code when placing your order.** Mojo specializes in pre-1980 amplifier parts, including a wide range of custom and vintage reproduction cabinets, a line of exact reproduction transformers, and hard-to-find electrical components. Mojo continues to supply a full range of speakers for the guitar market, including Jensen, Celestion, and of course, their own custom Mojotone speakers. The in-house cabinet shop at Mojo specializes in making authentic Fender and Marshall reproduction amplifier cabinets, custom cabinets from your own design, as well as cabinet repair and recovering. Mojo stocks over fifty different amp coverings and grill cloths to insure that vintage enthusiasts and custom amp creators have a large palette to choose from. Within the last two

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years, Mojo has become one of the largest vacuum tube importers in the world, stocking over 20,000 tubes. Because they buy tubes in large volumes, their prices remain very competitive. For completed electronics, Mojo is the east coast distributor for Belov amplification and also the home of Mojotone Custom electronics. Mojo manufactures and markets the Tone Machine amplifier, a powerful and eclectic tube guitar combo. They are also able to offer turnkey and partial component electronics and cabinets for OEM's and builders of all sizes. The future of Mojo lies in their ability to work directly with manufacturers, or bring the manufacturing in house. Our plans for the coming months and years are focused on making quality vintage parts available at even better prices, while assuring that all of their products are of the highest quality.

*Mojo Musical Supply  
Winston-Salem, NC  
www.mojotone.com  
1-800-927-MOJO*

### PLEK

The brand name PLEK stands for a technology which allows the best fret dress and setup work, based on a computer controlled scan.

The Plek is a computerized tool that scans an instrument strung to pitch, generating graphic views of the fret plane, fret heights, fret shape and placement, fingerboard relief radius, humps and bumps — basically everything that luthiers and repair pros have wanted to see well but couldn't, until now. Besides having measurement and dressing capabilities many times more accurate than the human eye allows, the PLEK has two particularly great advantages over manual fretwork.

First, it scans and dresses a guitar while it is tuned to pitch. This is a major breakthrough, since necks are subjected to approximately 100 pounds of string tension. This string tension invariably affects the shape of the fret plane, creating curves and humps that change when the strings are removed for a fret dress. The PLEK identifies precisely what needs to be done for perfect results when the instrument is re-strung, whereas even the most skilled luthier or repair professional must guess about how to compensate for the effect of string tension when dressing the neck with the tension released.

Secondly, the PLEK applies very sophisticated formulas for optimum neck curve or relief, adjusting the cal-

culations for the actual string height and individual string gauge from the treble side of the fingerboard to the bass. Achieving these same results by hand would be lucky and extremely rare at best!

The Plek is now in use by some of the top repair and restoration experts worldwide. We invite you to contact the Plek repair shop nearest you, or learn more about Plek technology at [www.plek.com](http://www.plek.com)

*Plek, Berlin/Germany  
+49 30 5369-6339, [custom@plek.com](mailto:custom@plek.com)*

*Joe Glaser, Nashville/TN  
+1 (615) 298-1139,  
[glaserjoetoo@aol.com](mailto:glaserjoetoo@aol.com)*

*Gary Brawer, San Francisco/CA  
+1 (415) 621-3904, [gary@brawer.com](mailto:gary@brawer.com)  
FretTek, Los Angeles/CA  
+1 (310) 474-2238, [plek@frettek.com](mailto:plek@frettek.com)*

*Philtone, Baltimore/MD  
+1 (410) 783-0260,  
[philtone@erols.com](mailto:philtone@erols.com)*

*Suhr Guitars, Lake Elsinore/CA  
+1 (951) 471-2334, [johnsuhr@suhr-guitars.com](mailto:johnsuhr@suhr-guitars.com)*

*Charlie Chandler's Guitar Experience,  
London, UK  
+44 20 8973-1441, [sales@guitarexperience.co.uk](mailto:sales@guitarexperience.co.uk)*

*GuitarLabs Scandinavia, Stockholm,  
Sweden  
Phone: +46 8 644-9480, [info@guitar-labs.se](mailto:info@guitar-labs.se)*

**Startouch Signal Switchers - One Step Closer** "Built by a musician for musicians." At Startouch, we understand that musicians need more freedom to switch various features in and out during performances, switch between different amplifiers, or combine signals. Startouch is setting an affordable new standard in A/B, A/B/Y, and custom designed signal switchers. Our pedals feature premium, hand-made quality with superior signal transfer, no bleed through, NO TONE DEGRADATION, true bypass switching, rugged 16 gauge steel chassis with powdercoat finish, super bright LED's, and custom colors and features. And all Startouch pedals are hand made in the USA. Simply put, they are the best value on the market! You can spend less for a basic, passive A/B or A/B/Y pedal that will prove to be less than sonically transparent and eventually fail. You can also easily spend more than the cost of our sensibly priced pedals, but our hand-built

quality and performance remains unsurpassed at any price. In fact, we guarantee it.

Startouch models include the ST-1 A/B pedal, the ST-2 A/B+Y, the ST2DC-9V, ST2S "Stereo", and the Custom AB&1/2Y Model ST-3. The ST-3 is essentially a ST-1 with the "A" side always on. Kick in the "B" side at will with the tap of your foot — very useful for a guitar tuner. Do you like being able to tune without unplugging your rig, or better yet, without running your signal through that tone-sucking tuner? Run it off the "A" side, leave the "B" side hooked to your amp, then deselect the "B" output to tune in silence! With the model ST2 A/B+Y system you can kick in those classic amps, one in A, and the other in B. Choose either and when that solo comes around kick it in ALL ON. An amazing wall of sound that will inspire and blow people away! The ST2S is for stereo guitars and or systems. Call for details (on anything).

*Startouch Pedals  
[www.startouchpedals.com](http://www.startouchpedals.com)  
503.588.7728*

**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

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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](http://www.stewmac.com),  
1-800-848-2273

**Toneman** Veteran working guitarist Don Butler is an experienced tech who specializes in servicing and restoring JMI-era Vox tube/valve amps as well as many other vintage British amps including Marshall, Selmer, Hiwatt, Sound City and Orange amps. Don also services and restores vintage tweed, blonde, brown and blackface era Fender amplifiers. Don's modifications and upgrades to vintage reissue Vox, Marshall, and Fender amps have earned him a solid reputation among players throughout the country for achieving dramatically improved, authentic vintage tone from reissue amplifiers. Don uses hand-made Mercury Magnetics Axiom Tone Clone transformers, along with the correct, premium signal path components to bring reissues to vintage specs. He also modifies reissue Vox wahs to vintage specs, and he offers upgrades to Vox Valve Tone pedals and reissue Ibanez TS9's. For the past 6 years, Don has been building the famous Rangemaster Treble Booster, which is an exact replica of the original Dallas Rangemaster unit from the early 60's. In addition to the original treble model, Don builds a full range model and a switchable model combining the features of both Rangemaster units. Don was also the very first dealer for Pyramid strings, and you can count on him to maintain a full inventory of Pyramids at all times.

*Don Butler, Newhall, CA*  
[www.tone-man.com](http://www.tone-man.com)  
661-259-4544  
10-6 PST, Tuesday-Saturday only

**TonePros Sound Labs** All TQR subscribers will receive an exclusive 10% discount when ordering TonePros components — just mention the "TQWD" discount code when ordering by phone or online.

TonePros Sound Labs International System II Guitar Components distributed by WD Music Products "Making

the world a better place for guitar guitarists!" Ever since our first published review article, The ToneQuest Report has enthusiastically recommended the patented TonePros system of guitar components. You deserve to discover why TonePros works!

TonePros tailpieces feature a patented locking design. For years, guitars with stop tailpieces and wrap-around bridges have been cursed by "lean" or tilt on their stud mounts. Since string tension was all that held tailpieces on, the only contact area was just a bit of the edge of the bottom flange, just a bit of the lip of the stud top, and often just as little contact with the intonation screws. TonePros® Locking Studs provide 100% of the contact area of the bottom flange, 100% of the contact area of the stud top, no lean, and dramatically improved sustain, resonance and tone.

TonePros bridge and saddle components feature the "patented pinch" — the lateral pressure that is applied from the strategically placed "tone screws" that greatly reduce the play or wiggle of the bridge posts in their inserts. The posts are frozen in place, resulting in a solid connection between the strings, bridge, and guitar top, transferring more string vibration and resonance to the guitar body, resulting in an audibly stronger, sweeter, woodier type of resonance and sustain. And once your guitar is set up, it's locked. Bridge height and intonation settings remain intact and exact, even after re-stringing. TonePros® System II Components are found on the world's best guitars, played by the world's best artists.

*TonePros Sound Labs International,*  
[www.tonepros.com](http://www.tonepros.com)  
[www.wdmusicproducts.com](http://www.wdmusicproducts.com)  
239-337-7575

**Victoria Amplifier** From our first Victoria to the one we build for you, every Victoria amplifier is meticulously crafted for real musicians and built to be played for a lifetime. We utilize components and manufacturing techniques that are chosen for their proven ability to meet both the sonic and real world gigging demands that musicians depend on. From the real Allen Bradley resistors (new manufacture, not surplus) to the finger jointed pine cabinets, every aspect of a Victoria Amplifier is designed to provide years and years of faithful service and superior tone. With the addition of our new Victorilux and Sovereign amplifiers, Victoria now offers amplifiers with features like reverb, tremolo and high gain circuits that will surpass anything currently available and define the word

"tone" for years to come. But manufacturing new amplifiers is not all we offer! Our restoration and repair department is equipped to turn the most heinous, hacked up old amp into an inspiring gem. Our obsession with period correct components and our real world expertise are your assurance that an investment piece or an old road hawg will leave the shop with all of its tonal potential maximized. The job gets done right at Victoria Amplifier. You can be sure that we at Victoria Amplifier Co. will continue to provide the finest guitar amplifiers available anywhere, at any price. New from Victoria — the Victorilux and Victoriette — the ultimate club amps, plus, the Sovereign — our answer for players seeking true vintage British tone with master volume and reverb at a stage-friendly 35 watts!

*Victoria Amplifier, Naperville, IL*  
[www.victoriaamp.com](http://www.victoriaamp.com) 630-820-6400

**Visual Sound** Visual Sound Founded by guitarist, Bob Weil in 1994, Visual Sound has become known for creating innovative effect pedals with impeccable tone at a reasonable price. The familiar "home plate" design of the Jekyll & Hyde Ultimate Overdrive, Route 66 American Overdrive, and H2O Liquid Chorus & Echo makes them stand out on any stage. Each pedal is actually two pedals in one, having two completely separate channels that can be used individually or in combination with each other, just like two pedals. However, they are priced substantially less than one comparable "boutique quality pedals, and even less than some mass-market pedals. Visual Sound pedals have been used on stage and in the studio with artists like Eric Johnson, U2, Gary Moore, Phil Keaggy, Johnny Hiland, Jars of Clay, and many others. The latest addition from Visual Sound is the 1 SPOT space-saving adapter — the first 9VDC adapter to require only one spot on a wall outlet or power strip. The 1 SPOT works with almost every pedal in existence and can easily power an entire pedal board by itself with the addition of optional daisy chain cables. It's a fraction of the cost of brick-sized pedal board power supplies and it takes up no space on the board. As if that wasn't enough, it even converts voltage automatically anywhere in the world! For more information about Visual Sound, mp3 downloads, and product information, please visit the Visual Sound web site, or contact Bob Weil personally.

*Visual Sound*  
[www.visualsound.net](http://www.visualsound.net) 615-595-8232

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