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## Hamer



*"Among God's creatures two, the dog and the guitar, have taken all the sizes and all the shapes, in order not to be separated from man." —Andrés Segovia*

*During the past 30 years, the history of guitar design has been meticulously documented down to the variances found in pickguard screws and peghead pitch by a gaggle of giddy guitar enthusiast-authors around the world. It seems as if nothing has escaped their scrutiny, while the Internet has provided a forum to further discuss, explore, debate and speculate on the stylistic nuances of the most popular musical instrument of our time.*

*But many inspiring stories remain untold in the guitar industry – stories of companies that have remained true to their founding principles of quality, innovative design and old world craftsmanship, even when economic conditions have placed such values in peril and compelled others to abandon quality for the bottom line.*

*Jol Dantzig and Paul Hamer launched Hamer Guitars in 1975 as a survival strategy to supplement their income as musicians, collectors and used guitar dealers. In the process, they produced instruments clearly superior to those made by the very companies that had inspired them. In the late '70s and throughout the '80s Hamer rocked, with players such as Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen, Jethro Tull's Martin Barre and John Glascock, Andy Powell (Wishbone Ash), John McVie (Fleetwood Mac), Andy Summers and Sting embracing Hamer guitars, while Dantzig and Hamer continued to produce increasingly creative departures from the original Hamer designs.*

*Hamer was ultimately acquired by Kaman Music Corporation, and the company moved from Arlington Heights, Illinois to New Hartford, Connecticut in 1997. Dantzig relocated Hamer's key employees to build and staff their new shop, where a limited number of Hamer USA guitars are built today by just ten exceptional craftsmen.*

*Among certain circles of informed players and collectors, Hamer guitars new and old are held in appropriately high regard, yet for others, they remain a vaguely familiar curios-*

ity. Your rapt attention to the factual details found in this issue will remedy that injustice once and for all. As usual, we have not set out to dazzle you with trivial minutia simply for the sake of dredging it up. Our intent is to provide a factual, historical foundation, credible detail about what makes a Hamer worthy of your consideration, and balanced reviews that will inspire you to seek out and play the uniquely stellar instruments that bear the Hamer name. Enjoy...

**TQR:** How did you learn the craft of guitar building and repair?



little Jol gets his groove on

I started as a player. I never really envisioned myself as a guitar builder – it wasn't something that I set out to do. I wanted to play, and I was a musician. My mother was a jazz musician who sang in big bands and my dad played saxophone, piano and violin. We listened to music, I grew up around music and art, and I thought that's what I was

going to do – either that or race cars. That was something else that I liked. I grew up around tools. My father was very handy and he had a small workshop. He always told me that you had to have the proper tools to do a good job.

**TQR:** When you started playing, was it on guitar or bass?

I started on guitar and I played that for a short while. I was in a band for probably less than a year and already playing social gatherings at school and stuff like that and writing our own music almost out of the chute, along with playing other people's music. The bass player was always late or just wouldn't show up to rehearse, so I picked up the bass and started playing, and I was struck with how thunderous it was – how much power there was in the bass. It rattled the entire roof. I was like, "Wow, this is way more fun than a guitar." Of course, there were stacks of amplifiers. The bass player had the bigger rigs back then, and I thought this was an instrument I liked. There was power there, so I immediately switched to bass. I kept his bass for a while – a Gibson EB2. When I had to give it back I bought a '62 P Bass with the tortoise shell pick guard. I didn't consider myself a guitar player for a really long time. In fact, I think it's probably only been

maybe the last eight or 10 years when people ask, "What instrument do you play?" and I will say guitar instead of bass. Even though almost everything I have ever done on record is on the guitar, I didn't consider myself a guitar player. A friend of mine, Lyle Workman, looked at me and said, "Man, you are a guitar player. What are you talking about?"

I played in bands and toured and did all that stuff that you do playing – you know, playing with bands that have popular records out and playing in clubs. You think you are pretty hot shit, but you can't exist on that stuff. You have to do something else. Most of the guys in the band had day jobs. I was working days in a chopper shop making motorcycle parts and buying and selling gear on the side. You would see a guitar or amp in the paper and buy it cheap, clean it up and fix it and sell it to someone for more money. Make a little money. About this time I hooked up with a couple guys, one of which was Paul Hamer. They'd been doing pretty much the same thing as I was, that is, selling guitars. They were mostly into banjos and mandolins, so that was an education for me.

**TQR:** And in those days there were plenty of old guitars to be found in the paper...

Yeah, people didn't call them vintage guitars. They were just used guitars. We knew they were better than the new guitars that you could buy at the time, but most people didn't realize there was a difference. However, gigging musicians could see the difference and once you put one of those guitars in someone's hand, it was a pretty sure bet that they would want to buy it from you. We would go around looking for guitars. We had a big Winnebago and we just loaded up with trading fodder – whatever junk we had lying around. They dragged me to all the folk festivals, and I learned about Bluegrass. We would get in that thing and pull the trigger and head in a



Jol Dantzig

direction and then pull into some town. We didn't have a big plan. It was more like, "Let's go to Fort Wayne, Indiana." We would pull into a town and look in the papers or go to the barber-shop and get a shave and start talking about who the musicians in town were and just chase down guitars. Someone might give us a lead like, "The widow Johnson, her husband was a guitar player..."

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**TQR:** How much of this was a commercial enterprise and how much of it was a byproduct of your disease?

It was clearly a disease. We joked about it all the time. You walk in and see an F5 Mandolin or something and you definitely broke into a cold sweat. You had to hold yourself back.



It was very lucrative at times, but you could go through long spells where you know, it was pretty much just paying the rent. I lived in a warehouse with my sound rental gear business, but I wanted to move on. By this time we had a storefront too, so I closed the warehouse and consolidated in the store. When the guitar business went from the bedroom to a storefront with overhead and you are trying to pay yourself a salary and you have a partner, you really have to start thinking like a businessman. So it would go up and down. There were good weeks and bad weeks. The music would only pay to a certain extent but the good thing was that the band could rehearse in the store at night when they were not gigging. It was like a one stop, self-sufficient little module-rehearsal space and retail space, and if you were in between apartments, you could live there.

**TQR:** Were you doing re-frets and things like that at the store?

We got into that sort of thing out of necessity. When you are struggling and you can't pay someone to do a re-fret, you have to do it yourself and you pick that up, but luckily for me, I made the acquaintance of this guy named John Montgomery. John was my mentor – he was an older guy and he did all kind of repairs, like band instrument repairs – putting valves on all the woodwinds, brass, violin and doing guitar repair. He had been in business for a long time and worked out of one of the local music stores. I really don't know where he learned his craft. By the time we hooked up with him I really had a good overview of how things were done, but he knew how to replace binding and how to do a little refinishing. Since I'm the kind of person that can't leave tools alone, I was like, "Well, here – let me try that, show me how to do this." I'm like a sponge... "How do you do that?" It became a learning thing and then at a certain point it occurred to us that we could probably

make guitars, couldn't we? I was thinking, "I want a bass. I want a bass that kicks ass. I want a bass no one else has done." Why not? So the idea was to make a Flying V, because nobody made a Flying V bass and I wanted it to look as much like a guitar as I possibly could. It would also be kind of a sight gag. As a Flying V, it was already going to look like a guitar, so guitar players or bass players could walk into a gig and think, "Hey, there is no bass player on stage, but then... wait a minute, I haven't ever seen a Flying V like that!" I wanted to make it all tricked out so we built that bass – a short scale, Flying V bass and put a whammy bar on it. I put one of those SG style whammy bars with the white plastic. I used an EBO bridge and drilled a hole and tapped it and I just screwed the bar on there, because those bridges are so unstable anyway. I could make the whole thing wiggle when I yanked on the bar, and it worked a little bit. I put crown inlays in it to make it look more like a guitar and put Les Paul custom binding on it. It kind of looked like the offspring of a Flying V and a Les Paul custom. It was a little bit of this and a little bit of that and I mixed some of my favorite parts of different guitars into one.

For the first instrument, it was pretty awesome and it blew people's minds. What happened was we would go to a gig and we would open for another act and the guitarist would say, "You're pretty good, where did you get that bass?" You get the obligatory compliment and then they would just want to know about the bass. It seemed obvious that this was something that other musicians wanted. Then we started getting requests to make guitars for other people, which we really didn't take seriously at first. We weren't really interested in making guitars for a liv-



ing, but we made one for the shop that wound up with Rick Nielsen. We had known Rick for a long time—we slept on the same hotel floors together and played the same clubs, and we also knew Rick from collecting. He was interested in guitars just like we were. He placed an order and it took us so long to build a guitar for him that we felt bad and it was like, "Well, OK, let's give him this one."

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**TQR:** You gave him the shop prototype.

Exactly. In the meantime, we would take it around to all the shows. We would go to see Edgar Winter, Spirit, The Allman



(L) Amy Powell of Wishbone Ash with Joel

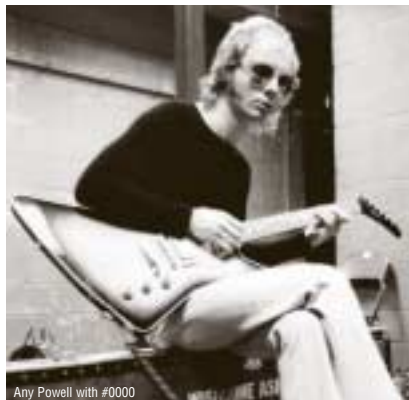
Brothers, Wishbone Ash – a lot of these different bands. We knew Jethro Tull and Bad Company too. We would talk our way backstage or sometimes just go to the hotel where we knew they were staying and call them on the house phone. “Connect me with Gary Moore’s room please...”

**TQR:** Simpler times. And they knew you had the guitars. Honey for the bears.

Yeah, exactly. And you know, when we went to these gigs, speaking of bears, we came *loaded* for bear. We brought all the neat stuff. And we started bringing the guitars that we built ourselves along, at first because we thought they would think it was cool so they would want to do business with us.

**TQR:** What inspired that first prototype – the Standard, which was an Explorer shape with the curly maple top and a ‘59 burst.

We took elements of two holy grail guitars and created something totally different. We called ours the Standard, and it was really reminiscent of my favorite things. Once again, it was a hybrid instrument and this is a re-occurring theme in many of my designs. I like to combine things in a way that is at once



Amy Powell with #0000

obvious yet altogether different. The best designs that I have done might prompt someone to say, “Surely this has been done before.” But it is new. The best designs are really things that when you look at it, you

think you have seen it before because it’s so natural. It’s such a natural idea.

**TQR:** It doesn’t look contrived.

No. It’s as though someone must have done it before because it looks so right. That’s the thing that gets lost... When we were doing this – mixing this whole Hamer brew, guitar companies were not building the guitars that we were using for inspiration. That was long gone. You couldn’t get them. They had completely written off the designs of the fifties. But more to the point, the new guitars didn’t work properly. The big companies didn’t really catch the idea that the older aesthetic was what people craved. I drove up to Bigsby where Ted McCarty was after he had left Gibson and bought Bigsby, and I brought our first guitar to show him. Once again, it was our sickness or our passion for guitar – I wanted to shake the hand of the guy who was responsible for the Les Paul, Flying V and the Explorer and the tune-o-matic bridge. I wanted to meet this guy and show him, “I appreciate what you did.” So I showed up at his doorstep, he looked at the guitar and the only thing he had to say was, “You know, guitars like that were failures.” He wasn’t all that interested in guitars at that point. He had this product called Flex Light and he was making those little flashlights that you put in your shirt pocket and they had a little flexible end so you could tie your fishing lure in your boat or something. He was totally onto something else and it was blowing my mind. I thought he was “Mr. Guitar” and it was obvious that Gibson had just been a job to him. He wasn’t a “let’s make a cool guitar” guy. It was all about business. He had moved on, and I walked away with very mixed emotions. I’m shaking my head like, “Man, this guy is not into guitars at all...” It was a revelation. I was hoping to learn from the guy, and in a way, I guess I did.

**TQR:** Well, the development of the Hamer Standard was very deliberate and not a happy accident.



No, not at all. The way it came to us in the very beginning is that we wanted to make cool guitars that turned us on – guitars that we would get excited about – but they had to have the right sound and they had to have the right feel and you couldn’t get that from a new instrument. We were so into vintage instruments that it just automatically had to have that, but it also had to have a visual appeal that was a step above what you could get as well. We started to realize as we showed these guitars to other

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Members of Jethro Tull

musicians that there was a real need in the marketplace for a contemporary... this is almost an oxymoron... but a contemporary vintage guitar. We thought that vintage guitars were getting so expensive that we could make guitars that were reasonably priced compared to a vintage guitar, but sounded just as good and played as well, had all that vibe and the romance of an old guitar. If it gets broken or if it is stolen, the customer could come back to us and we could make them another one just like it. It's a replaceable, professional quality, vintage style guitar that costs you much less than a vintage guitar. That was our concept – kind of like a modern vintage alternative, not a copy.

**TQR:** And how many of the Standard type guitars did you build before you moved on to the double cutaways?

There were probably about 50 by the time we started to make the double cutaway guitar. They started out at \$995 and I think they crept up to \$1,200 by the time the dealers started recognizing them, because we were dealing direct. We would take half a dozen instruments and fly to New York, get a suite at a hotel and send out invitations to people who had responded to a small ad that we put in *Guitar Player*. They would all show up and look at these guitars and place orders. We did the same thing in L.A. and Houston. It was very one-on-one.

**TQR:** What time frame are we talking about now?



This has to be '75 and I was just twenty-three then. We went to the NAMM show and shared a booth with Larry DiMarzio, who was a friend of ours who was pretty much coming up the way we were. I knew him from his workshop on 48th street in New York.

**TQR:** I was going to ask you about the pickups in the early guitars. Were they DiMarzios?

Not actually. My first contact with pickup repair occurred when I was in London in '73. I lived there for six weeks hanging out playing and I met Seymour Duncan at the Fender Sound House. He was just getting into pickup repair and modification, and we kind of made a mental note that we were into the same things. I had just started building my bass. Because I thought Seymour was still in England, it was DiMarzio that we hooked up with early on to do the pickups for the Hamers. We had a small supply of Gibson PAF pickups that we used early on in guitars like the one that Nielsen had – two of his guitars actually have original Gibson PAF's. There is a story there, because we had become the first warranty service center for Gibson outside of their factory. We were doing a lot of repair and restoration and buying a lot of parts from Gibson out of their parts catalog, and they were curious about that. We ordered the lacquer shaders that they used for their color and lacquer. They were like, "Who are you and why are you using all these parts?" They sent one of their reps down, we showed him our work, and they were setting up a network of warranty service centers at the time. They asked if we were interested and we said, "Hell yeah!" We went up to the Gibson factory in Kalamazoo and they showed us how they did their binding and how they did their frets and refinishing. We toured the factory and got to work with these guys for a while. At one point we stopped in the electronics area and they showed us how the Varitones were set up and I saw a cardboard box full of pickups. I'm digging through the box and there is an old P90 in there and lots of other stuff. I ask them, "What are these pickups?" "Oh, those are the ones that we pull out of customer's guitars. They are scratched, so we give them new ones with chrome covers, or some don't work..." and I'm like, "Well, are you going to do anything with these? Can I take this pickup and try and make it work?" They said, "Take the whole box. We're just going to throw them away anyway." I took them straight out to the car because I thought they would change their minds! It was just junk as far as they were concerned, and that's what blew my mind. They didn't have a clue what was going on. They had no idea. They thought the stuff they were making like the Marauder or whatever was just fine. The marketing guys especially thought, "We know what we are doing. We have college degrees in marketing and we are doing great."

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**TQR:** That's how the PAF's wound up in your early guitars.

Yeah, we went through the box later and there were about 11 of them in there. Some of them didn't work, so we sent them to Larry DiMarzio. This is before Larry even started making his own pickups. He was just doing repair. We sent them to him for repair and they are the ones that went into our early guitars. When we ran out of those, we would send brand new



pickups to Larry to be rewound to our specs. Once again, for the younger guitar players, that will sound strange because now you can walk into a guitar store and see half a dozen or more brands of replacement pickups, but back then, they didn't exist. You bought a Gibson original part and that was pretty much it. Fender? I don't think they sold replacement parts. I guess there was DeArmond, but those were unsuitable for rock. When Larry started making his own brand of pickups we no longer had to buy new pickups and rewind them, so at a certain point (and I don't remember what year) Hamer switched over from the re-wound pickups to the original Hamer pickup, which was made by DiMarzio, and we just marched on from there.

**TQR:** So a 1979 Hamer probably had DiMarzio's.

They were our proprietary pickups made by DiMarzio. We had an agreement with Larry that those pickups were not going to be made available to the general public. They were made specifically for us and wound a certain way.

**TQR:** Based on his observations relative to the PAF's.

Right, that was our jumping off point. But the final product was based on a collaboration between us. I wanted a neck pickup that wasn't as bassy as just a stock pickup. If you just take one pickup and you put it in both positions, you don't get optimum performance – it's going to be a compromise. For rock, it was just too muddy in the neck position. I asked Steve Blucher at DiMarzio if he could roll a little of the bass off. So it's a little brighter, and the bridge pickup has a little more mid-range – it has a little more than the neck pickup. We were already straying into hot pickup territory, but not like super overdrive. Larry's success went to the next level with his own production pickup, the Super Distortion pickup.

That was primarily an overdrive pickup. You could put that pickup into any piece of junk guitar and it would make you sound like Kiss. It was guaranteed to drive the amplifier into distortion and that's why it was popular at the time. Players wanted to get a lot of distortion and most of the new amps were just not up to the task. However, for our guitars we were looking for a little more natural overdrive – we had the cool vintage amps anyway. That's why our bridge pickup had just a little more mid-range and had a little more 'oomph' than a PAF. Our guitars sounded great acoustically. Why bury the sound with high output pickups? That's still my philosophy.

**TQR:** By the late '70s, how many people did you have working at Hamer and what kind of conditions were you working in?

We started out in John's basement and there were four partners to begin with. There were the two other guys, John Montgomery and Jim Walker, who was his assistant. We were the four who went into the business and it was difficult,



Frank Untermeyer & John

because we all had a different idea of what we ought to do and since we all had a vested interest, it wasn't always smooth sailing. We weren't in the basement helping any longer because we had to go out and promote the guitars, and there came a time when they didn't see the vision anymore. They didn't see any future – it wasn't an instant success. So we offered to buy them out of their share, which we did, but they continued to work for us building the instruments on a per-piece basis. That was right about the time when we decided we were going to build the double cutaway. Of course, the double cutaway guitar appealed to a lot more people than the Standard. It was a way to make it a little more mainstream and more accessible because they were a little easier to make, too.

**TQR:** What did they sell for approximately?

Interestingly enough, by the time we get to 1978, five years into all this, the Standard is on it's way to \$2,000, so the double cutaways are coming in at like \$699. We were hoping to make 15 guitars a month. We set up a shop in Palatine, Illinois and started making them there in 1978. This is also when Frank Untermeyer came onboard. Frank is a very talent-

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ed and driven individual, and he was trained in business. We needed a guy like that because I only knew how to build and market to guitarists. Frank also brought order to the chaos! Not everyone understands the level he works on. He's brilliant and I've learned more from him than anyone I could name. He was in charge of all the International stuff because he was fluent and had spent time in Europe and Japan. It was an extremely exciting time for all of us.



We were in Palatine for two years and in 1980 we moved to Arlington Heights, which was a much bigger facility. Palatine was about 1,500 square feet and we moved to 10,000 square feet. Up until then we were subcontracting a lot of the rough milling, and that was something that

drove Frank mad. Since the very beginning we would buy boards, but then we would have to take them to a mill to have them planed to thickness. We were primarily gluing and clamping, binding and making fret boards and fretting and gluing up necks and sanding, spraying, buffing and assembling. We were doing all that, but the really big stuff, we weren't prepared to do yet. When we decided to make the



leap and put everything under one roof and not subcontract any labor out,

that's when we made the move to Arlington Heights. That's why we needed all the room.

To this day there are guitars that people think are made in California or Florida or whatever, but really, they are made in Mexico, Korea and China. There is a lot of that going on today and it went on back then. It's just part of the industry. The thing that is rare is that Hamer consolidated everything in Arlington Heights in 1980 and the guitars were truly made under one roof and that's the *only* place that they were made. Just like now, the USA brand Hamers are only made here in Connecticut under one roof.

**TQR:** In the '80s you went from the Standard and the Sunburst to a lot of different models – the Prototype, Vector, Phantom, Blitz... and the Cruisebass kicked that all off. What are your favorites among the guitars that were built during the first 10 years?

I would have to say the Prototype is one of my favorites – the one with the three coil pickups. Again, this is the hybrid theory. Why didn't someone think of this before? If you could have a Junior with a humbucker – just really stripped down like a funny car, you know? It does one thing and it does it in a powerful way – the light turns green and it just rocks. But there just wasn't enough to the guitar that way. My idea was to put a single coil into the same bezel as the humbucker and by putting the single coil on the neck side of the humbucker, it puts it in a place where there is so much string excursion that it makes that single coil really fat. So it is kind of like this killer Tele. You have a three-way switch and it switches between the humbucker where you get this like full-on little mahogany body single humbucker guitar, Van Halen style, and then you flip the switch the other way and you have this Telecaster from hell. And then the middle position is like a bonus position, and you get this in-between sound that is not like anything else. And it looks cool because it has this big,



honking three coil assembly. That's what I like about it, because people look at say, "Man it must

really be loud. Two coils are good. Three coils must be better." It's kind of a visual, once again, like the bass with the whammy bar. It's a sight gag. It's not really one big pickup. It's really a two pickup guitar that can go from a roaring metal sound to twanging country with the flip of a switch. I still love that guitar. It was a favorite with a lot of guys like James Honeyman Scott and Elliot Easton.

**TQR:** Where did the sustain-block bridge come from? It seems to be unique to your guitars.

That's a good question – one that no one has ever asked. When I realized the difference between a hardtail Strat and one with a tremolo on it, it dawned on me that, OK, there is something going on here. Just by changing the bridge set-up you can get that much variation in tone, and so I thought

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Pretenders guitarist James Honeyman-Scott ©Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

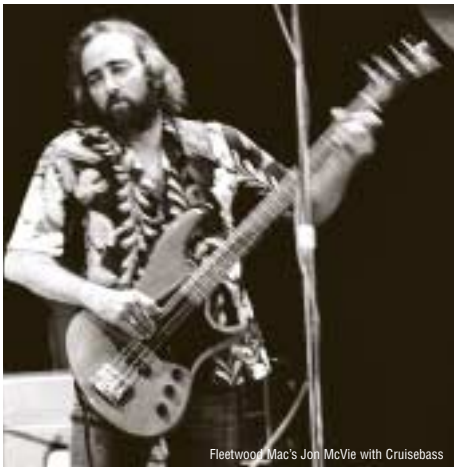
what if we just anchored the strings through the body hard-tail style? I wanted to have a little more neck pitch so the strings would come off the top of the body, so the bridge had to have a platform under it. I drew it out on a sheet of paper and we had a

machine shop make it. It's a different sound and a great sound, and it still stands up today. We build a few of them from time to time for customers who are hip to it. It's still available.

And I have to mention the Standard, just because when it first came out people thought, "What is *that*?" Journalists would write about Cheap Trick and they would say, "Rick Nielsen appeared on stage playing the weirdest looking guitar I have ever seen in my life," and it was a shocker. It's hard to believe now after all that went on in the '80s that at one point in time, that was a mind blowing guitar. Visually, you could just come out and stop the show with the guitar.

**TQR:** Would it be fair to add the Cruisebass to your list of favorites based on our prior conversation?

Yes, but for different reasons. That was a very measured instrument in terms of thinking it through and making it an instrument that we were going to be happy with. The Cruisebass really was a clean sheet of paper sort of deal. It's a lot



Fleetwood Mac's Jon McVie with Cruisebass

like a band. You've got years and years and years to make your debut song and fine-tune it in the clubs and then you record it. For us, that bass really reflected from 1973 all the way to

1980. We had seven years to make custom basses and 12-string basses and 8-string and 10-string basses and four string double cutaway basses, trying a lot of things in between. We saw what worked and what didn't work. Trying Thunderbird pickups and P-bass pickups. Putting humbuckers on basses. We did a lot of stuff in between to reach that point and the Cruisebass was the sum total of all of our experience up to that point, all coming together in that one instrument. It's got a lot of character.



You know what that bass reminds me of? Most people under the age of about 25 have never tasted a real tomato. They don't really know what foods taste like because it's all been commercially engineered. Similarly, there are a lot of basses that are made out of 16 kinds of furniture wood and they have a lot of high end and a lot of low end and they've got a lot of punch and drive and a lot of snap and they have all this fancy stuff on them. They've gone to the best schools and have a great resumé, but no personality. When you pick up a Cruisebass, it's this honest bass that is kind of a one-trick pony, but it does that so well. Get it right and add some personality – then you've got something genuine and worthwhile.

**TQR:** You can hear the wood. Well, let's talk about what you are doing now. The shop tour on the web site is really excellent. It gives you an appreciation in the space of maybe 10 minutes of how you go about building things. You are taking the time to do a lot of things that just aren't done any more.

An old friend of mine, Larry Fishman, came to visit recently and he had never been through our shop in New Hartford. Now, Larry deals with everybody in this business, so he's a



tough audience. I gave him a tour and showed him everything and as we walked out he and his associate just stopped and said, "You

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know, you are doing something here that is a lost art. This isn't being done anymore." And that's true. I really feel that's the difference between what we do and what a lot of people are doing in the guitar industry. We are not making an appliance. We are making something genuine, in an old world way. That's what you are acquiring when you buy a Hamer. You are buying a guitar, and you are buying something honest, something that doesn't fit the business model of today's society.

**TQR:** Let's delve into that a bit. One of the things that really hit me was the whole concept of the explanation of the stressed neck system and the fact that you are using three piece necks. Explain the theory behind letting these necks rest and age and the whole stress neck approach.

We have done that since 1980. This is an off-shoot of my fascination with aircraft and racing car building theory. Actually, it's more appropriate for wood because wood has kind of a mind of its own. It's not as stable as most metals. They do a process in metal-working called *normalization*. If you weld something together there are certain internal forces that are trying to make it twist and warp all the time. They will heat and cool it so that it will come to its final resting place. We do the same thing with the necks. We call it a stressed system because we use the internal stresses to hold the neck stable. The two outside pieces are mirror images from the same board. They are exerting force in an opposite direction, so any tendency of one piece of wood to move is counteracted by the opposite piece. It actually makes the neck much more taut, like the tightening of a drumhead. The center piece is a neutral piece that separates the two. We realized that when you cut away material when carving a neck, suddenly the wood is free to change position. Something that was holding it in check might be missing now. It wants to find a new, comfortable position to be in. Now, if you have been foolish enough to make your neck really quickly as you would if you were making hundreds of guitars every day, what happens is the neck will twist. If you have already put your frets in, you have to compensate for the movement in the neck by filing the frets. Our concept is rather than send out a guitar that has



twisted or warped or whatever, we let the neck sit on a rack and do all this normalization – do all this twisting and settling before we even put

the radius on the fingerboards. The guitar neck is totally glued together. It is brought down to about 95% of its finished shape. We have removed all the excess material and it is free to assume its relaxed state.

**TQR:** And this is with the fingerboard glued on.

Right, but the fingerboard is still flat. It's not radiused yet. And this is very different than the way guitars are made in mass production. You know, most anybody that is making guitars in any kind of quantity at all will radius the fingerboard and fret it and then glue it onto the neck. The problem here is that you have already determined what your playing surface is going to be. You've made that nice and straight but now you have glued that onto a neck and you hope it will stay straight. It's not going to happen. We pay the price up front by inventorying necks in process on a rack for a long time. We have determined the optimum amount of time through real research and real measurements. We have determined the amount of twist per day in increments down to a tenth of a degree. That's pretty much the only secret we have and it's not really a secret. Anyone can wait a couple of months and be done with it, but nobody else does.

**TQR:** If they are willing to devote the space to it.



It's not just the space. It's the money. Tell any accountant that you want to stop, take two or three months worth of your production and not be able to touch it and they would say you were crazy. This is the right way to do it, and to me it's

smart accounting because you either pay for it now in terms of inventory or you pay for it later in terms of how it ruins your reputation. I think it's better to put the money in it up front. Some builders are getting away with garbage... why the public thinks that a brand new guitar that needs a fret job is acceptable is beyond me.

**TQR:** You also pay attention to the grain orientation of the fingerboard, which is new to us.

Yeah, it surprises me that more builders are not into this. The fingerboard exerts a lot of influence over the shape or the straightness of the neck. The fingerboard is open to the atmosphere and it is swelling or shrinking and pulling the

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neck forward and back. It stands to reason that it can also bend it sideways. The neck can warp backwards, it can go forwards, and it can twist, but it can also bend sideways. If you were looking down the fret board it would look like a curved road. We reject any fingerboard material that isn't straight-grained wood. It costs

a bit more, but there is no shortage of other builders who will buy our reject fingerboard wood! Caveat emptor!

**TQR:** We see that, and we also see a lot of neck twists where you sight the plane of the peghead against the plane of the body and they are not parallel.

That's true, and that twisted neck takes the fingerboard and frets along with it. On a Hamer it doesn't matter, because we sand the radius on the fingerboard after the neck has twisted. All necks will twist. I've had dealers come back and say, "This guitar is no good. The fingerboard is thicker on one side than on the other. You made it wrong." Well, I tell them if it was the same, then your playing surface would be twisted and you would have to do a fret job. It's a matter of learning what to look at. I could show you in a minute what I'm talking about and it would be so clear to you, but it's difficult to say with words. There is a twist in any neck. If you let it twist before you machine the fingerboard surface, then you



can machine out the twist. This is something that we have done since 1980.

Hamer is a small shop of ten people making guitars by hand. In some of the high production shops, they are making over

400 guitars a day, which I think works out to making a guitar every 60 seconds. There are a bunch of workers who have to take a neck and a body and glue them together quickly and put a clamp on it. They don't have time to fit each neck, so the smart thing to do in production is to cut the neck joint oversize so the necks will all fit and then shim it to fit. This is the crossroads of tone. You have the soundboard and you have the neck that is driving it from the other end, and the crossroads is the neck joint. If you are going for that sweet sustained sound, you want to get the neck and body to couple. You want vibrations to transmit from one part to the other. This means you need as much surface area between the



two parts. The bigger your joint, the more surface area you can have and greater transmiss-

ion of vibration. If you have a little three-quarter inch joint with a shim in there, the sides aren't even coming into play because they are shimmed, and the back end, of course, is not a factor at all.

At Hamer we use a dovetail joint that is the full width of the fingerboard. It's 40% larger. And because we under-machine the sockets and each guitar is hand fitted, the neck is actually forced into and wedged into that slot so that the sides become clamped as well. So you are actually bringing the secondary surfaces – the sides of the neck into play against the inside of the neck joint. On our guitars, the neck is so tight that it is easily double what it would be on a vintage design just in surface area alone. The difference is very noticeable. Once again, it's not the only way to make a guitar, but if you are going to make a guitar that is sonically alive and you are trying to get that violin type thing, you've got to do all you can to couple those parts.

**TQR:** So that holds true even if we are talking about a Monaco Elite, for example.

Oh, a Monaco, even more so. Now one of the things that we do there is that little step underneath in the cutaway. There's like a little step. Instead of the cutaway coming smooth to the neck, the step allows us to bring out neck joint all the way to the width of the fingerboard. People have asked, "Why didn't you just make it smooth?" Well, to do that, we couldn't have a full width joint. If we did, we could run the neck all the way to the cutaway and not have any body on the side, but essentially, that's even worse. One of the things that we have

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the luxury of is that we have the equipment and the patience and engineering background to look at these things. There is a point of diminishing return – like the idea of a neck joint that goes all the way to the bridge. At a certain point, this is not an advantage, you are just slicing up the guitar's body – you don't have any soundboard effect left. It's just marketing bullshit.

**TQR:** Let's talk about your finish work, because that's another place where you definitely take a lot more time. I think the time line was three weeks.

Yeah, that's just about right. We always go beyond what is just 'acceptable.' We listen to what the manufacturers of the materials we use say. They'll tell us what will give us a good finish. But 'good' for us is not acceptable. Just like everything else, we invest the time to get that last little advantage by building up the finish over a longer period of time. It allows us to build the layers up and let them harden and sand them back down, go back in and spray more, let it harden, sand it back down. The final result is the finish is extremely thin. It's 11 mils, roughly – more like an acoustic guitar finish. It's not a new idea, just one that is generally ignored today.

**TQR:** What kind of finish material are you using?

It's an acetate-based hybrid finish. It is truly an old-school nitro base finish, not polyurethane or polyester. That's one of the reasons we have to build it up slower. It's not like



polyester where you just shoot it on and then sand the crap out of it. You have to build it up over time and let it dry and then re-sand it back down

flat. The reason people use things like polyester is that it is very hard and it's very durable and you can spray it on very thick and then you sand the surface and buff it and it's very durable, but unfortunately, it makes the guitar kind of a numbing glob.

**TQR:** It's embalmed.

Exactly. And it doesn't breathe. The problem is that people view instruments more and more like an appliance – like a toaster or a Corian countertop – it's supposed to be durable and glossy, so any ripple or telegraphing of the finish or the wood grain in the finish is viewed as a flaw. You could pay \$25,000 for a vintage guitar and it has all the rippling and that's fine, but someone won't pay \$5,000 for a guitar with a rippled finish, so the use of nitro is almost impossible if you want a flat finish. We found a way to get flat finishes that are thin and flat but the only way to do it is to build it up over a length of time. You can only do that by waiting, and of course, that means money.

**TQR:** You are also hand-sanding and hand-shaping the bodies and arch tops. You've got people that are skilled enough to basically do that free-hand with a sander.

They use a hand grinder, then a French-curve scraper. On the real high-end guitars, the only way to do it is to start from the very beginning by hand.

**TQR:** And you also actually carve the final neck shape by hand.

With a spoke shave, cabinet scrapers, files and sandpaper. I love that part of the tour when you see it. It really is old world traditions that are passed down. It's done just like the guys who have been there since day one.

**TQR:** How long does it take to train people to do all of these skilled tasks and where do you find them?



We *make* these people. Hamer is the kind of place where you come when you have done all the other stuff. It's the deep end of the pool. We've seen a lot of people who thought they were good, but couldn't swim. This isn't a place where you learn the basics of the craft. It's more like a place where you throw away the things you know

and re-learn from the people who have been in the shop since our days in Chicago. Every day I impart knowledge to people in the shop even if they have been here four, five or six years.

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They are learning every day from the people who have been there since Chicago. It's a constant learning situation. Some of the simplest jobs take two years to learn properly, even if you have a furniture background.

**TQR:** So you brought people with you from Chicago when you moved seven years ago?

Yeah, we picked the top people from our operation in Chicago and relocated them and their families. We brought 10 artisans and 12 semi-trailer trucks – machinery, wood, cars, furniture, dogs, wives, girlfriends and all our hopes for the future.

**TQR:** That might be the best part of this whole story.

Absolutely. To take 10 people out of the metropolitan Chicago area where they have everything they ever wanted within walking distance and to relocate really different types of individuals and their families to rural Connecticut and start over and build a workshop... We built our own space. We cleared a space – an entire floor in an old mill building and built a new shop the way we wanted it. That's a whole story unto itself on a human level. That was an experience that went as deep as anything I have ever done in my entire life.

**TQR:** That really counts for something, especially today. Back to the guitars... are you using Seymour Duncan pickups exclusively?



For the most part, yes, although we can option them out with others when we feel it is appropriate. I've worked with Steve Blucher at DiMarzio and most recently with Seymour, and it's just fun to partner up with companies like that – finding people that are interested in doing something special. In the beginning, it was difficult to get other companies interested, but now we're at the point that the reputation of the product is such that people want to partner with that.

**TQR:** What type of fret wire and nut material do you use?

We pioneered the use of the ultra-slippery, Teflon-style nut with our Lubritrak™ in the '80s, but we've since gone to



bone and fossilized ivory for aesthetics. It came down to wanting to do things in an old-world kind of way, and this is the premium stuff that should be used in a guitar

at the level that we build. The trick is to cut it properly, then the lubricity is up there with any other material.

We have our own fret wire made and it's what I call a medium-oval wire that's .100" wide and .050" tall. We go over it with a really light micro-mesh to take any manufacturing imperfections out of it, but we don't even have crowning files – we threw them away. If you build your fingerboard and neck properly you don't need to file and crown the frets. The fretwork is one place where you do need perfection, but for me to say that everything we do is absolutely flawless in an almost un-human way goes against what we're all about. You're going to see variations in things, but they are the kind of variations that tell you that a human being made it. It's the contrast where you see a perfectly smooth, flawless finish, and then the one little place where you can see the effect of somebody's handwork. It's like the one odd stitch on a Ferrari leather seat that tells you that a machine didn't do it. There are instruments out there that seem to be very antiseptic. You walk away from them cold because they are so uniform. Some of my favorite old guitars would have people thinking, "Oh my god, this thing is unplayable..." But it has character. That's a throw back to the vintage thing – those guitars were not perfect.

**TQR:** Tell us about the custom pots you have made. I suppose you require a tighter tolerance than the + or - 30% used by some companies...

I want the taper to be correct. It has a gradual run up to about '9' then it leaps up in volume like a little boost control. Once you master it you'll never want anything else. I like a pot that spins freely, but if you get one that does that from day one it's going to fall apart after a few months. The pots that we spec out tend to feel a little tight in the beginning and they break in to a nice place and then really last. They are a lot more expensive than buying them off the rack, even down to things like special plating so that it is solderable without sanding. Our shielding paint is made in Belgium and it's the most expensive nickel-based paint there is. We round over our back plate routs by hand and we use an aluminum back plate, which is part of the entire grounding and shielding process.

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**TQR:** We should also mention the ivoroid binding you use.

Especially when it's stacked and you have to miter the corners... Once you've seen what stacked binding looks like you'll appreciate the difference. On our Artist Ultimate there are over 14 hours of true pearl inlay and binding work just on the neck alone. Until you realize the ways that mass-produced inlays cut corners, you can't appreciate the quality of doing it the hard way. I could show you 50 different places



on our guitars where there was a fork in the road where we could have taken the easy, production way out – things that most people would never even recognize.

Instead, we take the harder route, one that has the integrity that any luthier could look at and say, "Holy crap, I can't believe you did that." We always take the more interesting route because we love having other builders say, "How can you possibly do that?" Not that they don't *know* how to do it – we just take the time to actually do it. It's an inspiration for them, which in turn is an inspiration for us. That's what makes my day – when someone like a Tom Anderson is inspired by our work.

**TQR:** Which models are closest to your heart within the current Hamer USA line?

This is the point where I usually say, "My favorite Hamer guitar is the next one," but the Monaco III is really special to me. Once again, in that hybrid, sight gag tradition, this is a guitar that you look at and think, "Oh, yeah... this is a Rockabilly/Jazz box thing..." But when you play it, out comes the fattest, ariest, gonzo Stratocaster tone, then you



turn the chicken head knob and get a great chickin-pickin' country thing. Turn it again and there's the classic Jimi Hendrix/SRV neck pickup tone... It doesn't look at all like the way it sounds. That guitar to me is the most wonderful thing, because if you are a Strat player, where do you go? You get an Anderson, or a Relic, or some kind of high-end

super-Strat. But this guitar is something more... guys like Doyle Bramhall II has one... Keb Mo has one... You may never give up the Stratocaster, but this one has the hollow-body, single coil tone that gives players somewhere else to go. I made that guitar for myself. The Super Pro and the Monaco have long scales, which gives them something a little different with that airiness of a hollow body. So I looked at it and thought, "If I put three big P90's on that it would be the biggest, juiciest guitar ever..." We took it to the NAMM show and it was blowing people's minds – guys that wouldn't even think of playing a two-humbucker guitar, for example. But this guitar is a really bold statement and you won't get what it's all about just by looking at it, which I think is a very cool thing.

### Reviews

## The Hamer Monaco Elite

*If you have an eye for fine detail beyond the commonplace, the Monaco Elite will leave a vivid impression you won't soon forget. Yes, at first glance the Elite resembles a stylistic cross between a Les Paul flame top and a Guild Bluesbird perhaps, but a closer look reveals the characteristic crafts-*



*manship, unique design and attention to detail that defines Hamer USA today.*

Our review guitar was provided by Music Makers in Austin, Texas ([www.musicmakersaustin.com](http://www.musicmakersaustin.com), 512-444-6686) and it may be there still. We were told that this Elite was a custom order by the former guitar department manager after he had personally visited the Hamer shop in Connecticut. He subsequently left Austin and apparently had to leave the Elite as well. It is now available as a slightly used instrument, having been in the store for over a year.

Previously-owned Hamer USA guitars are generally incredible bargains. Why? Because they will be overlooked by the masses in much the same way that Les Paul Specials seem to get little notice while single P90 Juniors are 'hot.' People will spend thousands on a '59 Historic Les Paul or a Relic Stratocaster or Nocaster, often sight unseen, yet there are equally worthy instruments selling for half what these guitars will cost on a good day *if* you are simply willing to step out of the middle of the road. We love the classics, too, but you

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can also find inspiration on the road less traveled when it comes to guitars.

The Monaco Elite is a stunner. Yes, the top is indeed far more 3-D than the usual figured maple *whatever*, but that's just one of many outstanding features you'll admire and appreciate. The fretwork is particularly flawless. The crown on each fret is absolutely virgin, the neck profile is neither to clubby or too shallow, and all of these features yield a truly remarkable and effortless playing experience. The ivoroid binding that encircles the peghead, neck and top is trademark Hamer, providing a flawlessly finished frame for the flowing lines of the Monaco. We often caught ourselves peering into the tobacco



sunburst finish (you *can* actually peer into it), running our fingers over the hand-carved top, and alternately marveling at the intricate and perfectly cut, true abalone 'Victory' inlay on the chocolate-hued, straight-grained rosewood fingerboard. Yes, it's yummy.

Unlike some alternatives to Fender and Gibson guitars, the stock Monaco Elite equipped with Seymour Duncan Custom humbucking pickups produces richly detailed tones and an overall character that is lively, woody, warm and balanced without sounding sterile or oddly one-dimensional. Our chief complaint with production humbuckers is their tendency to be muted and dull in the neck position, muddy in the middle with no sparkle, and linear, tight and lacking depth and air (too compressed) in the bridge. We've learned that efficient machine winding and the materials used in making most inexpensive production pickups produce a very cost-effective product with generally unremarkable tone. The Custom Duncans are better than that, and the Monaco confidently delivers the goods for fans of dual humbucking, solidbody guitars. We have noted that USA Hamers in general sound slightly more connected and articulate, with good string definition, much the same way that an amplifier with a tube rectifier sags while a diode rectifier is more solid, forward and articulate.

Full-sized, non-chambered, solid mahogany guitars are rarely featherweights, and our review guitar weighed a shade over nine pounds – about average for a Les Paul today. The Hamer seemed very well balanced when played standing up and seated, but who among us wouldn't like a little lighter guitar? Just two nights ago I watched Delta Moon guitarist Mark Johnson pick up our Nash Tele, and as he commented on how good it had just sounded while we were jamming, he held it by the neck, raising it up and down repeatedly to gauge the

weight (it's an 8 pounder). "Great-sounding guitar – one of your best – but too heavy for me." But get this... that eight pound alder body is where the mojo lives. Sure, we'd be pleased with an 8-pound Monaco, but sometimes an extra 16 ounces makes a difference you'll want to keep.

We truly enjoyed discovering the Monaco Elite... It feels right, plays right, sounds right, and like we said, visually it's a real stunner. You can find them used for as little as \$1,100 on a good day. That's no bargain for an offbeat guitar you



may not play all that much, but the Monaco isn't one of those. It's apt to become an all-time favorite that you'll keep within easy reach.

## The Hamer Monaco III

*True story... two years ago at the Anaheim NAMM show we ran into Terry McInturff, who asked if we had seen anything remarkable at the show so far. Our response was, "Not much... but have you seen the guitars in the Hamer exhibit?"*

One look at the Monaco III is all you really need to 'get' what Hamer is all about today. Just *look* at it! Our review guitar was custom built for the 2004 Nashville NAMM show and shipped to us in Atlanta by Willcutt Guitars, a Hamer dealer in Lexington, KY ([www.willcuttguitars.com](http://www.willcuttguitars.com), 859-276-2713). As



of November 2004, it was still available for sale. Ask for Eric.

The Monaco III is Jol Dantzig's personal pride and joy, and now we understand why. Who makes instruments like this anymore? The combination of a solid mahogany hollow body with a beautifully hand-carved solid spruce top really places

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the Monaco III in a class by itself. Add a Bigsby tailpiece, three P90's and a 5-way rotary chickenhead switch and you get a bigger, bolder Stratocaster vibe that is dramatically enhanced by the woody character of the solid spruce and mahogany construction.

We won't prattle on about the workmanship except to say that this guitar is built and finished with obvious skill and attention to detail that is simply as good as it can be, and the Monaco III capably bridges two very different worlds in guitar design and tone. We've been urging all of you to add at least one P90 guitar to your collection, and we're doing it again – especially for rock and blues (although they also perform exceptionally well for tamer jazz sounds). In addition to their legendary 'Mountain' tone when really cranked, P90's are loaded with sweet, bluesy character and harmonic content at low volume levels. The stock Duncan P90's in the Monaco III were very good, but they aren't our absolute favorites. We



continue to recommend Jason Lollar's brilliant P90's over every other variant made today simply because they sound that much better than all the rest. But key to the Monaco's one-of-a-kind tone is the 5-way pickup selection, which functions exactly like a Stratocaster and produces familiar single coil tones from

positions 1-5, only woodier and bigger. Great idea, and the Monaco III is a stellar guitar that may have you shrewdly evaluating what's in that stack of cases in your guitar room.

The complete Hamer Monaco line includes the standard Monaco (a dual humbucking version of the Monaco III, available in transparent red), the Monaco Sub Tone – a B-tuned all-mahogany, dot neck version in black with a 26.5" scale, the Monaco Super Pro – a chambered 25.5" scale model with figured maple top, and the Monaco Elite Mahogany with book-matched, chevron carved mahogany top, dot inlay, no binding and Duncan '59 humbucking pickups. The Newport line is also a must-see on the Hamer web site.

Short of custom ordering a new guitar, the Monaco III will be a tough find. Our review guitar was the only model we could locate in the entire country, and we wouldn't be surprised if it has been sold in the time it has taken you to read this review. You may contact Hamer customer service in Connecticut to order any of the Hamer USA models shown on the Hamer website, or patiently troll guitar shows and the web for bargains on used Hamer guitars.

## Hamer Phantom Custom

*"Now, the problem with making guitars for guitar players is that unless you're building something that looks like a Stratocaster or a Les Paul, it's really an uphill battle – even from world-class musicians who should know better. They say, "I don't play anything that was made after 1960." When I was in New York I was working for guys with the wackiest haircuts, hardware on their lips, stuff on their faces, all trying to be as different as they possibly could be, yet they wouldn't play a*



*guitar built after 1960. Hell, they were built after 1960, so what's up with that? I felt like saying, "You're not paying attention." But the bass players didn't have that problem – they usually had their eyes closed listening to what was going on, while the guitar players were busy looking in the mirror, dressing up cute, you know... working on a look,*

*while the bass players were working on creating a groove with the drummer that was so good that no one would ever want to play without them again (laughs). The guitar players didn't have their eyes closed and they weren't looking at the guitar – they were looking at this tangled mess of crappy little stompboxes on the floor in their quest for tone. They didn't know what their guitars sounded like." – Ken Parker*

Yes, it's true. At one point or another, most of us have been guilty of choosing an instrument as if we were buying a pair of shoes... "How will I *look* playing this guitar?" The Parker Fly was and remains an incredible instrument, but every time we toted one up to Nashville players would say, "Wow, this is an amazing guitar, but I wouldn't be caught dead playing it on stage." (*Now hand me that Telecaster...*) Or as Keith Richards is reported to have said when handed a Fly, "Nice guitar, but why did they have to make it look like a fuckin' assault rifle?" Well, we hope you are capable of picturing yourself playing something that actually *was* designed after 1960 – if not, you'll never know what you're missing.

When Jol Dantzig mentioned the original Hamer *Prototype* as one of his all-time favorite Hamer designs, we were intrigued by our vague memory of them as an '80s heavy metal mosh-er. Isn't it funny how we hear and see things so much differently now? Come to think of it, the decade of the '80s was just weird, period... We didn't find an old Prototype, but we

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the bridge, but with an additional angled single coil in the neck position and a book-matched flame maple top over a solid mahogany body.

We bought our review guitar on eBay as a 'new old stock' that had apparently lingered long in a music store that eventually went out of business. The seller bought it at a liquidation sale and we won the auction, which ended with 30 bids reaching \$720. At this moment there is another Phantom listed on eBay identical to ours with a 'Buy It Now' price of \$775.

After a lifetime spent ogling and playing guitars and our fifth year publishing *ToneQuest*, you might assume that we have seen and heard just about every desirable variation on the electric 6-string. Nope. We had never seen or heard of a Phantom. When it arrived we admired the guitar for about five minutes as we gave it a quick physical exam before cutting off the original strings, and we did notice an undisclosed flaw – a subtle, light discoloration of the orange finish surrounding the neck joint. Now, were we paranoid about such things, we might be concerned that the neck had been repaired or replaced, but if you've seen a Hamer neck joint... well, let's just say that the neck isn't coming off without performing some serious and detectable excavation and refinishing work. The neck joint on the Phantom was definitely original, unmolested and rock solid, and Jol Dantzig explained exactly what we were seeing: "The 'discoloration' that you see is actually finish de-lamination caused by some extreme stress placed upon the neck in shipping or handling. It can occur at the point where the neck and body meet. We have a quick and easy fix for it which takes about five minutes and is almost undetectable."

The Schaller locking tuners enabled us to re-string the guitar with a set of Pyramid .010-.048's, stretch them out, bring the guitar to pitch and check the neck relief in minutes. The truss rod had never been touched, and the 3-piece mahogany neck had developed a bit too much bow, but after three 1/4 turns of the adjustment nut the neck adjusted perfectly back to straight and true. We'll continue to sight the neck from time to time during the next few weeks as the force exerted by the truss rod causes the neck to find its 'happy place.'

did locate a 1997 Hamer Phantom Custom built in Connecticut. Like the Prototype, the Phantom Custom features a humbucking pickup and a single coil sharing the same mounting ring at

We first plugged the Hamer into our Balls 18W head and 2x12 cab with nothing more than a Holy Grail reverb pedal and let the chords fly through all five positions on the rotary switch. Looking at the overloaded bridge pickup ring, just consider the double coil humbucker closest to the bridge to be the bridge pickup, the single coil above it as the middle, etc. Contrary to some web reviews, the Phantom does not have a '3-coil Motherbucker' pickup in the bridge – it's just two separate pickups in one ring, consisting of a Seymour Duncan JB humbucker and two single coil Duncans, type unknown. We really didn't have the time to experiment, but we can imagine lots of interesting possibilities for potential pickup swaps in this guitar.



The Phantom completely and utterly blew us away on all counts. It certainly deserves *ToneQuest Buy of a Lifetime* status among instruments that can be had for less than a grand, but the Phantom is so

versatile and toneful that it also deserves *not* to be rated solely on the merits of its low price. It is also one of the best *playing* guitars we now own, which is saying a lot. In addition to delivering roaring tone with the bridge humbucker alone, this guitar does all the fat, sparkling, clean Fender tones brilliantly, yet for 'Gibson players' the Phantom is a much more forgiving guitar in terms of feel and playability when compared to a typical Strat or a Telecaster. The 5-way rotary switch combinations include neck position single-coil, neck & bridge single coils, bridge single-coil, all *three* bridge coils, and the bridge humbucker. Controls are volume and tone. Dialing back the volume on the guitar with our black-face Deluxe Reverb set on '4' allowed the single coils to really clean up, shimmer and shine like a classic Knopfler track, while riding the humbucker alone or with all three bridge coils on delivers a gloriously thick, heavy, overdriven voice that smacked the front end of our amps with authority. With such a wide range of great tones, the Phantom could be the session player's ultimate tool and the sonic equal to an entire rack of guitars on stage.

Like the other Hamers we've reviewed, the fretwork and nut on the Phantom were flawless. The neck shape is very comfortable – neither too big or too shallow or flat in the hand, and like all Hamers, the 3-piece mahogany neck is built using the 'stress neck' system. We should also mention that the

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## pickups

truss rod on our guitar literally glided through its range of travel as we adjusted the bow out of the neck rather than creaking and binding (an experience that will definitely give you sweaty palms as you torque an ornery truss rod). The Schaller locking tuners make string changes a snap, but at first they seemed to be too loose and imprecise when bringing the strings to pitch. After tightening the adjustment screws on the tuner buttons, they functioned with precision, and we had no complaints with the Schaller tune-o-matic bridge or the lightweight, chrome-plated stop tailpiece made by Gotoh.

Overlooking the minor finish de-lamination, the Phantom is also beautifully put together. The unbound, solid mahogany body and 1/2 inch figured maple top clearly produce dramatically thicker single coil tones, yet the guitar weighs no more than the lightest non-chambered Lester, at 8.5 pounds, (and it doesn't feel as heavy as that). Another nice touch is the belly cut on the back. Hamer really does select beautifully figured maple for its tops, and the figure on our vintage orange Phantom is striking without looking overwrought or gaudy. Visually, this guitar doesn't impress us as trying to be something it's not, and if you think about it, that's where a lot of new guitar designs go wrong... We really like the look of the



Phantom – it's a pro-level instrument that certainly isn't going to be confused with any other guitar, and it is remarkably versatile. On the other hand, we suppose its appeal will be tempered for some by the fact that it *doesn't* look like a Fender, Gibson or a Gretsch...

So there it is, and we've only scratched the surface of what's going on at Hamer USA. We urge you to visit the Hamer web site and take the factory tour. You'll quickly realize that a shop in which just ten men work is hardly a factory at all, and Hamer does indeed build guitars with care and skill that is rare today by any standard.

In addition to the toll-free customer service number below, readers are welcome to contact Hamer's product manager to order any Hamer USA model. **To**

Hamer USA, [www.hamerguitars.com](http://www.hamerguitars.com)  
877-442-6371 (toll free)

Frank Rindone, Hamer USA Product Manager  
800-813-1634 ex. 124

### JASON LOLLAR P-90 PICKUPS

*During the past 5 years we've remained on a constant rant about P90's, and having just installed another set of Lollars in a '54 Les Paul goldtop, we're going to rant some*



*more. Yes, P90's are just as noisy as any other non-noiseless, single coil pickup, but with the noise you also get the good thang. If the buzz is intrusive, just find your polar silent spot and hold position while recording. On stage, you aren't likely to hear it. We just saw long-time TQR subscriber John Fogerty last night at the Tabernacle in Atlanta (interview in the works) and his Historic Reissue*

*'54 goldtop with dual P90's seemed to cut through the appropriately loud mix like none of the other half dozen guitars he played (which included a couple of Ernie Balls among the more usual suspects). Catch John wherever you can...*

*Now, there are lots of fine companies that make a respectable P90... Gibson, Lindy Fralin, Harmonic Design and Seymour Duncan, for instance. We've heard them all, and while we don't put much stock in shootouts (and this isn't one), we will continue to recommend the Lollars because they possess the sweetest, completely opened up, airy tone and musically pleasing harmonic content of them all. We have often wondered how Jason Lollar does it, so we decided to ask him. Here's the scoop, straight from Vashon Island, Washington...*



**I started making P90's in 1979 after I learned to wind the Semi Mosley way, and I still make them like a cross between a Moserite and a Gibson. The construction varies in small details from a standard Gibson, which most manufacturers follow to the exact, original**

**specifications. I don't use a cast plastic bobbin like everyone else. Our bobbins are assembled from several parts and will**

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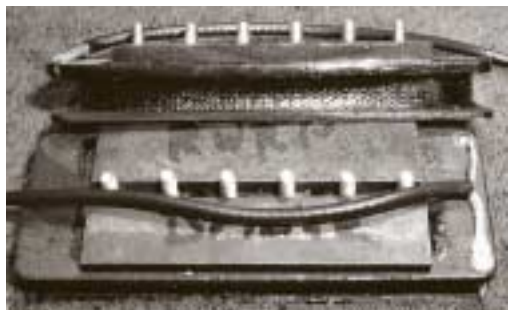


outlive a cast plastic bobbin. They are *very* sturdy.

Every detail has an effect on the tone, from the pole pieces and magnets, to the turn count and wire tension, and how thoroughly you pot the

pickup. You wouldn't think, for instance, that an Alnico 5 magnet from source 'A' would sound any different than an Alnico 5 magnet from source 'B,' but they do. The same thing goes for just about every part you use in a pickup. I spend a huge amount of time comparing bits and pieces, and you really have to do this if you want to make the best possible product.

Most high-volume pickup makers won't take the time to wind the coil to a specific tension where it will give you a slight amount of microphonics – they just pot it to death and that makes it easier to get a consistent result. I wind mine to have a certain amount of sponginess in the coil, and then I normally only pot P-90's enough to keep the coil from shifting and becoming more microphonic over time. Of course, I do occasionally pot them harder for people that need them to be free of any microphonics. Every pickup I make has a specific tension and amount of potting. It's a real balancing act – too much microphonics will be un-musical, and no microphonics can make a pickup sound dead in comparison, depending on the design. I also generally select magnets that have a specific gauss level rather than fully charging each magnet. This adds a considerable amount of time, but it has a lot to do with the results.



The idea behind all this, at the very least, is to give you a subtle amount

of improved cut, clarity and definition so your tone comes through the mix or the band noticeably better. This crosses over to a lot of the pickups I make. If you go too far with clarity, it can start to sound mechanical. Every one of our



stock designs are meticulously tested for tone. I test various materials and I only use what I find sounds best, even if it costs more. I really go through each design and pick it apart, and it's amazing how such a small detail can effect the overall result. In the last five or six years I have ramped up my process in order to get more consistent results. It doesn't do anyone any good to hand-wind a pickup and not be able to repeat the results precisely every time.

Here's a tip on a very cool, inexpensive makeover project... Remember our \$400 1965 Gibson Melody Maker? You'll recall that we started out by sending the original pickup to Jason to be re-potted, which was a significant improvement, but the stock Melody Maker pickup still seemed anemic for our intended purpose, which is to use it for slide, mainly in G and D.

We ordered a sheet of tortoise shell pickguard material from Stewart-McDonald and a black soap bar P90 from Jason, and then we turned the guitar over to Brian McDaniel. Brian enlarged the existing pickup rout just enough to accommodate the soap bar and tinted some of the mahogany dust he



had created cherry red, laying it in the new rout to make it look original

to the guitar. Then he cut the new tortoise shell pickguard, expertly beveling the edges all the way around. We also gave Brian some cloth push-back wire and a new .047 tone cap for the new P90 wiring.

Our cheapo Melody Maker is now an ultra-cool slide monster with freight train tone like an old Gibson lapsteel for a total investment of under \$600. And if we didn't want to use it for open tunings, it would also make a stunning all-purpose axe. Don't assume that these guitars are flawed and only appropriate for high-action slide setups!

Winter is here in full force, and you need to feed the creative guitar-freak within, so grab a Melody Maker and put your personal stamp on it. We can think of few more rewarding or simpler projects to pursue when it comes to maximizing an undervalued old guitar, and many, many *thousands* of Melody Makers were built in Kalamazoo from the late '50s through the mid '60s. *Quest forth... To*

Lollar Guitars  
www.lollarguitars.com  
206-463-9838

*the Lee Jackson*  
**ACTIVE GAIN PEDAL**

“Distortion is Truth” – Robert Poss



If the name Lee Jackson doesn't sound familiar, reach back to the May 2004 ToneQuest cover story featuring Phil Brown and become re-acquainted before proceeding.

And if you are one of hundreds of ToneQuest readers who have also acquired Phil's CD from ToneQuest Records ([tonequestrecords.com](http://tonequestrecords.com)), go ahead and throw it on as well. Phil lives in a world colored by intense distortion, but his entire record was also created at volume levels you could talk over in the same room. *Really*. How does he do it? Thank Lee Jackson.

Phil's Ampeg VL Series amp was designed by Lee Jackson, and Lee has designed an active gain pedal that delivers everything from clean boost to intense overdrive without imposing any tonal changes on your guitar and amp.

Jackson's pedal features true bypass and a 2-position 'Clip' toggle switch that produces two distinct levels of clipping on high gain settings. For clean boost, the Clip switch can be set in the middle, or 'Off' position. Variable combinations of the Master Volume and Gain settings determine distortion levels or clean boost. The active gain pedal can be powered by a 9 volt battery or external power supply, and at \$149.00 it's a solid bargain that has earned a coveted spot in our pedal board. **To**

Lee Jackson Designs, [www.leejackson.com](http://www.leejackson.com)

**Give the Gift of Tone!**



If you're stumped for gift ideas for your guitar-playing friends or you need to fill in your own wish list for the holidays, we invite you

to shop from home at [www.tonequest.com](http://www.tonequest.com) or toll-free at 1-877-MAX-TONE today!



Our ToneQuest e-store has been redesigned to make shopping

fast and easy. Simply create your personal account and return any time to fill your shopping cart with Pyramid premium hand-made strings, ToneQuest guitar straps by Long Hollow Leather (now with a pick holder!), ToneQuest Records CD's, and holiday gift subscriptions to The ToneQuest Report.

**Special Limited Time Offer!**

Give a gift subscription to The ToneQuest Report by December 23, 2004 and we'll reward your generosity with a free set of Pyramid .010-.046 roundwound strings and our famous Pyramid ToneQuest heavy guitar picks! Order two or more gift subscriptions and we'll send you a FREE ToneQuest guitar strap – a \$45 value! **To order your gift subscriptions call 1-877-MAX-TONE, or log on to [www.tonequest.com](http://www.tonequest.com). This offer expires December 23, 2004, so act now!**

**ToneQuest Guitars**



Now you can create your very own ToneQuest signature guitar! Our first limited run of six ToneQuest guitars have been delivered to the delight of their new owners with comments like these:

*“My new ToneQuest ‘Evangeline’ guitar has gone through three gigs and untold hours of playing at home. It's an absolutely wonderful instrument and anything I want is*

*there. You have created the world's first truly functional linear varitone! I cannot believe the tonal options for this guitar and there is not a bad tone among them. For me, this is simply a perfect guitar that gives me all the versatility I can manage.”*

–TQR subscriber Mark Warner, Broussard, LA

Call 1-877-MAX-TONE or write to David Wilson, Publisher, at [tonequest1@aol.com](mailto:tonequest1@aol.com) today to design and order your custom ToneQuest guitar.

On behalf of our staff and advisory board, we send each of you our very best wishes for the holidays and a healthy, happy and toneful New Year.

# 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 finger-

boards 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 Surface 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 Screamers 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 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 players finger and pick attack. With over 30 years of experience in pursuit of the art of sonic perfection, we provide a level of

## Resource Directory

quality and craftsmanship that will last a lifetime. 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 line-up, 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, 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 lightweight 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 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 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.630-832-1983*

**CR Coils** Jim Wagner has devoted years of research in his relentless quest to capture the classic tones of our guitar heroes. The recent 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 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

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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 COR-

NELL 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, characteristic 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

**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

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## Resource Directory

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*

**European Musical Imports** is the exclusive North American distributor for the very best that Europe has to offer, including: T-Rex Effects - Find out why everyone's talking about the T-Rex. The great organic tone and transparency of these Danish pedals are tough to beat! 6 models are available: Alberta, BetaVibe, CompNova, Mudhoney, Tremster and the Replica. Also available are the new MIDI units: Mac1 programmable switching system and the BigFoot controller. T-Rex users include: John Mayer, Carl Verheyen, Brad Whitford, Neal Schon, Carlos Santana, Matthew Sweet, Shawn Mullins, Pete Drogé, Bob Rock.

Lehle Switching Boxes - Lehle is the BMW of switchers. Handmade in Germany, the Dual, 3@1 and 1@3 switchers are the ultimate solution to eliminating those dreaded ground loop/signal degradation problems. Run multiple amps (or channels) with noise-free operation free of tone coloration. The New Lehle D.Loop is a fully programmable Effects Loop Switcher that allows the guitarist to switch in effects loop A, effects loop B, or both effects loops at the same time (all in stereo). Lehle users include: Peter Stroud, Joe Satriani, Carl Verheyen, Joe Perry, Lenny Kravitz, Neal Schon, Carlos Santana, Doyle Bramhall, Joe Bonamassa.

BSM Treble Boosters - BSM uses only NOS 1950's germanium transistors to recreate the Classic British circuits of yesteryear. 6 models are available: HS (Hornsby Skewes circuit), HS-Custom (modified Hornsby Skewes circuit), RM (Dallas Rangemaster circuit) RM-Metal (modified Dallas Rangemaster circuit),

OR (Orange Treble and Bass Booster circuit) and the BM-Q (silicon transistor model for more bite). Get that creamy distortion loaded with overtones reminiscent of classic Ritchie Blackmore, Eric Clapton, Tony Iommi and Brian May!

Headway Electronics Acoustic Guitar Pickups - These great sounding British units are now widely available in the USA. Check out the HE1 G1/FEQ and Snake2 models at your dealer and you'll be amazed at the natural warm sounding reproduction and top end sparkle. Both models offer a simple installation solution requiring minimal modification to your prized instrument. Headway users include: Dave Pegg, Martin Carthy.

George Dennis Amplifiers - American guitarists can now enjoy the same boutique amps as their European counterparts. GD amps feature hand soldered point to point wiring utilizing the best quality components throughout: matched JJ Electronic tubes, Accutronics spring reverb and eleven-ply laminated birch cabinets. The GD line is comprised of six series (Bluesman, Vintage, Blue Beetle, The Blue, Mighty Mouse, Spit-Fire ) which are available in various configurations with a variety of Celestion and Jensen Alnico speakers.

*European Musical Imports  
[www.europeanmusical.com](http://www.europeanmusical.com)  
201-594-0817*

**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 pickups 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 Wyld, 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

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## Resource Directory

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 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 woolly 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](mailto: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, round-wound, and flatwound strings, complemented 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](http://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](http://www.juststrings.com)  
[info@juststrings.com](mailto: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](http://www.klon-siberia.com) [info@klon-siberia.com](mailto: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](http://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 60+ 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

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## Resource Directory

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. Each individual unit is personally tweaked by both Joe and Bill throughout the build process. 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 Steve Kimock, Mitch Stein, Barney Doyle, Terry Haggerty, 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, Custom Reverb, Onyx, Opal, and Ruby. A number of customized versions of the aforementioned have also been built for players seeking the ultimate personalized tone machine. K&M also recently introduced its specialty guitar cables to rave reviews both here and abroad. Currently K&M is also producing a cathode biased limited production amp for Ultrasound Studios in New York City.

*K&M Analog Designs, LLC. Cotati, CA  
www.Two-Rock.com 707-664-0267  
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 pre-determined "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 pre-amp 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 designer and builder. Jason Lollar is a guitar builder on Vashon Island, Washington (near Seattle) who originally began building pickups for his own guitars and a few friends when he couldn't find the tone he was after. The word spread, and now Jason custom builds over 30 different pickups, including Strat, Tele, humbuckers, P90's, custom steels and Charlie Christian-style pickups, all personally designed and wound by Jason. He is especially well known for his P90, Imperial Humbucker and Tele replacement pickups, but he has also designed pickups for many unusual applications...

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

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

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

*www.lollarguitars.com, 206-463-9838*

**Parts is Parts** Need Fender, Gibson, Gretsch, Marshall, Vox or Korg parts? Get 'em at Parts is Parts. Founder John

Sprung is a veteran bass player, one of the first dealers in rare and vintage instruments, an avid Fender collector, and co-author of the definitive "Fender Amps: The First 50 Years." This book is an absolute must for anyone who owns a Fender amplifier, and one of the most frequently used resources here at The Temple of Tone. The ToneQuest Report strongly endorses this book, which John will be happy to sign for you on request. Parts is Parts is the world's leading source for vintage guitar and amplifier parts, and no one knows more about parts for Fender, Gibson, Gretsch, Hofner, Marshall, and Vox gear. John also carries a wide selection of aftermarket parts for almost any guitar or amplifier. Parts is Parts is a distributor for all Korg products. You can now buy your Marshall and Vox parts direct from John, as well as products made by Bigsby, Jensen, Eminence, Echoplex, and many more. Get the right part the first time. The expert advice from John, Miles, and Trask is always free.

*Parts is Parts, Wilmington Vermont  
http://www.guitar-parts.com/ 800-590-0014 or 802-464-0014*

**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.

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## Resource Directory

Each guitar is a unique work of art, hand-crafted 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 re-covering. 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 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*

**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  
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 education. The Stewart MacDonald catalog is packed with helpful tips, and the company produces an extensive series of training videos at their facility in Athens, Ohio.

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

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

**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**

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## Resource Directory

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  
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 worlds best

guitars, played by the world's best artists.  
*TonePros Sound Labs International,  
www.tonepros.com  
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 630-820-6400*

**Vinetto Guitars** If you ask ten different guitar players for their idea of the “ultimate” guitar, you'll get that many different answers. But there comes a point, when you've played and heard enough guitars, that you finally realize that finding the best instrument for you has nothing to do with the almost endless array of features and gimmicks out there today. It's about the connection-- the subtle, timeless connection that happens when the right player picks up the right guitar.

For over two decades, Vince Cunetto has been making guitars that feel, play and sound the way a lot of very respected players wanted them to, and most of

these players were not too concerned with the bells and whistles that come and go in trendy, modern guitar design. When Vince set out to design his own model, he wanted to build a guitar that would be comfortable to anybody that picked one up — like an old friend — but different enough to still inspire new ideas in their playing. This was the inspiration for The Legato, and remember — “legato” means smooth and connected. It's about flow and continuity.

The goal for Vinetto Guitars is pretty simple... to put extremely well-made, great sounding instruments into the hands of good players, so they can find new ways to bring out their best playing.

Any Vinetto Guitar can be special ordered to the player's specifications from a selection of standard neck profile, fingerboard, pickguard and body color options. We're also happy to discuss any special requests you might have for your new Vinetto. **For more information, please visit the Vinetto Guitars web site.**

*www.vinettoguitars.com, 314-542-0808*

**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 615-595-8232*

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Bruce Zinky  
Rick Vito  
Billy F Gibbons

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**GUITARS:** Our '62 Strat Parts Guitar  
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