



QRD

The Guitarist Interviews
Volumes I - X

Hey Kidz,

20 years ago I started my zine QRD to interview the bands I loved & get to read the answers to the questions I personally had for them. Four years ago when I decided I wanted to do totally gearheaded interviews about guitar, it irked some people because I wasn't asking any of the questions they cared about, but that's okay because I care about them & so do you or you wouldn't have picked this up to read. So there are over 160 interviews in here & I think every guitarist gives away something for you to either be inspired by or learn from & I hope that reading this somehow inspires you to be a better music maker or music listener. At the very least it should give you some fuel for the whammy bar & tube versus solid state debates. Thanks for your interest & support, it means a lot to both me & all the musicians you're about to learn about.

Special thanks to all the Kickstarter backers, especially Christopher Erisson, for making this book possible.

Hrt
Brian John Mitchell
[QRD](#)

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Jason LaFarge of Hallux & Pineal Ventana
June 2010

Name: Jason LaFarge

Bands: Hallux, formerly of Pineal Ventana & Blue Prostitutes

Websites: seizurespalace.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jason – It was a really crappy Global (Sears catalog) Fender-copy. I sold it to a friend in high school & tried to teach him to play with little to no success. I have no idea what he did with it. When I was 14 I got the guitar that is my main 6-string today – a 1979 Les Paul Custom with a factory-installed 3rd pickup.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jason – Well, my set-up for Hallux is my Travis Bean TB-2000 bass through a SansAmp Bass Driver into a 1973 Earth Sound Research Super Bass B-2000 amplifier (complete coincidence on the – 2000 suffix) & through an Ampeg V4 4x12 cabinet. My guitar rig in Pineal Ventana changed during my 5 years in the band. Started off with my 1979 Les Paul Custom through a Marshall JCM 900

head & KMD 4x12 cab with a Morley Wah/Distortion & Boss RV-3 & DD-5 in between. Before the *Axes to Ice* record, I changed my rig to a Travis Bean Artist going direct into a Johnson Millennium 250 combo. The Johnson is an amp emulator not unlike the Line 6 amps, but in my opinion way better. It allowed me to change my sound radically in between songs (and sometimes for parts of songs). I still have it & it gets a fair amount of use in my studio.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jason – At this point, it is a combination of the Travis Bean bass (which has a very distinctive sound) & the Earth tube head, which accentuates the low end of the Bean. I should say that the Earth head has 2 channels & the “Normal” channel makes for a really nice guitar tone, not unlike a Fender Bassman. For the rare times I pick up my Les Paul these days, the Earth is my amp of choice

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jason – There may be a lot of redundancy in my answers here. I’ll leave the editing to you. My main amp is the Earth Sound Research Super Bass B-2000 made on Long Island in 1973. Earth Sound Research made amps from the late 1960s through

the mid-1970s. They have a small but dedicated cult following. It is perfect for the music I'm doing now, as it has a "Deep" switch that really accentuates the low end. It's like getting punched in the gut if you're standing in front of it at raised volume.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jason – My main axe these days is my Travis Bean TB-2000 bass, which has an aluminum neck through to the bridge & is made of super dense Koa wood from Hawaii. It sustains for days. I had a Travis Bean Artist 6-string as well, but sold it a few years ago because (unlike the bass) it is very neck-heavy. Drove me crazy. I'm pretty sure Vincent Gallo owns it now, as he has become the world's foremost Travis Bean collector. I don't think he even plays. What a cretin. Anyway, my main 6-string is, & always will be, my Les Paul.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jason – Well, I think the chances of that happening are pretty slim, but I would probably have an aluminum neck & some sort of double cutaway design – not unlike a Travis Bean Artist, except

definitely with more weight in the body so as to cut down its lopsided tendencies.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jason – It would be a distortion pedal for bass that enhances the low end when in use. Too many distortion pedals thin out the sound when activated for bass. Any signature distortion pedal I had would increase the punch.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jason – 2 electric guitars (my Les Paul & a 1966 SG-style Melody Maker that has been reworked into a hotter machine with humbuckers instead of P-90s), 2 acoustic guitars, & my Travis Bean bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jason – I store them in their cases in the control room of my recording studio in Brooklyn.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jason – I haven't bought a guitar in over 10 years, but good action & good sound come to mind...

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jason – Not sure how to answer that question, as the market now is ridiculous. I'm a fan of vintage guitars – probably unlikely to ever buy a new one, unless the guys at Electrical Guitar Company do a custom design for me. I wouldn't mind paying up to \$1500 for a custom guitar.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jason – Other than general set-up work (i.e. lowering the action), I like leaving the guitar in its original condition.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jason – I generally do a fair amount of research on any gear I buy (including studio equipment), but if I have had a great experience while borrowing a friend's gear, I might pick one up without going overboard on researching.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jason – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jason – Depends on the project. Hallux requires a certain sound all the time. But with Pineal Ventana, I had gotten very tired of the same sound that the Marshall gave me so I switched to the Johnson for that very reason - I could change sounds radically with one click of a pedal. We were doing music that required me to change my sound frequently.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jason – I think Electrical Guitar Company is doing a great job of building on Travis Bean's work in the 1970s. I would like to have one of their guitars one day. I've also always liked the way the Gibson Firebirds looked (especially ones with the reverse headstock). I've had a friend's Music Man 210 Combo on loan down at the studio for a year or so & really like its sound. I could see picking one of those up one day. But in general, I have so much equipment in the studio world to lust after, that any guitar stuff is way down the list of things I need.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jason – Really depends on the kind of music they are doing. For me, the Global guitar that I first owned didn't have humbuckers, & in fact had really shitty pickups that were really thin sounding. So I guess good pickups (& good tuners) are essential.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jason – I can't say I've ever really had a bad guitar purchase. The Travis Bean Artist was neck heavy, but there was still a lot I liked about it.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jason – Never been much of a Fender guy. Obviously the basses they made in the '60s & '70s are classic, but the Stratocaster has never done it for me. I've always thought they sounded thin. There have been a few Telecasters that I like, but that is about it for Fender 6-strings. In fact, the best Telecaster I've ever played was a Schecter & not a Fender.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jason – I don't have a set routine. Sorry.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jason – I was 9. I had been playing violin for about 3 or 4 years at that point & got the Global guitar for Christmas in 1978. Because it was so thin sounding, I didn't really get into playing it & started playing drums for a couple of years before I got my Les Paul – then I returned to guitar playing.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jason – Late 20s when playing with Pineal Ventana. We were rehearsing 3 times a week & really working out material for records & tours. Definitely the best I've ever played....

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jason – Well, I don't know that it does. I think I'm as proficient on drums, bass, & violin as I am on guitar. I'm a pretty well rounded musician. I'm not brilliant on any of them, but I would say I'm above average on all of them.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jason – Well, I don't know about that. I would say that piano should be taught concurrently with whatever instrument you start with. The keyboard makes it much easier to understand music theory & makes it easier to relate theory to whatever other instrument you are learning, whether it is guitar or bass or clarinet or whatever. Being able to see all of the notes in linear fashion in front of you helps you understand the 12-tone system & intervals.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jason – Certainly an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jason – I would say inspired more than influenced – but guitarists that come to mind are Paul Leary, Duane Denison, Malcolm Young, & believe it or not, Alex Lifeson (pre-1980). I would also list Travis Kotler, the guitarist I replaced in Pineal Ventana. His work on *Living Soil* & those first 7" singles PV first put out is amazing. Bassists I'm in awe of are Jeff Pinkus & Tim Dahl.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jason – Well it is a little silly, but I understand it. I've never named my guitars, but I do refer to my Les Paul as "she." I have no excuse for it....

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jason – I've been very lucky in this regard. The worst I've done was taking my guitar case out of my trunk when I was 17 or 18 without remembering that I had been playing my guitar in a parking lot with friends & put it away without latching the case. When I lifted the case out of the trunk, the top opened & the guitar landed on the pavement, scratching the binding on the top of the guitar, but very luckily not scratching (or breaking) the wood at all. In another incident, I had let a friend use the Les Paul at a show in 1989 opening for Mary My Hope (with Clint Steele of Swans) & his singer thought he was Roger Daltrey & swung his mic in big 10-foot circles. Mic came down right on the headstock, but luckily again only dented the binding.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jason – Absolutely nothing other than listen to music.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jason – At this point, less than 3 hours a week (& sometimes way less). Recording others takes up most of my time these days.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jason – Dunlop Tortex orange. Perfect thickness for me. & it doesn't ever break (unlike Fender picks), it just wears away.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jason – For the Les Paul, I use 10s. Light, but not too light. For my Melody Maker I use 9s. It has the more fragile neck, so I try not to strain it too much.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jason – With guitar, if I'm touring I'll change them every few shows unless I break one. If I break one while on tour, I'll replace the whole set. With bass, I change strings once a year. I actually prefer the sound of dead strings on a bass. Especially for recording.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jason – With Pineal Ventana, I would break them fairly often. But we were also rehearsing & gigging a lot. With bass I never break strings. Ever.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jason – Probably my fretting hand for guitar (although I'm not a bad picker – just not a finger picker on 6-string). Not sure how it affects my style. With bass, I finger pick or use a pick depending on what the song calls for.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jason – I will do minor set up things, but if it needs a major tune up, I'll take it to a professional.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jason – With guitar, I'm a pretty standard tuning guy. Occasionally tune the low E down to a D, but that is it. With Hallux, many of our songs are drop C, so I just tune the low E on the bass down to C.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jason – I occasionally will write out music notation (left over from my classical music/violin days). But I have a studio, so often I'll just record ideas & listen back to them later.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jason – I hold it in the technically incorrect rock pose (below the waist).

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jason – Writing in E.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jason – Again, piano. Just for the theory insights it gives you.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jason – Maybe pedal steel?

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jason – I think I've chosen the wise path in never setting goals & letting my playing take me where it would naturally.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jason – I honestly don't remember.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jason – I'm really not that much of a gadget guy. The Tube Screamer is a helluva stompbox. Does that count?

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jason – Fingerpicking. I took classical lessons when I was 18 & really worked at the finger picking aspects, but it was never natural for me. I recorded Devendra Banhart 6 years ago & watching him play was amazing. Wish I could play like that.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jason – I did. Starting at 9, I started taking lessons from Terry Cantwell in Macon, GA. He was a classical guitarist that had studied under John

Sutherland at UGA. But my guitar (the previously mentioned Global) sucked & I lost interest. When I got my Les Paul at age 14, I started taking lessons at a Ken Stanton music store in Roswell, GA. The instructor's name was Mark (unfortunately don't remember his last name) & he did a good job in keeping me interested by teaching me songs that I was into. He taught me the basics of blues theory & after a certain point I wasn't learning anymore from him – which he recognized & suggested I start playing in bands. Later, I took classical guitar lessons from John Sutherland who had retired from UGA, but I wasn't disciplined enough to reap the benefits.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jason – Music is mostly about feel & not technique. It is certainly a blend of the two with a heavier dose of feel.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jason – I really don't know how to answer that question.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jason – I haven't used them much myself. But in dealing with the guitarists that come into the studio, I know that many have tuning issues. They are great for certain effects though.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jason – It really depends on the band & type of music. Some guitarists play rhythm in a lead style. In your traditional rock band, I would say the lead guitarist has to hold the attention of the audience while the rhythm guitarist lays the foundation underneath him. Perfect example is AC/DC. Angus is a great guitarist, but he's really a showman. Malcolm is in the background & HE is the one responsible for all of those classic riffs.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jason – Actually, the guitar is to me often the least important instrument in determining my interest in a band. Vocalist is #1. I can love the music & hate the vocalist & I'll never listen to the band again. Don't get me wrong. I love a good guitarist. Just doesn't make or break a band for me.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jason – Maybe Duane Denison’s Travis Bean from the Head through Liar years. Just because I love those records.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jason – Well, Duane Denison is still playing, so I would choose him for rock guitarists. I think Bill Horist & Ed Ricart are doing very creative work in experimental music.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jason – I would choose the songs “Control?” from Pineal Ventana’s *Axes to Ice*, “Waterlogged” & “Intrinsic” from PV’s *Breathe as You Might*, & “Crack in the Light” & “Taenia Soleum” from PV’s *Malpractice*.

QRD – Anything else?

Jason – I’m pretty sure you’ve covered everything. Thanks for having me be part of this series!

Aidan Baker of Nadja

June 2010

Name: Aidan Baker

Bands: Nadja, Whisper Room, ARC, solo

Websites: aidanbaker.org - nadjaluv.ca

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Aidan – My first & only electric guitar – a Strat-style Kramer from the 80s. I still use it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Aidan – Guitar to effects: Profile Overdrive, Zoom Multieffects, Boss Super-Chorus, Boss Overdrive/Distortion, Boss Loop Station, Akai Headrush, Ibanez Digital Delay, Behringer 4-channel mixer. I don't use an amp anymore; just go direct to the PA from my mixer.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Aidan – Guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Aidan – I used to have a VT Phaser Twin (proudly made in Quebec, according to the sticker on the back), but I sold it a couple years ago as I stopped using amps live. The only amp I have now is a little Ross practice amp that I fished out of the garbage a couple years ago & had a friend fix up for me (though it's still in that friend's basement, to give you an idea of how often I use it).

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Aidan – Afore-mentioned Kramer is the only one I have. I like its bass-heavy tone & sustain.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Aidan – I'd like something like a harp guitar with extra bass strings with maybe a secondary set of resonate strings... it probably wouldn't look pretty, though.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Aidan – Delay, reverb, & distortion all mashed uncontrollably into one.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Aidan – Two; one electric, one acoustic (a Seagull).

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Aidan – My acoustic is in my brother's apartment on another continent & I have no idea how he's storing it. My electric goes wherever I can find a space for it.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Aidan – Feel of the fretboard, action, response....

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Aidan – Less than they always do.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Aidan – Usually just stick with what I get.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Aidan – Not very.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Aidan – Not very, apart from the occasional addition/subtraction of a pedal or two.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Aidan – I think I'm pretty locked into my guitar tone already... though within that tone I like to change the variety of sounds at least, if not the tone itself.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Aidan – I'd like a better Pitchshifter than the one I have (in the Zoom), & a Pan/Tremolo pedal would be cool. A nice vintage Gretsch or Rickenbacker guitar would be nice to have...

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Aidan – Hmm... don't know.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Aidan – My Akai Headrush has lasted me a long time & helped create my sound/style. My worst purchase was buying an as-is Boss Digital Delay off Ebay that I never got to work.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Aidan – I like the consistency of Fender guitars, less so their amps (which never seem to take to my pedal set-up very well). I've never liked Gibson guitars, for some reason I've never really been able to pinpoint.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Aidan – If I'm in my open tuning (which I usually am), I usually just strum that open chord...

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Aidan – Twelve.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Aidan – I suppose technically I leveled out around 18 or so. Creatively, I like to think I'm still improving....

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Aidan – I started playing music on flute & one of the main appeals of the guitar for me was that you could play it by yourself & not be dependent on an accompanist or an ensemble of some kind as you almost always are with flute. I've taken that idea of guitar as self-sufficient pretty far with my music.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Aidan – No. Guitar is an easy instrument to teach yourself, but it's also a lazy one – you don't need to know much, if any, theory to play it; so starting with another instrument, even piano, can provide at least a little bit of a theoretical background. Which I think is good. Not absolutely necessary, just good.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Aidan – Ally, definitely.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Aidan – In order of discovery: David Gilmour, Dave Navarro, Steve Albini, Thurston Moore/Lee Ranaldo, Justin Broadrick, PJ Harvey, Mark Kozelek, Caspar Brotzmann, James Plotkin.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Aidan – Silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Aidan – My bridge popped out once at a show many years ago, but I didn't do it intentionally. That was pretty scary, but it screwed back in easily enough & has never done it again (so far).

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Aidan – Not much.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Aidan – After touring, I often go without touching the guitar for a long time. & sometimes I don't pick it up again until I'm leaving on another tour & need to figure out what to play...

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Aidan – Anything thick – at least 1.5mm. I hate thin picks, they always just frustrate me.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Aidan – Heavy, largely because I keep my guitar tuned low & the heavier gauge keeps the tuning better. But also because thicker strings seem to have more resonance.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Aidan – When I actually notice how grimy they are.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Aidan – Sporadically.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Aidan – Strumming. I'm more interested in the hows of playing than the whats.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Aidan – I set it up myself (if at all). The few times I've sent it to a tech, they made changes I didn't like.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Aidan – With Nadja I use C-G-C-G-G-D, mainly because it has a big, bassy sound. Solo, I either use that one, a Drop D, or standard, depending on what I want to play.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Aidan – I don't usually write down my ideas. I either record them or (try to) keep them in my head.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Aidan – Average. Not too high, not too low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Aidan – Sloppiness of technique. But I usually use so many effects no one notices it....

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Aidan – Something totally different – a woodwind or brass – so that you're exposed to a completely different methodology of playing, which helps you focus on musicality rather than technicality.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Aidan – Really complicated fingerpicking.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Aidan – Really complicated fingerpicking.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Aidan – Um... it's been awhile since I learned any new tricks...

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Aidan – Really complicated fingerpicking.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Aidan – No.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Aidan – To think of the guitar not as an instrument, but as a tool; so that mastering sound is a goal, not mastering an instrument.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Aidan – Think about space & time, allow for natural resonance...flow....

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Aidan – They're superfluous.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Aidan – Every guitarist should be able to do both (which isn't always the case), & if a single player can combine both rhythm & lead into his/her playing at the same time, that's even better.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Aidan – Sometimes. But not usually.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Aidan – Um, never really thought about that... & no one's immediately coming to mind....

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Aidan – I don't know that I could narrow that down to a single person – there are tons of innovative guitar players & they're innovative for different reasons.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Aidan – That depends on what you might consider best... I've tried to record my albums using lots of different techniques, exploring different sounds &

textures, & I'm still not sure which of any of those results I liked, or would consider, best....

QRD – Anything else?

Aidan – Just this: I think the cult of the guitar is pretty idiotic. The guitar is, in the end, just another instrument, just another tool – just a means of expression – & it doesn't (& shouldn't) mean you're going to be any cooler...

Jamie Stewart of Xiu Xiu

June 2010

Name: Jamie Stewart

Bands: Xiu Xiu

Websites: xiuxiu.org

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jamie – A Yamaha acoustic that belonged to my dad. It is at my brother's house. He wants to learn to play so I gave it to him.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jamie – Gibson SG, 50 watt single channel Ampeg Super Jet reissue & some combination of various Z.Vex, Electro-Harmonix, & Ibanez pedals.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jamie – Probably the amp

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jamie – It is small enough that I don't look like an asshole playing out of it, but loud enough that I can sound like one.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jamie – A Gibson SG. The neck is good for me & the pickups are macho.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jamie – It would look like a watermelon & the features would be that it would actually be a watermelon.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jamie – It would be the cement enclosure that they used to wall off the Chernobyl reactor. The features would be that it would never disintegrate.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jamie – 5.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jamie – They are just on stands or against the wall in my little studio.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jamie – That it is easy to play, has a history, does not look like a toy & sounds dark.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jamie – I am not sure I would ever pay more than \$1200 for one. But I like used guitars.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jamie – I add graphite bridge saddles.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jamie – Usually I can tell in a minute if something is right for me.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jamie – I change pedal setups for every tour, but the guitar & amp have been the same for a while.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jamie – I like pedals but my unprocessed tone I am feel set with.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jamie – I would love the rectangular Bo Diddly Gretsch & there is a ring modulator by Fran Tone I want to get.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jamie – Some first guitars are perfect.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jamie – Best would be a 1953 Silvertone & worst would be selling a 1968 Gibson Les Paul bass to purchase car insurance so I could drive my mom's car on an awful date.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jamie – Z.Vex is great. Super crazy sounding & great customer service.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jamie – Open E major chord

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jamie – 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jamie – Probably now.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jamie – It does not really, but I can't play anything else & sing.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jamie – Anything is fine as long as you play with your heart.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jamie – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jamie – Bernard Sumner, Steven Cropper, Tony Iommi, Rob Fisk, Daniel Ash, Nick Drake, PJ Harvey, Blixa Bargeld, Derek Bailey, Sarah Lipstate, Tom Petty.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jamie – Kind of silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jamie – Smashing it to pieces during a malfunction at a show by jumping up & down on it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jamie – Trying to learn to site read.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jamie – Depends on recording & touring schedule.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jamie – Super thin pink Dunlop.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jamie – 12s flat wounds. They sound dark & don't break & last for months.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jamie – When I break one.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jamie – Every couple of weeks.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jamie – Strumming, mostly I play rhythm.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jamie – Tech. I would fuck it up.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jamie – Standard. On some songs tune the high E up to G or the B down to A. I need to use certain harmonics.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jamie – Some cave man system that I need to overcome.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jamie – Pretty high

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jamie – Not being good enough.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jamie – Drums.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jamie – Flamenco.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jamie – Playing flamenco.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jamie – I don't really know any.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jamie – Incredibly good feel & time.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jamie – How to play a Clash song.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jamie – How to make crazy feedback.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jamie – Suck.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jamie – They are fun.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jamie – Nothing if they are good.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jamie – No way.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jamie – Muddy Waters. He had cool hair.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jamie – John Dieterich of Deerhoof.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jamie – On a really nice stereo.

QRD – Anything else?

Jamie – Nope! Thanks!

Brian John Mitchell of Remora
June 2010

Name: Brian John Mitchell

Bands: Remora, Vlor, Small Life Form, etc.

Websites: silbermedia.com/remora,
silbermedia.com/vlor

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Brian – It was a red Gibson Epiphone Stratocaster body style. My mom bought it for me when I was 14. I sold it to Michael Wood (Wet Teens/M is We/Something About Vampires & Sluts) a year or two ago & it got stolen from his practice space.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Brian – My current standard rig is a Schecter custom to tuning pedal to signal splitter with one channel being envelope filter, distortion pedal, looping pedal, reverb unit & the other channel being octave pedal, distortion pedal, looping pedal, reverb unit & then back into the signal splitter & into a Roland JC 120.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Brian – I think the natural assumption from people listening to my music would be that the loop pedal is the most important thing, but I don't think that's true. The only thing really integral is my right hand; even the fretting hand is optional.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Brian – Roland JC-120. It's loud, it takes anything I throw at it, & doesn't add much color to the sound.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Brian – I have a custom Schecter that was made for Mike Tempesta. It's got an aluminum face & looks cool. It also sounds good. It doesn't have a tremolo system & that's important because I like a guitar that can stay in tune when I beat the crap out of it.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Brian – I like the distressed aluminum top look, but I would put it on the back of the guitar as well. Something kinda Stratocaster looking. Something with 24 frets would be good. Maybe have three different kinds of pickups & each has its own volume & control knobs & switches so that they can

have their own output jack or blended to a single jack. Have the tone knobs so that they can lock in position. Have sympathy strings on the top that tune with a drum key with a pickup that can either go to the main mix or a separate output. So that's 4 possible output jacks & ridiculous. No tremolo system. Teflon bridges so strings don't break. Ship already intonized. Have a guitar case that comes with a lot of pockets including one that can hold a guitar stand that comes with it. I guess that's it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Brian – Well, I'm still looking for an octave pedal I actually like the sound of & haven't found one yet (a lot have latency issues). But I like a lot of different pedals. I'd like a looping pedal that could capture the loops the way the Line 6 looper does, but also really mess with the sound after capturing it like you could on the early 90s loopers where you can twist a knob to make something anywhere from a tenth the speed to ten times the speed. Also something where you could record multiple loops & either auto-sync them up or purposely have them out of phase with each other.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Brian – About a dozen.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Brian – I have some in cases in closets or in the basement, but others that sit out at all times to encourage me to play. There's a 90% chance at any time that a guitar is lying on my bed or leaning against it.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Brian – Better utilization of pocket space. Or cool images on them.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Brian – If it can be intonized, stay in tune, & look cool on stage. I guess the sound coming out of it comes next....

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Brian – I think you can get a decent guitar for \$500. They probably get 10% better sounding every time you double the price.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Brian – I change the strings & usually that's it. I changed to Teflon bridges on my main guitar & it dramatically reduced my strings breaking from my heavy right hand.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Brian – Not nearly enough. I got a bunch of stuff I'm not too happy with. I go on Harmony Central or ask somebody I know who owns something I'm thinking about buying sometimes. I don't like to test equipment out in a store, which is dumb on my part.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Brian – I'm still trying to tweak it to be exactly what I want. But it's stayed basically the same for a few years now. I think about swapping out my Lexicon reverb unit because it has a lot of hiss (I don't think it used to, but touring is rough on equipment made to live in a studio) & maybe adding another distortion pedal or another envelope filter & switching out my octave pedal. I don't know. The problem is always that there are some songs where an individual pedal is integral & if I pull out the pedal I'm throwing that song away.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Brian – I change my tone a bit. I think when you do wall of sound stuff & the notes start to get less important, changing your setting for different songs is pretty important.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Brian – The Electro-Harmonix POG & Digitech Whammy are probably the two pedals I'd most want. I kinda want an SG, maybe the platinum one or one of those distressed looking ones. Or any of the Schecter guitars with aluminum tops. & I kind of want an electric dobro.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Brian – The ability to stay in tune is important & it seems a little rare on starter guitars.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Brian – Best deals: I got a Rat Deucetone for \$80. I got a Rocktron Digital Destiny Reverb for \$50. The list price on my Schecter was \$15,000 & I paid \$2000 for it.

Worst deals: I used to buy 1960s Japanese hollow body guitars. They all have these weird movable bridges & skinny necks. They're hard for me to play & they go out of tune easily.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Brian – Right now I like Rocktron for effect pedals (they seem really tough & clean), Schecter & Aria & Washburn I feel like are fairly priced guitars, I like Roland amps (they're clean). I've never really cared for Fenders or Ibanez guitars (though I don't have a reason why), Electro-Harmonix pedals seem to break a lot, & Marshall amps add too much color to the guitar tone.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Brian – There's a Remora song called "Slip Sky" that is usually the first thing I play.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Brian – I got my first guitar at 14, but I'd say I started playing at 20.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Brian – 25 & its been wavering up & down slightly the past ten years.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Brian – Often I think I should play a trumpet or some other instrument that only plays one note at a time. I don't really understand chords well enough to play a chord oriented instrument. But I guess there is a certain physicality & violent attack versus finesse on a guitar that really does fit me pretty well.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Brian – Probably not. People should probably learn piano if they're going to be into western music. I'm sure it would have helped me to know more about what notes work together.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Brian – Mainly just as a tool more than anything else. But sometimes I see it as an incredible tool & other times a crappy one.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Brian – Probably Russell Halasz (Vlor) & Martin Newman (burMonter, Plumerai) were the biggest influences as I was in bands with them while learning to play guitar. The two “famous” guitarists that were most influential during my formative years were probably Justin Broadrick (Godflesh) & Johnny Rico (Warrior Soul) who are probably as opposite as guitarists get.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Brian – I think it can be natural, but it’s pretty silly as well. Guitars are pieces of wood with tuned wires mounted on.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Brian – I have a bass that got its neck snapped when a trunk got shut on it while it was in a gig bag.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Brian – Every once in a while I crack open a book of chords & go through practicing fingerings. I don't usually use more than two fingers on my left hand, so it's a challenge.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Brian – Lately I'm lucky if I play guitar five hours in a week. I miss when I used to have it in my hands six or seven hours a day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Brian – I use the orange Tortex picks (0.60 mm). The regular plastic picks I find melt when I play; which sounds cool, but is just annoying.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Brian – I use D'Addarios with the high E 0.011. These days people say that's a light gauge, fifteen years ago that was a heavy gauge. I've just stuck with it except for special circumstances with alternate tunings or when I was poor enough that I tried to buy wire from the hardware store to make

my own strings (they broke easily & didn't stay in tune).

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Brian – Generally just when they break or can't stay in tune anymore.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Brian – I used to break strings at about one per half hour of playing, but I switched to Teflon bridges & now I'd say it's one per 100 hours of playing. My right hand is probably a little too heavy some of the time.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Brian – I wouldn't really call either of them proficient. But definitely the strumming hand is integral to what I do. I could probably still play some of my songs with just my right hand, though I'd have to play around with tunings.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Brian – I set it up myself. Nobody would put the action as high as I need it to be. I really need to lighten up my right hand.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Brian – I generally use standard tuning. Occasionally I alter my tunings to make songs easier to play for recording. I do have a guitar that's tuned EAEAAE that I use on occasion because it can sound pretty huge pretty easily.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Brian – I use my own system that just lists strings & frets. I can't really read tablature or sheet music properly; I always convert them to my own system.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Brian – I have it so the center of my guitar is at my waist. Anything else just feels unnatural.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Brian – Playing the wrong notes.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Brian – If you're in a band, then any of the other members' instruments a bit so you can hear them a little better when playing with them. Playing bass helps strengthen your fingers & drumming helps with your timing.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Brian – I wish I could play clawhammer acoustic. Or to be able to play like Dave Mustaine would be pretty sweet.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Brian – I'd like to be in a straight rock band, but I can't see it happening.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Brian – I've been doing a lot with sympathetic string experiments. Taking guitars & putting them in front of one amp & then sending their signals out to other amps. It looks cool on stage even if it doesn't add as much to the sound as I like to think it does.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebaw, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Brian – I have a brass slide that I think looks really cool.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Brian – Playing chords.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Brian – I took a couple when I was 14. I think in retrospect I learned that you should try to learn to play from someone doing things in music that you want to do. My best guitar lesson type knowledge is “Each Animal Does Good Before Eating” which tells you the notes on the open strings in standard tuning.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Brian – Probably I’d want them to come in with their rig & help them sculpt their overall guitar tone & help them figure out what pedals they want to own.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Brian – Hit the strings hard (natural distortion) & intermittently really fast or really slow, do a lot of bends, be incredibly repetitive.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Brian – They knock your guitar out of tune & generally should be avoided. They generally sound out of place to me & should just be bends. Notable exceptions of when people should have tremolos – surf music & cowboy soundtracks.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Brian – When I first buy a guitar & then accidentally when I twist the tone knob instead of the volume knob.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Brian – I think of lead guitars as a little more improvisational, but also a little more gimmicky. In general I think of rhythm players as more competent players who don't have to compensate for shortcomings & insecurities.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Brian – Sometimes. It depends on the mix. If the mix is good, I can forgive a lot.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Brian – Willie Nelson's beat up acoustic. That thing is beautiful.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Brian – I'll go with Alan Sparhawk (Low, Retribution Gospel Choir), Justin Broadrick (Godflesh, Jesu), Jon DeRosa (Aarktica), & Bill Horist. I think those four guys have all figured out that playing faster is just a weapon & not the evidence of being a good guitar player. Also they are all very competent with controlling & sculpting feedback & that's an important element to me.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Brian – Probably *Ensoulement*, which is a 71 minute piece I did for Ping Things. You can download it at www.archive.org/details/pingthings008

QRD – Anything else?

Brian – I wonder how many people will read the whole of these articles.

Martin Newman of Plumerai

June 2010

Name: Martin Newman

Bands: Plumerai; Goddakk

Websites: plumerai.com, silbermedia.com/plumerai,
facebook.com/PlumeraiBand,
silbermedia.com/goddakk

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Martin – Harmony – Flying V electric. It was white with gold hardware & I eventually sold it to a classmate in high school after I got a Charvel Model-4 (this was before Jackson fully took over Charvel, so it didn't have the triangle fret markers etc. yet & no Floyd Rose bridge). I think the Flying V came from a Sears or JC Penney Catalog.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Martin – Guitar: Metropolitan – Tanglewood or Gretsch-5120 & sometimes a Fender reissue BassVI to Dunlop Crybaby WAH -> Electro-Harmonix Big Muff Pi ->Ibanez – SS10 Session Man (distortion w/ built in chorus) -> Boss-TR2 ->Boss DD-4 ->EH Holy Stain -> Roland JC120

I have to say the Holy Stain is a replacement for my

old styled Holy Grail which started having issues. & why two fuzzes? The Big Muff sort of lacks clarity, it's more fuzz than distortion.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Martin – Tough question, for me personally it's the guitar. It has to feel good to play or everything sounds like shit to me. But for the songs/sounds it's probably the pedals. Although our songs aren't as effect reliant as they used to be, too much or too little fuzz/distortion or the delay or tremolo dialed too slow can really mess up the feel & flow of a song.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Martin – Roland JC-120 for live & a Magnatone for recording.

JC120s are sort of workhorses & can take a beating during a tour & still get really loud & full sounding regardless of the room. The other feature I like about it is that the sound you send in is basically the sound you're going to get coming out of the amp. I remember it having a decent reverb but over the 9 years I've had the amp it stopped working & I never bothered trying to fix it.

The Magnatone just sounds sweet. Great reverb & smooth lush sound. It's especially great playing a

Fender Jazzmaster or Jaguar through. Sort of a classic sound like you'd get from the 60s or 70s. An added feature is that it has an M that lights up when you turn it on. Its built in vibrato & reverb are great, but the reason I don't use it live is that there are intermittent crackles & pops. We've taken it to the shop & they either say they fixed it or don't hear it.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Martin – Right now it's the Metropolitan Tanglewood. Mainly for the shape. But also because it has a full & thick sound & for some reason it kicks out more power than the other guitars I use. It's versatile so it's great to do regular rock guitar playing as well as ambient & the more wall of sounds that the kids love these days. Overall it just feels good to hold too.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Martin – It'd be big & bulky with thick ass strings. All the characteristics I like about the Metropolitan. With a synth element like the Guitorgans have. & a bunch of switches. It'd be cool if I could do something with it like shoot off fireworks or lasers

too & if you can pull hidden knives from it, all the better.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Martin – A wah controllable tremolo/delay pedal. With a loop capability. All of it would be able to be controlled via the wah in regards to the speed of the effect. My biggest problem in Plumerai has been not being able to adjust the effects mid-song to the drummer's tempo or even just because I think a part would sound better slower or faster.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Martin – Personally I own the Gretsch & a crappy acoustic. But in the Plumerai collection we have about seven. The Metropolitan, the aforementioned Gretsch, a Jazzmaster, Jaguar, Fender Bass VI, a homemade Bass VI, aforementioned crappy acoustic.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Martin – In the apartment either in a case or on a stand.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Martin – How cool it looks basically. I tend to like humbuckers for both sound & aesthetics. After that how it feels in my hands.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Martin – What I personally feel it should cost is around \$400. But that's me dreaming since they're usually much much more. I don't particularly like newer brands/models. People seem to like them but I still prefer older styled Fenders, etc.; not PSRs or Schecters.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Martin – Adjustments are made. I most recently changed out the pickups in the Gretsch with TV Jones pickups & need to do the tuners.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Martin – Not very since I'm mostly judging it by its looks first, playability second, reliability third.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Martin – Not really. I usually don't play the guitar plugged into an amp except at rehearsals & recording sessions, so I don't get to hear it as often as I should. IT does change though. I've replaced pedals or taken them completely out of my rig. Depending on where my playing is going. More & more I use less pedals. Less U2 more The Cure.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Martin – A lot is a bit much, but I like to alter it up. I usually stick with a tone for a period of time & then change it. I should do more changing during a recording session, but I don't like to mess up the momentum of playing.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Martin – I don't typically have equipment lust, but I wouldn't mind a Fender Twin Reverb Amp or this guitar I used in the studio, a Univox Hi Flyer maybe.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Martin – Good songs.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Martin – Worst was the Line-6 pedal, best is probably the Gretsch & the wah pedal which allows for a bit more play with the delay &/or tremolo so you don't just get the same tone spittin' back at you, it allows you to create the allusion of rhythm when really it's still the same old repeats.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Martin – EFX: Boss pedals & Electro-Harmonix have been the best tone wise. Line-6, Danelectro, ART have been the worse even though they seem like they had more functionality. Nanoverbs were horrendous in terms of tone, but it had a decent swelling reverb you can manage on there with a single pedal.

Amps: the JC-120 of course, & the Fender Twin Reverbs, I've never had a good experience with Marshall, Peavey, or Line6.

Guitar: Fenders rule. Never particularly liked any Gibsons I played or Schecters or PRSs.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Martin – A minor, D minor, E minor jam.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Martin – Who knows, but I'd guesstimate around 12 or 13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Martin – When I listened to a lot of metal, so I would say between 10th & 11th grade. I'm not sure how old you are then, 16 or 17? Or younger? But it wasn't til later that I played more interesting parts.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Martin – I don't know that it does, it's just I've had one & have been playing one for a long time so now it's most comfortable cuz I can play without thinking & generally know where to go next for the next note I want. Playing other instruments for me is still a struggle.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Martin – No. Definitely not. They're so cheap & ordinary that nowadays nobody cares. It's like skateboarding, something cool some people like to do but nothing to be really excited about or respected. I don't blame them really, who'd be excited about kids with baseball caps playing Dave Matthews songs.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Martin – A bit of both. It limits me cuz I generally reach for it first or feel that since I'm the guitarist in a rock band that whatever song I write should be oriented for the instrument.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Martin – In no particular order, Robert Smith/Porl Thompson, Jeff Hanneman, Vadim Kolpakov, Alex Skolnick, Sergei Shnurov, Eugene Hutz. Jim Shaw/Mark Francombe. John McGeoch.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Martin – Chips in paint or knobs falling off. Mostly from dropping it, which is usually a result of the strap not being secured. A singer for my first band

ever pulled the headstock off of a Les Paul at the rehearsal studio we practiced in on accident & then tried to patch it together with gum.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Martin – Nothing. Maybe writing parts that are more difficult to play.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Martin – If there isn't a show or recording going on probably about an hour a week. I think that's enough. I mainly use it as a tool to write music. I'm not particularly interested in being a guitar god.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Martin – Usually the purple Dunlops, I don't recall the size but they're fairly thick & stiff. Flimsy picks aren't for me, I actually don't even see the advantage of a pick that's going to retreat when it hits a string.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Martin – .11s. Anything thinner sounds weak, anything thicker hurts my fingers. I have the

hollowbody strung up with .10s cuz I do more hand strumming & live it started to cut my fingers which sucked on a week long tour where I'd cut the finger on night one & have to spend every other show in pain.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Martin – Before recording or when it breaks usually.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Martin – Not often anymore, it's actually to the point now where I can just sense a string is going to break during a show. You'd think that would get me to change the strings beforehand, but you'd be wrong.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Martin – Definitely strumming hand. I don't play solos or songs that require too much fiddling around so when I do try it, on occasions I notice that the fretting fingers sometime go where they want to.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Martin – My brother sets it up so I guess that's like sending it to a guitar tech.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Martin – Regular ole E tuning. Life is easier this way.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Martin – It's all in my mind. If I can't remember it then I guess it's not really worth remembering anyways. Sometimes I'll record it, but never write it down. Seems wasteful.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Martin – It used to hang low, but now I play it higher sorta centered around waistline. When I started using more than just power chords I noticed it was easier to play with the guitar a bit higher than slung around my knees. But I'll never play it Berklee high. If it meant having it high or not being able to execute a complicated guitar solo "lick"... I'd definitely sacrifice the lick/solo.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Martin – Making the claw to hold down chords.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Martin – I hear piano, but I wouldn't know personally. Playing guitar definitely doesn't help me play piano any better though.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Martin – Flamenco & gypsy.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Martin – Getting the perfect sound for a song. There's a tone that I can only describe as round that I can't achieve, but hear in my head.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Martin – Raising the guitar strap. Also the slappity strumming of gypsy guitar.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Martin – Fingerpicking where the thumb is playing a different rhythm than the other fingers.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Martin – I took lessons at University once because it was required in the program I was in to take lessons on an instrument. The only thing I really learned was that my instructor was full of shit & didn't think there was a difference in sound between all downpicking & alternate picking let alone thought you could get the same sound with your fingerpicking as you could with a pick. He actually spent a couple minutes each lesson trying to convince me to buy his CD.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Martin – That there's a noticeable difference in playing everything all on one string even though it's more of a pain in the ass to play. The easiest most efficient way to play a part isn't necessarily the best.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Martin – Not care about technique. Make the claw pay attention to the rhythm. The Subtleties are the best parts.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Martin – Had a Khaler on my Charvel back in the day, it was fun to play with. Have a Bigsby on my Gretsch & use it primarily for subtle chord dives like in surf tunes.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Martin – Who gets to play the guitar solo I would think.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Martin – Dream Theater is horrible anyway you slice it.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Martin – Elvis’s guitar. I’d sell it & buy something I really wanted with the money.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Martin – In Muzine’s Issue #09, there’s a free extended “Empty Graves” EP. For the short & online versions: Plumerai.bandcamp.com I like “Empty Graves,” “Strike,” “Die... die slowly,” “Lavinia,” “Avernal” in terms of guitar work. & anything from the Goddakk album is worth checking out in regards to guitar playing.

QRD – Anything else?

Martin – I think it’s important for guitarist to not listen strictly to guitar parts of songs. Also pay attention to rhythm even if you’re doing wall of sound strummy stuff. There’s a pulse in it & you should take note & use it.

UPDATE – January 2013

For the longest time I was a firm believer in Roland’s JC-120. Most of the guitar sounds I loved growing up roared & chimed through it & then later the Fender Twin Reverb caught my attention. Always a 2X12 combo of sorts. After hauling that around the eastern seaboard, up & down stairs or over gravel lots to & fro the back of the van I finally

broke down & decided that I needed to go smaller without sacrificing sound. Realistically, I never needed half the power of the JC-120 playing in small to midsize clubs & often would be harassed by our vocalist to keep the volume down. So, I put together a travel friendly setup.

It all started with Electro-Harmonix Magnum 44 power amp pedal. This little amp that fits onto my Pedal Train 2 board, gets as loud as I require & much like the JC-120, I've rarely ever had to crank it past the 15% mark. As the name indicates, it's 44 watts & pushes out to either 8 or 16 ohm speakers, they make a cheaper 22 watt pedal called the 22 Caliber as well. From my experience, it has a good solid tone with no frills except a switch for bright or normal.

The Magnum powers a Fender Superchamp 1X12 cab. This cab maintains a good solid tone from the Magnum 44 & keeps in line with big sounds out of a small & light package. On my recent shot out to the west coast, I shoved this cab into a large suitcase & packed my clothes around it & not only was it easy to wheel around, it still kept me within the bounds of allowable weight for luggage & I didn't have to pay an extra \$25 or \$50 baggage fee. Similarly, I live in a city & this amp would fit nicely into a granny cart if you needed to travel by foot & if worse came to worse, it's not so heavy that you couldn't carry it by the attached handle a few blocks or on the subway. The downside to this cab

is that it's just got one input & can't be daisy chained if I wanted to start using a 2x12 set up again for stereo effect. It also doesn't seem like I'd be able to take the backing off, as it seems to be one solid back piece with the input jack attached.

Since the Magnum only consists of a volume knob & a brightness switch. The next two pedals needed to be thrown into the mix to sweeten things up. First, EQ is being done by a 6 channel MXR EQ - I think I prefer knobs, but this pedal does the job. It also offers more control since you can bring down specific ranges of your tone. It definitely comes in handy. The Electro-Harmonix LPB2ube is a tube preamp that sweetens & strengthens the tone by adding some tube drive & having two channels, I attached an AB switch so I can use one channel clean & one channel as a tube overdrive. The only annoying bit about this pedal is having to use the power supply that it comes with instead of powering it off of a brick supply. It has a lo & hi input knob, which comes in handy when I switch off between the Metropolitan & the Fender. The Metro comes in hot so switching the knob to Hi input dials it back without having to adjust the volume/drive settings.

That completes the basic sound of my "amp" or rig or whatever you want to call it but how can you have a setup without a tuner? I've recently come to favor TC Electronics as a good mid/low-priced pedal. It started with the Polytune mini. Very small, very accurate & I can check the tuning of all

6 strings at once. & did I mention very small? My smart phone is larger than this tuner, let us not forget that it's also "true bypass". This starts my effects loop & I run it into a Crybaby Wah, which I may replace with something nicer or at least less beat up. I have a fuzz pedal for the big wall of sound power bits of our songs & I used to use an EH Big Muff Pi; but, as the name suggests, it was big & took up a lot of real estate on the pedal board. In the past, I had replaced my EH Holy Grail (reverb) pedal with the Holy Grail Nano & while it was a decent pedal, it just didn't perform to my liking & I didn't want to go through that disappointment with the Nano version of the Muff. So I went with a clone version of a Big Muff. Fit into a typical square pedal casing about the size of an MXR. It nicely fits the layout of my pedal board & is practically as powerful as the EH Big Muff Pi. I'll admit it doesn't have quite the low grumble of the EH pedal, but it's close & the benefit of the small chassis is definitely worth the slight loss of low end.

My last remaining BOSS pedal, is the Tremolo/Pan PN-2. It may no longer be in production. It's at times a very important part of my setup (see Plumerai songs "Six Ton Gorilla"/"Empty Graves"/"Intangible" for example). However, since upgrading a few of my other BOSS pedals, I can now really hear the tone suck when I click it on,

especially in the low ranges. Which means the clock is ticking on when the PN-2 gets replaced. Part of the reason I'm practically BOSS free these days is my discovery of TC Electronic. I used to not be able to part with my Boss Delays until I found this nice decently priced replacement. While I would love an analog delay, they're just not versatile enough for me, especially with my occasional foray into more experimental-looped-droney territory like on the Goddakk records. But this pedal the Flashback has everything I need in the delay as well as a looping function. So it's like I lost one pedal, but gained two. It has a multitude of settings, analog, tape, reverse etc.... So there's more of a variety of sounds than the Boss & it doesn't suck your tone like the Boss does. The Flashback also makes use of Toneprint, which is a setting on the pedal where I can download from the interwebs or straight from my smartphone a delay sound designed by some celebrity guitarist. Unfortunately the pedal is geared toward the Guitar Center crowd so most of the tone prints & advertising sort of turns me off as I'm not a fan of Dream Theater or Santana, but it's a nice feature because if I get bored with the pedal I can download a new setting to tinker with. This pedal is a great versatile delay to have & when you're lugging around all your gear, it's nice to not have to carry around multiple pedals to do similar jobs or to have to switch out pedals depending on the gig or the

song. There's also a switch to choose one of three types of delay repeats, half note, quarter note, & a combination so you have a bit more options as to the rhythmic pattern of your delay.

Similarly, I also switched out the aforementioned EH Holy Grail Nano with a TC Electronic Hall of Fame Reverb Pedal. I started with the Holy Grail when my JC-120's reverb stopped working. It was a nice time while it lasted, but eventually the pedal started squealing at random intervals. So out with the Holy Grail in with the Holy Grail Nano. I read that it was very close in sound to its bigger counterpart. While that may be true, I felt that there was a range of effect missing from the Nano. So my sound was either too dry or too wet & that sweet spot could never be found. So, I moved on to another TC Electronic pedal. Like the Flashback, there's a multitude of Reverb types on the Hall of Fame & it's also equipped with TonePrint & is true bypass. Sometimes it's like having a rack multi-unit, but without the horrible sound quality of Line 6 & all with the compact & ease of use as a Boss or EH.

All of this fits neatly onto one Pedal Train 2 board with a power brick secured underneath. So as a traveling man, you have your guitars on your back, pedals in one hand & cab in the other. The recent west coast tour saw the cab being checked-in & the pedals in the overhead bin. In a van, the setup leaves room for your bassist to bring their 6 foot

Ampeg cab that is going to be bigger than the stage you're playing on & if you're playing places that are backlined, you'll have your sound that you can power their cab with instead of dealing with a beat up Marshall stack from 1984 with missing knobs & a channel button stuck or not working. While I don't pretend that this sound surpasses or is even equivalent to buying a Fender Twin Reverb or Vox or what have you, chances are for a live/touring scenario, you'll be happier you didn't lug a big heavy amp down the stairs into a basement club & back again. As an added bonus each component is approximately \$150 give or take, so if it craps the bed you can just replace the one component without having to shell out \$600+ to acquire the same or similar model amp at the last minute to continue a tour.

Mat Sweet of Boduf Songs

June 2010

Name: Mat Sweet

Bands: Boduf Songs

Websites: bodufsongs.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Mat – It was a demented looking homemade thing that I picked up at a car-boot sale for some very few monies. Sounded like crap, wouldn't stay in tune for five minutes. I gave it to someone else a few years later when I upgraded.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Mat – Fender Jagmaster, Peterson Strobostomp tuner, Line 6 Echo Park, whatever amp I can borrow.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Mat – Guitar I guess, just because I'm comfortable with it.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Mat – Nope.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Mat – The Jagmaster has a sticker on it of a skeleton rolling double snake eyes & it says, “Let’s roll!”

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Mat – As above.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Mat – Hardware equivalent of a dark-ware bit crusher.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Mat – One acoustic, one electric, one bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Mat – On stands around my room.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Mat – Just something that feels right & special.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Mat – I usually have a preference for cheaper gear - more costly things just feel wrong in my hands.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Mat – Not much customizing beyond re-stringing & tuning down.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Mat – I tend to do a lot of research before any kind of investment, but I find that I really need to have something for a while & use it before I can form a reliable opinion on it for myself. I actually had a Jaguar before I got the Jagmaster, & it took me 4 or 5 weeks of usage to realise it wasn't right for me. I knew pretty quickly with the Jagmaster, which was about a fifth of the price.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Mat – Not really - I have certain bits of hardware & software that I rely on.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Mat – I like to have a few different options - use lots of VSTs & a Line 6 Pod for recording.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Mat – It'd be nice to have an amp - Fender Twin would be good. I much prefer combos, even for big heavy riffery.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Mat – Ability to stay in tune.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Mat – Nothing springs to mind, but it's certainly not unusual for me to buy something then resell it a few months later because it didn't quite work out.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Mat – Shonky cheapo stuff usually isn't worth the money saved, for it will be rubbishy & break quickly.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Mat – Sleep – “Dragonaut.”

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Mat – I used to “play” my dad's electric guitar when I was 12 or 13, but it was long time after that that I started actually thinking about what I was doing.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Mat – Still working on my overhand/underhand technique.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Mat – Uh, it doesn't really... I started off playing the drums, & feel much more confident behind a kit. In truth I would have a lot more to say if these questions were drum-oriented. Playing guitar was

more of a move for the sake of songwriting than anything else.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Mat – There are a lot of guitarists around because it makes a fun sound & looks cool. I guess it might be interesting if more people started on something else?

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Mat – Ally. Me & my axe against the world.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Mat – Tony Iommi/Dave Pajo.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Mat – Both. Mainly silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Mat – Took apart my first guitar & stripped it without having a clue about the complexities of putting it back together correctly. Gave it away soon after that.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Mat – Think about Yngwie Malmsteen whilst masturbating.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Mat – Depends whether I'm recording/rehearsing... maybe 7 hours a week on average?

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Mat – I think it's a 0.5 - feels right.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Mat – Big fat ones - they work best with low tuning.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Mat – When they break.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Mat – Not very often.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Mat – Strumming hand has tricks, fretting hand is pretty lame. Result = shoddy work all round.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Mat – Pay for a set-up once in a blue moon to keep things ticking over.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Mat – Tuned to B with standard intervals - so, like E but 5 frets lower.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Mat – Tape recorder.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Mat – Usually sitting down.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Mat – Doing finger-tap solos during practice.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Mat – Drums.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Mat – Hidden mongoose/darkpalm style.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Mat – Mastering the hidden mongoose/darkpalm style.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Mat – F#.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Mat – G.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Mat – No sir.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Mat – Picked harmonics.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Mat – Be fairly crap at playing guitar.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Mat – Too much hassle for tuning.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Mat – Finger-tapping skills.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Mat – Nope.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Mat – A ludicrously expensive one so I can pay rent next month.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Mat – Maybe Creston Spiers (Harvey Milk) for having extreme heavyosity without being dull & cliché or something.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Mat – In the future.

QRD – Anything else?

Mat – Thanks awfully.

Robin Crutchfield of DNA

June 2010

Name: Robin Crutchfield

Bands: DNA, Dark Day, Robin Crutchfield

Websites: robincrutchfield.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Robin – A Stella acoustic folk guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Robin – My favorite set-up was to attach a capo & slide it up a few frets so the guitar sounded more like a mandolin or harp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Robin – When I switched from acoustic guitar to keyboard, the combination of instrument, amp, & effects was pretty important in tweaking the sound.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Robin – I can't recall what brand it was, but it had a pretty good bass tone & a built-in tremolo effect. I

got it from filmmaker Amos Poe who got it from Ivan Kral of the Patti Smith group when they had once been in a band together.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Robin – At this point my “main guitar” is a Pakistani made harp that retails for about \$100. It is baby-sized & gives a nice cradled tone. It is a twelve-string which seems to be all I need.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Robin – It would be a harp shaped like a crutch, have electric amplification features & also double as a walking assist.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Robin – It would contain a number of effects including reverb, echo, flange, chorus, wah-wah, & looping sampling delay.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Robin – None at the moment. A couple of ukuleles, 3 harps, 4 lyres, 2 psalteries.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Robin – In my treehouse.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Robin – Portability, affordability, aesthetic charm, overall tone.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Robin – Up to \$350.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Robin – I am perpetually looking for the perfect instrument & keep searching weighing new purchases with those I own.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Robin – I do online research first, keep my budget low & take a gamble. I am often put on the spot by dealers in shops.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Robin – I keep looking.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Robin – I'm after the perfect sound.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Robin – Nothing specific. Would like to be left alone in a big showroom with unlimited time to test under no stress.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Robin – They should be custom fit to each hand.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Robin – The best & worst purchase was an Indian tanpura, which I learned I could not play; but in working with it, I discovered a scale that I have adopted for all my work since.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Robin – Roland & Boss effects have been helpful to me & the right size & price.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Robin – I test for the clarity of all the strings then improvise.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Robin – Twelve.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Robin – Thirteen. I was never very good.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Robin – I don't. Guitars are cliché/common. I prefer the unusual. Even my harp is nonstandard size; miniature compared to those most play, even Celtic harpers.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Robin – No, I'd recommend drums or keyboards to start out.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Robin – For me, at this point, a guitar is an adversary, whereas a harp is an ally.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Robin – When you find the right instrument for you, it seems to contain its own soul & personality. I totally understand the tightness of the relationship people have with their instruments.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Robin – I stored a harp in a too-hot apartment on a high shelf where the hot air rose, & the hot dry air cracked the wood, which split under the pressure.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Robin – I visualize myself in ancient Greece in another life playing a lyre to the sheep or for royalty. I listen to a wide variety of music, both modern & ancient, & listen for each artist's approach.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Robin – I play for as long as the mood possesses me & wish it would be longer.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Robin – I don't use them, but prefer a well-manicured fingernail.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Robin – I prefer the nylon to steel. Steel strings have a lovely metallic ring, but the nylon is sensual to the touch & makes the instrument's embrace more loving.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Robin – I've been lucky enough yet to have not had to.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Robin – I am very gentle on the strings. The instrument is a delicate tender thing.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Robin – Both work as partners.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Robin – I have come to my own methods.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Robin – I prefer not to give them away. Let each man discover his own.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Robin – I have used diagrams & personal tape recorders in the past, but now rely on memory or instantly commit to digital tracks.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Robin – Close to the heart, cradled like a baby.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Robin – Being too self-conscious & concerned about what others might be listening for or expecting of me.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Robin – Anything developing dexterity or toughness of fingertips.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Robin – Bottleneck slide.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Robin – To get a clean, lovely sound without experiencing pain.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Robin – To treat it rhythmically as a drum.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Robin – Playing what & where I wish.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Robin – About fifteen chords & hammering on the strings.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Robin – Ignore the rules & find your own method.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Robin – Embrace their ancient past.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Robin – They can become addictive.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Robin – The ideal player would do well to blend the two.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Robin – No, a band is balance against strife in constant struggle.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Robin – I don't think any would do much good in my ownership.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Robin – My all-time favorite guitar player is Danny Kirwan of early Fleetwood Mac. His guitar always sounded like it was gently sobbing.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Robin – Any of my current harp albums.

Darren Hayman of Hefner
June 2010

Name: Darren Hayman

Bands: Hefner, The French, now solo

Websites: www.hefnet.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Darren – My first guitar was an Encore acoustic, swiftly followed by an Encore electric. The acoustic got trod on by a drunk student friend. The electric exists in my parents loft somewhere.

QRD – What's your typical setup from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Darren – Fender Telecaster, lead, Fender Pro-Junior Amp. Beat that.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Darren – Now if someone didn't say the guitar here wouldn't you think that strange & slightly wrong?

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Darren – The Pro-Junior above. It has two knobs Tone & Volume. I only use one of them.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Darren – I have three Telecasters; but despite owning a Fender Thinline, my main guitar has become a Squire Pro-Fat (?) by nature of the fact that I have had a B-bender fitted to it. A B-bender is a truly audacious guitar mod that allows you to move the pitch of the B-string by pushing the guitar down against the strap. It needs to be seen to be explained.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Darren – It would look like a Fender Telecaster. It might have a B-bender.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Darren – Being the owner of a modular synthesizer pretty much all effects pedals look like miniature poodles next to my Rotweiller. Maybe I could design a pedal that makes promoters not be arseholes?

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Darren – 5.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Darren – In a music room/studio on hooks on the wall.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Darren – Are they a Telecaster?

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Darren – I bought a gimp, spare, Squire Telecaster recently for about £100 new & its fine, really good. I have paid £600 before. I think sometimes you have to be aware of the appropriateness of the expense of your guitar next to your songs. There is a British singer called Richard Hawley who plays songs of heartbreak on various £2000 Gretsches & it just kind of looks inauthentic. This is show business & the guitar you play does affect people's impression & expectations.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Darren – I've done a few things. I usually put one humbucker pickup into a Telecaster if it doesn't already have one. See also the B-bender mod I had put in my Telecaster mentioned above.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Darren – I like simple uncomplicated things because they work. I like small things because they are easy to carry & most of the size & hassle with guitar gear is unnecessary when you compare it to the sound people make. I know my taste so I don't need to research much. Eclecticism is over-rated.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Darren – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Darren – I like a decent guitar, slightly overdriving four valve tubes. That's it. Luckily so do most other people. In the studio it's sometimes different (see modular synthesizer above) & I have some old funky items like a Watkins CopyCat but mostly it's guitar & amp.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Darren – If I had more money & people around me to carry shit I might be interested in having a Vox amp, an AC30 or more probably an AC15; but really I'm fine.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Darren – Well I think buying a really cheap piece of shit as your first guitar is obstructive to learning; but guitars are so good & cheap now, it's hard to go wrong.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Darren – I bought a 12 string electric mandolin that is really unplayable & very one trick pony. I guess in terms of value my Fender Pro-Junior Amp has been an awesome purchase. Pretty much my only gigging amp for over ten years now.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Darren – Well, I guess, I'm kind of against the idea of effects at all really. I do see guitarists that use them well, but once again the secret, for me, seems to be a simplicity & directness in the approach that is often missing. Guitarists often fetishize gear & that can be their undoing as a musician. I really don't like Marshall amps, they always sound loud without having any meaningful definition. I really don't like the feel of playing a Stratocaster. They've never made sense to me.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Darren – I don't know. A G chord. Check it's in tune.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Darren – 16/17.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Darren – I stayed at the same level from about 25 to 35 & during that time was a really good rhythm guitarist, but terrible at lead or finger picking. Recently I have learnt another tuning & learnt to pick better. I even take a solo once in a while, so I

honestly think I've started getting a little better again. In the grand scheme though I'm shit.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Darren – Well it doesn't. I'm a much better bass player.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Darren – Not really, because it's too singular &, as I said before, encourages a fetish with gear & less important matters. I understood a lot more about how music works after learning the piano. With piano it's just easier to see how things fit together. It gives you a better frame of reference & theory when working with other musicians too.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Darren – Both. It's an instrument with so many tropes & stereotypes that you have to work around them. Everything has been done & at heart they are kind of boring. We have to make them interesting.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Darren – Wilko Johnson, Tom Verlaine, Alex Chilton, Sterling Morrison.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Darren – Silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Darren – I've thrown guitars around a stage. Various chips & gouges but telecasters are strong.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Darren – I don't really practice as such, but get better through writing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Darren – I don't know, 3 or 4. Sometimes none. It's weird. Guitar is my main instrument even though I'm better at others. I write on all manner of strung instruments & pianos & drum machines. Sometimes I get to a gig & pick the guitar up & it's like meeting a stranger. But it keeps it all interesting.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Darren – I use the first pick I find, or my fingers.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Darren – Regular Slinkys because I've never thought about it. If something else is around, then I'll use that. It doesn't matter much to me.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Darren – Every two gigs.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Darren – No more. Never. I used to all the time. Does that mean I've got better or got old?

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Darren – Everything I do & love is ultimately based on rhythm & syncopation so I guess my strumming/picking hand is better. As you might be able to tell I am nervous of thrills & fussiness so it follows that as well.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Darren – I have sent it to guitar tech once or twice, but not often. I can do a small amount of electrical maintenance myself, but that's about it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Darren – EADGBE as always & CGCGCE because they are all I know I guess.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Darren – I remember it or use a dictaphone.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Darren – Christ I don't know. Guitar length. You know so the guitar is near my crotch.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Darren – Wow, if I knew there were 40 plus questions I wouldn't have started this. Boy.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Darren – As I said earlier piano affords perhaps the best overview of music in general.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Darren – I'd like to be better on scales & stuff, but I manage fine & limitation is a gift to creativity.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Darren –?

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Darren – Possibly the Open D tuning.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Darren – Perhaps some other picking techniques.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Darren – No.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Darren – Nothing, I'm not that good really. They should listen to no one & learn in a vacuum.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Darren – Not play an F sharp minor properly.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Darren – That they get in the way & often make your guitar go out of tune.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Darren – Seriously? Well I think one prefers rhythm & plays in a more rhythmic style, but the other is more interested in melody so thus plays that way. I find the separation of the two jobs quite strange really. Most of the guitarists aren't one or the other. They are just guitarists. They do both. I think to think in terms of a lead guitarist or a rhythm guitarist is very old fashioned & conservative.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Darren – No. & if somebody answers yes to this then they don't really like music.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Darren – None. They're just tools. Like hammers.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Darren – I don't know, Derek Bailey? You would certainly have to look away from rock.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Darren – At a show I guess. I'm better & more exciting live. I tend to find guitars boring on records, but they are very useful live.

QRD – Anything else?

Darren – God no. Thanks. That was my first guitar interview. It might have showed.

Anna-Lynne Williams of Lotte Kestner
June 2010

Name: Anna-Lynne Williams

Bands: [Lotte Kestner](#), Trespassers William

Websites: lieinthesound.fr, trespasserswilliam.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Anna-Lynne – My parents bought me a cheap classical guitar when I was in high school. I actually donated it to a garage sale raising money after Hurricane Katrina. Otherwise I probably would've kept it around for posterity.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Anna-Lynne – I use all my guitar pedals on my voice & the guitar stays clean. Sometimes I'll use the trem or overdrive on a Vox amp if I'm playing electric guitar.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Anna-Lynne – Acoustic guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Anna-Lynne – I need to get a new one... right now I have a buzzy little Vox amp.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Anna-Lynne – Rosewood Martin acoustic with a concert sized body. I just had an antique Gibson pickup installed... it sounds great.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Anna-Lynne – A hollow body. Not too big. Warm sound, dark stain.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Anna-Lynne – Reverse delay.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Anna-Lynne – Three.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Anna-Lynne – One in the bedroom, two in the attic/studio.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Anna-Lynne – If it sounds different from my other guitars, if it feels good in my hands, if it's not too bright sounding or too clunky.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Anna-Lynne – Between \$1000 & \$2000.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Anna-Lynne – so long as it's set up well I leave them alone. Except for that new pickup I haven't done anything else to my guitars.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Anna-Lynne – I usually buy things on a whim when I'm in a beautiful mood & I try something & it seems right. No research.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Anna-Lynne – I'll add a new pedal maybe once a year.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Anna-Lynne – I like having a standard acoustic & a hollow body around to choose from.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Anna-Lynne – Santa Cruz acoustics sound amazing. I can't afford them. & I'd like to buy some Electro-Harmonix pedals; I don't have any at the moment.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Anna-Lynne – I shouldn't have bought a guitar on Ebay, but it was pretty. It didn't record well & it smelled weirdly musty & I ended up re-selling it.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Anna-Lynne – I can't get away from Martins. & Boss pedals. I like Fender amps.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Anna-Lynne – Something of mine....

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Anna-Lynne – Maybe 16?

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Anna-Lynne – Around 29 I recorded my first solo album & that made me better with timing & got me playing without a pick.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Anna-Lynne – It's portable, & you can take it to bed.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Anna-Lynne – Guitar or piano.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Anna-Lynne – So long as it stays in tune, it's my ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Anna-Lynne – I don't play properly, so I doubt I sound like my favorites. I like Sam Beam's guitar playing.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Anna-Lynne – Mmm.... silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Anna-Lynne – One of my Martins tipped off its stand onto my hardwood floor & the binding split. I took it straight to the doctor.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Anna-Lynne – Nothing besides straight up playing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Anna-Lynne – 10 hours a week maybe, if I'm not in the studio or on tour.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Anna-Lynne – Medium or none.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Anna-Lynne – I never change my strings. I don't even know their gauge. I like dull strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Anna-Lynne – Only if I'm installing a pickup or a battery or something.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Anna-Lynne – Hasn't happened yet.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Anna-Lynne – Fretting. I think I was meant to be left-handed.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Anna-Lynne – I've only had one guitar set up, this girl down the road from me is really good.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Anna-Lynne – Just standard.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Anna-Lynne – I have my own bizarre system, which includes me drawing the fret board as well as writing a series of paired numbers....

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Anna-Lynne – I play with my acoustic flat in my lap.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Anna-Lynne – I make too much fretboard noise. But I kind of like that on recordings.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Anna-Lynne – I played piano first & that helped me.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Anna-Lynne – I can't use a slide with the way I play. That would be nice.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Anna-Lynne – There are a few chords that kill my hand so I avoid them

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Anna-Lynne – No, & you can tell.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Anna-Lynne – Play the guitar flat with their fretting hand over the neck instead of under.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Anna-Lynne – Tremolo is pretty.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Anna-Lynne – Creativity.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Anna-Lynne – No!

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Anna-Lynne – Nick Drake's dark mahogany Guild.

Larry Marotta

June 2010

Name: Larry Marotta

Bands: mostly solo, but sometimes with Starlight Fleecing, La Caja, & Honk, Wail, & Moan.

Websites: www.larrymarotta.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Larry – My first guitar was a Sears acoustic I got for Christmas when I was five years old. I think it cost \$19.95. I treated it as a toy for the first five years that I owned it. Then when I was 10, I decided I wanted to learn to play Kiss songs on it -- that's where it all started. I suspect my parents got rid of it at some point. I don't have it now.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Larry – I use a Fender Telecaster through a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe. I'm not anti effects, but I really don't rely on them -- never have. Lately, however, I almost always use a volume pedal. If I need distortion, I use my amp's master volume & overdrive switch, although I may be in the market for a basic stompbox distortion in the near future. Sometimes I use a DOD Flanger. I have a very cool

Z.Vex Fuzz Factory that I'm still learning to use. I've also been using an Ebow a lot on my acoustic.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Larry – The guitar is always the most important element, but the wrong amp can really make a guitar miserable to play. I hate gigs where there is a communal amp everyone is expected to use. Nothing is worse than when you know your sound is lousy from the moment you first plug in, but you're going to be using that unknown amp for the next 90 minutes. Effects, although I use them from time to time, are not that important to me.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Larry – A Fender Hot Rod Deluxe is my current main amp. It makes my Tele sound good, which my other amp, a Mesa Boogie Mark II, didn't.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Larry – My main electric guitar is a 1988 Fender American Vintage '52 Telecaster Reissue. It's one of the coolest-looking electric guitars ever, & appearances are important to me. The utter simplicity of the Tele fits in with my less-is-more

aesthetic—a chunk of wood with two pickups, volume & tone knobs, & a pickup selector. No other buttons or switches or gizmos. You can pretty much play any style on a Tele. My main acoustic guitar is a Guild M20. It's concert-size (smaller), so it is easy to hold & play. It has a very unique midrange tone. No pickup—I really hate the way pickups make acoustic guitars sound. Luckily it's also super loud, which is good because I frequently improvise with other musicians without having a microphone on it.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Larry – I don't know—if I were successful enough to warrant a signature model, I'd probably have several different off-the-rack guitars to get different sounds. If I did have a signature guitar, it would have to accommodate all of the styles I play. The volume & tone controls would be useful through their entire range of motion. Electronically, it would have to be quiet, since I often play at low volumes where buzzing could be intrusive. It would have to keep its tune. I also tend to like smaller guitars that fit my body well.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Larry – People don't usually associate my playing with effects, but a distortion box that ran the gamut from a decent blues tone to horrible oscillating feedback would be useful.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Larry – Four electrics, one acoustic, & one lap steel. I would not consider myself a guitar collector, though.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars? In their cases in the basement, in the dining room, upstairs: I'm totally not uptight about storing my guitars, maybe to my own disadvantage at times.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Larry – A guitar has got to fit my body well. I like guitars with a variety of tones since I play a lot of different styles. I like volume & tone controls that actually affect the sound throughout their range of motion. Probably most important, though, is that the guitar has to look cool. I have to want to play it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Larry – Good guitars should be affordable by good musicians, but they're often not. With a few exceptions, the best guitarists I know can't afford expensive instruments since they're making only semi-adequate livings playing or teaching guitar, often without the medical & retirement benefits afforded those in "legitimate" fields. It's usually the hobbyist -- a professional from a non-musical field who was in a band when they were younger -- who has the money to buy a top-of-the line instrument. The rest of us do our best to get the best instrument we can afford.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Larry – I tend to work with what I have, although I do correct problems like bad intonation or fret buzzes. The idiosyncrasies of different guitars can make your playing go in interesting directions. I sometimes think about putting Barden pickups in my Tele because that's what Danny Gatton used.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Larry – A lot. Since I don't have a ton of disposable income to buy stuff, & I have two other people in the house who rely on my paycheck, I have to really justify a purchase to myself. Sometimes, I might

think about a piece of equipment for years before I buy it. Oddly enough, even when I do buy a new piece of equipment, I might not really start using it until months after I buy it. You really need to practice with it first. All of your stuff -- guitar, amp, pedals -- is your instrument, & you should know it all well before you start playing out with them.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Larry – Not really. If I made more money from music & didn't have a mortgage & a car payment & I was single, maybe I would change things around often. Then again, I've never been an equipment junkie.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Larry – I think I'm still looking for THE tone. I'm almost always dissatisfied with my tone in some way. I do find my tone a lot easier to control on acoustic, which is why I play acoustic more these days.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Larry – I've always lusted after that two-tone green Gretsch Anniversary Model 6125 -- that's probably the coolest-looking electric guitar there ever was. I wouldn't mind owning a Gibson Pat Martino Signature Guitar or a really nice archtop acoustic like the old 1930s Epiphone Derek Bailey used to play. I'd like a 12-string electric at some point. Amp-wise, I'd love a good-sounding vintage Fender Vibrolux amp, although a vintage Twin or Champ would be cool, too. On my pedal wish list these days are a Keeley Compressor, Boss RT20 (rotating speaker effect), TC Electronics Flanger, an Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Man, Klon Centaur Overdrive, Mid-Fi Electronics Glitch Computer. Quite a list for someone who claims not to rely on effects, right?

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Larry – It should be cool & you should feel cool playing it. It's hard to feel inspired & focused playing an ugly piece of crap. Beyond that, the intonation should be good & you should be comfortable with the action & the shape of the neck.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Larry – I'd say the Steinberger I bought in the early 90s was a great purchase. It's an amazing guitar, but I bought it after their 80s heyday, so I got a first-rate instrument ridiculously cheap. It was my main guitar for about 15 years until I got sick of people asking about why it didn't have a headstock. Worst: I traded in a Music Man 130 watt head & a 60s Epiphone Coronet for a crappy Mustang at a guitar show. I was hoping to use the Mustang to trade with a guy there who had an old Gretsch hollow body with an actual bullet hole in it that I just had to have. By the time I showed up with the Mustang, the guy changed his mind. Those dudes who got the Coronet & Music Man are still probably talking about that rube at that one guitar show.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Larry – Dislikes: In general, I don't like looping pedals since 99% of the people who use them employ them in totally obvious ways. Also, in an improvised setting, no matter what anyone else is playing, the loop ends up dominating the music. Although I don't hate them, I would never really care whether I owned a Strat or an SG. Likes: I like Teles -- I could see having several since they all sound so different. I could see having several Gibson hollow bodies (335, 175, etc.). Effects: I

always like Electro-Harmonix stuff since it is so goofy.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Larry – I probably play something to make sure is in tune, like a first-position E chord.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Larry – Ten.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Larry – I like to think I get better & better with age, but I'd say that I probably started playing well only in my mid-20s. I was not a natural on the guitar. I genuinely sucked pretty bad for a really long time.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Larry – Mostly because I've played it for over 30 years. Also, when I started playing, I was such a geeky nerd & a weakling & lame at sports, but the guitar made me instantly cooler. I've always maintained that playing an instrument to attract

potential sex partners is perfectly reasonable. In any event, playing guitar is still a huge part of my self-identity. Physically, though, even if I'm not holding a guitar but hold my hands as if I were, I instantly feel centered & comfortable. No other instrument makes me feel as safe & centered & complete.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Larry – You should play whatever instrument grabs you. However, I think guitar can be a discouraging instrument for small kids (5-9 years old). Unless you're willing to lock yourself in your room for a few weeks & woodshed, you're not really going to learn chords. You definitely have to go through a total obsession phase sometime early in your development, which a lot of young kids may not be ready to do (& I don't believe in forcing someone to play). There is no slow, steady, & systematic way to learn chords. In that regard, piano is probably easier since you can immediately play in tune & pick out chords & melodies.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Larry – An ally. But like a good friend, it should be honest in telling when you're being lame.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Larry – I listen to a lot of people, but I could probably narrow it down to a few key people. One, Ace Frehley from Kiss, who made me want to play guitar in the first place. Ace's talent was & is still using all of the cliché licks & putting them together in completely surprising ways, sort of what Ringo Starr does with drums. Two, Robert Fripp from King Crimson who showed me that there can be more to rock playing than pentatonic & blues scales in 4/4 time, that you can be intelligent & still enormously heavy (the *Red* album, the solo on Bowie's "Fashion"). Three, Eugene Chadbourne, who opened my ears to the world of free improvisation, the value of a good cover, humor in music, taking chances, & that a good guitarist can make any instrument sound good. After that, I'd have to cite Bill Orcutt (Harry Pussy) & Jim Hensley, two guitar playing friends of mine from the late 80s in Miami who had no qualms about brutalizing guitars to get the sounds they were imagining. They taught me how to forget what I know, go for it, & not care.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Larry – Like in thinking a guitar is really just a big penis, or that someone is so good at guitar that they can make it “talk?” It’s probably natural but silly. Comparing guitars to penises is ultimately pretty sexist to our community of female players. & the human voice is still ultimately the greatest melodic instrument. No one says that someone makes her voice sound like a guitar.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Larry – I set fire to one once onstage using rubbing alcohol & a match. Twenty years later, people I know still talk about this, how that mild-mannered guy would do such a thing. Oddly enough, it has given me some clout with my younger noise colleagues, although I don’t do stuff like that anymore. You don’t need to make that statement too many times or it becomes boring shtick.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Larry – I play along with CDs or YouTube or with those Jamey Aebersold records jazzers use to woodshed. I try to transcribe or at least learn parts of solos that I like. I learn tunes & try to play them in all positions & transpose them to different keys on sight. When learning tunes, I’ll play each chord

as an arpeggio & then play the appropriate scale for that chord. I very rarely practice scales by themselves since I think that doing so teaches over reliance on muscle-memory rather than being musical. I like using either Ted Greene's or Joe Pass's guitar books for practice ideas. Lately, I've been working on a hybrid picking technique for country playing: using a flatpick plus middle & ring fingers on my picking hand. The most important thing to me is that I am mindful of whatever I'm practicing, not just developing mechanical tricks. If you're not actively listening to what you're practicing, don't bother.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Larry – I probably play anywhere from zero to 20 hours a week depending on my schedule or what I'm trying to accomplish. Right now I'm learning the Scelsi *Ko-Tha I* for a concert (in an actual concert hall!) I'm playing, & that requires that I break the 20-hour-a-week barrier. If I could have a year off from my day job where I could practice 8 hours a day & someone would pay me to do it, that would be great.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Larry – I like the Dunlop Tortex heavy or extra heavy picks. I loathe floppy picks. Lately, I've been experimenting with those little thick plastic jazz picks.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Larry – I use sets with 10s on the high E-string on my electric. You need to have a thick enough string to have a good tone, but anything heavier & it is harder for me to bend strings. For my acoustic, I use 12s or 13s on the high-E. Anything heavier is hard on my hands. Again, you have to balance playability (light gauge) versus tone (heavy gauge).

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Larry – I change them based on their sound & feel, not according to any time schedule.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Larry – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Larry – I can move quicker with my fretting hand. As a result, I have to resist the temptation to do too

many quick left-hand pull-offs & hammer-ons when my right hand runs out of power & my mind runs out of ideas.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Larry – I use a tech -- I'm not really tech minded in any way. Again, I'm not that anal about how my guitar is set up, although I like the way it feels after it has been set up. Just like I don't like cleaning my house, but certainly enjoy the house more right after it is cleaned.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Larry – I always use standard tuning on electric, although I'll often detune my low E & A strings randomly during the course of a set when I'm improvising, mainly to get a nice rumble if I'm not working with a bassist. For acoustic, I sometimes use C—F—A#—D#—G—C, standard turning a major-third down. Also on acoustic, I'll often use standard tuning with the low E tuned to D. I don't tune to open chords very often unless I'm playing someone else's music. My lap steel is tuned E—B—E—G#—B—E.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Larry – If I'm writing down an idea, I use standard notation. I really don't like tablature since it gives only half of the story. The only time I find tab useful is when learning a difficult fingerpicking piece. If you're going to make the effort to learn tab, spend the extra few minutes to learn how to read standard notation. It really opens up the world of music.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Larry – My guitar is usually over my stomach. Anything higher looks too geeky; anything lower makes it too hard to be accurate when playing.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Larry – I need to relax more when I play. I tend to hold my breath or breathe too shallowly when I'm playing something difficult. This can become a real problem when I'm recording a quiet solo acoustic piece & you can hear my erratic breathing in the background (although I guess I could join the Keith Jarrett/Glenn Gould club of musicians who make

annoying sounds when they play). Also, I'm not as anal about precise tuning as I should be. I could also stand to spend some time with the metronome.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Larry – Piano. Guitarists learn chords as shapes. With piano, you have to learn what notes you're playing & why.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Larry – I'd love to be able to do really fast banjo-style fingerpicking like Jerry Reed or Danny Gatton. I'm working on it, but it's slow going (sigh).

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Larry – I'm not ashamed to admit that I'd still love to be a blow-the-audience-away virtuoso guitarist. I just have never put in the hours you need to do that. I'm interested in too many other things to do that much guitar. I've also always been a fan of things like No Wave, a music that relies on a lack of too much technique. I'm conflicted.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Larry – I was impressed when someone finally showed me the “James Bond” chord (low E, G on the fourth string, B-D#-F#). I never get tired of it.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Larry – I really want to be able to get the hybrid flatpick/fingers technique to work. I’m starting to play more country, but I don’t want to switch to a thumbpick for electric guitar playing.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Larry – I took lessons for a year & half when I was 13-14. My father, however, was a professional musician, so I picked up a lot from him. I guess the best thing I learned from lessons is how to read music. All guitarists should learn to read. It’s not that hard, & it makes the sheet music section of your local library a wellspring of new ideas & things to practice. In retrospect, I wish I would have had lessons with a first-rate guitar teacher. When I was a kid, Vincent Bredice, one of the best guitar teachers anywhere, had a studio in Miami. My father made the prospect of studying guitar with Bredice so scary that I never seriously considered it.

Then again, I've also always been a little suspicious of people who have too much *proper* technique. Conflicted again.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Larry – I would have a student spend a long time just very slowly playing scales & melodies on the high E-string & listening carefully & not worrying about “proper” technique. For some reason, the upper frets are kept a mystery to students for a long time, while I think learning all of the notes on one string is much easier than learning scales across several strings. I'd show them how the intervals on one string directly correspond to the layout of the piano keyboard. Once you learn one string, you can very quickly learn the five others since they all follow the same patterns. Teaching position-playing too early encourages making playing choices based on convenience rather than on what works for the music. Besides, the best players play vertically up the fretboard, not horizontally across. Even when non-musicians describe a good guitarist, they will probably mention that he/she plays all over the fretboard, especially high up on it. Intuitively, even the non-guitarist knows that is important for some reason.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Larry – I think what makes me unique as a player is that I'm comfortable in a wide range of settings & I'm not afraid to make mistakes on stage in pursuit of something I'm imagining. So if someone wanted to be able to do that, he/she should listen to a lot of different styles of music & not be afraid to put him/herself in playing situations with people much better than you who totally kick your ass. That's how I learned to play. Then do whatever you want & not care what people think.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Larry – Unless you actually practice with your tremolo, most players tend to overuse it, or use it in all of the most obvious ways. If you find yourself unable to live without your tremolo, you should think about why this is so. There's a definite difference between *employing* something & *relying* on something.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Larry – A good rhythm guitar player is usually a better musician than a strict lead player since rhythm players have to have a good understanding

of harmony, tone, & rhythm. You also have to think a lot about how to play with bass players & keyboardists. They also have to listen to the entire band & to the song a lot more.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Larry – No. Your band is only as good or interesting as the drummer. Try to imagine the Stones without Charlie, or even the White Stripes without Meg.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Larry – I'd love the Fender Esquire Jeff Beck used in the Yardbirds. Some of the most exciting solos ever played on an electric guitar were played on that instrument.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Larry – I really love what the Campbell Brothers -- Chuck & Darrick -- have done with steel guitars.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Larry – Probably not on recordings. I think I'm at my best when I'm playing on other people's songs in a club setting. I love playing "session musician" & trying to add something unique & appropriate to someone else's music. I've always been a fan of people like Andy Summers who have a wide background & great skills who don't mind disappearing into the texture of a song.

QRD – Anything else?

Larry – Never put down someone else's music. It is probably important to him or her. & someone out there probably thinks your music totally blows. It's hard enough to be a musician without all of us turning on each other. When we fight each other, the Man holds on to his power.

Andrew Weathers

June 2010

Name: Andrew Weathers

Bands: Solo, in the past, Hidden Lake Park, Acid of All Ruins, Morrowville

Websites: www.andrewweathers.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Andrew – I had a black Squire Stratocaster that got quickly covered in stickers. I recently traded it to a friend's younger brother for a snare drum.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Andrew – Various iterations of the same theme - Epiphone SG - Volume, Distortion, Delay - computer - house PA, borrowed amp or a shitty amp of mine.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Andrew – Effects. By the time the guitar runs through everything, any kind of pure tone is long gone.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Andrew – I have a Fender 212, & it's just what I've had for years.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Andrew – Epiphone SG, again, I've just had it for years. I've wanted to get a new one, but it just feels comfortable in my hands, & I don't play as well on other guitars.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Andrew – It would look like a Fender Jazzmaster & have built-in MIDI pickups.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Andrew – A wah pedal that has two outputs - one that sends filtered sound, then another that sends out the sound that was filtered out. This wah would also have a much larger range than your typical wah.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Andrew – Epiphone SG, off brand acoustic, off brand Les Paul knockoff, Squire Stratocaster.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Andrew – They mostly stay in their cases in my house, but the SG stays on a stand next to my pedal set up.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Andrew – I haven't thought about that in a long time, it's been a while since I've bought a guitar. Last time I was just looking for a guitar that stayed in tune. Now I would look for a guitar that has timbral versatility.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Andrew – \$600.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Andrew – I stick with what I get.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Andrew – If it's less than \$100, it's usually an impulse purchase. More than that & I'll do as much research as the internet allows, but I usually don't get a chance to try things out.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Andrew – Really often, a lot of pieces end up being based around a new organization of my equipment.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Andrew – I try to change it a lot, but I think I've been stuck in a rut for a while.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Andrew – Fender Jazzmaster & Jaguar. I would really like an Electro-Harmonix Hog, too. Or a baritone guitar.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Andrew – Tuning pegs that stay in tune, that was my trouble with all of my first guitars.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Andrew – Worst - a Boss Slicer pedal. I thought it was going to be really cool, but it absolutely wasn't at all. The best was probably my recent purchase of a pedal board. It's going to save me a lot of time at shows.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Andrew – I'm really hating M-Audio recently. I use one of their audio interfaces, & the preamps on it are really awful. Also, I don't want to hate it, but I've been having a lot of trouble with Electro-Harmonix pedals lately. I think they sound really great & they make some really interesting things, but I think they're inconsistent. Some pedals will have an irreparable hum & some won't. It just doesn't make sense.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Andrew – D - F# - A - F# - D

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Andrew – 13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Andrew – I still haven't leveled, I'm really bad at guitar.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Andrew – I really don't think it fits me very well. I think I look really awkward with a guitar in my hands. But I think it fits my attitude towards playing, in that it's a pretty versatile instrument that works in a lot of different contexts, from solo playing to playing in groups, which is what I like about it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Andrew – I wish that it wasn't, I get a little exhausted from the amount of "White Boys with Acoustic Guitars" that I see, but it makes sense. It's an instrument that's become inexpensive & it doesn't take a lot of time to get proficient at it.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Andrew – Adversary. I get frustrated by the small range it has, & by the way that certain chord voicings just won't work.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Andrew – Fennesz, Christopher Willits, the guys in Explosions in the Sky, Jonsi from Sigur Ros, Cody Bonette from a band called As Cities Burn, Rhys Chatham, Glenn Branca lately.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Andrew – It's not for me, but I understand it. One develops a relationship with your instrument.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Andrew – I've got no horror stories; I don't play very hard.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Andrew – Almost zero, I just play.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Andrew – 3, but I'd like to be more at 10 - 14.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Andrew – The orange Fender picks, because they're a good middle ground. Too thin & there's too much pick noise. I used to use REALLY thick picks, but I broke too many strings.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Andrew – Flatwound 13 - 56. I like how flatwound strings feel on my fingers, & I like the smooth sound from relatively thick strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Andrew – Not often enough, about every 2 months.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Andrew – Usually at the end of the tour, I'll break one.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Andrew – My fretting hand. I'm left handed, but I learned to play guitar right handed. I think it shows up in how I play. My right hand doesn't really do very much, but my left hand moves around a lot.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Andrew – I send it to a tech, I just don't trust myself to do it right.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Andrew – I play in standard usually. Sometimes I'll use the "American Football" tuning, if I want to go for that sound. When I record, sometimes I'll make up tunings so I can play parts that don't sound like normal guitar parts.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Andrew – I use a lot of my own notation, which is a mixture of standard notation & graphic score techniques. But if I'm playing someone else's music, I like chord charts a lot.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Andrew – Pretty high up, so the bottom of my guitar doesn't reach past my waist.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Andrew – Playing in one range for too long, I don't explore the neck enough.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Andrew – Learning banjo has actually transferred into my guitar playing lately.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Andrew – Fingerpicking. It sounds so, so great & I just can't possibly do it. Also, I would love to be able to shred.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Andrew – Guitar soloing. I'd also like to play with feedback more efficiently. I'm working on that one.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Andrew – The dominant seventh chord.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Andrew – Sweep picking.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Andrew – I never did, I taught myself.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Andrew – I'd like to think I could teach someone how to think about improvising, but I've never been able to.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Andrew – Pick four chords, play notes from those chords & add a lot of delay.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Andrew – I have no use for them right now.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Andrew – I'd rather there not be a difference. I think it's a distinction made by a player who thinks too highly of himself.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Andrew – Absolutely, I like listening to interesting guitar things.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Andrew – Eddie Van Halen's Frankenstein.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Andrew – Christopher Willits. With his “folding” technique, he's developed a style that really integrates electronics with guitar playing, in a way that really transcends what most people are doing with guitar & computers.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Andrew – My album, A Great Southern City. It's my first where the guitar isn't consistently processed.

QRD – Anything else?

Andrew – I feel like this probably makes me sound like I don't know how to play guitar. But thanks for asking me to do it!

Mike Cospers of Sojourn

June 2010

Name: Mike Cospers

Bands: Currently, I just play with Sojourn, but over the years I've played with Bill Mallonee, Dirt Poor Robins, Jamie Barnes, Brooks Ritter, Bryan Fox, & Peter Searcy.

Websites: www.sojournmusic.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Mike – I had a rental from the Doo Wop Shop for a while, & then I saved up money for an Epiphone Riviera - which is like a 335 with a crazy tailpiece & mini-humbuckers. I sold it, foolishly, a few years later. I miss that guitar very much.

QRD – What's your typical setup from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Mike – It depends on the gig. These days, 90% of the time, I plug straight from the guitar into a Fulltone Tube Tape Echo (their reengineered Echoplex) into my Bad Cat Tone Cat.

For more ambient music or for recording, I'll pull out the pedalboard. Deep breath here:

Teese Wizard Wah - Keeley Compressor - Hilton Volume Pedal - Moog 12-stage Phaser - Fulltone

Supa Trem - GMD Lothar Overdrive - TC Electronics Nova Delay - Line 6 Verbzilla - & it ends with a weird clean boost that I don't know who made. The Tape Echo goes between the pedalboard & the amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Mike – I think the most important part of every rig is the guitarist's hands. If you notice with guys like Bill Frisell, Stevie Ray Vaughn, & anyone with a signature sound, their tone doesn't change dramatically. Even The Edge - a guy known for his effects madness - still sounds like The Edge when he's plugged straight in. That's because so much of tone is about your hands. How you hit, how you fret, the kinds of voicings you choose. If I had to pick one piece of gear I couldn't live without, it'd be my Tape Echo. I bought it when Fulltone first released it, & I haven't missed a gig or a session with it ever since, though almost 100% of my setup has changed.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Mike – Bad Cat Tone Cat. I've played everything, & this one works for what I do. It's basically two amps in one – an AC30 clone on the left with E184 output tubes & a Bad Cat Hot Cat on the right, with

EL34s. It's very flexible, & I love the Bad Cat gain sound.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Mike – The guitar that's been my main guitar for the past several years is a Chad Underwood Telecaster. It's a weird combo of old & new parts, it has some really aggressive Lindy Fralin pickups, & it has a Fender Custom Shop "NoCaster" neck, which feels like a baseball bat. For the last few months, I've been playing a Strat a ton too, but the Tele is like home for me.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Mike – It would probably be my Underwood Tele.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Mike – It'd be a variation of the Tube Tape Echo. I'd love a mod that allowed you to roll off some of the bass frequencies, so that'd be my signature change.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Mike – 7ish?

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Mike – Here, there, & everywhere. I should be more careful.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Mike – First off, I look for something that's built well – neck straight, intonation good. Next, I'm basically just looking for something that feels good & makes me want to play. Does it look good? Does it sound good? Can I imagine myself playing it all the time? Any more, because I have several guitars, I know exactly what I'm looking for when I'm buying.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Mike – I've got an amazing guitar that I use for bottleneck that cost \$99. Seriously. I use it a ton. My electric guitars were well over \$2,000, & I think they're worth every penny. It just depends on what you need & what you're doing. If you're playing professionally, eventually you'll want a pro-quality instrument, & there is a world of difference between a \$500, \$1,000, & \$2,000 Telecaster.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Mike – I make changes, but usually not dramatic. I use volume & tone pots quite a bit, & the stock ones – even on high end guitars – are usually junk. I have one Tele I modded dramatically, but mostly I just change out volume & tone pots & call it done.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Mike – I'm thankful for return policies. I usually don't test them a ton because the best testing ground is with a full band. A distortion pedal may sound amazing in the shop, but with the drummer there, you discover that all the clarity disappears. I buy a lot of gear & return it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Mike – Yes. About once a year.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Mike – I've been trying to nail down a particular tone for a long time. I'm loving the simplified setup I play right now, & feel like I've gotten somewhere

with it, but I won't be surprised at all if I end up pulling out the board again soon.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Mike – Vintage Fenders. Anything pre-CBS – amps, guitars, all of it.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Mike – Good tuners!

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Mike – Best – Tube Tape Echo, my Underwood Tele.

Worst – I'm just not a Gibson guitar guy, & I've tried over & over to buy a Gibson SG or Les Paul, & it always ends up being a big disappointment.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Mike – I'm a big fan of Fender guitars, Fulltone effects, & Bad Cat Amps – for obvious reasons. I also really like Keeley Electronics. He makes the

best compressor for guitar or bass on the planet. For wah users – spend the money on a Teese. It BLOWS AWAY the Vox & Crybaby stuff, & is categorically better than Fulltone's too. But everyone should buy a Tube Tape Echo. They're heavenly.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Mike – I don't know. Ask Jamie Barnes.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Mike – 15.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Mike – I hope I haven't peaked yet....

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Mike – I'm not sure.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Mike – Nope. Learn basics on a piano or a horn. I played trumpet for 8 years before playing guitar, & I understood music & melody. Most guitarists don't know the first thing about melody, & won't learn it if they learn guitar first – unless they learn using something like the Berklee Method (a great instructional book).

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Mike – My ally, though sometimes the music requires that we get into a fight.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Mike – Angus Young, Nels Cline, Bill Frisell, Jim Campilongo, Mike McCready are my faves.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Mike – You should ask my guitar that question. 😊

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Mike – No good stories here. I've always been a nervous parent with my instruments & haven't ever smashed anything.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Mike – I break practice up into four categories:

1. Technique – working on picking & fretting through various mechanical exercises
2. Scales, Chords, & Arpeggios – broadening my knowledge & looking for new voicings
3. Songs – learning songs from great players & great songwriters
4. Improvising – practicing over changes

It's the Howard Robert method for breaking down practice & is something Craig Wagner showed me. I try to be systematic about practice when I practice, which isn't all the time. I tend to go through seasons of intense practice to develop an idea or skill & then seasons of less intense practice.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Mike – See above.... When I'm practicing hard, it's 5-6 hours a week of practice, & 8 hours of live playing.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Mike – Wegen bluegrass picks & Stubby picks. I like a big pick – it gives you control over dynamics.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Mike – Acoustic – 13's, Electric – 10's.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Mike – At least once a month on my main guitars. Sometimes much more than that!

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Mike – Almost never. I've broken two strings in about 5 years – both recently.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Mike – I don't see a distinction. You need both working in harmony, or you'll get sloppy.

QRD – Do you setup your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Mike – I send mine to Bill or Teresa at Guitar Emporium. They're amazing at what they do & I

don't have the patience to learn how to do a setup as well as they do.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Mike – Standard tuning, Open E for bottleneck slide, open G for squareneck & lap steel.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Mike – I record ideas, I never write them down.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Mike – Normal, I think. None of this Jimmy Page lowrider stuff.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Mike – I tend to start solos in the same spots. I definitely need to break that one.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Mike – Something that's single-note, like a horn.
(See my rant above about melody)

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Mike – I wish I could do really screaming fast country stuff like Jerry Reed & Jim Campilongo. I'm working on it, but not there yet.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Mike – Learning the Tony Rice Bluegrass Guitar book.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Mike – Your tuner works better if you put your pickup in the neck position & roll back your tone 10% or so. Try it.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Mike – I take them in seasons, & I've learned a TON from them. I'm really thankful in particular for the times I got to learn from Craig Wagner. The guy is a technical master, & really knows how to break down technique into easy-to-swallow pieces.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Mike – I've only ever had great teachers, so I'm not sure how to answer that one.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Mike – Listen to a lot of Bill Frisell.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Mike – I like them. I setup my Strat so it's down-only, & I think it sounds great.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Mike – Lead guitar is committed to working with, responding to, & echoing the melody. Rhythm guitar is committed to supporting the melody.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Mike – Nope. Songs always rule the day.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Mike – I'd like to have one of Mike McCready's late-50s Strats. Both because McCready is one of the main reasons I play guitar & because those 50s Strats are amazing.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Mike – Nels Cline from Wilco.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Mike – At Sojourn on any given Sunday.

QRD – Anything else?

Mike – Nope. Thanks!

Sibyll Kalff

June 2010

Name: Sibyll Kalff

Bands: “the horse cock kids”, studio b, spunx distorted, mississippi goddamn, & various other jam & session & side projects (though I did not & do not play guitar in all them, having been a bassist in the first place)

Websites: sibyllkalff.com, myspace.com/sibyllk, myspace.com/mitchellrobert, myspace.com/projectstudiob, myspace.com/thehorsecockkids, www.myspace.com/spunxdistorted
free mp 3 downloads at sibyllkalff.com/music.htm

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Sibyll – Actually I started out as a bassist! Though I was playing all kinds of guitars, acoustic & electric ones all the time, too. When I was a kid I had a very old crappy no name acoustic guitar first - loved it - was playing really stupid songs & ditties - but apart from having the brain of the papa elephant in general, I can really not remember what happened to it.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Sibyll – I hardly ever used effects at all & just plain use a loooooong cable.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Sibyll – As I don't use effects, thus guitar & amplifier.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Sibyll – Right now a little Vox amp, great one, very small, but it has a lot of power. It is very handy, you can use it for playing in the streets, in small, mid size clubs & have it run over any PA of course, too (don't laugh). I had for a long time a Regent amp (old former DDR amplifier, that I used as a bass amp!) but I played all kinds of amps over the years. I love Fender Twin Reverb ones (though never had any) very much!

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Sibyll – Right now it's a Fender Tele copy (my favourite ones, along with Gretsch guitars, though I never owned any original one). Sand colour.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Sibyll – Hmm... I'll show you later, ok?

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Sibyll – I am actually not sure whether I'd want one.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Sibyll – Right now, one. In those days back yonder we had many guitars & basses, but we ate them all in the mean times.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Sibyll – Various styles over the years, depending on the number of guitars & situations. Right now, plain simple, plain upright. Standing.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Sibyll – That it sounds to my likings & in the first place that it feels right. That's the most important, it must feel immediately "yours" & smooth & funky to play. If it's "yours" you feel it in 3 secs (sound included).

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Sibyll – Well, difficult to say, of course a good price comes in very convenient! But it depends on the guitar; you can find \$2 guitars with the best sound & pay \$100s for guitars that plain don't have it. (I'd rather pay the \$2!)

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Sibyll – Depends in what condition they are. Normally I love them as plain as can be.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Sibyll – Depends on the piece of equipment. As thoroughly as I can of course.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Sibyll – Not too much.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Sibyll – It must have “that” tone... & if it has, I do not change too much, apart from, sometimes it’s of course great to plain mess around for fun.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Sibyll – See above, Fender Twin Reverbs, Fender Telecasters (Fender Precision Basses), Gretsch guitars, good acoustic ones e.g. & of course I totally love all old tube amps

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Sibyll – That it’s plain “your” guitar sound & feel wise.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Sibyll – My lil Tele is one of the good purchases. I went into the store asked, “What’s ya cheapest Tele copy today?” They told me “Ah, wait a sec, ya can have that crappy yellow one.” & after 3 secs, I know, hey that’s my baby, it’s a gooder.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Sibyll – See above please!

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Sibyll – Some of my favourite chords & licks.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Sibyll – I don't remember exactly, but I when I was a kid.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Sibyll – Stay tuned, please....

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Sibyll – Though I play many instruments altogether, in the last years I focused on guitar, just because after decades of playing bass, I kinda felt like it. & you can more easily take it along than a grand piano, that adds of course.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Sibyll – I think, this really totally depends on one's personal likings, what instrument to chose as a first one.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Sibyll – My ever ally; but ok, that can change rapidly into something else in moments, too.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Sibyll – Man, there're so many good ones I ever since love, you find many of them on all my pages or as references on my pages, rather check them all out there, will ya?

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Sibyll – Depends on the result, I'd say.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Sibyll – I normally do practice while playing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Sibyll – Totally varies & depends on the situation I am in. I love to play some 5 to 10 hours a day, when I got the time & space for it though....

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Sibyll – Fender medium picks are my favourite brand. In all colours & styles.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Sibyll – Depends & varies.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Sibyll – I can be rather sloppy with that, in the first place surely when one breaks.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Sibyll – I try hard to avoid it.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Sibyll – Myself. I actually never had one.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Sibyll – The most appropriate to the given situation & mood. (Most of the time this very well know common one though.) The rest is pluriversal quantum physics....

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Sibyll – As I just plain improvise for more then 20 years, I hardly write anything down, if at all, then most of the time in “sibyllinic tabs.”

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Sibyll – Looooooooooooooooow, baby, loooooooooooooow...

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Sibyll – You tell!

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s guitar playing?

Sibyll – A guitar?

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can’t?

Sibyll – I always have this personal habit not to answer any question # 42!

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Sibyll – Do I have to?

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Sibyll – Sorry, the latest I learned was match trix!

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Sibyll – Please consult my....

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Sibyll – Nope.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Sibyll – Just play & play &....

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Sibyll – Maybe rather ask that someone?

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Sibyll – Some few are “allowed” to use them....

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Sibyll – The spelling?

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Sibyll – Hardly.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Sibyll – Hmmm, there'd be some... maybe some of Keith's Teles?

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Sibyll – Can't name just one, there are too many great cats out there....

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Sibyll – Hmmm....

QRD – Anything else?

Sibyll – With mucho mas “love *n* roll!” ... pt xox

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Tam
June 2010

Name: Tam

Bands: Tam / The Vampires

Websites: sonicbids.com/tamok,
youtube.com/user/tamisabel,
cdbaby.com/artist/tam1,
myspace.com/tamofvampires, ecstaticpeace.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Tam – Classical Aria. I sold it cuz it was cracked.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Tam – Electric guitar “Tracer” to overdrive or delay to Fender amp.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Tam – Guitar & drum trax.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Tam – Fender. A friend gave it to me. Sounds dirty.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Tam – Tracer. It's a copy of a Les Paul cuz I never could afford a real Les Paul.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Tam – Red hollow bodied f-hole guitar (Gretsch I think it is).

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Tam – 200 effects in one box.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Tam – 2.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Tam – In their cases. At a friend's place.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Tam – Cost. Ha-ha.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Tam – Nothing. Given by a worshipping admirer.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Tam – No.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Tam – About a half hour. Plug it in, see if it works.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Tam – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Tam – One. Only vary if the song requires it.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Tam – No idea. Red hollow bodied f hole electric guitar. Vox amp. 200 effect pedal box.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Tam – A picture of a loved one.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Tam – Strings. I hate changin' 'em. Bad straps that fall off.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Tam – Gibson, cuz everybody has one & everybody wants one. I hate those oval shaped acoustics too. Ovation I think they're called, sounds like menstrual problems.... I hate 2 guitars on one... heavy metal nightmares....

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Tam – What a stupid question... that depends what mood I'm in on that day?!

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Tam – 16 or so.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Tam – 25.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Tam – No.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Tam – No. Piano is best. Easier to learn notes.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Tam – Both when I can't play what I wish I could.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Tam – Django Reinhardt/Mike King, John Reissner, Harry Howard, William Reid, Dave Wenger, Andy Flesh, the guy from Love & Rockets, Nick Cave's guitarists.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Tam – Depends on what chemicals have been ingested.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Tam – I don't hurt my guitars.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Tam – I listen to guitar parts from songs I like.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Tam – Varies if I have a show or not, 10-20 hours... more I guess, but I cant make noise where I live.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Tam – Purple Dunlop, cuz they're hard & solid & Mike King showed me they were the best & he was right.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Tam – Medium... not too light, but doesn't hurt your fingers.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Tam – Never. Only if one breaks.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Tam – Not a good question. Never jinx never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Tam – My hand doesn't fret, my mind does & that's what affects my style... the amount of fretting!

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Tam – Myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Tam – Regular. Sounds good. Though I should experiment more I suppose.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Tam – Tablature.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Tam – Down by my hips.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Tam – I wish I didn't play such complicated songs so that I could dance around while I play, plus my guitar is so heavy, I need a light one but don't wanna get rid of my heavy one.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Tam – Piano or bass.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Tam – Feedback noise style.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Tam – Really fast solos.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Tam – Bass lines as guitar lines.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Tam – Feedback.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Tam – Yes, from Mike King. I learned about a billion swing jazz chords in diminished & augmented etc., etc.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Tam – Dim & aug chords.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Tam – Take a lot of drugs.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Tam – Too clichéd.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Tam – Stupid question.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Tam – No.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Tam – Black blues busker I see playing the metro cuz his guitar is so out of tune, yet he makes it shine.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Tam – sonicbids.com/tamok

QRD – Anything else?

Tam – Book me on tour please ASAP! Europe & UK I need to go! Need a tour manager, thanks. Label's real mad.

Jamie Barnes

June 2010

Name: Jamie Barnes

Bands: self, Sojourn Music

Websites: jamiebarnes.net, sojournmusic.com,
silbermedia.com/jamiebarnes

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jamie – Mexican made Fender Strat at age 12. Sold it for cash money once I got a real Tele.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jamie – When playing electric I generally go to Volume Pedal, Keeley 4 knob Compressor, Luther Overdrive, TC Delay ND-1, to amp. Generally there is some sort of Boost pedal in there too. When Acoustic, I just go straight from my Martin with a Radial JDI Passive Direct box.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jamie – Guitar. You can only polish a turd so much.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jamie – I have a few I play. I really like BadCat's Hot Cat 15W. Warmest tone I've ever heard.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jamie – I actually had a guy build me a guitar with a dried out cow's skull as the body. He simply bolted a neck on, put a lipstick pickup on it & bam! It looks & sounds like pure evil.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jamie – It would be called the "Imago Dei" & when I stomped on it would make me as fast a flat-picker as Bryan Sutton.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jamie – Currently I just have three: Martin D-16 Acoustic Electric, a Fender Telecaster, & a Gretsch Country Gentleman Jr. I have few banjos as well.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jamie – Always in their case with a humidifier & usually in my basement unless it's too cold.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jamie – Automatic plane tickets? I don't know... maybe a quarter inch cable dispenser... like Bubble Tape.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jamie – Character, quick action. Mostly tone.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jamie – I have a hard time paying over \$2000 for a guitar.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jamie – I might have someone work on the neck/action for me... generally don't fiddle around much myself with it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jamie – I'm very particular & very cheap... so I look up a ton of reviews & test it out as much as salespeople will let me.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jamie – Hardly ever. I stick to the things that work for me.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jamie – I generally shoot for one tone & nest there.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jamie – I'm currently salivating over the idea of purchasing a National Resonator.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jamie – Good action & decent pickups. Most young guitar players have no idea how hard they are making it on themselves by not having the neck set up right. This probably leads to a ton of kids

quitting because “it hurts to shape an F chord.” Also, most youngsters don’t know jack about tone.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Jamie – I bought a 12 string once & it was the most difficult thing to keep in tune & hurt my hands to play. Ditched it very soon after buying. Also, because it was a Washburn.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jamie – Badcat makes great stuff. Obviously, most Fender items can be trusted.

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jamie – Just random blues licks. No “Stairway” or “Hotel California.”

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jamie – Started playing at age 11 on my mom’s old nylon string.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jamie – By age 17 I was really good. I started leaning toward being a writer by age 19 & lost a lot of speed & technical skill after that.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jamie – A bass is too heavy, man. I'm a small dude.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jamie – Sure. Women are more impressed by the guitar than piano.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jamie – Sometimes I feel hindered by it as a songwriter because I am so familiar with it that my hands seem to go to the same place time & time again. Writing songs using an instrument you aren't as familiar with often forces you to focus on the basic needs of a good song - like the melody.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jamie – David Gilmour, Leonard Cohen, Justin Hayward, Johnny Greenwood, Mike Kinsella.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jamie – Generally. Name your babies & your pets... not your cars, guitars, or body parts.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jamie – I've let a neck warp by not caring about its environment. Never smashed a guitar, but would love to have the freedom to do so.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jamie – Turn on a metronome & practice licks. I've been generally doing this more with banjo over the last year since I'm wanting to be a legitimate player.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jamie – I play maybe 1-2 hours a week. An hour of that usually is performance. I'd love to add more of course.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jamie – I steal all my picks from Mike Cospers. Not sure what they are or where he gets them, but they are fine picks. 😊

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jamie – 12s. Always. Better tone, but not finger-bleeders.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jamie – Every two weeks.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jamie – Hardly ever. I think the last time was 3-4 years ago.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jamie – I think my right hand (strumming/picking hand) is where most of my playing strength is. I think my thumb & forefinger do more work than the left hand ever does.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jamie – If I get work done I have someone else do it. I never know what I'm doing & it will save myself a lot of grief as well as my wife. When I work on my instruments I generally get very grumpy around the house.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jamie – I generally hate alternate tunings because they are just not practical from a performance standpoint. I'll maybe use Drop D or DADGAD if I know I'll have a second guitar on stage with me. I hate it when singer/songwriters detune their guitars & try to tell some sort of story about the song they are about to play to try & fill time. It's almost always boring & painful.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jamie – Lead sheets with chords are just fine. I don't have the patience for tabs or sheet music anymore. Listening to a piece of music a few times is usually enough for me to know & a lead sheet helps a bad memory.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jamie – Well, I'm very short, so to most people my strap length chokes like a python.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jamie – Fingerpicking with two fingers instead of three.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jamie – The banjo!

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Jamie – Slide guitar. Most people shouldn't try using a slide. There is a huge chasm between a good slide player & a bad one.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jamie – Having \$5000 to afford a really good one.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jamie – Holding a lit cigarette behind the nut.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jamie – My friend bought me a really nice clasp capo with my name engraved into it. I love it.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jamie – Chicken pickin'.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jamie – I switched my major in college to study guitar... it didn't take long for me to drop out completely.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jamie – A lot of your tone is actually in your hands rather than your amp/pedals.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jamie – Self-loathing.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jamie – Best if used in moderation.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jamie – Rarely. Once it's in the sweet spot, leave it.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jamie – Lead guitar players need more creativity in terms of melody lines & to compliment a song rather than holding down the spine.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jamie – Nope. What's that cliché phrase? You are only as good as your weakest link. I think the drummer is usually where most bands live or die.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jamie – Springsteen's signature Tele always sounds pretty darn gnarly.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jamie – Johnny Greenwood of Radiohead - very creative work.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jamie – *The Recalibrated Heart* I suppose sums me up. Most of my lead guitar days are documented on recordings that have disappeared over the years.

QRD – Anything else?

Jamie – I heart Brian John Mitchell.

Nathan Amundson of Rivulets

June 2010

Name: Nathan Amundson

Bands: Rivulets. Also collaborations with Annelies Monseré, Clara Hill, Roy Santiago, Vlor, Jessica Bailiff, Pale Horse And Rider, if thousands, Remora, Aidan Baker, & Mat Sweet.

Websites: www.rivulets.net

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Nathan – A 1970s Takamine dreadnought my dad gave me. I still have it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Nathan – Acoustic or electric guitar into Vox AC15 amp. My acoustics are all outfitted with LR Baggs pickup systems.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Nathan – Amplifier.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Nathan – Vox AC15. It's crystal clean, but small enough that it can be made to break up easily. I like to keep it right on that edge between clean & breaking up. It's fun to play there.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Nathan – Probably the Martin. It's a D-series something or other, a 15. It's the easiest to play & sounds best for the quieter stuff.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Nathan – The D-15 with the Baggs system installed works great for me. I would love a Gibson ES335, but that's just because I've always wanted a Gibson ES335.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Nathan – The only pedal I use is the Boss TU-2 tuner. I've always used the LR Baggs Para DI box though, so I guess that would be it.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Nathan – Er, there are a bunch of guitars here, but they're not all mine. I own 3 or 4.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Nathan – Nope.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Nathan – It has to be easy to play. It has to sound right for what I want it to do, & I have to like the way it looks. I use different guitars for different things.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Nathan – Oh, I don't know. One of my favorite guitars was an old \$20 Harmony I found at a Salvation Army in Red Wing, MN. That one had a lot of songs left in it.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Nathan – I have LR Baggs pickup systems installed in all my acoustics. Otherwise, if I don't like it to begin with, I don't get it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Nathan – Briefly. It only takes a moment to know if it's going to work or not.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Nathan – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Nathan – I'm into trying new things, & I've gotten better at getting what I want over time, but my chain is pretty simple. The right guitar into the right amp, set a particular way, done. Still there's a lot of wiggle room even in just that, so I do experiment & learn new things all the time.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Nathan – I've already foamed over the ES335.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Nathan – Do you like it? Does it make you want to pick it up & play it? Like, do you have a crush on it basically. Can't keep your hands off it. That's the one.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Nathan – I've never bought a guitar I didn't like. If I don't love it, I don't buy it. Maybe that's why I have so few instruments compared to most musicians I know. My Martin has served me well.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Nathan – Obviously I'm partial to LR Baggs stuff. They're not even paying me to say that. But yeah, most pickup systems for acoustic guitars are abysmal. Baggs gets it right. It's the sound of your acoustic guitar, louder. Why is that so hard for everyone else to master?

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Nathan – Something pick-y that moves up & down the fretboard a lot, like “Shadow of a Ghost.”

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Nathan – 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Nathan – Oh I don't know. Hopefully I'm not there yet!

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Nathan – Same reason as most people. It's portable & it speaks in a voice that everyone understands.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Nathan – I don't care. Not for me to say.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Nathan – Neither. It's a tool.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Nathan – Robert Smith & Simon Gallup.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Nathan – What do you mean? I'm gonna say yes.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Nathan – I've smashed a couple.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Nathan – I don't practice.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Nathan – 0 hours.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Nathan – None.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Nathan – Mediums. The sustain is better. They're more substantial. Lights feel like toy strings to me.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Nathan – It depends. On tour, every couple weeks. At home, never.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Nathan – Never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Nathan – My fretting hand. I'm not into folk music so my strumming hand never learned to do much more than strum. I can do some very simple picking patterns, but that's about it.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Nathan – It's rare. I've had maybe 2 guitars set-up ever & both of those were by a tech.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Nathan – Standard tuning dropped a half-step, & various bastardizations of DADGAD.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Nathan – I'll write the names of the chords if I know them. If not, I'll draw a little chord chart.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Nathan – Waist length?

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Nathan – Sloppiness.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Nathan – You know, I hated piano lessons as a kid, & I remember very little of it, but I do think it gave me a good foundation of understanding as to how things are put together. But obsessively listening to - & playing along with - your favorite music can do that too, so who's to say.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Nathan – Soloing. I am physically incapable of soloing.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Nathan – Bash.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Nathan – Gurgle.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Nathan – No.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Nathan – I have nothing to teach anybody.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Nathan – Learn not to play. Shut up & stop talking & listen. Half or more of the shit that you're about to do is completely unnecessary.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Nathan – They're fine. They're fun to play with I guess.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Nathan – Mick Mars & Robert Johnson.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Nathan – No.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Nathan – None. I fooled around with one of Nick Drake's guitars once & that was nice. But it's kind of like fooling around with someone else's woman.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Nathan – I really don't pay attention to stuff like that.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Nathan – The *You've Got Your Own* EP, on Acuarela.

QRD – Anything else?

Nathan – Thank you for caring to read this far. Anyone can make music. Be yourself.

Jenks Miller of Horseback & Mount Moriah
June 2010

Name: Jenks Miller

Bands: Horseback, Mount Moriah, Jenks Miller
(solo), In the Year of the Pig (drums)

Websites: myspace.com/horsebacknoise,
myspace.com/mountmoriah,
myspace.com/intheyearofthepig

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jenks – A 1980 Gibson SG. Still play it. Just got some TLC at Fret Sounds in Graham, NC.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jenks – gtr>Boss chromatic tuner>harmonic percolator>stereo Memory Man>amp

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jenks – Amp.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jenks – A Peavey Delta Blues (1x15), because it has an excellent clean signal (modeled after an AC30) but is easier to carry than an AC30. The 15” speaker provides a nice bass response, in case I need to fill out the tone for spare (or solo) arrangements.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jenks – Totally depends on the situation. A modified Telecaster (in Mount Moriah, sometimes in Horseback, whenever I need that twang), a Gibson SG (heavier sounds, & often solo), a Les Paul (heavier sounds &/or Ebow), & a 1964 Gretsch Astro Jet (solo).

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jenks – I don’t like signature guitars. I like basic stuff.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jenks – Ditto for pedals.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jenks – Too many! Not enough!

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jenks – Out of the way.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jenks – How it plays & how it sounds. The fewer bells & whistles, the better.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jenks – Between \$400-\$1000, used & broken in.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jenks – I usually stick with what I get. The setup is important, especially for different tunings. So sometimes additional setup is needed.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jenks – I must play it first. It takes only a couple minutes to tell if a guitar is right or not.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jenks – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jenks – I am after one particular tone (well, maybe two or three particular tones) that can be modified dynamically while playing, with my fingers &/or pick strokes.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jenks – None. The gear is always in service to the playing & not the other way around.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jenks – It's probably a good idea to buy a cheaper (used) guitar first, so one can decide if playing guitar is something he or she wants to do.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jenks – Best: my Peavey amp, in terms of value.
Worst: a chorus pedal.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jenks – I think effects are generally overused & can hinder the development of a player's individual technique. I try to dislike all effects as much as possible (sometimes they still sneak into the signal chain). Most brands of amplifier & guitar have at least a couple excellent models; those choices completely depend on the application.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jenks – I tune it.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jenks – 15.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jenks – 23 or 24, but I'm always trying to improve.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jenks – I don't think this is true, necessarily. I also like playing drums, bass, & keys; but I'm not very good. Guitars have a wide range of sounds & stylistic applications, so I tend to gravitate to guitar.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jenks – No. Piano is probably the best introductory instrument, since its interface is very logical & makes for a good teaching instrument.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jenks – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jenks – Neil Young, John Fahey, Loren Connors, Keiji Haino, Tony Iommi, Matthew Bower. Non-guitarists: John Coltrane, Tony Conrad, Brian Eno.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jenks – Natural. Guitars have “personalities,” so it’s kind of inevitable.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jenks – Nothing significant. I’m pretty protective of my instruments.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jenks – I don’t practice much any more outside of playing. Sometimes fingerpicking exercises are built into the songwriting process, in order to train my muscle memory for a specific part. I used to practice much more, developing my ear by playing along to recordings.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jenks – It varies greatly, probably between 1-15 hours. On the higher end if I’m recording or touring.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jenks – Medium. It seems to be the most flexible, i.e.: able to produce the greatest number of distinct

sounds. I use my fingers a lot, too, for greater tone control.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jenks – 11's, for a similar reason.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jenks – Maybe once a month. More if needed.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jenks – A couple here & there.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jenks – My strumming (picking) hand, because it controls the rhythm of my playing & dynamic sound of the guitar. Both hands have to work together, though.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jenks – A guitar tech: Usually Brian Haran at Fret Sounds in Graham, NC. He's a pro & knows much more about set-up than I do.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jenks – Standard, Drop-D, & DADF#AD. I prefer open tunings for fingerpicking or droning sounds.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jenks – I usually don't write my ideas down. I record them instead.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jenks – Fairly high, to allow access to the entire fretboard. When playing solo, I usually hold my guitar on my lap.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jenks – Improper intonation drives me up the wall. I'm continually trying to get better at intoning notes.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jenks – Piano, drums. Practically any other instrument will help in some way.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Jenks – Sweep-picking death metal style guitar. But this would require a completely different set-up, so I don't lose sleep over it!

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jenks – I'm still working on them all, I guess. Probably always will be.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jenks – I don't know any tricks. I actually don't know what a guitar trick is! Slings a guitar around my back? Playing with my teeth? I can't do either of those things.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jenks – Still working on them all. There's always room for improvement.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jenks – I took lessons for two years when I first started playing guitar. Lessons helped me make the mental connection between what I am hearing & what I am playing -- this has proved to be a very valuable skill.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jenks – Most guitar lessons seem to focus on technique (which is important) & neglect how your playing effects your sound. I suppose I would talk a lot about sound. I'd also talk about playing with other musicians as a group, & how to listen for changes in dynamics & mood in this kind of ensemble situation.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jenks – Play fewer notes.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jenks – I love tremolo.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jenks – Lead guitar players have bigger egos & less rhythm.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jenks – No. Good guitar playing plays to the band (& the arrangement) as a whole. If I'm noticing the guitar playing at the expense of the rest of the band, it's usually a bad sign.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jenks – None. I would just worry about banging it up.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jenks – As long as Keith Rowe is around, he'll probably qualify.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jenks – Any Horseback record (*Impale Golden Horn*, *The Invisible Mountain*, the upcoming *Forbidden Planet*), the upcoming Mount Moriah debut, or my solo-improvised record, *Approaching the Invisible Mountain*.

QRD – Anything else?

Jenks – Nope! Thanks, Brian.

Chris Olley of Six by Seven

June 2010

Name: Chris Olley

Bands: solo, six.byseven, Julian Cope

Websites: www.chrisolley.co.uk

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Chris – It was so cheap it never had a name. I swapped it with my mate for something else.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Chris – Not much, a tuner, overdrive, & sometimes echo delay pedal.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Chris – A good lead & my tuner.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Chris – Vox AC30 1965, it sounds, er, amazing!

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Chris – Rickenbacker 330. I won't play anything else. I have played this guitar since I bought it in 1997.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Chris – The one I have.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Chris – Coloursound Overdrive.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Chris – Rickenbacker 330 electric & Martin 00015S acoustic, Fender jazz bass. I sold everything else.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Chris – Hanging up in the hallway upstairs, on stands, lying around in the living room. They are in constant use.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Chris – I don't buy guitars, I found what I was looking for.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Chris – £1000 upwards to be a proper instrument.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Chris – I stick with what I got.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Chris – Not too much, check it out on YouTube.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Chris – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Chris – I have one sound. When you put a Rickenbacker into a 1965 Vox AC30, well, it doesn't really get much better than that.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Chris – Nothing, I've reached Nirvana

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Chris – It should be shit.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Chris – I bought a Gretsch Electromatic. Nice looking, but sounded terrible. Cheap Fender Telecasters... rubbish.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Chris – New Marshalls are shit. I like Sans Amp pedals for demo recording. I hate Line 6 stuff & anything that pretends to be the real thing in a digital simulation kind of way.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Chris – A chord.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Chris – 15.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Chris – 35.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Chris – It's the coolest thing... electric guitars are the sexiest instruments in the world.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Chris – For me, yes.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Chris – My brother, my lover, my best friend, never leaves my side

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Chris – Neil Young, John Martyn, Peter Buck.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Chris – Eh?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Chris – I've smashed quite a few to pieces, including a 12 string acoustic & a 1963 Burns guitar. My Rickenbacker has been rebuilt 4 times & has had 3 scratchplates. I once threw it across the stage at the Electric Ballroom in London & I nearly cried in the dressing room, but it managed to survive. I've just had it refurbished & I will never throw it again.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Chris – Nothing, I always play songs.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Chris – I play about 4 hours a day. I would like to play 10, like I used to.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Chris – I use 88mm green ones because they work best for me & I'm always picking them up out of the washing machine

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Chris – 10-46... that gauge works for me, light.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Chris – Every gig after sound check.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Chris – Never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Chris – Strumming hand, that is the most important, the other one pushes buttons but the strumming hand is the language.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Chris – I get someone who knows what they are doing to do it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Chris – On electric, always standard, on acoustic Drop D sometimes.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Chris – Neither, I look on YouTube or ask a friend to show me how to play something.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Chris – As low as possible so I can still play.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Chris – Don't have one.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Chris – Don't know.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Chris – Really good ragtime picking or Eddie Van Halen/Gary Moore fast playing.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Chris – There are many, see last question

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Chris – I can't do any tricks!

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Chris – Just to be able to play really fast like Steve Vai!!

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Chris – No, never.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Chris – The importance of the strumming hand & simplicity & attacking the strings hard.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Chris – Play really hard & strum really fast.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Chris – Love them! Been toying with the idea of putting a Bigsby on my Rickenbacker, but been told it will change the sound.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Chris – One is a twat the other is the salt of the earth.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Chris – No, the drummer is the backbone of any band. If the drummer does his/her job right you will be listening to the guitarist.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Chris – Neil Young's black Les Paul or Steve Jones's white Les Paul.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Chris – Neil is God & always will be.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Chris – On my new solo album.

QRD – Anything else?

Chris – Find your place & be yourself.

Don Campau
June 2010

Name: Don Campau

Bands: Don Campau, The Desmonds (1976-1978),
The Roots Of Madness (1969-1976)

Websites: www.doncampau.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Don – A cheap steel string that I got when I was 16. I can't remember what happened. I think it got passed on when I got better instruments as time went by. My first experience was playing modally because of an Indian music influence.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Don – I usually plug directly in to my BOSS 8-track digital recorder. It has tons of effects & can be operated easily & on the fly. I do not play live, although occasionally do live recordings with others. Then I bring the 8-track & use it as an effects output.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Don – Guitar & 8-track digital recorder.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Don – Acoustic 135 made in 1970. It is powerful & provides a clean sound. Too clean actually, no distortion whatsoever so I have to use a pedal.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Don – For electric I use two: Gibson Les Paul XR-2 (1982) for rock style lead. It has a strong & powerful tone way up the neck. My 1960 Gibson ES 175 for chords, rhythm, & jazz lead. Super good action & intonation & so easy to play.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Don – I think I have them already. I have all the features I need. Maybe some kind of “Fripp” pedal for ultra long sustain. I don’t know what that would be though.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Don – I don’t really use pedals anymore, just effects from the 8-track. Mainly distortion, sustain & delay

& a super sharp & clean biting tone called “Country Comp”.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Don – 3 electrics (listed already but also a faux Telecaster), 1 Rickenbacker lap steel, 1 steel string acoustic (Yamaha), 1 classical, 1 bass (my wife’s 1965 Fender Jazz Precision).

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Don – In my studio under lock & key.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Don – To get a sound that I don’t have already. However, my interest is in getting other instruments besides guitars now.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Don – Hmm, good question. But good quality is rarely cheap, although I did buy my ES 175 for \$250 in 1975. Probably more than I would be willing to spend now.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Don – Sometimes I take them for a tune up, the electronics get dusty, the inputs loose, etc.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Don – I just play it in the store & see how it sounds. That being said, I rarely buy anything new now.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Don – Rarely. It is for recording only.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Don – I do like specific tones & go to them often, but also look for contrasting tones when recording a song. To me, it is more about the composition & less about any virtuosity anymore. I want to play less & have it mean more.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Don – None that I can think of. Probably some sustain or delay effect that I don't have.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Don – Make it easy to play so I usually suggest a nylon string to start with. That is what I gave one of my daughters recently.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Don – Both of the high quality guitars I have were fantastic buys. My brother gave me a fake Telecaster from Denmark. I can't remember buying a bad instrument.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Don – I like Roland effects. I don't have a lot of experience with other stuff recently. I used to use a "Heavy Metal" pedal with a Digitech Sample/Delay pedal before my 8-track. Before that I used a Foxx Wah/Fuzz.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Don – Simple chords, simple leads, harmonics.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Don – 16 in 1968.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Don – Probably years ago in the late 70s/early 80s. Maybe early 1990s as well So, I was 30-40s. I'm OK now but have gone downhill with execution, speed, & finesse.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Don – I'm not sure it does. My fingers are short, my arthritis bad. It's what I know, but I have branched out into other areas now besides guitar.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Don – Tough call. I think it depends on if you are a "natural" for it. I originally started on flute & alto sax in school & wish I would have stuck with it.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Don – Definitely an ally. If the tune isn't working with one instrument I will switch to another. Guitar is only one part of my arsenal.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Don – Harvey Mandel, Terje Rypdal, John McLaughlin, Clarence White, Derek Bailey, Hendrix, Robert Fripp, & many, many others.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Don – It is natural to give nicknames to your friends although this is not something I've done.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Don – In 1982 I tripped over my strap bringing my 175 to the concrete floor & snapping it in two at the headstock. I cried & let it sit for 9 years before I fixed it. One could never tell now that it was broken.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Don – I'll either turn on the drum machine for a metronome, practice to pre-recorded rhythm tracks, or occasionally still turn on the cheapo auto chord keyboard because it can run through key changes easily. However, I rarely do this now & it has begun to show when I go to cut a solo.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Don – Hmm, it varies. During the winter I rarely go to the garage studio. When the weather gets good I start recording again. Would probably be 1-2 hours a week. I would benefit by practicing more, but never get to it now because of so many other projects.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Don – Depends on the song & application. Medium for most leads. Sometimes thin for light sounding rhythm.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Don – Light starting at .09 for high E. I can still do string bending & it stays in tune, mostly. Plus, not as many string breaks as with super light gauge.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Don – Maybe once a year.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Don – Occasionally the high E, but not often.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Don – Good question. I think my arthritis has affected my fretting hand because I can no longer make the chords I used to. However, my style has evolved into less chord changes now. In fact, I don't even like chord changes for the most part. I still do them though, but less. My strumming hand is fairly good still.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Don – Myself except for occasional tune-ups.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Don – Several. Open G, Open E are the main ones. Also minor key variations of those. Then, I also use a capo in those tunings. I also use unspecific tunings to surprise me. Tunings that I don't even know the names of.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Don – I simply record sketches onto the 8-track. Sometimes I sing it as a sketch.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Don – Mid level I guess although I usually sit now. The Les Paul especially is hard on my back. I hold the ES 175 higher I guess because it is lighter.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Don – Playing habitual positions & cliché ridden riffs. Also, playing too many notes.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Don – Almost any other one I'd say. The ability to listen is sometimes lost by being a guitarist & having to be louder than everyone else. My advice: Turn down & listen more.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Don – That Allan Holdsworth type of flowing lead where the fretting is done with the three lower fingers & the barre is made by the index.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Don – A live instrumental album with a trio.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Don – Tuning randomly & seeing what happens.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Don – I like slide with electric & acoustic. I also like super high capo with open tuning.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Don – Classical & flamenco. Master would not be the right word though. Too much work & commitment is required.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Don – No, I am self-taught.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Don – When not to play & to listen effectively.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Don – Why would they want to do that?

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Don – I don't know what that is. I sometimes use a tremolo effect, is that different?

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Don – Rhythm players listen better. Bass players listen better. Drummers (sometimes) listen better.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Don – Depends on the material. Of course I love a virtuoso but showing off for that sole purpose doesn't move me as much now. You don't see guys like Frisell or McLaughlin playing with untalented players. The main point is that musicianship should serve the song, not the other way around.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Don – Clarence White's Fender with the B string bender. Because it can sound like a pedal steel. Then again I'd have to be good enough to handle the string bending strap. I'll bet that's not easy to master.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Don – Eivind Aarset because he serves the material & doesn't have to show off except when needed. Bill Frisell of course because he has such a distinctive style & uses restraint.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Don – Peppered through my massive discography. I've put a few guitar oriented tunes on *The Best of Don Campau, Vol 2* available for free here:

archive.org/details/TheBestOfDonCampauVol.22000-2009

I also have a brand new album of instrumental guitar music here:

archive.org/details/DonCampauDaysOutOfOrder

QRD – Anything else?

Don – Thanks for asking. My musical ambition has moved into different areas besides guitar now although I still get a kick out of playing. Now, I am interested in other instruments & what I can learn about myself from playing them. It makes me listen better.

Colin Newman of Wire & Githead

June 2010

Name: Colin Newman

Bands: Githead // Wire // Immersion - others TBA

Websites: www.pinkflag.com // www.githead.com

// www.colinewman.com // www.swimhq.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Colin – Suzuki acoustic. I still have it. I've written tons of stuff on it & still do if I'm choosing that method of composition.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Colin – Let's get this straight from the top, I have zero gear fetishism. I choose guitars for their colour & shape; my favourite amp is one that doesn't feedback when I don't want it to. I record guitars as clean DI & use every guitar fx plug in I can get my hands on. I used to use shit loads of pedals but can't be arsed, I can get weird shit in my computer! Orange just brought out a combo with a computer build in; it's got 6 usb ports & wifi. I want one!

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Colin – Person playing it... duh!

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Colin – See above.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Colin – I’ve got an Eastwood Airline it’s a fetching shade of seafoam green.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Colin – I pretty much prefer pastel shades. I like ones that come in weird shapes also, but sexy weird shapes – not retard ones!

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Colin – Obviously the “make everything sound better” one (in a nice pastel shade of course) that does all your amp sim too plus emulates all them groovy MXR boxes. Also it should be light, so bored with lugging round equipment!

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Colin – Too many.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Colin – In the studio, under the bed, in our storage.....

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Colin – My favourite feature is whether the manufacturer will give it to me for free or not. 😊

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Colin – No idea.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Colin – Hell no!

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Colin – Computers, tech gear, sure. Instruments, nope.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Colin – I don't have a rig. Just stuff I use on gigs. It's hired.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Colin – I like guitar amps that have as few knobs as possible. Best amp for me is one with only volume. I create tones in my studio then save to my pedal.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Colin – Just the new Orange combo ☺

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Colin – My first guitar is/was an acoustic. The sound is just engaging enough to fire me to do stuff on occasion. I used to mainly compose in the bathroom because it had the best acoustics! Someone getting a new guitar needs to do several things IMO. Firstly go to the store dressed like you would for the most important gig you can imagine. Make sure there is a full-length mirror. Model the guitars. Do you look cool /cute/whatever? A guitar

is a fashion accessory; don't let anyone tell you different.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Colin – Same guitar - Ovation Breadwinner (white) looks fantastic, sounds like a heap of shit!

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Colin – Not really.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Colin – A chord of E.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Colin – 16.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Colin – 17.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Colin – I think it's hard to look anything other than a prat with a set of pan pipes that's for sure!

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Colin – I have no opinion.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Colin – Ha-ha-ha-ha. Who knows? My main instrument is a Mac Pro.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Colin – I'm gonna sound dead arrogant, but I don't think anyone anymore & not for a long time.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Colin – I think it almost totally depends on the name. Girls having cute pet names for their guitars can be charming. Guys naming their guitars after viking marauders or similar are less so.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Colin – Broke a string???

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Colin – Practice???. What's that? I never play the guitar unless there's a point to it.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Colin – If I'm not using it in what I'm doing, then not at all.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Colin – I've used Jim Dunlop .60 nylon picks since forever & ever, even though they didn't even bother to answer my request for sponsorship e-mail.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Colin – I've also used Ernie Ball Regular slinky 10-46 forever, even though they didn't even bother to answer my request for sponsorship e-mail.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Colin – When gigging, every other show.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Colin – I try not to! It's the reason why I use that pick/string combination & change so often. Especially as I mainly use the airline live as it has that Bigsby whangy bar that makes re-stringing 10 times harder!

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Colin – Guitar playing is all about the right hand IMO (unless you are left handed of course!).

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Colin – It probably needs doing...

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Colin – Regular. Less arsing around.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Colin – Pro-tools does it for me.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Colin – Medium, how it's comfortable. Anything else looks stupid.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Colin – No idea. I have minimal technique, but no desire to acquire more... it all depends on context.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Colin – No idea.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Colin – None.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Colin – Juggling.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Colin – Plugging it in.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Colin – What's a string cutter?

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Colin – I leave that stuff to others.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Colin – Are you kidding??

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Colin – Forget everything the teacher taught you.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Colin – I actually don't think anyone can. They always play too many notes.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Colin – They are called whangy bars in Wire-speak & are generally considered to be on the same level as flutes (i.e. beneath contempt). I wish my guitar didn't have one.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Colin – One is almost entirely pointless. 😊

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Colin – How could anyone think like that?

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Colin – The most desirable & collectable one so I could sell it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Colin – No idea. I don't admire guitarists

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Colin – Get the records, come to the gigs.

QRD – Anything else?

Colin – For me a guitar has always been a means to an end as a tool & a fashion accessory in terms of the look of it. That's kind of it really. The rest depends on what you need for what you might be doing with it.

Ashkelon Sain of Trance to the Sun June 2010 (mild updates February 2014)

Name: Ashkelon Sain

Bands: Trance to the Sun, Submarine Fleet, Soriah

Websites: soriah.net - projekt.com -

myspace.com/trancetothetunes -

myspace.com/ashkelonsain

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Ashkelon – My true first guitar was a nylon string my parents got me when I was still in the single digits. I wish I still had it. My first electric was a phony Les Paul made by Epiphone. I traded that in for a bass after about 3 weeks. I was much more interested in playing bass during my teens.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Ashkelon – On the first few Trance To The Sun records in the early 90s I was running my guitar through one of those Roland GP16 rackmount units. You could do all sorts of interesting things with that, like auto-wah for example. Around '96 I switched to the Yamaha FX500 because I became addicted to the chorus effect it has. In both of those

cases I was recording my guitars direct (no amplifier), with digital delay in the recorded signal (I use a lot of synchronized echoes). I added reverb in post process back then & my favorite device was the Alesis MidiVerb II. I still own three of them.

In the 2000s it became more realistic for me to afford to use stompboxes. Having a pedal board is an expensive hobby! The first upside to using stompboxes is you can adjust your settings on the fly & turn effects on & off at will, so it becomes a compositional tool. The next upside is they sound way better than rack gear.

On my pedal board, in order, I have: Electro-Harmonix MicroSynth; Electro-Harmonix White Finger Compressor; Alesis Microgate looped from a Boss LS2; Cry Baby; Ibanez Tube Screamer; Exotic Pedal USA AC Booster Overdrive; Boss EH2; Diamond Tremolo; Mr Black Eterna; Boss BF3; Strymon Ola Chorus; TCE Nova Delay; TCE Hall Of Fame Reverb.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Ashkelon – That’s like asking what’s the most important corner of a hypotenuse triangle, so I guess it has to be effects.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Ashkelon – I run my effects in stereo beginning with the flanger & carrying on through the delay pedals & I have two 2x12 combos. A Music Man & a Vox.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Ashkelon – I have an Ibanez Artcore series that looks like a Gibson 335. The low-end frequencies are extremely sweet. I also have a Danelectro Baritone & the thick strings make a very rich sound. It has the lipstick pickups too, which have extraordinary dynamic sensitivity. I have another Ibanez, a 2004 Talman Series. It's a very lightweight guitar & it has more of an airy tone, as opposed to the other Ibanez, which is watery, or the Danelectro, which is definitely more earthy. About 15 years ago I was using a hand made seven-string guitar pretty extensively. That one definitely has an icy sound. I have not used it for any recordings in quite some time, but it made an appearance on the Soriah tour in 2012.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Ashkelon – I guess it would be made out of that stuff they make mood rings out of, so it would glow

different colors in sync with the mood of whatever song I play on it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Ashkelon – I would design some sort of chorus pedal, but I have no idea how pedals work inside. There's so many amazing pedals out there though & they're all so very flexible & mutually compatible. I'm happy enough with what's available for now.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Ashkelon – There's the five that I use regularly. Two basses makes seven, I think... & there's a couple others in the closet.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Ashkelon – I always buy the case.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Ashkelon – Primarily I judge a guitar by how it sounds compared to other guitars & how well intonated it sounds as you play high up on the neck.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Ashkelon – Less than a wedding ring, but more than your allowance.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Ashkelon – I have nothing against customization, but I haven't resorted to it much.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Ashkelon – I think it's really important to make head to head comparisons with similar gear before you choose.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Ashkelon – No. I have an effects notebook & I like being able to replicate sounds I worked on previously. It would be too complicated to do that if I changed my setup all the time, for me at least.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Ashkelon – I think I use a lot of different tones, but there does seem to be something fundamentally the same about them all too.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Ashkelon – That’s a dangerous question.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Ashkelon – A new set of strings.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Ashkelon – I’ve recognized that I have bad luck with used gear. It’s just what happens. I’m not superstitious (anymore). I believe in paying a fair price & I try not to be too concerned about that which I can’t afford.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Ashkelon – I love Fender guitars, but I really don’t like Fender amps because they’re too bright. I like

my amplifier combo. The Music Man is very warm & it's a little dirty & the Vox is bright & clean by comparison. Together they make a beautiful tone, as you'll hear on the next TTTS record.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Ashkelon –

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QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Ashkelon – Nine. But I didn't get serious about it until I was more like 14

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Ashkelon – I don't think that's happened yet.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Ashkelon – More than any other instrument, electric guitar is something an imaginative creative person can pick up, & with some work, make a sound they can call their own. I like the originality of sound & tone that electric guitar is capable of. & I like that it has frets.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Ashkelon – I think voice is often people's first instrument, whether they realize it or not. A little singing ability goes a long way when you can play a guitar.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Ashkelon – What?

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Ashkelon – Robin Guthrie. Robert Smith. John Vallentine Carruthers. John McGeoch. Charles Burchill. Jimi Hendrix. The Edge.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Ashkelon – I plead guilty as charged.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Ashkelon – I cracked the body of my bass while playing aggressively.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Ashkelon – I imagine playing & I imagine the sounds I'd like to create.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Ashkelon – A conservative estimate would be anywhere between 10-20 hours a week. Maybe more.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Ashkelon – Clayton .63mm, standard shape. They wear out at the edges, but they don't break. I use the same pick on guitar & bass.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Ashkelon – On my Baritone I use the D’Addario 14-68 gauge set. On my six strings I use the Ernie Ball 10-46 gauge set. For a lighter sound I’ll often replace my low E with a 42 gauge. On my acoustic I think I use a standard 12-53 set? I know the low E is a 53 anyway.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Ashkelon – Pretty damn often.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Ashkelon – Only when I neglect to change the strings in a timely manner.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Ashkelon – Whenever I run across issues like that I just practice a whole bunch.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Ashkelon – I like to do it myself, if I can. Sending it to pro can be a good thing though.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Ashkelon – You can get some happy accidents when you mess with the tuning. Sometimes I'll retune the guitar to something strange & if I come up with a riff that I like, then I'll tune the guitar back to normal & figure out how to play it that way.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Ashkelon – All of the above. Whatever's quickest for the idea.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Ashkelon – Not like Steve Howe, but certainly a little higher than average.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Ashkelon – I rarely use upstrokes when picking slowly.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Ashkelon – The opposite gender (or other person/same gender, if that's your preference).

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Ashkelon – Flamenco.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Ashkelon – Setting it on fire.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Ashkelon – Hendrix's opening solo in "All Along The Watchtower".

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Ashkelon – I love all that stuff.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Ashkelon – Making the guitar sound like a piano.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Ashkelon – I took lots of lessons. I learned far more than I could include here.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Ashkelon – How to play Siouxsie & The Cure in an authentic manner.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Ashkelon – Be aggressive & graceful at the same time.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Ashkelon – As long as they stay in tune, I'll take 'em.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Ashkelon – One's named Angus, the other is named Malcolm.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Ashkelon – Maybe possibly the first time I listen to it. Maybe.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Ashkelon – I've never thought about it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Ashkelon – Reeves Gabrels... because that's the most obvious answer.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Ashkelon – “Atrocious Virgin” by Trance to the Sun. “The Blue Obscurities” also by Trance To The Sun. “The Eztica Tour Collection” by me & Soriah. The next Trance To The Sun album will be called *Aviatrix* & I've never played better on an album. It comes out in Spring 2014.

Zac Keiller

July 2010

Name: Zac Keiller

Bands: Solo, Dark Passenger, Quint, Ensemble of Shades, Umbra

Websites: zackeiller.polydistortion.net –
myspace.com/zackeiller

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Zac – My first guitar was a black Rickenbacker 620. I bought it when I was 15 years old while vacationing in Seattle. Before that I was borrowing various guitars from my brothers. A year after that I purchased a Fender Jag-Stang, which I kind of regard as my first guitar proper as I wound up playing it a lot more. Thinking back at the time, the Rickenbacker was a bit too mature for what I was playing & I eventually sold it to buy a mini disc 8-track recorder that I never used. One of my many musical regrets.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Zac – My guitar goes into a Pro Co Rat distortion pedal, into a Digitech Space Station multi-effects unit, into a Behringer digital multi fx pedal for

delay, into a Behringer digital reverb pedal, the output of this is sent stereo into a Behringer 4-channel mixer with RCA cables out into the line-in on my computer which is a no-name PC I've owned since 2002. The software I use is Cooledit Pro. I mainly use it for a multi-track editor & for bouncing the tracks into wav format. I never use an amplifier at home & record everything in this manner, monitoring & mastering everything on headphones to pick up more intricacies.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Zac – Definitely guitar & effects. I am not amplifier savvy & know almost nothing about how to obtain a great combination of guitar & amplifier. At some point I became obsessed with achieving a large, epic sound with my music, it wasn't until using the two Behringer pedals & the stereo outs that I finally understood how to get it, amps usually added more layers of background noise & I want the most pure signal I can get, so to eliminate all of that, the setup described above gives me the cleanest signal. Having said that, I do own two amplifiers, a Marshall Valvestate 150watt & an SWR Workingman's 15 bass amp. I use both of these basically as stereo speaker cabinets: left & right when performing live, with the sound & mix controlled entirely from the guitar & effects. If I'm

performing at a venue I know has a great PA system, then I don't take the amps & use a DI box.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Zac – My main amp would have to be the SWR, purely because I love bottom end & warm tones & it's a very powerful component in transferring the giant guitar sound into a live scenario. Since I was a teenager I never understood why more guitarists weren't using bass amps, I mean I'm sure there are lots of them, but many of the bands I was listening to back then used only guitar amps. I was & still am obsessed with bands that have no bass player as I like to find out what they can do with those limitations. The first band like that I started listening to was The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion & then Zeni Geva & a few others came along that I got in to.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Zac – My guitar is a Cort M Series M600. I traded in my Fender Jag-Stang for this, as at the time I was seeking a guitar that would stay in tune & would be a good workhorse. The Cort wound up being the ideal guitar as it is very comfortable to play, has a small neck & next to no background pickup noise.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Zac – If I had a signature guitar it would have a built in magnetic transducer to create string drone. I briefly used an attachable device named the Sustainiac (see Gears of Sand album *Unrefined* & self releases *Broken Signals*, *Line*, *Return to Predatory Harmony*, & *Sketches in Monochrome* available via my web site) which produces the same effect as the Ebow, but on all six strings. The sound, intricacies & subtleties this can create are brilliant, but in order to really get a strange otherworldly sound it requires a complicated combination of pedals as well as attaching the device to the headstock to generate the buzzing became a bit difficult to perform live so I ceased using it. You can hear the first & only live appearance of this setup on the live mini CD titled *Monolith2* available on Lo Bango Sound myspace.com/lobangosound

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Zac – My signature pedal would be a reverb, delay, & pitch shifter combination. A basic reverb & delay pedal can do wonders for creating soundscapes.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Zac – I own three guitars: The Cort, a Martinez acoustic, & an Aria Sinsonido skeletal bass guitar.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Zac – On stands or in their cases.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Zac – As above: comfort, small neck size, low pickup noise, & pickup placement. I tend to go for twin humbucker guitars.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Zac – Who can say? I've played on crappy pawn shop brands that sound great & top of the line brands that sound terrible, it is very subjective & personal, throw in one's choice of amp & effects & sometimes it doesn't matter what guitar is used. Price wise I wouldn't pay more than \$1200.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Zac – I stick with what I get.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Zac – The last piece of equipment I thoroughly tested was the Digitech Space Station & that was in 1998, since then any pedals I've purchased I did not know how they would sound until I got them, but I spend a lot of time experimenting at home & can usually make anything work in some way.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Zac – Not often. I think I've only had one or two changes in the last five or six years. I tend to stick with a rig & the warning sign will be when the recordings start to stagnate or I generally lose interest in playing that I'll then re-think my rig & change things around.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Zac – It depends on the song or the mood I'm in. I'm forever toggling between all settings. If I'm playing more soundscapes with effects I'll use more bass or middle, to not create too many high ends but if it's a clean signal then more tone.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Zac – I have always wanted a Pete Townsend signature SG, a Travis Bean, a Gretsch White Princess, a Fender Bass VI, a Fender XIII & Neil Young's old black Les Paul. I don't expect to ever own any of them, but I do dream about all of them from time to time.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Zac – I think if possible that a person's first guitar should be something that easily stays in tune & is comfortable to play. It also depends on the age of the potential player. If your child would like to learn the guitar, then invest in a decent instrument to give them the best start on it. I guess the flipside to that argument is that other notable players started out on pieces of crap & managed to forge their own style.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Zac – The best guitar purchases have been the Cort & the Digitech Space Station, only because these two items have proved to give me the most mileage & versatility. The worst are probably my two

Behringer chorus & compressor sustainer pedals, only because I bought them with no intended use & have not yet found a suitable use for either of them beyond guest appearances on a couple of tracks.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Zac – I endorse any Digitech item, only as I've had nothing but good experiences with them. The same goes for Behringer pedals, locally they retail for between \$30-\$50, which is literally the cheapest price in the country, & I love a bit of competition to kick the Boss effects in the arse. They're way too expensive even for the most basic of pedals. I am also beginning to love Gretsch guitars . I occasionally borrow one from my Father & the difference in tone is definitely recognisable compared to other guitars.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Zac – The first thing I will play is usually a song by Aussie guitarist: Cam Butler. I've been a big fan of his work for many years (his trio Silver Ray in particular). Cam's music has this incredible simplicity about it. He often uses only the same three or four chords, but is forever creating interesting & cinematic melodies with them. He

also achieves a brilliant, warm tone with his old Les Paul that resonates with me. Over the years I've picked up a few songs of his, so if I sit down to have a play then I'll often start off with one of those to get my fingers back into it.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Zac – Twelve years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Zac – My best, most technical level of guitar playing was definitely sixteen to eighteen. During those years I was interested in the Chicago instrumental/math rock type of bands like June of 44, The Shipping News, Rodan. I was always playing songs by those bands & indirectly became more of a technical player because of them. I was also heavily into The Jesus Lizard, Big Black, Shellac, Fugazi, & Zeni Geva. All of which are still special bands to me. I had no social network during those years & rarely left the house or did anything else, so it was very easy to be good at playing the guitar. By comparison I am definitely a terrible guitarist nowadays. I rarely ever play for leisure & when I do play it is for recording purposes. Usually during a creative frenzy I'll pull out some great

guitar parts & then wonder where they came from. Another way to look at it is I am a far better player now in terms of knowing exactly what I want to play.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Zac – I guess I'm just used to it. Growing up it was my constant companion. Anywhere in the family home there was always a guitar lying around & my brother & I would often play for hours while watching the television, so even while being involved in other things we would be playing a guitar. All that time on the guitar then may be the reason I don't feel the need now.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Zac – I don't really have an answer for that. My guess is that it's most peoples first instrument because it is such a recognised & accepted one. The common time frame to learn guitar is often in one's teens & even then it is most likely because we associate it with excitement & fun. One of my favourite clips is The Who live at Woodstock playing an incredibly noisy & distorted version of "Sparks". I was & still am transfixed when watching that clip because Pete Townshend's antics

symbolized freedom & sonic mayhem, which in turn led to me picking up the guitar.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Zac – It is both. When things are going well, creatively speaking then the guitar is my ally. If I'm trying to go for an idea & can't make it work, then I feel terrible. I feel bad some times that I didn't learn anything else. I do love to play the bass as well, though not as often, but if I am recording & want to use other sounds, sometimes I can take any other stringed instrument, & in a ham-fisted way manage to get something out of it that at least sounds semi professional.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Zac – Pete Townshend, Link Wray, Kurt Cobain, Billy Corgan, Neil Young, Steve Albini, Duane Denison, Jeff Beck, Jeff Martin (The Tea Party), Dave Pierce from Flying Saucer Attack, Jon DeRosa (Aarktica's *No Solace in Sleep* was a major turning point), Luke Sutherland (of Long Fin Killie, Bows, & Music AM), Trent Reznor (from a textural point of view). I'm sure there are many others but they escape me at the moment.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Zac – It seems a little odd to me, but I've seen & heard of far sillier things than that.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Zac – Nothing serious, just some broken strings here & there. I don't play guitar that hard. My technique (if you can call it that) is quite restrained, I often play at high volume but play softly then increase strength to give the song sudden bursts of noise.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Zac – Maybe some finger exercises up & down the neck.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Zac – As mentioned I rarely play at all anymore, but I wouldn't mind fitting in thirty minutes per day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Zac – I've use the same nylon medium pick for many years. It helps with lighter strumming, but is still heavy enough to play hard if need be.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Zac – I like a heavy gauge to achieve a warmer tone & more bottom end, but from a playability point I prefer light gauge strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Zac – Once every few years. A can of WD40 lubricant & stainless steel polish can bring a set of strings back to its original health if applied every few weeks.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Zac – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that affect your style?

Zac – I think they're both exclusive. Each one contributes something that achieves a greater sound that couldn't occur without the other.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Zac – I've often wanted to have it set-up, but as long as it stays in tune that is all I need. I'm lucky in that I've found the perfect guitar that matches my needs, so it's fine as is.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Zac – I use a standard tuning, & occasionally a Drop D for certain songs. If I'm working on a multi-track recording I'll often tune to an open chord & use a violin bow on the strings to create extra atmospheres in the mix.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Zac – I never write down ideas & I cannot read tablature or music. I sometimes wish that I could though. 90% of all my music is based on recordings that were improvised, meaning that if I sit down to play for fun, my rig runs into my computer anyway, so I'll often press the record button then have a thirty minute sound file at the end of it. Depending on if I'm playing noise or drones, I will often edit down those sessions into finished tracks. Or if I'm trying to record more of a

musical song I'll take melodies from those sessions & work on them until I get a song.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Zac – I wear it low, but not “Jimmy Page’s groin” low.

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Zac – I like playing the same few chords. I need to learn some more.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s guitar playing?

Zac – I own an electric mandolin that I rarely play, but when I did, the fingering involved in that transferred to greater dexterity on the guitar.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can’t?

Zac – I have always wanted to be able to finger pick on acoustic guitar, but the other part of me thinks that there are already far too many finger pick players in the world to do the job far better than I

can, so I prefer to play the acoustic like I do an electric.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Zac – Learning more chords & becoming more technically proficient.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Zac – I would teach them power chords first, & the more complicated chords & finger arrangements later. I started off on power chords playing things like “My Generation” & “Smells like Teen Spirit”. Learning something new can be difficult enough, but if you can achieve some kind of goal early on, I find that gives one more impetus to keep going & if when teaching someone, they can start playing basic songs, or their favourite songs, they realise that playing guitar is actually within their grasp & not something unattainable that only other people can do. At least that's the way it happened for me.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Zac – Play hammer-ons for ten minutes without getting sore fingers. I use a lot of hammer-on techniques in conjunction with delay, reverb, & distortion to achieve droning effects.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Zac – I like Bigsby's, purely from an aesthetic level, but never feel the need to use them.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Zac – I've often wondered about this & have struggled to see the difference between the two. Watching my brother playing guitar he can play anything, chords to complicated solos, so in my family there has never been rhythm or lead, we just play guitar, however it works.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Zac – It depends on the situation; I'd imagine it would be frustrating watching a struggling band with a great guitarist, because there'd be no pay-off of watching all the instruments gel together to create the greater musical whole.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Zac – Neil Young’s old black Les Paul. It’s beaten up, thrashed, & still sounds great. I hope my Cort looks as bad as that in thirty years!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Zac – See my above list of favourites. There is no one innovative player above all others. It all depends on individual musical taste. I am a fan of Scott Cortez of lovesliescrushing. I’ve never met the man (except online) & have heard hardly any of his music, but what I have heard has been brilliant. A couple of times in the past though we’ve had a few long email discussions about the nature of the guitar, effects & other things & he has some great insights. I like Scott because he is a guitar worker; cruise by his MySpace or Facebook & he seems to always be working on a new guitar contraption or method of playing. He has such enthusiasm & excitement & it really shines through, even if you don’t know him. It is that sort of workhorse musician attitude that resonates with me. Eric Quach of thisquietarmy is similar as well. I like that he works so hard at every level of his project from music all the way down to realising each release he puts out. I’m handicapped in that way in

that I have so much recorded material, but very little released & I just keep moving ahead to the next thing. Getting something released is great, but the time it takes & mailing out copies to labels, keeping hopeful..... I'm more addicted to the process & realising the tiny ideas that form in my mind into their finished states.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Zac – Listen to any album on my web site: zackeiller.polydistortion.net. Basically anything related to sound, gadgets, or technique that I've discussed in this interview can be found on my previous albums. All of which are available for free download.

QRD – Anything else?

Zac – Thanks for inviting me to take part in this interview.

Eric Muhs
July 2010

Name: Eric Muhs

Bands:

Website: www.invisiblemoose.org

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Eric – Fender duo-sonic. I sold it to a vintage shop. It was very vintage, but kind of crappy.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Eric – No typical set-up - I try different things all the time. Right now, a Digitech GNX4 & Electro-Harmonix 2880 four-track looper.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Eric – Probably the effects really.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Eric – I think the new Vox amps sound great.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Eric – Mid 70s Telecaster. I rewired with new pickups & put phase switches on both & I have a B-bender.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Eric – My Telecaster. Unbeatable.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Eric – I like the GNX4 a lot. I also like how it talks to my computer.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Eric – Electric Telecaster, Rickenbacker, Gittler, Epiphone SG, Guild acoustic 6 & 12 strings.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Eric – Generally in the case, except for the last one I used.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Eric – When that case is closed, nothing should move around in there. I often add some foam.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Eric – I always install strap locks & redo the action & intonation. So easy, but most guitars are setup badly.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Eric – You can start to get something pretty good for around 500 dollars. Craigslist has inflated the price of older guitars ridiculously.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Eric – Upgrade.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Eric – The internet makes this easy.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Eric – Yup.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Eric – I am a chameleon.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Eric – I'm pretty happy right now.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Eric – Low action on beginning guitars is very important for tender fingers. I like thin strings for that reason, too - they don't have to be quite as tight.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Eric – That duo-sonic, for being vintage, was just a sucky guitar. The vintage aspect made it unattractive to modify. I love my telecaster. I think I paid 300 for it.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Eric – Dislike Marshall stacks. Really? You need that?

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Eric – No predictions.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Eric – 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Eric – I'm still getting better.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Eric – It's easy.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Eric – Sure.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Eric – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Eric – Neil Young, Bill Nelson, Robert Fripp, Steve Hillage.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Eric – At its worst, it's harmless.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Eric – I've dropped them or let them slide to the floor. Letting other people play it is always a risk.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Eric – 2.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Eric – I like heavy nylon picks with some kind of grip.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Eric – Extra light, easy to bend.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Eric – As needed.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Eric – Once per 50 hours - not much.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Eric – Right hand.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Eric – I do it. Not rocket science.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Eric – Standard, open G, open E.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Eric – I record.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Eric – Long.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Eric – Not practicing.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Eric – Ukelele.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Eric – Learning a lot of other people's songs.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Eric – The one I've just discovered.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Eric – I have a LOT to learn about my GNX4 pedal.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Eric – Nah.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Eric – How to not sound like a guitar.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Eric – Be daring & original.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Eric – I LOVE TREMELO.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Eric – Up all the way, almost always.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Eric – Nothing.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Eric – Nope.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Eric – I like many of sounds Isaac Brock of Modest Mouse. I've been into Robin Trower lately.

Patrick Vega

July 2010

Name: Patrick Vega

Bands: Patrick Vega

Websites: www.patrickvega.com - [YouTube](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Twitter](#)

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Patrick – Falcon Strat copy. Torino red. Sold it to afford my guitar teacher's guitar. Now wish I still had it. For nostalgic reasons.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Patrick – Ideal situation: Fender Stratocaster, Pedalboard (Boss Tuner, Cry Baby from Hell Wah, YJM 308 Boost, Digitech Whammy 4, CE-2 Chorus, BF-2 Flanger, MXR 90, Danelectro DanEcho) into (splitter) Peavey 5150 (EVH) & Marshall JCM2000 heads 8 & Marshall Silver Jubilee into two 2*12 Marshall 1936 (stereo).

Indie/Real World/Convenience Situation:

Fender Stratocaster into Line6 X3 Live pedalboard into Marshall JCM2000 head into two 2*12 Marshall 1936 cabs.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Patrick – Fender Stratocaster.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Patrick – Marshall JCM 2000 DSL. Affordable, flexible, easily replaceable & does the job.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Patrick – Fender Stratocaster American Standard, Three Tone Sunburst, Maple Neck, Graphite Saddles, DiMarzio & Fender Custom Shop Pickups, bone nut, floating tremolo. Been with me the longest (since ‘96). Sounds great got real life dings & scratches & is still number one in a harem of Strats & Les Pauls.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Patrick – Fender Stratocaster American Standard. Available colors: Three Tone Sunburst, Torino Red, & Black. Maple Neck only, single ply white pick guard, vintage style saddles, graphite saddles, DiMarzio & Fender Custom Shop ‘69 Pickups, bone nut, new American Standard Vintage Style 2

point tremolo, my logo on the neck plate. Available for: fitted to my tunings & regular tuning. Strap locks installed.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Patrick – Wah-Wah Pedal. Manufactured so you don't have to turn the pedalboard to actually face the audience when playing it a lot. Ferrari accelerator style with my logo on it. Adjustable sweep & a huge on/off LED, noiseless operating (no squeaking), a power supply/cable jack that can't brake (hate those thin connectors on the side) & a off/on switch that is weapons grade, light material but sturdy.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Patrick – Like 9 & 2 basses, but I really only use 3 Strats, one Les Paul, & a 4 & 5 string bass for recording.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Patrick – Public storage, in the studio, in my apartment & in bed.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Patrick – Gig Bag: headstock/string protector so it does not mess up the bag. An actually functioning zipper (right!?), thick & protective but light material, a real protective cushion on the bottom (!!), straps that don't brake or tear or hurt while carrying & are easily adjustable. Some space to put in stuff. Cool looking = Anti-back packing/rucksack style.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Patrick – The Fender Stratocaster - Made in U.S.A logo. Classic 50's are fine too.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Patrick – Depends on what is “good” which is a matter of taste & perception of all kinds of things -- mainly experience, playing level, & knowledge.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Patrick – I have to because of my unusual tunings (my low “E” string which is a “C” is a .56 & the rest is a bit odd too), so needs a nut, neck, saddle, & tremolo adjustment. Other than that, depending on the guitar, I put in Fender Custom Shop Pickups or

a certain kind of DiMarzio. Oh & a strap lock strap, so it doesn't fall while maneuvering!

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Patrick – Big time, IF I get something new. There's not much out there except classic stuff that I care about really. I'm happy with my Strats, old Marshalls, first run 5150s & old cabs (mainly because of the fact that stuff manufactured before like '98 is just of much higher quality & actually works). Also some vintage pedals if I find a cool one. Line6 makes good stuff too; which I mainly use out of convenience & for budget reasons.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Patrick – No not really. Only if something brakes.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Patrick – I definitely like to change based on mood when recording. Basically it's a schizophrenic mix between vintage & modern rock/metal tones. Live it's the Strat/Marshall combo I lock in to.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Patrick – Fender Stratocasters, old chorus & analog delay & weird pedals, old Marshalls (Plexi, Jubilee), Fender Twin.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Patrick – A “Patience ON” switch? I don't know, that really depends on the player. For a serious player... well he/she finds out real quick on his/her own what's missing or not.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Patrick – Best: Fender Strat, vintage amps. Worst: No, I'm happy, I know what I'm doing & back in the day it was all a learning experience & right for the time/moment, so it's all good.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Patrick – It is: Fender, Marshall, Gibson, MXR, Vox, Boss. Everything else is there, but the only true originals & essentials are those mentioned. All

a matter of taste & choice of wood, style, look, playability..... I will not say that I dislike something, because I pretty much ONLY like the ones I mentioned which is only my personal taste of course. ☺ Like how many religions & saviors does one need?!

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Patrick – G, D, & then an Asus2 for some reason to see if it’s in tune (I wouldn’t have known, but a student told me once I allegedly always do that).

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Patrick – 14. I really wanted to start at 9, but was told by some “experts” that my parents asked that I had to wait until I was a bit older.....

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Patrick – I’m a work on progress. Death won’t stop that either.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Patrick – Never had an option. The guitar chose me. I had no choice & I can't NOT play. It's all I think about. 24/7. It's number one, numero uno. The most important thing in my life.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Patrick – I have no answer to that. Whatever works & motivates, is fun & is wanted or chosen by the beginner. Others like me have no choice; there is no alternative.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Patrick – It's my voice. I speak, sing, scream with my guitar, I write & play guitar instrumental music. This is how I express my deepest emotions, feelings, anger, love... everything. I really would like to BE a guitar. 😊 (Preferably in Jimi Hendrix's, Jimmy Page's, or Eddie Van Halen's hands.)

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Patrick – In the beginning: Satriani, Malmsteen, Vai, & Eddie Van Halen. In general: add to that Hendrix, Page, & classic blues players.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Patrick – Hey, that's cool, I can relate, it's like a person, it's alive, so it's natural people name it. Even people that have 100s of guitars mainly have ONE favorite. It's like your one true love. 😊

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Patrick – I've been pretty good. Never broke one intentionally - only once smashed one on stage & it was a cheap one out of a pawnshop. I would have a hard time doing that to a Strat... I don't care one bit about dings & scratches though. 😊 As long as it does not affect the playability (i.e. on the neck).

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Patrick – Constantly challenge myself, invent new exercises & mainly just play & play & play though. Most importantly: Play loud (different animal), while standing, looking cool, & be dead on with intonation & technique, feeling & effects & all. That's the real deal. Preferably on stage.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Patrick – As much as I can. Thanks to being DIY (Do It Yourself) & indie & having a day job & bit of a life as much as I possibly can - it varies. Would like: 24/7. But make no mistake, everyone & everything has to step aside & make place for my guitar & music. Guitar IS number one/top priority.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Patrick – My signature picks, made by Steve Clayton. Great shape, great material & it's got my name on it. ☺ I sometimes wear it in a Pickbay Guitar Pick Pendant too. Check 'em out: www.pickbay.com.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Patrick – Oh god. Here we go: I use three different tunings okay; I use standard, Drop C & my special tuning (mix between Drop C & Open G). So I have three different sets of strings where as the last one (which is my favorite one) is made out of three different sets or packs of singles (sometimes they are hard to find). It's no accident that made up set; it's research & experimentation. I finally found it & I had to write it down on a piece of paper for a while so I wouldn't forget. ☺

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Patrick – Every time before I play a show & before I record. Other than that, I clean them well. 😊

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Patrick – Rarely. I'm pretty good & I bend the hell out of 'em too. I guess graphite saddles DO work huh? 😊

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Patrick – EVERYTHING. I practiced millions & millions of hours. & still do. & will never stop. But the best stuff always comes from your heart & soul. It's that special way you hit, bend, fret, pick whatever a note or produce a sound. THAT's the stuff.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Patrick – I like having a pro do that. I have enough things to worry about as is. I own set-up & repair books & read about it, but it is still a plan to actually do it. Very much like mixing. Hey the day only has so many hours right? That's a thing I envy about real famous players: 24 guitar techs & a runner to get food & stuff (all that normal people,

everyday chores, tech, whatever kind of stuff which is all cutting into my making music time!).

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Patrick – A piece of whatever paper & some kind of pen will do it.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Patrick – So it looks cool, but is still good for playing some technical stuff.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Patrick – I wish I had a switch that makes me unaffected by anything out of my control. Negative vibes, negative or no energy, technical issues, health issues (sick on stage...), band screw-ups... I'm getting better at zoning all that out though. 😊
Getting completely lost in playing. 😊

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Patrick – Another guitar? Ha-ha I have NO idea. No wait... the drums! Oh yeah, the drums, it's all rhythm baby. True story too.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Patrick – For some life is a game, for me it's a war. I'm constantly chasing & improving, but am pretty happy at the same time. BUT not satisfied. I'm restless.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Patrick – The guitar has unlimited goals. That's the beauty of it. & that YOU & the people that will read this when it's published -- know my name PRIOR to reading this. There is still time though. 😊

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Patrick – What's a guitar trick? Shooting an RPG off of it?

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Patrick – Don't need a gadget when I got a guitar. If I don't have a guitar, it definitely would be the picture of a guitar.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Patrick – Perfect intonation (bendings) in ANY situation. Especially when you have no monitors & play by sight.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Patrick – A whole lot of 'em & in different & not so obvious ways too. Answering that question would take a few pages though.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Patrick – How to understand stuff, not memorize it. Especially the guitar neck.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Patrick – Be me. & there only is one me. Unless I've been cloned. Then that person would know what to do.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Patrick – I am anti-fixed bridge. I need my tremolo floating. Not big on locking systems either (I tried). It's what Leo Fender invented with his boys back then. That's why they didn't really change it in like 60+ years.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Patrick – Frequently. Especially while jamming. Roll off the highs off the bridge pickup & also adjust middle & neck pickups. You need a functioning guitar for that with non-sterile knobs & pots though (i.e. Fender, Gibson). 😊

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Patrick – Attitude? Ego? Personality? Gets in the way of their drinking arm? 😊 I don't know!

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Patrick – Tough ‘cause if the singer is annoying then you know... everything stands & falls with the singer. But in some cases, yes. With instrumental stuff, yeah, probably.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Patrick – Ohhhhhhhhhh a Hendrix Strat, an old Van Halen guitar & an old Jimmy Page guitar. Those guitars got some magic on it believe me this.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Patrick – OK here it comes: ME. ‘Cause it’s instrumental music like it has not been done before. Check it out & you will have to agree. It’s “Where The Guitars Are The Vocals” or “Guitar Instrumental Music Without Giving You Seizures.” & I put the IN in innovative, too. 😊 That’s right, I said it. Now check out www.patrickvega.com 😊

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Patrick – On my albums *Freefall Faith Firestorm* (2007, FFF Music) & *8 Bullets* (2009, FFF Music). I am about to finish up a new EP by the way.

Shooting for a summer 2010 release! Stay tuned www.patrickvega.com (shameless self-promotion)

QRD – Anything else?

Patrick – Check me out, give me & my music a chance & support the art you like. Meaning: Do NOT download it ILLEGALLY. May it be music, photos, articles, software, books. Support the art you like! Without it, this world would be pretty bland.

Russ Stedman

July 2010

Name: Russ Stedman

Bands: Mostly solo studio work. Notable live bands included Teenage Slots (1986), Ten Center (1995-1996), The Sneakies (1996-1997), Stickler (1998), Moist Host (2006-2007)

Websites: www.russstedman.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Russ – It was a Les Paul copy made by a company called Lotus. I traded it in for my 2nd guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Russ – I don't really use an amplifier anymore, as I don't play live anymore & I live in an apartment. Most of my playing is done through various plugins in Pro Tools.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Russ – Well, I guess the guitar is pretty important. The effects can be just as important, however. I

don't feel inspired to play if the right tone isn't there.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Russ – The last amplifier I owned was a Marshall JCM 900 half-stack when I used to play in bands. Haven't owned an amplifier for about 10 years now.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Russ – It has most recently become an LTD Viper 300-FM. It is comfortable & has nice active EMG pickups with great frequency response.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Russ – It would be a mid-70s Gibson Les Paul Goldtop Deluxe if I could afford one again.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Russ – I always liked the original Ibanez Tube Screamer from the 80s. Very Metal. I also had an imitation Scholz Rockman from the Sears catalog that had a bitchin' over-the-top distortion sound.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Russ – Two. The LTD & a custom built Flying-V.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Russ – In my apartment, on a stand, or leaned up against the wall.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Russ – A snack machine. But seriously, I don't take my guitars out of the house anymore, so cases are kind of irrelevant.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Russ – Something that's easy for me to play. 24 3/4" scale. Thin neck.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Russ – The Viper was around \$600. I think that was pretty fair.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Russ – Changing strings is about the extent of my upgrading.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Russ – Long enough hopefully.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Russ – I gots no “rig”, so no.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Russ – I like all kinds of crazy shit, but most of it involves lots & lots of distortion.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Russ – The aforementioned Les Paul. I would also dig having my 2nd guitar back which was a Westone Concord III... but I'd be willing to bet I wouldn't play it much.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Russ – Low action.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Russ – Best - The aforementioned Les Paul that left me in a time of dire financial straits. Worst - Some sort of Epiphone with a Floyd Rose.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Russ – The ever-elusive skinny-necked Les Paul. I like Marshall amps. I don't care for 99.9% of Strats or anything pointy with skulls. Bolt-on necks bite. Amps with no master volume are right out. Single-coil pickups are wimpy.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Russ – Probably just some random wanking.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Russ – Thirteen.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Russ – Probably 17 or 18.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Russ – Because KISS LOVES YOU, ROCK & ROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL LLL!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Russ – No. More people should play cello or bassoon. I wish I would have learned to sight-read when I was a kid.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Russ – Depends on the music.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Russ – Ace Frehley, Bob “1” Mothersbaugh, Eric Clapton (pre-1970 - really anything after Cream is useless to me), Jimmy Page, Frank Zappa, Dave Gilmore, Robert Fripp, Billy Gibbons, Prince, Steve Vai (Pre-1990 - before the guitar-god albums).

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Russ – Completely daft.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Russ – Do you mean by accident or on purpose? Dropped my Westone down a small flight of concrete stairs once, but the worst that happened to it was a little chunk out of the back of the neck. On purpose I once attempted to fuse an acoustic guitar & a bass into a new instrument which I dubbed "The Gabajar". That did some pretty serious damage, let me tell you.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Russ – What else is there?

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Russ – Sometimes I do not play at all in a week. It would be nice if I could find an hour a day, but it rarely works out.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Russ – Dunlop. The yellow ones. They're nice.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Russ – Ernie Ball 08-38. Never understood why people want to torture themselves with anything heavier.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Russ – Whenever it seems pertinent.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Russ – Rarely. Usually I have decided to change them before they break.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Russ – I think they're about equal... at a skill level I would call "Medium-Rare". I don't try to play fast anymore because I don't have the chops for it or the time to develop them.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Russ – It stays pretty set-up on its own in its comfy indoor home.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Russ – Standard tuning down 1/2 step because that's how KISS did it.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Russ – I don't write down guitar ideas, therefore the question is moot.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Russ – Gut-level, which can be tricky with a substantial gut.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Russ – Repeating familiar patterns.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Russ – I find it much easier to visualize & build chords on a keyboard. Not sure if that really helps guitar playing or not.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Russ – Classical.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Russ – Making anything Lydian or Locrian sound believable.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Russ – Creating a fake wang-bar sound by bending the note with your right hand behind where you have it fretted with the left.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Russ – I had an Ebow for a while... it got boring pretty quickly.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Russ – More weird chords.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Russ – I took guitar lessons from a couple people very early on. I learned that it's mostly best to just teach yourself.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Russ – Play hard, play fair, nobody hurt.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Russ – Practice a whole bunch for about 5 years & then just slack the rest off.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Russ – I would love the Floyd Rose if it came with a personal guitar technician to be at your beck & call 24/7. Too annoying to deal with maintenance-wise.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Russ – Only if I want to sound like Santana, which isn't very bloody often.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Russ – Size of face in album artwork.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Russ – No.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Russ – I know I just said Strats suck (which they do), but it would be cool to have that blondish Strat that Frank Zappa played on the '84 tour... but it has a Floyd Rose so there would have to be a personal guitar tech that came with it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Russ – Mike Keneally. He plays like a mother fucker & writes funny & interesting songs.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Russ – All of my 80+ releases since 1982 are available for free download at russstedman.com.

QRD – Anything else?

Russ – Every Good Boy Does Fine.

Bret Hart
July 2010

Name: Bret Harold Hart

Bands: I have been working solo & collaboratively for several years. Our defunct “avant-Appalachian” band, BARBWIRE HEARTS re-convenes now & again, & my Massachusetts band, HIPBONE, plans to record again eventually.

Websites: [Lulu Store](#) - [Edge Surfing Podomatic](#) - [Soundclick](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Aural Innovations](#)
[Interview](#)

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Bret – It was a Sears Silvertone acoustic, the neck of which bowed within a year of purchase (1971). I learned rudiments on it, generally just fooling around, until 1974 when my friend David Chace taught me how to fingerpick. I got serious quickly & upgraded to a nice Epiphone dreadnaught in 1977.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Bret – I connect whatever instrument I have chosen to a string of moveable FX that tend to include echo, distortion, wah-wah, looping, reverberation,

& pitch-shifting. I have a lot of vintage stuff in the “arc” - MXR, E-H -- along with much newer digital things to expand the palette. I like to run through a direct box, when playing acoustically. Electric instruments I send through either a Fender Acoustisonic, splitting the stereo signal between its 2 channels, or for small rooms, a 5W Epiphone Valve Junior tube amp. I also have a 60W four-channel PA that sometimes functions as the guitar amp.

QRD – What is the most important part of your rig, guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Bret – The sequencing of FX in the chain. Improper pedal-arrangement can badly attenuate the signal or flatten an otherwise very cool timbre. Oh yes, & working cordage & lots of batteries.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Bret – The 5W Epiphone Valve Junior tube amp I have is wonderful. It has an on/off switch & a volume control, that’s it. It generates remarkable volume, is clean & as quiet as the incoming signal, & when I turn it up to 11, the tube gets really hot & produces a fuzziness that sounds very 1950s. I traded a 60W solid state (noisy) Crate amp for it at a pawnshop & believe I came away with a deal.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Bret – Presently, I continue exploring the possibilities of the 12-string electric/acoustic guitar. I obtained one a year ago & I just love it -- unplugged or tweaked. The double-dulcimer timbre & strangeness that happens when it is sent through an FX chain offer a bunch of unexpected fun.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Bret – Mine would be similar to the best electric guitar I ever owned, a Baldwin Nu-Sonic. Lightweight, the nicest whammy bar I've ever encountered, & wicked differentiation between the bridge & neck pickup tones. Loved it! The guitar was stolen at a gig in Massachusetts in 1994.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Bret – Something like the new Electro-Harmonix Memory Man, combined with looping & pitch shifting.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Bret – I have one electric guitar, five acoustics, a homemade banjo-bass, & numerous other homemade stringed instruments that resemble most guitars.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Bret – In our music room, with all the keyboards, percussion, & so forth.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Bret – Someone to carry them for me.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Bret – That it stays in tune & doesn't look too dopey. Being cheap is a must.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Bret – Good guitarists should be given good guitars.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Bret – I play them until they break or something better arrives.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Bret – None.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Bret – Continuously.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Bret – I choose tones in real-time, based upon the needs of the moment.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Bret – I think I've pretty much got all of the tools I need already.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Bret – Low string action, closed-back tuners that work, a trussed guitar neck to minimize warp.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Bret – None. All good.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Bret – I just love Roland/Boss FX & recording gear, Electro-Harmonix & MXR pedals, & Fender Telecaster guitars.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Bret – The idea that told me to pick up the guitar.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Bret – 1971.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Bret – Probably about ten years ago. Since, I have been adjusting to increasing arthritis in my hands,

elbows, & shoulder. I don't expect to ever stop playing guitar, but physical necessities make me approach the instrument with respect.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Bret – Yes.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Bret – Why not?

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Bret – Both, & we like it that way.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Bret – Neil Young, Fred Frith, JJ Cale, Adrian Belew, David Torn. There are tens of others that I enjoy & admire greatly, but these guys are the ones that made me try to achieve more at some point on the continuum.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Bret – No. Whatever makes them happy.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Bret – Making my first modified electric instrument (The “Bend-Guitar”) was vicious. It had been a Hagstrom solid body 12-string electric. I took a bandsaw to it & cut it in half between the bridge pickup & bridge; then, reattached the halves with a huge gate hinge on the back. While playing, forearm pressure on the body & pulling back on the neck created IMMENSE string bends & immediate de/retuning into strange places. This instrument developed a wiring problem & was disassembled for parts in 1990

See article in Aural Innovations for more info: aural-innovations.com/issues/issue16/ho-mades.html

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Bret – I practice being happy & at peace. This allows for everything else.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Bret – 3-5 hours weekly.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Bret – Medium nylon, with some flex & strength. I prefer to fingerpick, but use a plectrum when appropriate.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Bret – Extra-light, to permit more aggressive bending.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Bret – When they sound dull & dead. More often during humid months.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Bret – Seldom, these days. As a teen, all the time.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Bret – I am proud of both hands, as they each have so much to be mindful of. Because I fingerpick, the right hand is involved in all sorts of arachnid stuff. Because I simulate slide guitar & dip into a lot of extended technique with the left hand, there's a lot

of horizontal stuff going on over there. They're both proficient at what they are asked to do.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Bret – Self, unless badly damaged or beyond my abilities.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Bret – In my college days, I tried all manner of open tunings. They have their uses, & make for some very chiming stuff. These days, I use standard & drop-D tunings a lot. Sometimes, I drop the high E-string down to a D as well, but keep my fingerings standard. Neat things happen.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Bret – I have composed using graphic notation (the CD *494 Possible Polygons*). I wish I could write scores. For songs, I type-out lyrics & place chords changes above syllables where the changes are called for.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Bret – The right bout is below my nipple.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Bret – I took-on this challenge about 20 years ago & have broken free of the unconscious habits that used to stiffen my playing. Improvisation is cathartic & cleansing.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Bret – Any of them. Music is about ears, not instruments. Trying & failing miserably on an unfamiliar instrument is always a great reintroduction to one's familiar instrument.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Bret – Hawaiian slack-key guitar. It's beautiful & reeking with delicacy.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Bret – Copyrighting all of my guitar compositions.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Bret – A little loop of duct tape on the body of the guitar is a great way to keep picks nearby, right where I want them.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Bret – I have enjoyed the E-Bow for many years. They're great! I also am so happy with the gains made in tuner technology during the last decade. Can you believe this? I used to tune with a pitch pipe.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Bret – Fingerpicking using the right ring finger & pinky -- I just can't train that little waif to behave & do what needs to be done. My picking style is similar to the 3-finger banjo playing of country music pioneer, Charlie Poole, who invented the style.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Bret – I truly owe my enthusiasm for guitar to David Chace, who told me I could do it, then showed me that he was right. I learned how to fret chords, fingerpick, & strum along with songs I liked

at the time. I believe that the ability to jam along with a song one likes is the key to continuing with guitar.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Bret – Rhythm matters, so I work hard to deliver a sense of what “good time” is while playing. I teach from where the child (or adult) is. If they have a nascent strength, I build from that talent. If they have no talent, I help them find things that they can do well, then build on that.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Bret – They might need to lighten-up a little. I enjoy surprises in real-time. This took ages to get to. People are “wired” to hear error. I have worked to love the unexpected & unlovable sound.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Bret – They're cool. The knife-edge whammy on my old Baldwin was smooth & left the intonation intact. Bigsby's are nice, as are the Floyd Rose systems. I also have a terrific admiration for players who use the Clarence White B-Bender &

HipShot units with virtuosity. Brad Paisley, like country music or not, is an absolute genius with them, as is Albert Lee.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Bret – Continuously.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Bret – I have learned to be both at once. I started off as a rhythm player in the late 70s, but then was thrust, rather uncomfortably I might add, into the role of soloist. I hadn't a clue. I knew what my ears liked, but hadn't the hands or dexterity to pull that kind of stuff off. Many years have given me a style that is suitable to many situations.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Bret – No, although I can enjoy any musician-visited-by-genius during the moments that is happening. Bad music often contains gems of instrumental virtuosity.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Bret – “The Log” that Les Paul made, one of Hans Reichel’s beautiful self-crafted instruments, one of Eugene Chadbourne’s guitar-inventions. (I own the first “Rake” of his. It’s part of a windchime in the back yard.)

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Bret – I have no idea. I don’t know who’s out there anymore. My heroes are, mostly & pleasantly, still living, so I still listen to them. When I was an independent music reviewer in the 80s & 90s, I learned that there’s such a thing as musical dilution from hearing too much. I may sound way out there about this, but too much choice is too much. When friends recommend something, I check it out.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Bret – Live, on a good night. Otherwise, I’d suggest anything that rings one’s bell at [my lulu.com storefront](http://my.lulu.com/storefront). Read the blurb & listen to your eyes.

QRD – Anything else?

Bret – Thanks, Brian, for this opportunity to musically reflect. It’s been fun.

Rick Ray
July 2010

Name: Rick Ray
Bands: The Rick Ray Band
Websites: www.rickray.net

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Rick – A Silvertone Les Paul copy hollow body electric, got it in 1967... it cracked in half a few years later.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Rick – 1968 SG or 1985 Strat, A/B switch to go between guitars (the Strat has a GK1 to guitar synth) tuner, rotovibe, wah, compression, octave divider, A/B between two distortions (one path EQ & tube distortion, the other transistor distortion), noise gate, phaser, stereo chorus, stereo flanger, analog delay, volume pedal, analog delay, flanger doubler, digital delay 1 second, digital delay 2 second, Echoplex, to Peavey Stereo Chorus Amplifier.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Rick – 1968 SG.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Rick – Peavey Stereo Chorus... very powerful & clean.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Rick – 1968 SG because it plays great... low profile frets, like the fretless wonder Les Pauls which you cannot get anymore.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Rick – Just what I've got now.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Rick – Tube Distortion with good EQ on it.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Rick – Six.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Rick – All over the place... easy access to play at any time inspiration hits.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Rick – They're fine like they are.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Rick – Feel & sound.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Rick – Cheaper than what they're going for, that's for sure.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Rick – Pretty much stick with what I get, but I do adjust them to my liking.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Rick – Read about it & try it first if possible.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Rick – Not much.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Rick – Depends on the song, yes.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Rick – My 1973 Les Paul Fretless Wonder... had it for years, sold it to an old drummer of mine, under the condition that later on in life I could buy it back... he died & the whereabouts are unknown.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Rick – Upon first learning... it's the person, not the guitar.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Rick – Never made a bad purchase... the best was the 1973 Les Paul or my current 1968 SG.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Rick – Old Gibsons... not new ones, the frets are like railroad ties... MXR old & new.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Rick – Probably one of my tunes or a Beatles tune.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Rick – Six.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Rick – I started getting pretty good around 13... but my best playing is right now.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Rick – Not sure of that one.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Rick – Whatever the person’s passion is.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Rick – It’s my sanity keeper.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Rick – George Harrison, Robin Trower, Frank Marino, Steve Morse, John McLaughlin, Greg Lake, Robert Fripp, Phil Keaggey.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Rick – Companies name them, I guess artists can to... I don’t.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Rick – Cracked my first guitar in half by tuning it up way to high.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Rick – Just playing “ALL THE TIME”.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Rick – Probably about 30 hours a week... & that's probably enough.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Rick – Heavy... more control than thin ones.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Rick – 10's... better feel... less breakage.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Rick – Definitely before every gig... & whenever they start to sound dull.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Rick – Too much.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Rick – I believe they're equal... both as quick as each other.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Rick – Mostly standard... I've experimented with others & recorded some things that way, but I like standard tuning the best.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Rick – Memory.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Rick – Not too high, not too low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Rick – Can't think of any.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Rick – I like playing piano also & believe that has helped my musical knowledge.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Rick – Some of the classical type of picking I'd like to some day get to.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Rick – I think I've met the ones I've set up... just getting better all the time is the goal now.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Rick – Not into tricks.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Rick – None.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Rick – Some day, classical picking technique, although it's not a high priority.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Rick – When I was a kid I did... didn't learn anything from the teacher... so I learned myself.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Rick – Chords are “THE” most important thing when learning... everything else is secondary.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Rick – Learn the “Lost Chords” that I've found & pay close attention as some of it goes by fast & complex.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Rick – Electrical Tremolo or Vibrato? If the vibrato systems... I like what's on my SG & Strat.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Rick – I don't.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Rick – I'm both... so for me... no difference.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Rick – No... you can be the best guitarist in the world, but if your songs suck or the other musicians suck... so do you.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Rick – I'm happy with what I've got... don't need or want someone else's guitar.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Rick – Phil Keaggy always surprises me as does Robin Trower... Frank Marino's pretty inventive... Steve Morse is always coming up with unheard of things.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Rick – Some cuts can be heard at www.myspace.com/therickrayband

QRD – Anything else?

Rick – You can also checkout www.rickray.net

John William Gordon

July 2010

Name: John William Gordon

Bands: John William Gordon, Theloni On Wry

Websites: www.johnwilliamgordon.com -
www.mutantjazztrio.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

John – My first guitar was a Gibson ES-335, which I bought after working all summer for it when I was 15. I didn't really like it, but couldn't wait to try out other guitars after working all summer away from home just to buy an electric guitar. I traded it in a year later for a Yamaha SG-2000. Before all this I borrowed an acoustic guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

John – Gibson ES-446 (I LOVE IT!), & for recording a Fender Vibroverb Custom (w/15" speaker); for live, the same Fender Amp plus a little old Supro tube amp; I use both amps together through a SignalFlex SF-DAB The Connection splitter (very simple device for such a long name). I use an Ebow sometimes. Monster rock cables. That's it. No effects except a little reverb in the

amps. I love listening to guitar with crazy effects, but I don't like to use them myself because they make me feel separated from my guitar & music. That's why I like the Ebow: it's not an automatic effect & I have to work it. I very recently started messing with a PRS guitar with a whammy bar. I also just started experimenting with two Yellow Jackets in my Fender & just received a 100-watt Weber Mass attenuator to try on my Fender amp with its regular power tubes (not the Yellow Jackets).

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

John – The guitar, then amp, then cables.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

John – Same as I mentioned above. Fender Vibroverb Custom: point-to-point wiring, clean tone with some edge starting with the volume at about 3.5 - 4.5. Its nice tone doesn't start until the volume reaches about 3.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

John – Like I described above, my Gibson ES-446. I fell in love with it the first time I played it. A

guitar store owner recommended it. It's got a hybrid sound to my ears; kinda jazz, but not fat classical jazz tone (though I love Jim Hall et al!), but also a little edgy. It's honest & doesn't make everything sound perfect if it isn't played that way.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

John – I was thinking about that the other day. I'd love to have a Gibson ES-446 with a killer whammy bar that would let me dive bomb! Oh, yeah! But completely bottoming out a whammy bar on a fragile hollow body is a fantasy, I guess. I'm still new to whammy bar use, but my head's full of whammy bar stuff & I'm working on some tunes with it now. I thought about wearing my 446 & my PRS whammy guitars at the same time so I could swing them around my body & go back & forth, but decided against it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

John – A volume pedal that didn't degrade the tone ONE BIT. I have a nice volume pedal but don't use it because I can hear the tone change just plugging through it, & it's supposed to be one of the really good ones.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

John – Four electric guitars & one acoustic.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

John – They hang on hooks in their gig bags in my closet except for my 446, which stays in its hard-shell case here & there in my practice room for fast access. I don't store any of my guitars on stands because I live in earthquake country & heard some guitar-stand horror stories from the last big quake. I can't stand the thought of losing my 446. I actually prefer leaving guitars on stands so I can pick 'em up right away, but even a medium earthquake might shift something. You know, after answering this question I may start to use stands in my practice room because that sounds too paranoid, heh heh.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

John – I have an insanely heavy flight case that meets airline standards. I wish someone made the same strength case but much lighter, only a few pounds.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

John – Love. I have to love it. I try not to buy guitars I just like. I need to go WOW & just dig playing the heck out of it with a silly grin on my face. Also, I really like a high D (or higher), a medium neck, a cutaway, & lightness. That Yamaha SG-2000 I had weighed a ton & really made me appreciate lighter guitars.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

John – I don't know. Depends what you're doing, what you like, & what you find used. Mexican Fender Telecasters make a lot of people happy & cost \$600 or so, but the low-end of the really good guitars seems to start around \$1600. I've never been a gearhead. Most guitarists know way way more about gear than I.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

John – So far, just stock, except I put Gibson humbuckers on my little PRS whammy experiment.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

John – I play it & see if I have a crush on it. 99% of the time I simply think, “That's nice,” & that's not

good enough. I need to love playing it & listening to it. I don't care about articles & reviews. I haven't picked up a guitar magazine since I was 17. Friends & trusted stores give me important info about stuff I might like. I guess they keep up with researching gear. I guess I've started researching guitars some, now that I think about it. I'll search on the internet for info on TheGearPage & other sites, but not very much.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

John – Rarely, though I'm messing with the Yellow Jackets & Mass Attenuator on my Fender amp & the whammy bar on a cheap PRS. Did I mention the whammy bar? I LOVE it!

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

John – I like to listen to many different players' tones & tone-shifting players, but for me I've pretty much settled on a clean tone that lets strong, weak, dirty, & clean playing come through honestly. A tone without too much varnish, just some reverb, though verb can mask crud somewhat.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

John – None. I'm happy except I'd love my dream signature guitar, which doesn't exist.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

John – First, decent intonation. So many cheap guitars, especially acoustic ones, have insanely crappy intonation, if I'm using that term right. I mean the spacing between the frets & the nut & the bridge so a note an octave away on the same string is really an octave apart. How lazy are the cheap guitar makers? It doesn't cost anything more to space the frets & bridge correctly. I bought a Ukrainian acoustic guitar for \$100 while in Russia & its intonation is pretty good. It's a great \$100 guitar in my opinion, a really good beater. Lazy pathetic guitar makers assume beginning guitarists just hang out by the nut playing open chords & don't stumble up the neck where the manufacturer's crappiness goes splat.

Second, decent action. Not crazy high. You know, in high school some of us picked up a friend's crap guitar with strings 3/4 of an inch off the fingerboard (not counting slide guitars). After an hour your left hand was super tired (no jokes, please).

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

John – My Gibson ES-446 was my best by a continent. I didn't realize Gibson's Custom Shop stopped making them until it was too late. I begged them to make some more & even put a deposit down through a local dealer, but after a year I got my deposit back. My worst purchase was a used 2nd ES-446 from across the country. The seller was very cool & let me check it out for a day or two after I received it, but I was so excited to have another 446 I didn't really check it out properly. It turned out to have a post mod installed inside, plus I stupidly ignored its heavy locking tuners, which made the light ES-446 horribly unbalanced. The post messed up the sound to my taste. I didn't sober up until a few weeks after I bought it, then realized I hated it. I traded it in locally for a backup guitar, a big-body Eastman, just to have a traditional sounding jazz guitar handy. The local storeowner pointed out the post mod in the 446. That explained part of why I didn't like its sound. Playing a guitar you don't love really sucks, especially when not relying on effects to smooth out the sound. It's weird how the same models can vary guitar to guitar. You gotta play 'em, not just read about 'em.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

John – It varies by model within brands. I've never been a gearhead & instead focus on playing, practicing, & writing.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

John – It varies. New tunes pretty much keep flowing so I might play something new or something old. With my own guitar, I might pick it up & start with difficult mental practicing.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

John – Fourteen? Freshman in high school.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

John – I haven't plateaued ever since I started practicing a really hard slow mental workout that automatically improves my physical playing, too. After learning that, I've continued to progress steadily. I try to get friends to practice this way, but they don't like the drudgery.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

John – I don't know. I'd love to play drums & bass, really. The guitar lets you play harmony & melody (chords & individual notes). It allows bending & slurs & glisses etc. It's more portable than a piano, but not a harmonica. Hmmmmm... I don't know. The chick-magnet thing, that wasn't it for me, though my girlfriend really likes my music.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people,s first instrument as often as it is?

John – Everyone should choose the instrument they love. Some people benefited greatly by switching to another instrument to fill a spot in their friends' bands. But, really, I don't think it's ever good to force a child to play any instrument. I know a few people who were forced to play piano until they were 18. They got quite good, but HATED it & abruptly stopped at age 18. You gotta LOVE it to play & work hard. It's music, not brick laying. Don't bother if you don't love it. Let a kid pick his or her own instrument. If that's the guitar, that's fine.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

John – My ALLY completely. What? My Adversary? Huh? If you know the ENTIRE fretboard & not just a couple of familiar zones, then

the guitar becomes your ally & a source of infinite ideas, inspiration, & comfort.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

John – I started playing guitar at age 14 after some friends played Mahavishnu Orchestra for me. Mahavishnu had disbanded long before I first heard them, but they were THE reason I started playing guitar. Their punk intensity & crazy multi-peaks blew me away. My mom worried about me listening to them so much. I've never been into lyrics, but I'm growing to like lyrics more & more. After John McLaughlin (Mahavishnu Orchestra) I listened to many horn & piano players, especially Monk. I never tried to play like Van Halen, but like his playing; his swinging on his early CDs I owned is like no other rock guitarist's in my opinion. Even my early guitar teacher, who graduated from New England Conservatory & studied a little with Mick Goodrick, said, "Eddie Van Halen swings like a mother fucker!" (In a good way.) I've listened to a huge range of guitarists, from the extremely out to the extremely in: Derek Bailey, Joe Morris, Nels Cline, Bill Frisell, John McLaughlin, Alan Holdsworth, Jimi Hendrix, Van Halen, Jeff Beck, Andy Summers (one of his short Police solos is one of my favorite guitar solos), Jim Hall, George Benson (early kick-ass stuff), Wes Montgomery,

Grant Green, Charlie Christian, Leo Kottke, Paco de Lucia. They've all been in my CD collection at one time, along with many others. I've seen many others live & dug their shows. By far, though, after John McLaughlin, I focused on Charlie Parker, then Monk & more Monk, with some Lester Young, Coltrane, & Davis & Monk again.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

John – Go for it. I don't do it, but I think it's cool. If you feel it, do it. That's never worked for me. I've never been able to do it with cars, guitars, or anything. I tried once & just dropped it because it felt unnatural. I like to use my guitars as tools & not baby them to the point I'm holding back my playing or thinking about the thing instead of my playing. I want them to serve me, not the other way around. They're things, not people or animals or even insects. But I think it's cool & usually funny when other people do it & that's why I tried it, too. It just flopped for me.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

John – Long-term acidic sweat damage. It seems like I practically melt guitars with my right forearm if I don't wipe them down. That might have to do

some of my long practice sessions. But I've never broken a guitar.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

John – Lots of hard mental exercises: practicing church (Ionian, etc.) & melodic minor modes in ALL 12 keys ONE string at a time UP & DOWN while thinking the notes instead of using geometric patterns; plus, moving entire tunes through 12 keys. That's the MAGIC mental work that effects EVERY aspect of your playing by some sort of indirect brain neuron building (who knows?); it's weird how fast you improve if you do it. It'll move you 10 years forward in just 1 year (but an exhausting year). I wish I knew about it when I started! I heard a few heavy players & teachers mention that they've never seen musicians progress so fast as when they practiced playing tunes in all 12 keys. It's hard work & your head will steam & you'll need naps, then you'll improve, then improve faster & faster over a year or two & keep improving even faster after that.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

John – It moves around. Some weeks 30 hours or more, some weeks only 5 hours. Mostly in between.

I think it's good to take breaks. Our minds keep working on things even when we're not doing them consciously, so breaks can be great.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

John – Clayton 1.52mm tear drop (they're small). I think I started using them because I read John McLaughlin made his own thick small plastic picks. They're pretty tricky in some ways. I can coax threatening or gliding sounds from the strings much more than with a medium Fender pick in my opinion. But big medium picks make strumming infinitely easier for me & that's pretty fun, too. There are no rules. Use whatever you want. There are so many great players who use all sorts of things. Did you hear about the Bulgarian virtuoso who uses a goat's tooth for a pick? Neither have I, but he or she COULD exist. Probably be a bad ass.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

John – Kinda weird: 13, 16, wound 24, 32, 36, 46. Playing cleanly & not very loud, thin strings don't pack enough tone for me. But I don't want too much fatness down low. I settled on my current set years ago after experimenting with lots of gauges.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

John – Live: every night or every other if the set was short & I wiped them down well. For recording, I change them the night before & play them very briefly then wipe them down to get a little chemical reaction of some kind. My recording engineer & I like that approach. When just practicing, I push strings much longer. If I wipe them down a lot, maybe 2 weeks, otherwise weekly.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

John – Very, very rarely. I don't use light strings. But on my whammy guitar, I just broke a few. I recently started using BigBends Nut Sauce to stabilize tuning & it's also supposed to help prevent string breakage. Also, I use reinforced steel strings for the 13 & 16 (they're reinforced on the bridge end).

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

John – I work on both. Sometimes one is better than the other, but I made a huge jump in technique in the last 18 months. Seeing a video of me about 2 years ago shocked me because my left hand position sucked. So I adjusted & practiced much better positioning & have noticed from photos that it's become normal for me. Then I learned something

else I call “dead hands” that caused a huge leap in my speed. It freaked me out. I learned it playing a video game that I’d plateaued; I broke through my plateau immediately then practically ran over to my guitar to try it & it worked there, too. That’s pretty recent -- just 2 years ago.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

John – A tech sets up my guitar initially then I maintain it. A tech also does fret jobs (honing or replacing). A good tech is awesome, opening up new beauty in your hands, really.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

John – Regular old tuning. But I’ll mess with each tuner for effect on occasion (“Low Tide Happens,” the last tune on my second CD, *Technot*, is an extreme example). The whammy bar lets me drop way, way down & I’ll stay down for seconds, but I haven’t imposed that on listeners yet.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

John – I go off memory for new tunes. If I can’t remember it, it must have been unmemorable!

Survival of the fittest for new tunes in my mind. If it haunts me, then it's staying alive & grows. But, hey, I'm not writing pop hits, so this isn't a formula for success, just the way I like to do it. I write the tunes I like. After my tune solidifies, I write it using Sibelius & print sheet music for my bassist & drummer. I write the notes & sometimes chord symbols, which in my case are really suggestions.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

John – Pretty high. I've never been very susceptible to peer pressure & feel comfortable with whatever look brings me the most facility.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

John – I pretty much squashed a really bad left-hand habit about 18-24 months ago & since then the same old steady hard mental work continues to slowly & consistently crush obstacles.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

John – I don't know. The guitar, bass, violin, & viola all have the crazy unfriendly note layout compared to the piano, so any of the former might

help directly. The piano can really help indirectly for visualizing & giving theory some life with real sound. I really don't know. I'm just Bee Essing.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

John – Flamenco! What badass cats! & what kick-ass music. Not the mild stuff, but the balls-out kind. Whew. That's wild. Some of those guys are like one-man armies.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

John – Picking harmonic arpeggios of chords. I'm not even close. I've heard & seen some amazing harmonic arpeggio playing. People show me how to do it, but I can't seem to get it. I'd like to pick-plus-finger-ring them with my right hand while voicing them with my left like I saw Jack Wilkins do once. So what I do sometimes is just hammer a chord's octave harmonics for atmospherics. But to be able to move chords around & rip harmonic arpeggios like I heard & saw Jack Wilkins do would be beyond the beyond. But it's not a priority.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

John – Hmm... I don't know. What tricks can you show me? I'd like to learn one.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

John – Ebow for sure. It's an effect, but doesn't do anything automatically, but you can misuse it on purpose & get shrieks, etc.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

John – Same as above: picking harmonics an octave up from each note in any chord voiced with my left hand. I can't even get off the ground with that.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

John – Yeah. First I took a class in school where I learned basic open chords. Then Mahavishnu hit me. Pretty rough on a beginner, actually. I lived in the burbs & drove all over trying different teachers. I looked for a jazz teacher, but didn't really know what jazz guitar was. Most of the teachers I tried for a lesson or two just strummed a few chords while I jammed. Then I found Harry Andrew, who graduated from the New England Conservatory & studied with Mick Goodrick. My hour lesson

would often go 2 hours. He'd loan me recordings to educate me. I did that for one year then kept referring to the lessons for a few years after that. Then I heard Adam Levy play jazz standards in a super trippy way that blew me away. So I took about 5 - 10 lessons with him. He had me go through two Ted Greene books, then taught the shape concept, which I've used ever since & love mightily. Since then, I took ideas from different players on other instruments. I also referred to Mark Levine's jazz piano book frequently & still look at it sometimes.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

John – The hard mental work of thinking the name of each note as you play through each scale one string at a time, up & down the whole fret board, making sure to not use geometric patterns & instead think each note name as you play it (even say it out loud).

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

John – Find chord shapes (any grouping of notes you like without worrying about the formal name of the chord) then move those shapes up & down the

neck diatonically (within a scale, forcing slight shape changes to stay in the scale). You'll get your own personality because you'll choose your own "shapes" instead of stock chords. Guitarist Adam Levy taught me that years ago. I think he teaches at the New School in NY now.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

John – I'm a tremolo newbie, but I don't like the older type with only shallow, mild tremolo. I like to push the whammy bar all the way down. So far, I stick with a one-way setup (only slackening strings below their normal tuning). The locking systems, man, everybody including my guitar tech warned me off those. I'm totally green with whammy, but might change something else. My friend with a Jaguar showed me a common mod for those & I liked playing it. I'd actually like to own a Jaguar or Jazzmaster just to play with its tremolo.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

John – Never.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

John – From my genres of jazz & fusion, there's no difference. We play it all. However, Freddie Green

in the old jazz world stuck with rhythm back in the day & that worked for him even in jazz! I like to play chords & single notes.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

John – I don't know. Probably not, but who knows what will happen when I listen to something. Music is really about emotional response. You never know how you might respond honestly. I admit I like my Sex Pistols CDs even though they can't play their instruments very well. I like passion, energy, & sincerity in music, regardless of type. For some reason, I also like Mexican pop music on the radio. I can't explain it, though I can BS an intellectual defense after the fact, such as "Mexican pop music still uses horn players who are real musicians who produce nice tone & the singers really sing." I don't even speak Spanish! Go figure. But really, I just like it. Also, I heard a local college's classical orchestra play some way crazy Ligeti once & it entranced me. Maybe a first-rate orchestra includes more guile & stress that are absent from innocent college players just doing their best for the love of it; they didn't stink, by the way, they just weren't first-rate, only better. That's a digression, but not really.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

John – Hmmmm..... I don’t know. Nothing comes to mind. Now if you asked about what guitarist would I like to be able to play like, I could rattle off at least a dozen I’d Frankenstein.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

John – I don’t know. Frankly, I don’t really listen to much guitar music. I guess innovation can be physical or musical or both. Someone might go faster, or play more than six strings or pluck or tap with both hands, that’s physical innovation. If the sound is different, too, then it’s also musical innovation. Slide guitar was an innovation at one time, both physically & musically texture-wise. Some musical innovation is textural, like playing with a new effect or switching between effects (textures) a lot. Then there’s rhythm, harmony or melodic innovation, perhaps combining rhythms & voicings from different genres, like playing upper-Mongolian music with African rhythms on a peddle-steel guitar.

I think anyone with his or her own sound should be appreciated even if you don’t love it & even if very simple. That’s the whole of art in my opinion. Self-expression. If you can hear a few notes of

someone & know who it is immediately, that's pretty amazing, even if simple. A musician should be respected just for that. I think Jerry Garcia said, "Don't be the best at what you do. Be the ONLY one doing what you do."

Beyond that, I think we should all strive to honestly express ourselves through our instruments without worrying about what other people think.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

John – iTunes. 2 CDs: *John William Gordon & Technot*.

QRD – Anything else?

John – Nope. Thank you.

Evan Peta

July 2010

Name: Evan Peta

Bands: Mother Inferior, Aladdin Sane, Vagabonds of the Western World

Websites: www.dezvalentino.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Evan – It's a 70s Univox Les Paul copy with a sunburst maple top. My father's a musician also (plays pedal steel) & he traded in an ancient drum machine for it. I still have it & it's in its original case in the other room right now.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Evan – Cord to amp, I've never been much for floor effects.

Evan – If I'm recording I just plug direct into the Pro Tools interface & use the onboard amps they have in the program, though I have used other things like a Korg Pandora's Box & the line out on my Cyber Twin for recording.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Evan – MY Gibson SG-1 because I can play it best.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Evan – A Fender Cyber Twin, it's the best sounding amp I've ever heard. It has tons of settings & tones from old tweed amps to howler monkey overdrive. Most important, it has a real open sound, big & huge & it's just a 2-12 open back combo. (I've never liked closed back cabs.)

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Evan – My main guitar is a 1972 Gibson SG-1, which was the bottom most of the Gibson line. It was given to me by my friend Russ Stedman, who in turn got it originally for about \$100 in trade. It was in pretty sad shape. I had my friend Mal fix it up for me by some friends of his, had the neck shaved down more uniformly (it was like a square baseball bat) refretted with Dunlop 6105 frets, repainted high gloss black & threw a DiMarzio Steve Morse Bridge pickup in the lead (it's a single pickup model). It's been my main guitar now for about 3 or 4 years. Also it has a skinny neck, E to E, I can't play guitars with wide fingerboards.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Evan – I'd base it on a mid 80s Hamer Phantom which was like a cross between a Fender Strat with a Jaguar off center rear bout, but with Gibson features (24 3/4in scale, humbuckers, glue in neck etc.) I have one from 86 & it's the most comfortable well balanced of any guitar I've owned. The features I'd want would be a neck with a flatter fret board radius, like 12 to 16 inch, I never could get on with curved finger boards on Fenders (can't bend without killing out) a thin but rounded neck, a skinny neck E to E (finger board width), single dot inlays & Dunlop 6105 frets, 24 frets full access clear to the body both sides of the neck (deep cutaways), 6 in line head stock, 2 pickups DiMarzio (Steve Morse lead, a Super 2 in neck) 2 volume & 2 tones, regular 3 way pickup switch. All in one wrap around bridge (like a Leo Quan). Mahogany body & neck with rosewood or ebony fret board. Neck thru would be nice, but glued in would be cool. & just to make it play a little bit easier, a 24 & a 1/2 inch scale.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Evan – It would be the guts of a Marshall Lead 12 (which was a small practice amp they put out in the

80s). I've never liked Marshalls much, all high end & bass, but those little amps were GOD. You wanna know what a guitar really sounds like, you plug into one of those. Years ago I picked one up at a pawn shop for \$75. Dug it from the start, but what really was the magic was when I plugged it from the line out into the front of my Dad's old 76 Fender Twin. It was the coolest, heaviest tone I'd ever heard. It was like Thin Lizzy *Thunder & Lightning* tone. I had been waiting my whole life for that sound. (But nowadays the Cyber Twin gets the sounds I want.) 😊

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Evan – Got about 3 I like, the rest are just \$20 pawnshop oddities.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Evan – Wherever there's a place to set one.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Evan – Bigger case compartments.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Evan – Skinny necks, top to back & E to E. If the neck is too fat or wide I don't even pick it up off the stand. High frets (no Fretless Wonders) also very low action. & nothing that if you fell on would impale you.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Evan – Used \$250 (but that was years ago). New, it's what you can afford I guess.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Evan – Depends, first to go is a pickup if its muddy or weak.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Evan – Pretty thorough, also if it's a guitar I will ask them to put my gauge of strings on it & set it up to my specs, better to know before you lay down your shekels.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Evan – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Evan – My main sound is always Big Rock sustaining guitar tones, but when recording I use what's needed I guess.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Evan – None in particular, but I'm always looking for a guitar that I can get along with.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Evan – Nowadays most first guitars are light years better than they were way back when, I was very lucky my 1st guitar had low action & played well.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Evan – Best, my 86 Hamer Phantom for \$250 (tax included). Worst, a custom ordered Paul Reed Smith that I waited almost a year for, worst guitar ever, took it back & got my money back.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Evan – Old BC RICH Guitars Pre-1980s are great, each of them were like a custom guitars. Also Hamer thru the early 90s, those are well made & consistent guitars. The aforementioned Marshall Lead 12 practice amp & Fender Twins with master volumes (you gotta have a master volume) loaded with E-120 JBL speakers. Man those amps howled. When I played live with the Marshall Lead 12 into the Twin it just leveled the place, I couldn't turn the master volume past 3 & a 1/2.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Evan – Just play single line stuff off the top of my head, always improvise!

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Evan – 12 in 1977.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Evan – That's a hard one as it's happened at many different times in my life. When you learn

something new that pushes you into a whole new direction, that'll carry you for a long time, till you hit that plateau where you just go skittering off into something else. I think if possible everyone should just try to keep going forward. You just can't say, "That's it." I've thought that a few times & then something snuck up & surprised me.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Evan – Frank Zappa said he picked guitar cause it made the most obnoxious sound, I think he was on to something there.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Evan – Sure why not, their cheap, plentiful, & everyone has the right to make a fool of themselves.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Evan – Les Paul is my co-pilot.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Evan – When I started:

Ted Nugent (*Cat Scratch Fever* is what made me want to play)

Rory Gallagher (He's my favorite guitar player, *StageStruck* was amazing, Rory could rip it up & write good songs)

Gary Moore (Thin Lizzy's *Black Rose* is my #1 record, players like John Sykes & Vivian Campbell completely based their styles on Gary, he had as big an influence on European players as Van Halen did in the US.)

Eric Clapton (No matter what he played after 1970, the 60s stuff, especially with Cream, is still blinding.)

Billy Gibbons (He's the perfect mix of English & American blues player, 70s ZZ Top was incendiary.)

Peter Green (1st time I heard the live solo to "The Green Manalishi" I nearly drove into the ditch, true story. I miss the real Fleetwood Mac.)

Paul Kossoff from Free (It's a real shame more people don't know about him, he was one of the best of the 60s English players, & had a unique style.)

Brad Whitford & Joe Perry (Always my favorite twin guitar team, *Live Bootleg* was exquisitely messy.)

Dave Gilmore (He played the same blues scales, but nobody ever came close to sounding like they were from Mars like he did.)

Jimmy Page (Well, he's Jimmy Page now isn't he?)

Pete Townsend (*Live at Leeds* is my fave live album hands down, proto apocalyptic dance music propelled by a windmilling arm)

Jimi Hendrix (My 1st Hendrix LP was a mono copy of *Are You Experienced*, MONO????? What was up with that???)

Scott Gorham (Longest standing & most underrated of Lizzy's guitar players, he played almost all the Major pentatonic solos, & that proved to me that you didn't have to sound country playing that scale.)

Chuck Berry (The same day I bought *Cat Scratch Fever* I bought Chuck's *Greatest Hits*, a good start indeed.)

Eddie Van Halen (I was completely confused & gobstruck the 1st time I heard him, it was a video for "You're No Good" on TWIGGYS JUKE BOX. Seriously I hadn't a clue what the hell he was doing, & maybe that's a good thing because by the time I could, I really didn't have any interest to play like that, everyone else already was. The biggest influence he had on me was the weird noises he made.)

Rick Derringer (Excellent player & a nice guy, my friend Mal knew him & put him on the phone for me to talk to when I was 16. I asked him what he was doing & he said he was producing Weird Al Yankovic, & I thought, "What's he doing with a polka guy....")

Rick Nielsen (I love Cheap Trick, what great songs & rocking riffs.)

Jeff Beck (*Beck-Ola* should have been a 6 album set.)

Tony Iommi (I didn't get into Sabbath until I was 18, I used to think they were too heavy & not bluesy enough. But one day I picked out 3 Sabbath tunes off the top of my head before supper & thought, "These guys sound pretty cool actually.")

Brian May (Queen should have just remade their 1st 4 albums over & over again, so cool & heavy, Brian was like a choir of angels with pitchforks.)

Frank Zappa (The *Shut Up & Play your Guitar* 3 CD set was the very 1st CD I ever owned & I listened to it endlessly, that did permanent damage for sure. Frank was an excellent blues player, at the same time had about as original a style as anyone who's breathed.)

Steve Morse (When I was young I read articles with him giving advice like playing scales 3 notes to a string, which really opened up the neck, & also did a lot to straightening out my left hand technique.)

Robert Fripp & Adrian Belew (I will forever have these 2 intertwined for 1 big reason, years ago you could never tell who was doing what on King Crimson records, let alone even watching them live on TV. I do credit Fripp for making me wanna play blues as weird as possible after hearing him on Bowies "Fashion", because at that time I didn't

know there were other scales other than pentatonic minor.)

Leslie West (Seriously southern rock was invented by a nice Jewish boy from Hackensack, New Jersey.)

Les Paul (I have 2 honorary grandfathers, Stan Lee & Les Paul.)

Later on:

Richard Thompson (I never heard of him till like early 90's when Russ Stedman played me 'Rumor & Sigh', It just sounded so original. The songs were great but when he started playing, it's like he invented his own style from the ground up, all the odd sounds & howls, totally amazing. Probably made me look at the guitar more differently than anyone else.)

John McLaughlin (MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA OMG MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA. John McLaughlin to this day is as amazing to me.)

Ulrich Roth (Showed me you could play a Major scale & not sound like a nursery rhyme, should have been as big as Van Halen, Yngwie Malmsteen needs to buy this man a steak dinner.)

Michael Hedges (Saw him back in 86 on a PBS Windham Hill Special. After he took out the 13-string harp guitar & started beating the spit out of it, I was hooked. He invented a style that people to this day try to emulate & don't even come close.)

Mick Ronson (I never got Bowie until like the 90s, way to much “Lets Dance” too little rocking, then I heard “the man who sold the world” (also known as “The Mick Ronson Solo Extravaganza”) & that did it. His big influence was Beck, but I tend to think he morphed it into something all his own & frantically spectacular.)

Albert Lee (My dad Larry is a true blue country guy, played & sang in country groups when I was little & then started playing steel (self taught) by the early 70s, playing in many more groups. Country was all around my house as I was growing up, & I never took to it much, by my teens it was all Big Rock & howling guitars. But even when I was younger Albert Lee always caught my attention for his wild crazed Tele playing. As years went by some of that earlier country stuff started sounding good to me (Buck Owens Rules) so by the 90s Albert kept popping up catching my attention to the point I finally gave in & actually started throwing country sounding bends mixed in with the howler monkey guitar runs. At best I play what I call ‘fake country’ cause what Albert does baffles me. So in the end Dad wins. 😊

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Evan – Not so much any more, but years ago some of my past guitar names have been Sandy Mary,

Lita, Speedy, Peter O'Wellian, George-Ola, & Bender to name a few. If B.B. King does it, it has to be okay; anyway it's less silly than naming your body parts.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Evan – Took the neck clean off another Hamer Phantom I owned once by walking thru a doorway. I had it on the strap & I thought I had raised the neck high enough to walk thru, but the tip of the headstock & the end of the guitar caught & the neck just popped off. This happened 2 days before Christmas, Ho Ho Ho. I sent it to Hamer to fix, they had it for 6 months sent it back saying it “couldn't be fixed.” Gave it to a friend of mine's dad Denny (he's a miracle worker with guitars), he called me 3 days later said, “It's fixed;” he glued it back on, it was good as new. Amazing.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Evan – I need to warm up so I don't pull a hamstring, usually just chromatic runs up & down the neck, then scales 3 note per string & then maybe a few other various things I've picked up on the way like playing modes in different degrees (3rds, 4ths, etc.) & always using alternating picking.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Evan – I practice every day, but only 45 minutes to an hour; I'd like to play more, but I have to not over do it. In 1992 arthritis kicked in, my hands went from Eddie Van Halen on espresso to Keith Richards sleeping. I ended up at the Mayo Clinic & having both hands & wrists operated on. My doctor was Allen Bishop, whose 1st chair oboist on the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. With him being a musician, he knew it meant a lot to me to try & get back to playing. I had to pretty much start all over again after that; I knew what to play, but my hands were at day one all over again. The odd thing is I never recorded any solo tapes till after 1992 so everything was after the fact. Years later in the late 90s I decided to give Dr. Bishop a CD I'd just finished, to show him what he'd done for me. 6 months later when I went for a check up, he was pretty surprised & happy.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Evan – Dunlop Yellow Tortex .73 mm with the smiling turtle on the front, I've been using those for about a year now. Before it was the orange ones, same turtle .60mm, I just wanted a little less flex to them so I could pick a little more accurately.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Evan – Ernie Ball Stainless Steel Extra Slinky 8 to 38. Have used stainless steel strings my whole life cause they got more zing than nickel.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Evan – About once a month (or when you grab the D string & run your finger up it to see if it's got any fret ruts in it...).

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Evan – Never any more, did when I was 12.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or

Evan – Fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Evan – I'd say it used to be my left up until the last few years, now it's pretty even. I have never been happy with my picking; but it wasn't bad, I probably hit 7 to 8 out of 10 notes with the pick, but it never was consistent & it bothered me. When I recorded 3 or 4 King Crimson style songs a few years back on a CD called *Klaatu Barada Necktie*, I knew I had to get it together to try & even come

close to Fripp. My picking was better, but I still wasn't happy. About 2 years ago I decided I was going to watch John McLaughlin & see exactly how he picked, cause he pretty much is the end all be all for that. I would watch DVDs of him playing live & watched how he held his pick, what angle, where he rested his wrist etc. One of the key things was resting the wrist on the bridge. After awhile I slowly noticed my picking was becoming more accurate & my right hand at the same time was less fatigued (still working on it though). Thank you Mr. McLaughlin.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Evan – Myself. Why? I live in South Dakota. ☺

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Evan – After 92 I started tuning to E flat just to take some pressure off my hands. Why not, it's not cheating, Jimi did it, Van Halen did it & let's not forget Buck Owens too.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Evan – I have a little hand held tape recorder I stick ideas on, that way I always know how it's supposed to sound.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Evan – George Harrison high; used to be Jimmy Page level, but it inched its way up over the years.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Evan – Never knowing when I'm overdoing it on my hands, but I'm not sure that's a bad habit.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Evan – Theremin.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Evan – Flat out over the top country playing like Albert Lee, I don't have a clue what he's doing.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Evan – Doing a whole CD with just 1 guitar no other instrument, The “Guitar Army” as Jimmy Page referred to it. Maybe my next CD.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Evan – I learned how to make an ascending melodic minor scale not sound stupid.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Evan – Roland GR-20 guitar synthesizer (I think of it as a gadget, too weird to be a pedal).

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Evan – I could never do that fast Eddie Van Halen tremolo picking trick, there I admit it, you all know now, admitting it is the 1st step to public shame.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Evan – Nope, all by myself with a stack of records & I learned the songs not the solos. I never could see the point of learning someone else’s solos, I figured you could only use them on that song. Anyway it’s a bad habit, you just have to shed

someone else's solo style later & that's hard for some people. I can only play 3 solos, "Cat Scratch Fever," "Free for All," & "Another Brick in the Wall," & I'm sure I can only play them about 85% right. Learning scales & always improvising is the only thing that made sense to me. The concept of improvisation hit me one day when I was young, hunched over my mono tape deck with Cream *Live Volume 2* blaring "Stepping Out" which is basically a 12 minute guitar solo by Clapton. After about 10 minutes of him wailing away, I got flustered & thought, "He's just making this all up as he's going along." If I couldn't improvise solos any more I'd quit playing.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Evan – Allow yourself to suck. Too many precious cookie cutter perfect playing drones out there these days. If you hit a wrong note or make a weird noise, make it part of the song. The mistakes & weird noises are what make your style.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Evan – Make mistakes & weird noises.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Evan – Never cared for one myself. & on the subject... Floyd Rose's are a blight on the universe, every time you change strings you need to reset the whole bridge, who thought this was a good idea?

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Evan – When I need a neck pickup sound (since I don't have a neck pickup).

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Evan – There shouldn't be any, a guitar player should do both equally good (but having good rhythm is #1).

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Evan – I have been known to fast forward to a solo in my younger days, but really it's the song that counts. The reason Thin Lizzy were the best was that they had great songs played well with great solos. They should have ruled the world with that combination.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Evan – Peter Green’s Les Paul, because not only was it Peter Green’s, it was also owned later by Gary Moore. 2 heroes, 1 guitar!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Evan – I wish Shawn Lane was still alive (he passed away 2003). He possibly was the most innovative guitarist in the last 20 years, just had his own style & was always improvising. Someone that’s caught my attention the last year or so is Jimmy Herring, excellent improviser & very identifiable. Of course I still think people like Richard Thompson, John McLaughlin, Eric Johnson, & Steve Morse just seem to keep improving & growing.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Evan – My playing on the *EVLAND* CD is pretty bouncy (It’s my favorite, in no small part because Russ Stedman played drums on it). If you go over to www.dezvalentino.com you can download it for free. (All my CDs are up there for free.) Actually any of them I’m fine with, but if you listen to the

early stuff to now you can hear me getting my hands back a little more each CD.

QRD – Anything else?

Evan – I might have gone on & on a bit with the answers, but I had to get it all in, it's like being on the cover of Guitar Player. 😊

Evgeny Zheyda of Thorn1

July 2010

Name: Evgeny Zheyda

Bands: Thorn1

Websites: myspace.com/thorn1silpheone -
last.fm/music/Thorn1 - silbermedia.com/thorn1

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Evgeny – My first guitar was a Stella (the Soviet copy of the Fender Jaguar). I was pleased with her, especially for the many sound modes. But after some time it was stolen.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Evgeny – Now I usually use a Fender Stratocaster with Boss DS-1 to DigiTech Digital Delay. Also I like the sound of Marshall & Vox amps.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Evgeny – The most important things are effects; in particular, rich & transparent delay.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Evgeny – Most often I use a VOX-AD50VT amp.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Evgeny – I like the sound of a Fender Stratocaster for crystalline highs & rough mids. So I try to play on those guitars.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Evgeny – Among the priorities I would call the flexible control tone sound, switching between pickups, 24 frets, body design (like a Fender Jaguar) &, most importantly, a good intonation. I may not refuse to have a tremolo.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Evgeny – I'd love to have a set of compressors-reverb with the ability to delete the original signal. As of yet I cannot find the effect that meets my requirements.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Evgeny – I have one electric guitar, a Fender Stratocaster, which I use mainly for concerts; & a

Workmen acoustic guitar with increased scale length & the nylon strings for home rehearsal.

QRD – How & did you get your guitars?

Evgeny – Oh, acoustic guitar given to me by parents on my thirteenth birthday & the electric I bought in a store network A&T Trade close to home.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Evgeny – First & foremost is a sense of comfort. If I hold the instrument in the hands & my hands feel free, but there is no tension in the muscles, then I start to try the sound. Good sustain, the ratio noise/signal, & amplitude attenuation are important points. But first of all I am interested in the tonal characteristics & the resonance of music in the wood.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Evgeny – I think a good guitar, which I would be satisfied with, is worth about \$1500. Maybe less, because for my music is more meaningful to use post-processing & effects than the presence of a high-quality original signal.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Evgeny – I just use what is available.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Evgeny – I explore the extreme possibilities of the equipment. From the very quiet sound, minimum effect to the provisions of “all turned to ten.” If the sound at the maximum effect strikes me as extreme, & the sound is distorted, but readable, then I think about buying it, because between the minimum & maximum are a lot of variations.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Evgeny – Yes, I quite often change the settings. Sometimes it happens during the execution of a single composition to create a dynamic effect.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Evgeny – Most likely I can change the tone, but in the post-processing. On the guitar I fix one position tone for each song. The exception is the volume knob.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Evgeny – I dream of a firm Fender Jaguar, multiple Boss RE-20, chorus, & EQ from the same manufacturer. Marshall combo or stack would be a good gift as well.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Evgeny – I think, first of all it must be suitable timbre characteristics & convenience in sound managing.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Evgeny – The best buy was the pedal Boss DS-1. Also a good solution was Fender strings, which for some reason I had not enjoyed. I like when the strings are weakened (for example, I use 0.8 strings for the high E).

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Evgeny – I love Boss/Roland effects & synthesizers. They have always been quality &

marching in step with the times. Fender guitars have always been desirable for me too. Probably because it's not worth doubting for their quality & the timbre characteristics are completely satisfying to me. The ideal concert sound amplifiers are Marshalls. The Jackson & DOD products are not too good for me.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Evgeny – Most often it's just two chords - Em7 & Am7. Of course, I use non-standard fingerings. Then I play something like Dead Leaves Rising's "Each Day Is Like Winter."

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Evgeny – Twelve years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Evgeny – At 19, I think.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Evgeny – Its timbre & capabilities are suited to me. In addition, the guitar is a free instrument. Otherwise we would not have seen so many guitar styles.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Evgeny – There is nothing wrong that people start with a guitar, as often happens. The main thing is an understanding of harmony, melody, & your own vision.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Evgeny – Of course only as an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Evgeny – Hmm.... At different times there were different people, but none of them had a decisive impact on my style. Jon DeRosa, John Frusciante, Robert Smith, Rene Rutten (of The Gathering), & others were the main authority for me.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Evgeny – It is worth remembering to compare the guitar with a girl to understand this. I do not support such things, but I do not see them any harm.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Evgeny – Oh, when I was about 14 years old & I had only just started playing in a post-punk band. During the execution of one of the emotional songs with my lead vocal, I blew the neck of my guitar on the wall. Then I was not too upset. Much more, I was upset when we smashed the rare Soviet analog synth Rhythm-2...

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Evgeny – I'm just playing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Evgeny – I have never considered it a duty for me. Depends on my mood.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Evgeny – Often 0.7 mm.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Evgeny – Mostly lights, if it does not apply to an acoustic guitar. For acoustics, I use nylon strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Evgeny – When I feel that their sound is no good.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Evgeny – Recently - never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Evgeny – I think my fretting hand. Because of this, I like to invent the chords with complex fingerings for my compositions.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Evgeny – All I do myself. My work can be called DIY.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Evgeny – Standard system, sometimes a semitone lower. & sometimes the deviations like D#-B-G-D-A-E.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Evgeny – I write down the names of chords. Sometimes I draw a picture. Sometimes I write a draft of the outline FL melodies.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Evgeny – So that it covered my hips 😊

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Evgeny – Thoughtful & sometimes excessive desire for improvisation.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Evgeny – Playing on any polyphonic instrument.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Evgeny – Possibly artificial flageolets.

QRD – What’s a guitar goal you’ve never accomplished?

Evgeny – Nothing.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Evgeny – Aarktica’s “Nostalgia = Distortion.”

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Evgeny – Don’t know. If I have something missing, I’m learning it. Now I like everything.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Evgeny – Never.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Evgeny – Primarily -- not a technique, but musical thinking. If the teacher will introduce you to this thinking, he is a real master.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Evgeny – Do not learn how to play, but only think of interesting harmonies.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Evgeny – They are all good, I think. Let them enjoy those who are interested.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Evgeny – No difference, it is only in their heads. Perhaps, someone covers the inability to play the melody.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Evgeny – Yes, but I'm hardly going to listen to this band a lot.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Evgeny – Perhaps one of the vintage Fender Stratocasters of John Frusciante.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Evgeny – Sometimes I think that they are John Frusciante & Omar Rodriguez-Lopez.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Evgeny – On my upcoming album *So Far As Fast*. Rock fans can think of & search for records of the Russian rock-group Partisans through the year 2008.

QRD – Anything else?

Evgeny – Be yourself & sort things out at last, what you truly want to do. & be kind to the world. This is the only way. Everyone can everything.

Dave Halverson of Trance Lucid

July 2010

Name: Dave Halverson

Bands: Trance Lucid, Adolfo Lazo Band, solo recordings

Websites: davehalverson.com, trancelucid.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Dave – I still have it! & I still use it for guitar lessons, once in a while for recording. I painted it in the 80s....

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Dave – Live: Guitar > JHS Pulp n Peel compressor > Boss OD-1 overdrive > Boss SD-1 overdrive (modified) > Boss OC-2 Octave > Boss CE-5 Chorus Ensemble > Amp

Recording: Guitar > anything/everything > preamp > interface > computer

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Dave – Definitely the guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Dave – I have always really enjoyed my Roland VGA-7. The modeling options are great, & do not have to be too colored necessarily. & the 13-pin input options are very interesting to me, & can be blended with the straight guitar input.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Dave – US Masters Vector Versatek - this guitar is amazing, & perfect for me. US Masters makes very high quality guitars with standard features that fit my natural preferences. The neck joint is unbelievably solid, the tone control is more useful through the full range of the knob than any other guitar I have ever played, the Sperzel locking tuners & the Dunlop 6105 frets are favorites of mine.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Dave – Shape-wise, I'm not sure. It would have a stop tailpiece, many pickup/coil-tap configurations, a rosewood fingerboard, a transparent finish.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Dave – It would be some sort of strange morphing modulation/delay pedal with a lot of real-time parameter control.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Dave – Seven.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Dave – In their cases, most in my studio, a couple in storage.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Dave – Maybe a little music box that plays something pretty when you open it.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Dave – Generally: playability, tone, stability, speed, comfort, unless I am looking for something more specific.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Dave – That completely depends on what you are getting & what good means to you.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Dave – I almost always upgrade &/or customize.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Dave – Very thoroughly.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Dave – I think it is in a constant state of evolution on some level, however slow that might be. If I find something I really like, I am able to stay with it for a long time.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Dave – I like to have several basic solid tones that consistently express my playing well. & a million others for specific purposes.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Dave – I'm curious about the Eventide pedals & it would be nice to have a roomful of strange old amps.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Dave – 1. Playable, low action. 2. Good intonation. 3. Reasonable tone.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Dave – Best: US Masters Vector Versatek guitar. Worst: not to name names, a low-cost tube preamp.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Dave – I have had a lot of Roland/Boss equipment over the years & I have loved it. & their customer service has always been A+ for me.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Dave – Usually some sort of wide interval exercise.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Dave – Fifteen.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Dave – I'm still improving, I hope. But I think I made a big jump in my early 30s when I committed to practicing 5 hours per day. I did that for several years, before I owned any recording equipment. Once I started recording a lot, I suddenly had less time for practicing the guitar, but I felt like I was at a point on the guitar where my time was often better spent recording than practicing hour after hour.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Dave – The range of tones & the different ways of using it (rhythm, percussion, melody, texture, etc.).

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Dave – I don't know. It is more convenient than a piano in most ways, although the piano may be a better first instrument sometimes.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Dave – Always an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Dave – Al DiMeola, Wes Montgomery, Eric Johnson, Joe Pass, George Lynch, Randy Rhoads, David Torn.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Dave – It is silly, often totally contrived & pretentious, but somewhat natural in a way if you spend so much intimate time with an instrument. I also suppose if you have enough guitars, it is a more romantic way of distinguishing them than by model number.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Dave – Extremely retuning my 1/4 size acoustic until the bridge became unglued & popped off.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Dave – Studying chords & melodies, critical listening, developing tones & sounds.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Dave – Usually about 10 hours per week, ideally more like 15-20.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Dave – After years of using more standard-sized picks, a few years ago I switched to Dunlop Pitch Black Jazz III picks (1.14mm). They have so much more control. Now playing with a standard-sized pick is like playing with a dinner plate. I also sometimes use a Dunlop Ultex Jazz III for a little different response & a Dunlop Nylon Jazz III XL when I need more of a surface & more of a point.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Dave – It depends, but mostly D'Addario XL120+ (.0095, .0115, .016, .024, .034, .044). The feel of that gauge is just right for me. For my playing, sometimes the .009 is a little light & the .010 is a little stiff. I use the more common .009 set on some guitars. I also use Thomastik-Infeld Rope Core strings on several guitars, & a really heavy gauge on one guitar.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Dave – That depends on usage, generally every 3 weeks to 3 months.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Dave – Almost never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Dave – I think my left hand is a little ahead of my right hand, after years of developing a more legato style. But I have come to realize the importance of developing the picking hand fully, as it is the activating hand which accounts for most of your tone & definition.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Dave – I use a guitar tech because he is a million times more knowledgeable about such things.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Dave – Standard tuning, Drop D, Drop A, & a few I have developed myself.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Dave – I usually record my ideas with notes, but if I had to jot something down quickly I would use tablature.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Dave – I don't know exactly - not high, not low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Dave – Having limited patience to play difficult parts very slowly in order to learn them.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Dave – Piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Dave – Flamenco.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Dave – I would like to be able to build a guitar.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Dave – I'm not sure - probably one of the weird signal-processing things I stumble upon frequently.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Dave – I have always been very fond of the Ebow.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Dave – 10-finger tapping? No, just kidding. Some of the classical technique would be good to have a better grasp of.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Dave – Yes, for 3 years when I started playing. I learned a lot of general stuff of course, & a lot about discipline in practicing.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Dave – I try to bring my own interpretation of music theory & as many outside approaches as reasonably possible, with improvisational practice, & a tie-in to something basic that a student can generally relate to.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Dave – Technically, maybe adopt a legato playing style with some interesting string bends & some palm-muting.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Dave – I generally do not care for them or need them.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Dave – Once I have it set, I usually don't adjust it while playing. But I use several different settings.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Dave – Someone who is a “lead guitar player” makes me wonder if he is rhythmically challenged & not capable of playing solid rhythm guitar. Whereas someone who is a “rhythm guitar player” may be a more well-rounded player even if he lacks the confidence or desire to play lead guitar.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Dave – No.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Dave – Maybe some really weird Rick Nielsen guitar because I would enjoy being a collector of strange guitars.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Dave – I like Vernon Reid & David Torn a lot because they have a really unique outside perspective & are so textural in their guitar playing, almost transcending rhythm & melody/harmony.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Dave – There are links to my recordings at www.davehalverson.com. Of my recordings, the most guitar-intensive are *Apothecary Charms* (2008), *The Colours of Darkness* (Trance Lucid, 2005), & *1991* (recorded in 1991, released in 2009).

Charles Rice Goff III

July 2010

Name: Charles Rice Goff III

Bands: -ING, Disism, Herd Of The Ether Space, Turkey Makes Me Sleepy, The Magic Potty Babies, River Cow Orchestra, PLUS a wide variety of solo & collaborative work, been operating Taped Rugs Productions since 1980

Websites: tapedrugs.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Charles – I got a plastic Mickey Mouse guitar when I was maybe 3 or 4 years old; don't know what happened to it.

First real acoustic guitar when I was 15; an El Degas. I still have it now (age 51). These days I use it mostly for lap slide playing.

First electric when I was 17 (new 1976 Telecaster). I sold it in 2007 for a lot of money.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Charles – Cord to 3 different distortion pedals (circa 1970s, early 80s) in series, to volume/wah pedal, to loop duplicator, to amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Charles – All are important.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Charles – Stereo amp, it's what amplifies my computer recording equipment. Vox Pathfinder for on the road performance -- it's lightweight, clean, easy to mic, & loud.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Charles – Hello Kitty Squier Stratocaster. It's lightweight, easy to play, stays in tune, & attracts attention.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Charles – Lightweight is important. Clean sound without junked up volume/tone controls. Frets & neck in good condition. Easy access to being able to place things on or near pickups is important to me.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Charles – I like loop duplicators, not too complex though. I like volume pedals too.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Charles – Five: the above Hello Kittycaster, a 1990s Squire Stratocaster, the above El Degas acoustic, an Ovation Acoustic (old big belly model), a 1970s junky Japanese off-brand bass

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Charles – Closet, cases (both hard shell & soft gig bags). Humidity control is important in Kansas.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Charles – In a perfect universe: anti gravity grips.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Charles – Individuality, playability, clean electronics, frets & neck in good condition.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Charles – Good guitar? For my purposes, \$100 used. I have been a starving artist all my life & seeking out value for low cost has always been an important survival technique for me.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Charles – I often set-up temporary preparations (John Cage-style) during performances & recordings. I've had the frets ground a few times on a couple of my guitars when the string grooves started to buzz. I've had pickups installed in acoustic guitars. I had the original tuning pegs on the Telecaster switched for Shalers. I had a custom-made bone bridge made for the El Degas.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Charles – For guitars, I play them through amplifiers in the store. Generally for any musical equipment I invest in, I attempt to secure a “trial” period to give the goods a proper workout in my home studio.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Charles – I am always looking for new things to play guitars with or to hold next to the pickups & play (electronic toys & such).

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Charles – Tone depends on what I'm doing & how I'm hearing it when I'm doing it.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Charles – I don't go shopping for such things very often at this point in my life. My music studio is filled with a lot of stuff besides guitars & guitar gear. I think getting a new mixer might be on my list of future acquisitions. I just bought a 1927 wind-up Victrola phonograph, which I intend to experiment with as a performance tool.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Charles – On the guitar itself? Maybe a chord cheat sheet. It might be nice to have a little removable lyre music holder like woodwind players use in marching bands.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Charles – All the guitars I've bought have had good & bad qualities for my purposes, but if the instrument is too heavy to hold around my neck, that's unacceptable for me. My Telecaster was solid oak & gave me some real problems after years of use.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Charles – Generally all companies fail & succeed for me in various ways. I like Road Hog cords. They never die.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Charles – The strings. The electronics come next. Both are important to me.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Charles – I got Mickey when I was 3 or 4, but got more serious at 15 with the El Degas.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Charles – Leveled up? I'm always trying new things, challenging my improvising skills sometimes, my song-playing skills sometimes, my experimental skills sometimes. These are all different ways of interacting with the instrument & I leave it up to someone else to decide which of them is "best." I usually have a goal to achieve when I pick up an instrument, & I work until I achieve it. Unfortunately, I'm not always able to retain the ability to achieve my goals consistently.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Charles – It doesn't; but I have played guitars for a long time, so they're familiar to my fingers, arms, & brain.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Charles – My first instrument was a rubber headed drum. Each person has his or her own artistic drives, & the first instruments that each person plays might simply be organic extensions of these drives. No "should be" in this response, however, for me.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Charles – It is a tool.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Charles – Robert Fripp, Frank Zappa, Todd Rundgren, Henry Kaiser, Fred Frith, Andres Segovia, Lou Reed.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Charles – Yes to both.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Charles – The El Degas has suffered a lot from the pounding of repeated hard plectrum rhythm chords played around the sound hole. These chippings were made in my earliest years with the instrument. Otherwise, my guitars have fared well in my care. I like to prepare my guitars, but I try hard not to damage them in the process.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Charles – Plotting out a course before playing, then seeing how well I can follow that course, while perfecting the plot in the process. Being able to repeat the plot with ever-increasing original flair can also be a part of this process.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Charles – The amount I play my guitars depends entirely on what I'm using the guitars for. If a show's coming up & I need to get ready for a live guitar performance, I usually play one-two hours per day, until I have the planned presentation seriously embedded in my head & fingers. If I'm recording something, I play until I get the part right (this may take one to several days & one to several hours on each of those days). I play a lot of instruments & the guitar comes in only when it's called for.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Charles – I use all kinds of plectrums because they all can do different things. Besides the standard acetate thins (fast rhythms), mediums (leads), hards (scraping), sawtooths, triangles, teardrops, (each for different grips) etc., I also use the big thick felt ukulele picks (which work well for pounding the fretboard & getting ringing tones), arrow heads

(which get some great grinding noises & even shoot sparks), & metallic picks (which have unique scraping qualities).

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Charles – Medium. They stay in tune & are easy to play.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Charles – Whenever they start to sound wrong. It's mostly an ear thing for me. If I don't use a guitar for a while & then I get it out & notice dark spots on the strings or places where the winding is separating, I change the strings right away.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Charles – These days not very often. Used to a lot in my aggressive youth.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Charles – I'm not very good with either. I think the brain is the answer here.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Charles – I don't fiddle around with the action much if that's what you're after here. My old Japanese bass needed some alteration in its tail because I got it after a friend took it for a ride in an unpressurized airplane cargo hold. I did the altering. The bass is purely an experimental instrument for me. It's an electric bass, but I often play it in a stand with a violin bow, so higher action helps anyway.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Charles – Standard & random -- those are the ones I know.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Charles – I prefer audio recording ideas first, then writing down some tablature, maybe writing out some notation, & I always include lots of verbal explanations (either recorded or written out). I keep the recordings for future reference. I often dream melodies & develop them later in the recording studio. The recorded dreams are often sung or hummed. I offer this site in way of demonstration:

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Charles – As high as I can. I like to see the frets clearly.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Charles – Hitting the wrong string at the wrong time.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Charles – I can't speak for others. For me, it's piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Charles – I emulate the styles of others to varying degrees at various times, but genres don't really work well for me in general. Each piece of music or sound art that I approach has its own organic qualities. I do my best to work within my limitations of ability & experience.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Charles – Instantaneous sight-reading of notation.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Charles – Playing a Zizzle Zounds through the pickups with the guitar body sitting flat on my lap.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Charles – Vibrator (dildo type).

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Charles – Playing notes loud enough to be heard by fingering the fretboard alone, without picking or strumming the strings with my other hand.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Charles – No guitar lessons. I learned woodwinds in grades 3-6. That's where I learned the basics of how to read music & how to finger instruments.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Charles – The ability to reject genre.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Charles – Approach each playing experience as a unique & organic artistic expression.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Charles – If you are talking about the tremolo bar or “whammy” bar, I don't like to use such things because they make the guitar go out of tune quickly.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Charles – Whenever necessary. Some of my guitars have no tone knobs.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Charles – None, every guitar player is both a lead & a rhythm player from my point of view.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Charles – I can never ignore any member of any band in my experience, “good” is in the ears of the beholder & often in the mood of the beholder.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Charles – I wouldn’t know what to do with a famous musician’s guitar, so I guess I’d like to own John Lennon’s signature Rickenbacker, so I could sell it for a lot of money & use the money to buy some musical equipment that I could actually use myself.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Charles – Innovative? This is a trick question. I’ll vote for Tipper Gore here.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Charles – I have posted nearly 200 albums & videos at archive.org. Most of the posts feature my guitar playing in some form, but some don’t include any guitar bits on them at all. Again, “best” is in the

ears & the mood of the beholder. Try the suggestions I offered at the beginning of this survey to start with. Go here for a more complete Taped Rugs selection:

www.archive.org/search.php?query=Charles%20Rice%20Goff%20III%20Avant%20Garde

QRD – Anything else?

Charles – For me, the sounds a guitar produces are not limited to notes & chords. I often use guitar pickups to channel the sounds of battery powered electronic toys, motors, music boxes, & other such things. These sounds also can be manipulated through effects in various ways. Placing metal thimbles, rubber page turners, etc. on your fret hand can provide interesting sounds. Pulling strings & wires through the guitar strings can create unique noises. Placing playing cards in between the strings creates some great percussive opportunities. There are several sound artists who have created extraordinary musics with these & other much more innovative techniques (Henry Kaiser, Fred Frith, Bill Horist, etc.).

THANKS AGAIN FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY, BRIAN. Good luck.

Calvin Johnson of Dub Narcotic Sound System
July 2010

Name: Calvin Johnson

Bands: the Hive Dwellers, Dub Narcotic Sound System

Websites: www.kreecs.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Calvin – A red Lyle guitar that I purchased at Music 6000 in Lacey, Washington. I traded my clarinet & paid some cash. My mother was very upset because she said the clarinet was worth more than the guitar. I now know she was correct. Mother knows best. Ten years later the Lyle was lent to a local teenage anarchist punk who liked it so much I gave it to him. He covered it in tin foil.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Calvin – No pedals, guitar into a 25 watt Harmony H400A tube amplifier with an 8" speaker. This is turned all the way up. I don't use any vocal amplification at performances, so this amplifies the guitar just the right amount.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig: guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Calvin – The guitar. I have three electric guitars, a Gretsch Electromatic from 1954, a light blue Kapa Continental from the late '60s, but the guitar I use most for performing with the Hive Dwellers is a Hohner HG596 my friend Sixx gave me for my birthday, she painted it pink. I added a Dean Markley transducer so it can be plugged into an amplifier.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Calvin – The Harmony H400A is the amplifier I use for live performances. At our Dub Narcotic studio I have two others that I use for recording, a Fender Twin Reverb that someone replaced the original speaker with one two inches larger (which makes replacing the tubes a pain) & a Randall Commander with one 15" speaker that I found at Tombstone Music in Clackamas, Oregon & a portable Hilton square dance public address amplifier that works really well as a guitar amplifier.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Calvin – The Hohner is used in the Hive Dwellers shows; I also have a 1954 Martin acoustic that is used for solo live shows & in the studio. It belonged to my father, he received it as a wedding present from his bride. The Kapa & Gretsch are used often

in the studio, people love the Kapa & always want to purchase it from me, but that will never happen.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Calvin – How about a hornet green hollow body 12-string Mosrite electric guitar? Or a black Silvertone.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Calvin – That would be the Calvin Johnson signature guitar tuner, made by Onboard Research Corporation.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Calvin – Uhhhh... eight?

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Calvin – They are on a shelf.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Calvin – “Made in the U.S.A.” stamped on them.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Calvin – Color.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Calvin – \$12.00 - \$75.00; or free.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Calvin – If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Calvin – Go with the feeling.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Calvin – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Calvin – Hmm... what does that mean exactly?

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Calvin – Susannah Hoff's Rickenbacker, Cliff Gallup style '56 Gretsch DuoJet.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Calvin – The strings should not be set far away from the neck.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Calvin – The MXR distortion pedal sounds right.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Calvin – A, D, G, or E chords

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Calvin – Thirteen years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Calvin – 40 years old.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Calvin – I'd like to play trumpet.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Calvin – No.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Calvin – It is a tool.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Calvin – Rockabilly slingers like Paul Burlison, Billy Hancock; Barbara Lynn & other blues rockin' soul players whose names are unknown to me; Jandek.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Calvin – Not into it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Calvin – Dancing spazzy at a show, the guitar flew over my head & landed behind me, neck broken.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Calvin – Non.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Calvin – Three or four, maybe.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Calvin – No plectrum.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Calvin – 10 - 13 - 17 - 26 - 36 - 46

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Calvin – Rarely.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Calvin – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Calvin – Uhhhhhh...

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Calvin – No guitar technicians around here.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Calvin – E - A - D - G - B - E

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Calvin – Mostly what is referred to as “tablature.”

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Calvin – Looking at my left hand.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Calvin – Spanish classical guitar

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Calvin – The guitar strap my mother made me when I was 13 years old.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Calvin – One lesson. The E, A, D, & G chords.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Calvin – Make up your own songs your own way. Whatever sounds right is the right way to play them.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Calvin – The Quadra-Sound Blender is a guitar effects box with deep tremelo & vibro sounds.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Calvin – Never.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Calvin – Their choice of clothing. Rhythm guitar players usually look good.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Calvin – Unlikely.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Calvin – Cisco Houston. He had style.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Calvin – I have no idea.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Calvin – Golly, the Dub Narcotic Sound System 12" singles "Mega-Clash Version" [KLP147] & "Cowboy Coffee (Version)" [KLP155].

Kim Chee of Pineal Ventana & AkuYou
July 2010

Name: Kim Chee

Bands: Pineal Ventana, AkuYou (current)

Websites: akuyou.com - myspace.com/akuyou -
akuyou.bandcamp.com -
myspace.com/pinealventana

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Kim – First guitar was given to me by a HS friend. Old Peavey T-15 that I still use to bow with & make strange noises.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Kim – Currently I have been using Digitech JamMan looper pedal, Ibanez UE400 & UE 405 rack units, Rat distortion, MXR blue box, Boss RV-3 Delay/Rev, Boss RE-20 Space Echo & whatever else I come across I will give a try. On the search for Ibanez UE305 that I sold years ago & now I want one again.

Guitar wise I still use my 1969 SG Jr that I used in PV along with an Epiphone SG.

I got rid of so many things since the fall of Pineal Ventana that I regret! Somehow “lost” my old

Sovtek head from PV, so right now I am using a Fender Princeton Chorus amp. A bit bright for me, but when I can save some \$\$ probably go back to the Sovtek Mig-50.

Sometimes I use a cheap Encore I picked up for \$25 that gets some nice tones. Don't even know the model. It is an SG style, electric blue with 2 white switches for the pickups.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Kim – For me guitar comes first as I have to be comfortable with it, then effects, then amp.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Kim – Right now the Princeton Fender Chorus. Main reason was I needed an amp quickly to start playing live again & being broke doesn't give many options. Wish I knew where my Sovtek head went! One of those, "I lent it to someone & never got it back." Ha-ha.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Kim – Definitely my 1969 Gibson SG Jr. I have small hands & it fits me perfectly. I don't know what I would do if I lost it. I can get some great

noise out of it & I really know what I can do or not do with it. It is not the features for me, it just feels like it was made for me.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Kim – I am really not that into looks & such. I guess my dream would be a Travis Bean, but I should have snagged one back during the PV days. My bandmates each had a bass & electric Travis Bean, back when they were affordable. I have seen some of the newer custom made TB types & they sound awesome. A friend in Chinese Stars has one of the custom ones, but from what I gather they are real expensive.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Kim – I am all into delays, echoes, & reverb. A bit of octave ups are nice as well. & nasty distortion of course. Wish I knew those Death by Audio guys cause I really like some of their stuff, just can't afford it right now.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Kim – Right now I own 5 electrics, one 12-string acoustic, & 2 basses. Oh, & a sitar.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Kim – I keep my main 2 at our practice space in their cases & the rest at home on a normal 7 rack guitar stand. Nothing fancy. The sitar I had a welder friend make me a special stand for.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Kim – I don't look for features. I do need low action though because of my small hands. Ha-ha Need? These days I rarely look to buy guitars. Only sometimes I see what is out there in the way of some old SG Jrs. If I see something real cheap & interesting looking, I may buy it just to see what tones I can get out of it. Even beating on the neck with a stick can be great if I didn't pay a bundle for the guitar.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Kim – Pretty much same as above. I don't feel cost is the issue. It is all in how you connect with it personally. If it feels good & sounds good why pay \$2000 for something just for the name. To each their own of course. Again, I would love a Travis Bean though. I'll wait another 10 years, then maybe I can afford one.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Kim – Usually just stick with what I get. Nothing fancy, I am not that technical with that stuff.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Kim – Funny you ask. I am one of those people who like to buy used things when they seem like they would make interesting sounds. I rarely test out things before I buy unless I am making a huge investment, which is rare.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Kim – I play around a bit with the effect loop inputs on my amp, but usually nothing more.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Kim – I try to change the tone a bit, but I think in reality most of it comes out with the same sound & feeling.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Kim – Death by Audio Octave Clang, my old Sovtek, & this old distortion pedal I had back in 93. It was round & was called Wizard or something like that. Of course another SG Jr (old).

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Kim – Guess it depends on what the player is trying to do. For me any basic one would do. For others maybe extra pickups. Who knows? I sure don't.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Kim – Probably a crappy old chorus stompbox. Don't even remember the name, but it sucked.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Kim – I haven't had a lot of experience with lots of different brands. I played a Strat for a while, but prefer the Gibson SG. The Strat I used mostly for rhythm. Like the Ibanez old analog rack units. Travis in PV had one & I just loved it. So now I have 2. Sovtek I feel gives a good nasty sound, love it. The Fender I use feels brite to me. Not too sure if I will stay with it.

QRD – What was the first thing you play when you picked up a guitar?

Kim – Noise, then a friend showed me “Tangerine” by Led Zeppelin. Just the first part if I remember right.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Kim – 17, same friend that gave me the Peavey was an awesome player. He played a lot of blues & old southern rock. I guess I started learning chords & such from him.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Kim – Probably the last few years of PV, 28-30 I guess. But I play what I feel & am not really trying to be perfect or anything.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Kim – I have played piano & not much else. Did a bit of percussion with PV & loved it. I am by no means a drummer, but I can come up with some cool rhythms I think. I like tribal & simple that’s

almost mesmerizing sometimes. At least that is what I strive for.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Kim – No I don't think so. Anything that interests you is what you should go for. I wish I picked up sax. My friend's 7year old is an amazing violinist

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Kim – In PV definitely an ally. With AkuYou I have been coming up with drums before adding guitar, which has been a change. I do drums on the computer. Now working toward live shows, added 3 other musicians, so bringing the music that Clara & I did to a live setting has been challenging for me. We have a live drummer, so now I can focus on guitar again.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Kim – Who knows. I never know how to answer this question. I am sure most everything I heard growing up had to have some impact.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Kim – To each their own. Everyone has their “thing” I guess. Mine has no name, just guitar.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Kim – Put a whole line of knicks in my Strat neck from banging on it with a drumstick at a PV show. I had fun doing it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Kim – Mostly playing, I like to hang alone & just see what kinds of sounds I can get from some of my small Gamelans or sitar... or just mess with effects. Write a lot of music on the computer these days. So different from early 90s! Instant gratification.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Kim – Not enough hours in the week for me to play enough! I play at home mostly.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Kim – USA nylon Jim Dunlop .60mm. They don't slip from my fingers. Always loved them.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Kim – Not that picky with strings usually 9/10 gauge.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Kim – Not often enough.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Kim – Funny enough, very rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Kim – Strumming definitely, I think in terms of rhythms. Just is what is it is. Not really trying to get a style. Just what I play is what comes out I guess.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Kim – Set up as in fix? custom? or on stage? Everything myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Kim – Nothing fancy, sometimes I drop to D & have experimented at home with Drop C, but I find the D to be more my style.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Kim – I usually record my ideas at home on computer these days. In PV it was all memorization. I haven't read sheet music since I was 10 & playing piano.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Kim – Mid I guess?

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Kim – My impatience between songs when playing live & lack of self-confidence. I play for me & that is what counts these days. I want to have fun & do what I want to do.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Kim – The tennis racket helped me a lot when I was a kid. That was my guitar. Rocking out, jumping on the bed to Ozzy in like 83 I think. I loved playing to *Van Halen I* also. Piano helped me also. Any stringed instrument I guess wouldn't hurt.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Kim – Classical or spanish styles

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Kim – I feel good about it all. No expectations, so really I have nothing to accomplish except excitement with what I am doing musically.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Kim – Really can't think of one off hand.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Kim – Ebow is cool, but never owned one myself. Just messed with them some. Bows create nice sound also on the guitar.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Kim – Not really sure, I play just what comes out. Sometimes in my head I have a fingering idea that I just can’t recreate.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Kim – I was 22. Took some for 4 weeks & it did nothing for me. Think I asked to learn “Wishing Well” from Bob Mould or something like that & the teacher wouldn’t do it. Learned mostly from just messing around myself & friends along the way (Eric, Rob & more).

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Kim – I wouldn’t teach... but I think to make the player comfortable & let them know that it is okay to play what you feel for yourself & not to just join the trail of what is hot now. It is ok to go off the usual path.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Kim – Just listen to it. Very minimal, guitar layered, reverb & delay are keys I guess... but why emulate? I guess one can take what they get from what they like & make it to their liking.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Kim – Haven’t messed with them much so can’t really form an opinion. Heard some cool stuff with them though. When I was 14 & living in Florida I remember when I first heard the tremolo in “How Soon is Now” by The Smiths & was mesmerized.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Kim – It depends on the type of band they are. I guess to the masses the lead would be the “better” technically, but I find that in a lot of bands that the rhythm & lead share the role back & forth a lot. From my experience of late, most ideas are from rhythms. Some bands don’t need leads I think. I like minimalism though, so I’m ok with less leads. It has always bothered me when people harp on the lack of technique or ability & don’t appreciate the music for what it is. Everyone has their own vision & it doesn’t have to be “perfect” to everyone.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Kim – I just don't listen to one instrument. I listen to everything as a whole. If the song or performance keeps my interest all is good, every member has their place & it is the whole feeling you get from it. A band should do what they do firstly for themselves & their self-satisfaction. You have to love what you do or why do it at all? If the members are cohesive with each other, that is what counts. But I guess to answer the actual question it would depend on the type of music it was. Hard to answer unless I heard the music I think. Sometimes the “rest of the bad band” are the ones that write everything.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Kim – Never thought about it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Kim – I love Omar Rodriguez Lopez's playing. It seems to come so natural to him & his timings are right up my alley. I like Clipd Beaks a lot from California. Lots of layers... also Amedeo Pace from Blonde Redhead. I don't really look for innovation; I just like what I like. Hard to keep up with so many bands & projects these days. With the internet bands have it easy these days. Seems like

one can never hear everything new. Sometimes I like mellow & sometimes ear-piercing beauty such as Arab on Radar or crazy jazz....

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Kim – You tell me? Ha-ha, who knows. I have never considered myself a “guitarist” I guess. But to answer the question I guess take a listen to any of the Pineal Ventana stuff or AkuYou.

QRD – Anything else?

Kim – Thanks!!!

John G Sosnowski of Cystem
July 2010

Name: John G Sosnowski
Bands: Cystem, Broca's Area
Websites: www.tapegerm.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

John – Oh, Jesus, that was a long time ago... I guess my very first guitar was just some cheap old acoustic that my Dad bought me. I don't even remember a brand name; it was probably Sears or Montgomery Wards, something like that. Think I ended up selling it. My first electric guitar was also cheap, but I remember the name, it was a Castilla. I beat the crap out of that thing, covered it with stickers, took it apart & put it back together again for no real reason. In the end I blew it up with smoke bombs & firecrackers... I was a troubled teenager. LOL.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

John – Well, I haven't played through an amplifier in years, probably decades. I don't get out much. My guitar goes into my rack which consists of a Mackie CR1604 mixer & 4 effects units, a PODxt,

Digitech 2101 Studio Tube, a Digitech TSR-12, & an Ensoniq DP Pro. All that goes into my computer where the rest of the magic happens.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

John – The guitar, of course. That's the most intimate part of the set-up, IMO. Without that, everything else is... useless. Isn't it?

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

John – I don't even own an amplifier anymore. I used to have a nice Sunn amp, don't remember what model.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

John – My main guitar is my only guitar these days, & that is an affordable G&L Legacy. It's a poor man's Strat. & I prefer the Strat style guitars.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

John – My signature guitar... Hmmmm... well, I guess I would go with a Strat style body... & lots of buttons. I once got to play a guitar that had one of

those Sustainiac pickups, that would be a nice feature too.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

John – It would definitely have volume swell, pitch shifting, cavernous reverb, echo, echo, echo, & some badass distortion.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

John – Just the one. There was a time when I had five guitars, one of which was a Yamaha 12-string acoustic. That was one of the better guitars I've owned.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

John – In a hardshell case, usually laying down somewhere.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

John – An espresso machine? I don't know, I think they're fairly functional these days. Maybe the hardshells could have some compartments on the outside for storage (strings, straps, picks, &

whatnot...) just make the cases a little thicker & viola! A guitar case tackle box kinda thing.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

John – A thin neck. & not too wide. I played a Jackson Charvel once &, for me, the neck was too wide. Gibson necks are a little fat for me also. I like the Straty kinda necks, they fit my hand better.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

John – Honestly? Free is nice. But capitalism wins out, LOL. I guess it's a supply & demand thing. For me, a good guitar is one I can afford. 😊

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

John – If I had a nickel for every day I said to myself, “I should really put some new guts in my guitar,” or “I really should get this thing intonated.” I'd be dead. I've had one non-working pickup (neck position) for I don't know how many years. I am the world's most procrastinating guitarist. I tend to leave them “as is.”

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

John – I usually get info from other people, then go try it out in a store. I have a friend that used to work in musical instrument store & I got a lot of info from him. He even got me an opportunity to mess around with a Parker Nightfly guitar, which was pretty sweet, wouldn't mind owning one of those.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

John – Only when I have to find somewhere else to live. Not very often.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

John – Well, I'd have to say I look for one particular tone. & when I find it, I pound it into the ground, LOL. I tend to use the same effects a lot, volume swell drenched in reverb, but, every once in awhile I try to do something different. I'm not a very accomplished guitarist in the heavier genres (or any other genre for that matter), but I'll try to rock out every now & then.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

John – Oooooo... PRS, those are nice guitars, but way out of my budget. Maybe an Ibanez Jem... Amps, I'm so out of touch with amps anymore I wouldn't know where to start. Probably whatever Eric Johnson uses. I like his sound.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

John – Hmmm... The only thing I can think of is maybe numbering the frets, instead of just dots? I don't know.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

John – Well, the BEST would have to be... ALL OF THEM! 😊 I'd like to think any purchase I've made regarding the guitar is a good thing. Even if it's buying a cheap old crappy guitar, it can still be an inspiring thing.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

John – The effects that I have have all been worth getting. I loved the sounds I could get out of them & still do. I've had my Digitechs for decades, I love the PODxt too, the amp selections are great for someone like me who doesn't own an actual amp. The Ensoniq has some unique sounds in it too. Amps, again, I don't even know where to start, LOL. Guitars, well, I go for the Strat style because it's more... ergonomic, I guess, for me. I like the features on those Parker guitars, the acoustic/piezo pickup thing, very nice.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

John – A, E, D.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

John – Define playing, LOL. I'll say 12, that's when I actually HAD a guitar & took some lessons. When I was knee high to an insect I would mess around on this dumpy acoustic guitar my Dad had sitting around (along with the bongo drums I don't remember him ever playing). He had this glass paperweight & I would whip that thing up & down the neck making a god-awful racket until someone told me to knock it off.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

John – I don't know, my “best” playing might still be ahead of me. I think I'm a better player than I was 10 years ago. Who knows what I'll be doing 10 years from now? You can always learn something new, can't you? Not to answer your question with a question... 😊

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

John – I have to say it's the music I was exposed to. Mostly guitar oriented rock music. Although I would LOVE to be able to play drums, piano, & violin. Not the harmonica though, too much spit involved (no offense to harmonica players).

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

John – I think their first instrument should be whatever they're comfortable with.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

John – Um... I think there are a lot of variables involved with that, what kind of mood I'm in, what

I'm trying to do, how well whatever it is is coming along... Depends on the day I guess.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

John – Neal Schon, Eddie Van Halen, Steve Vai, Adrian Belew, & Robert Fripp. I have to say those are my top five. In no particular order.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

John – I think that's a subjective thing. I, personally, haven't named my guitar, but I don't think it's silly to do so.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

John – See question #1, LOL.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

John – I hum a lot. Drum my fingers. I have some Chinese balls that I can't roll properly. & I grind my teeth to make drum phrases in my head that no one else can hear. O_o

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

John – Eeesh... a week? Maybe 14. I can't say I'd like to play more than that because, well, I'm lazy & unorganized.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

John – Right now I'm using these picks called "COOL," they have this gritty spot on them so they don't slide around in your fingers. They're 0.8 mm. I tend to use heavier picks, I like 'em sturdy.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

John – Well, I had .011s on recently because I thought I should try to strengthen my fingers. But then I went to .009s. Lighter is just easier & if I use those, I don't need strong fingers. 😊

QRD – How often do you change strings?

John – When the crud is so thick the .009s look like .011s. LOL.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

John – Hardly ever anymore. Guess I'm not as aggressive as I used to be.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

John – Strumming hand. I play right handed, but sometimes want to try learning lefty because, sometimes I feel my strumming hand would do better on the fretboard. It effects my style in that I don't do a lot of fretboard gymnastics.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

John – I usually do it myself. Replacing any guts or anything I would probably have someone else do. I lack soldering skills.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

John – Mostly standard. Sometimes Drop D or C. Every once in awhile I'll switch to something different just to see what comes up. I love open tunings. I have a list of some different tunings that I'll whip out occasionally.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

John – Hmmm... Can't read or write music. I'm a musical illiterate. I've had a few lessons that taught me some basic chords, but other than that it's all by ear.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

John – As high as the strap allows. I haven't played standing up in eons & I'm usually hunched over anyway so, I keep it in the hunchback position.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

John – I hold my pick incorrectly. Middle & first fingertips & thumbtip... eesh.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

John – I've heard that you can go anywhere from the piano, but no experience with that myself. Makes sense though.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

John – Fingerpicking, sweep picking, flamenco, classical... pretty much all of them. LOL.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

John – Trick...? Not sure I know any tricks. Maybe two-handed tapping, but I don’t normally do that in my own stuff.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

John – I loves mah Ebow! Capo has been inspiring also. I’ve tried to mess around with the slide, but I suck.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

John – 8 finger playing, that acoustic slapping style of playing, ala Michael Hedges “Ritual Dance”...

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

John – Yes. A few from one guy that taught me basic chords & a few from another guy that taught me a few songs. “FREEBIRD!” 😊

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

John – Play what you want. Be yourself & don't be ashamed to suck. I know some guitarists who are technically phenomenal, but couldn't come up with anything original if you tied a weasel to their face.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

John – Smoke a LOT of weed....

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

John – I think they're great! I don't use it much myself. I love what Steve Vai can do with it.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

John – At least once a day, if I'm home alone. 😊

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

John – Rhythm is the foundation, Lead is the bells & whistles. I am sometimes more impressed with rhythm players. I saw this guy once playing rhythm for some bar band, he was finger picking all night long & his playing was just incredible.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

John – LOL, I was actually in that band once. I was playing bass (not too shabbily I might add) & this guy playing guitar (rhythm & lead) & singing was a really great musician, but his friend, the drummer, was terrible. Couldn't keep a steady beat to save his life. THAT was kind of hard to ignore from being in the band. But we had fun & the crowds didn't seem to mind much (being drunk helped I'm sure). Personally, I can overlook the rest of the band if the guitarist knows what he's doing.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

John – B.B. King's Lucille. Because it's an awesomely slick guitar.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

John – Steve Vai. To me, he just has the most recognizable & expressive voice on the guitar.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

John – At www.tapegerm.com. That's where pretty much all my music is.

QRD – Anything else?

John – Um... well, advice-wise, I guess I would say be yourself & you don't have to be perfect to be a good musician, just be able to get your point across. & as long as you're happy with it, that's all that matters.

Michael Walton of mwvm
July 2010

Name: Michael Walton

Bands: mwvm

Websites: mwvm.co.uk - silbermedia.com/mwvm -
myspace.com/mwvm

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Michael – A Fender Squire Strat. Black with white pickguard with a rosewood neck. I wanted the guitar David Gilmour used in *Live at Pompeii*. I eventually sold it for £20 or something ridiculous like that.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Michael – At the moment I've cut my FXs right down. Fender Telecaster > Marshall Shredmaster > Line 6 M9 > Frostwave Resonator > EHX Memory Man > Fender Vibrochamp XD & a Peavey Classic 30. I'm considering selling my Resonator, they go for crazy money at the minute.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Michael – I’ve owned loads of different guitars, I bought a USA Telecaster in 1997 & it’s been my main guitar ever since. The Vibrochamp is superb for slide & clean tones, the Peavey Classic 30 gives me more umph with regards to guitar “pad” fade-ins. FX? I’d say the Shred Master -- quite a vocal guitar FX. I’ve used it on every track I’ve recorded, especially the glissando slide. I couldn’t replace it, really. It’s the only pedal that has survived since about 2000. I recently got rid of my beloved Line 6 DL4, mainly because the Line 6 M9 does the same job plus much, much more. I used to ridicule multi-FX units, I owned a few over the years & they’ve all sounded rubbish. The Line 6 M9 has put to bed my hate of multi-FX, brilliant pedal.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Michael – Hmmm... difficult one. Since I recorded the last album I’ve had 5 or 6 different amps, my fav was a Mesa Boogie 5:50 Express -- fantastic shimmering cleans, but with regular guitar playing it sounded a bit metal, like it needed to be shredded -- no thanks. The Peavey Classic 30 is quite noisy, probably needs some caps replacing or something, saying that I’ve used it quite a lot on new recordings.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Michael – My standard Tele. Glissando slide does not sound the same on any other guitar. I prefer single coil guitars, they are more appealing to my ears. Glissando guitar on humbuckers is no good, you pick up more noisy/scratchy sounds of the tonebar against the string. No idea why, must be something to do with the extra gain.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Michael – It would do what those new Moog guitars do, but look like a blonde white Telecaster, black pickguard, with a Maple neck & those old oval tuners.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Michael – I'd like a Binson Echorec type pedal with modern digital controls & a looper.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Michael – Three. A 1997 Standard USA Telecaster, a 2010 Thinline Deluxe Telecaster & a shitty acoustic at the moment.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Michael – In my dining room (where all my equipment is kept).

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Michael – A bit more FX pedal storage.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Michael – The way it looks, always. I've owned six Telecasters over the years, all different set-ups, components, & colours. I just like how they look. It seems silly to go for looks first, but truth be told, all my favourite guitarists played Telecasters -- so I know what to expect with regards to tones.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Michael – The most I've paid for a guitar is £800ish. A 2009 Standard Stratocaster (that I have since sold). You pay for what you get, simple as. The 2009 Strat was lovely to play, & had the best vibrato/tremolo system I'd played. It pissed on cheaper Mexican guitars. The finish was nice too. Cheaper guitars go out of tune & that sort of thing.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Michael – Yeah, I've done all kinds of mods. 4-way/out of phase/series/parallel switching Teles, bleed caps. 7-way switching Strats. I once installed a sustainiac pickup in a Epiphone LP (I hated the tone of that guitar). I've also dabbled with various vintage pickups in Strats. It was a big regret to sell the Sustainiac pickup though.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Michael – I usually check out YouTube & review sites first. Then if a local store has whatever I want in stock I'll spend a few minutes trying it out. If it excites you, then you know you're on to a winner. Got to admit though, the honeymoon period doesn't last long with most new bits of kit.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Michael – Ha. I've had loads of different set-ups since *Rotations*. Different guitars, amps, FX. If I listed them all it would get embarrassing -- seriously. I've settled with my current set-up now for about 4-5 month, that's a good sign.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Michael – Only the one, really. When I had a '69 Tele with 4-way & out of phase switching, I could get loads of different tones. I used that on some recordings, but in general the out of phase tone is generally unusable, thin, & not pleasant on the old ears.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Michael – One of those Moog E-1 guitars. They are every dronester's dream I think. Way out of my league. I always wanted an Eventide pedal, then I bought one - a Pitch Factor. Expensive, but a quality pedal. I only sold it because I needed the cash. You could play "slide chords" up to 4 note with a single string, using an expression pedal would change it to major/minor or whatever. I'd say a real tape delay, that's what I'd really like. Amps? I've played on some beauts, again they cost too much money, but I'd really like a Bogner Duende -- that sounded beautiful.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Michael – Nothing.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Michael – When we had our daughter, I wanted to down size, so I bought a Boss GT8. It sounded dog shit, so do Line 6 Pods, awful. I also bought a Epiphone Les Paul studio I modded. What a dull lifeless guitar, even acoustically, it sounded dull. Terrible guitar.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Michael – Some, not all, of the Line 6 range is quite appealing & forward thinking. Fender guitars & amps.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Michael – Blues. I always play blues, David Gilmour stuff. However, my favourite song I like to play is "Love Spreads" by the The Stone Roses.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Michael – 15 or something.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Michael – I still haven't got to a level that I'm comfortable or confident with. I improve every time I learn or try new stuff.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Michael – I still think a faded in “pad” guitar>delay>reverb>amp sound is better than anything a synth can deliver. I've sampled the full range of a faded in “pad” & glissando notes on a guitar. So I can play the sounds I like with a keyboard.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Michael – Whatever instrument influences you to start playing music in the first place should be your first choice. Within reason.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Michael – It's the first port of call, if that's what you mean.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Michael – Syd Barrett, David Gilmour, a little Daevid Allen, Jonny Greenwood.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Michael – Silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Michael – I walked in to a door handle with my Tele. It's chipped away the paint right to the wood.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing your songs?

Michael – Radiohead, Pink Floyd songs. Loads of stuff. Even The Rolling Stones. It has no relevance on what I record.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Michael – I work away from home during the week. Sometimes I'll take away the guitar, sometimes I wont, same with my laptop. Weekends are

sports/family orientated, but I manage to fit in some playing here & there. A good week, I'll play about 8-10 hours. A bad week, no guitar at all.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Michael – Those yellow/orange Dunlop ones.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Michael – 10s. They are more comfortable to play.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Michael – Every 4-5 months.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Michael – Very rare, I'm no shredder.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Michael – The co-ordination of both doing what you intend them to do. I don't think about styles too much.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Michael – I set everything up myself. It's a high action for slide. The only thing I send my guitars out for is a fret dress. Which my wife's work colleague does.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Michael – Standard. For slide I tune it to fit what track I'm recording, usually Open G.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Michael – I don't write anything down. If I come across something I like, I record it.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Michael – I sit down.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Michael – Those same runs your fingers automatically do when you pick up a guitar. However, this doesn't effect what I record.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Michael – The bass I suppose. Maybe some keyboards. I mean, I still see fret positions, not notes when I play the guitar.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Michael – Delta Slide that sounds good rather than shabby.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Michael – Play a full song without making a mistake.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Michael – No idea.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Michael – Slide. I can safely say the Ebow does not feature on any new recordings. It's over used in the genre.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Michael – I've always been impressed by flamenco guitar playing. The timing, usually. I have no intention of learning this style.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Michael – I went to one or two. The last time I went, this guy (who was a shredder) told me he was gonna make the Terminator movie with self-made props & a camcorder. Bit of a weird cunt. I didn't go back.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Michael – Nothing.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Michael – Play very simple glissando guitar parts.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Michael – They work. Folks like Jeff Beck make the guitar sound so unique using a tremolo.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Michael – I always roll it off to about 8. Then if I need more presence for lead part turn it to 10.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Michael – These are getting silly now. It's a bit like saying, what's the difference between a lead singer & backing singer?

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Michael – No, band first as a whole. I mean, I'll always admire someone who plays their instrument well, but the overall output & how it makes me feel is the important bit.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Michael – I'm not really that type of person.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Michael – Jonny Greenwood. Constantly impressive to hear. Looks like a dick when he plays though.

Annelies Monseré

July 2010

Name: Annelies Monseré

Bands: Annelies Monseré

Websites: www.annelies-monsere.net

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Annelies – Basically, I never owned a guitar. My brother had a kid's guitar & that must be the first guitar I played on. It was destroyed (by accident or not -- I can't remember) when my brother was in a sort of high school rock band called "Opposite Generation."

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Annelies – Guitar - Feedback - Tremolo - Delay - the "Vintage Time Machine" - amp. But, I usually don't use all these effects, if any.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Annelies – Guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Annelies – Park. It's small & easy to handle. Plus it's the only one we have that actually works decently.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Annelies – Gretsch hollow body (of the Historic Series). I didn't choose this guitar (Wim Lecluyse did), but I like playing it so much that I got into playing guitar more.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Annelies – I have no idea.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Annelies – Wim & I have two guitars: the electric guitar he bought when he was younger (a Gibson type of guitar -- quite nice actually) & the Gretsch.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Annelies – In the music room in their cases or on a stand. We only have one stand, though, so one is always in a case.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Annelies – Straps to put the guitar on your back.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Annelies – Never bought one, but it should be significantly different from the ones we already have.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Annelies – No idea.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Annelies – Stick with what I have.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Annelies – Not much.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Annelies – Never.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Annelies – I change around, with no good reason.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Annelies – Maybe a good acoustic guitar would be nice. I like to play a Martin. But “lust after” is too strong. A bass guitar might be nice, too.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Annelies – Decent sound...?

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Annelies – Best: Gretsch. Worst: nothing.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Annelies – I like the Fender Twin amp that was once used on a tour I did. Well, because it sounds good. Multi effects processor pedals are most likely

the worst idea: guaranteed high school rock band sound.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Annelies – The song I am working on at the moment or songs that I need to rehearse.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Annelies – 15?

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Annelies – There is no such thing is my best guitar playing.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Annelies – Guitar basically does not fit me more than other instruments. Piano stays my main & most favorite instrument.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Annelies – Not sure. Nothing “should” really.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Annelies – Neither.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Annelies – Wim (Lecluyse/Circle Bros.) as he leaves the pedals the way he used them & it makes it easier for me to experiment with them. My guitar playing is so limited that I cannot offend anyone, by claiming I am influenced by them.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Annelies – Silly.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Annelies – None.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Annelies – Nothing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Annelies – I play maybe a half hour a week -- sometimes more, sometimes less. That's fine.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Annelies – No pick.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Annelies – 0.11. I got a few packages as a present from my boyfriend.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Annelies – Not much - when they break or when I leave for tour or they seem to be pretty bad.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Annelies – Not often.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Annelies – Strumming hand -- but, then, I do not strum, I pick. The fact that my fretting hand is not

too good has an effect, as consequently many bad notes are played.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Annelies – Not set it up at all.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Annelies – The usual one. No particular reason.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Annelies – Sheet music.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Annelies – Not very high. Somewhere between Talk Talk & Nirvana (ha-ha).

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Annelies – Making mistakes?

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Annelies – I like drums &/or strings.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Annelies – Kim Deal's? PJ Harvey's? Basically, I can't write songs like them.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Annelies – Playing in a really great rock band...?

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Annelies – Playing a bass line & a high part at the same time.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Annelies – Capo.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Annelies – Any.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Annelies – No.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Annelies – Learn to listen to the sound & adjust it. Learn not to show off guitar skills, but focus on the songs.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Annelies – There is no reason at all to try to do that.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Annelies – Could be good, could be bad.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Annelies – Not often.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Annelies – I think that's a pretty silly difference in my world.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Annelies – Absolutely not.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Annelies – Someone really famous like Eric Clapton or maybe better Kurt Cobain. I could sell it for a lot of money. (again -- ha-ha-ha) I really don't care to own a guitar by some famous musician.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Annelies – Ha-ha! Well, *Marit* has a few guitar songs. There will be more guitar on later works, though.

QRD – Anything else?

Annelies – I'm sure it is obvious I am not a guitar player at all. I just use it when I think a songs fits better on guitar.

Eric Quach of thisquietarmy
July 2010

Name: Eric Quach

Bands: thisquietarmy, Destroyalldreamers, etc. +
Mains de Givre, Parallel Lines, Ghidrah

Websites: thisquietarmy.com, destroyalldreamers.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Eric – One of those cheap Yamaha guitars that comes packaged with the little Peavey amp. It had this cheap sounding, dirty buzzing through multiple delays & cheap distortions. It was actually used for many early Destroyalldreamers shows & on some tracks off our first album *A Coeur Léger Sommeil Sanglant*. I loaned it to a girl a couple of years ago, & I don't think I'll ever get it back... oh well.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Eric – Current practice but typical enough ever-changing, ever-evolving set-up:

Fender Jaguar > Baja Tech Custom DaMOAF >
Boss Pitchshifter/Delay x2 > Ibanez Delay/Echo >
EHX Small Stone > Boss Tremolo/Pan > EHX
MMwH > Line6 DL-4 > Digitech PDS 20/20 /
Digitech Jamman > Alesis Microverb / Digitech

Digiverb > Behringer Mixer stereo-out > Traynor Bass Mate Amp + Traynor Guitar Mate Amp.

Pedals on the bench, but used, switched around or added to the set-up quite often: Digitech Space Station, EHX POG, Digitech digidelay, DOD Bi-Fet , DOD DFX94, Boss DD-20, Line6 Echopark, Line6 Verzbilla, Pro Co RAT, Zoom Ultrafuzz, Digitech Turboflange, Alesis Philtre. Other units have been temporarily shelved.

I usually go straight out to the PA or a combination of Amp + PA for thisquietarmy gigs. For Destroyalldreamers, I used to play through an 80s Roland Jazz Chorus JC-120 but switched to a Traynor Mark III 2x12" tube combo from the late 70s. Other projects have different set-ups... but this is long enough.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Eric – Effects. Am I the only one saying this here?

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Eric – Traynor Bass Mate, it’s a 15" tube combo from the 70s, it looks & sounds great, perfect apartment & gig size.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Eric – Japanese Fender Jaguar Special HH (2002), it's a darker red than the classic Fender candy apple red, matching headstock, Dragster humbucking pickups, fixed adjusto-matic bridge, chrome knobs. It's sexy & it feels powerful. I like my other guitars as well, but for different & more delicate applications.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Eric – Might be like the same one I have, but with a Jaguar tremolo bar & maybe some kind of sustaining system... also with integrated Facebook & Twitter apps so I can update while I play gigs.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Eric – I actually like to play with all the parameters of all my pedals separately. Kevin Micka of Animal Hospital re-wired all of his pedals into this one big custom metal box with flip buttons & switches, just like a control board & only he knows what he's doing. That would be a great signature pedal, if my pedalboard was fixed enough.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Eric – 5. Yamaha acoustic guitar, Godin LG, Epiphone Dot, Fender Jaguar Special HH... & the one I'll never see again.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Eric – On a guitar stand at home or in their cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Eric – A GPS to track it when you're flying overseas or when it gets stolen.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Eric – Comfort, playability, & good looks.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Eric – When you think you're getting a great deal... well, that much.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Eric – Stick with it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Eric – Thoroughly enough on the internet, message boards, reviews, clips, second opinions. I mostly buy used & discontinued stuff that I can't really try.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Eric – Yes, for various projects, but mostly because it's essential to experiment & to find new different sounds, as my tracks are mostly based around specific sounds creating specific moods.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Eric – I change it around a lot.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Eric – Fender Jazzmaster, Fender Bass VI, Fender Jaguar Baritone, Ampeg & Sunn amps, all those new EHX pedals that keep coming out, some boutique pedals -- but not really. I like to think I'm set for a while (as an attempt not to spend money)... I'd like to get a Fender Jazz bass though, & maybe another analog synth.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Eric – Good tone, well built.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Eric – Best: Line6 DL-4 delay/looper, DOD DFX94 delay, Digitech PDS20/20 multi-play, & PDS8000 delay. Worst: My first distortion Boss Power Driver, that cheap tone sucking black Russian Big Muff, & the Digitech PDS3000 reverb.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Eric – I like the discontinued Boss pedals, but I hate everything new they put out. I like old & new Digitech delays & looping devices. Most new EHX stuff have very interesting features that might be worth exploring. I like Fender guitars, Traynor, Ampeg, & Sunn amps... or any old tube amps. I used to have a Roland JC-120, it was great for a while, but then I sold it because I got sick of it. Never been a fan of Fender amps either.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Eric – Open chord, maybe an E or Am if I'm in standard.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Eric – 22.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Eric – 99.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Eric – Something about strumming to make strings & waves vibrate rather than pounding rhythmically, pressing keys or blowing into something just seems right & feels better.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Eric – It's a good instrument that you can learn on your own & not get too bored or frustrated with, I think.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Eric – Both, constantly.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Eric – Neil Halstead of Slowdive, Scott Cortez of lovesliescrushing, those guitar players in Mogwai &/or Godspeed.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Eric – Silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Eric – Dropped it by accident. Scratches & dings.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Eric – I run an infinite loop through my pedals, & then I play with my pedals instead.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Eric – Sometimes I don't play for weeks. Whenever I feel like it.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Eric – Jim Dunlop .88mm or 1.00mm. It works.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Eric – D’Addario 11-49.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Eric – When I feel like my playing & my sound is shit & then I realize they don’t feel nor sound as good as they used to.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Eric – Not often. Except when we played that song “The Sky Was Glorious For a Moment” (by Destroyalldreamers) -- they’d break one out of two, & would involve bleeding fingers.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Eric – Strumming. It affects my style in the sense that I play slow anyway which is fine because I like to sustain notes & chords through my pedals.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Eric – Guitar tech, because I don't really know much about setting up or if I'm doing it right.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Eric – Standard & Open C or some derivative of it... Not sure. Starts with CGC anyway.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Eric – I don't write my ideas down, I record them. Then I re-listen & if I can't play them again, I give up & dub the recording as an improv. If I can play them, I practice until I remember it enough so that I won't forget for a while, until it's been too long & I have to figure it out again.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Eric – Low-Average. It should probably be higher because it's bad for my posture & I have no more money to go to the chiropractor.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Eric – When trying to be creative going back to playing the same kind of riffs, sounds, structures, & time signatures -- not being able to break a certain pattern.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Eric – Drums. Rhythm helps a lot. Playing in a band is a great way to improve.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Eric – I don't know. Shredding? Fingerpicking. Or anything slightly complicated.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Eric – Play two guitars at the same time? No, wait... I sort of do already.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Eric – Trick people into believing that I actually know how to play guitar.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Eric – Play someone else’s song.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Eric – Ebow!

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Eric – Nope.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Eric – I’ve never had a guitar teacher, how should I know? I could teach about effect pedals.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Eric – Something in the lines of playing loads of drone-y textures through a first looping device feeding into other parallel looping devices, & then finding the intrinsic melodies throughout that thick, noisy wall of sounds.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Eric – Kevin Shields loves it. 'Nuff said. I haven't spent enough time with one actually.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Eric – Always maxed.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Eric – One has long black curly hair & a funny top hat, the other usually just looks plain regular because I can't remember what he looks like.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Eric – No. However, you could just get rid of the rest of the band & play solo.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Eric – Don't care enough about other people's guitars, really.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Eric – That guy over there!

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Eric – Each album is always an exploration in sounds, themes, textures & feelings. So it's pretty subjective. But this is an interview & if it's not going to be used to promote any new releases, it'd be a shame. So, get the latest thisquietarmy album! It's called *Aftermath*.

QRD – Anything else?

Eric – Yes, but... 58 questions is long enough! Thx.

Robert Poss of Band of Susans

July 2010

Name: Robert Poss

Bands: Tot Rocket, Western Eyes, Rhys Chatham, Band of Susans

Websites: www.distortionistruth.com -

www.robertposs.com -

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Band_of_Susans -

www.bandofsusans.com - myspace.com/robertposs

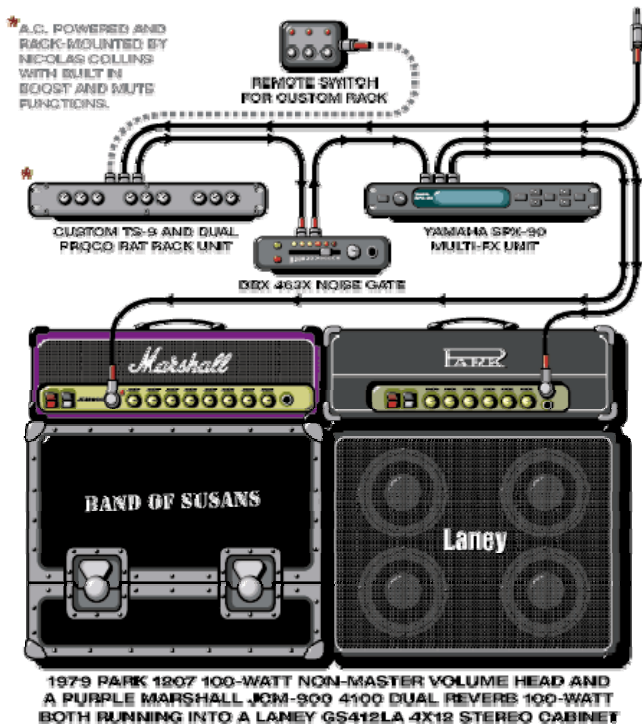
- myspace.com/bandofsusans - guitargeek.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Robert – A very beat-up late 1970s Fender Telecaster that the previous owner had stripped bare, crudely painted orange & installed two humbucking pickups in. I paid \$125. I subsequently had a friend put on a cherry wood veneer top, black pickguard, & add a phase reversal switch. (This was the 1970s, don't forget.)

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Robert – My Band Of Susans era touring set-up was:



.... But for recording we used a variety of Marshalls & Fenders & an occasional Vox or Bruno. I now use Park, Decware, Frenzel, Valvetech, Fender Champ & Pro Junior, ZT Amplifiers Lunchbox amps as situations demand.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Robert – My distortion pedal set-up & its gain-staging is probably most important. With that I can make almost any guitar & amp sound like “me.”

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Robert – My favorite amp is a 100-watt Master Volume Park head retrofitted by Sansamp’s Andre Barta to vintage non-Master Volume specs. Since I used to stack two heads, Matt Wells (The Magic Shop) added a cooling fan. The amp had the bass response & power to handle the extreme distortion & high gain I would push through it. I generally ran it at a very low level. Even at the outdoor Roskilde Festival in Denmark I ran it at about 3. I prefer the sound of EL-34s & let my pedals do the distorting, rather than the pre or power amp stages.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Robert – My primary guitar is the rare G&L SC-1. I have several -- some with the stock single-coiled MFD pickup & some with a Dimarzio Humbucker From Hell & others with two MFD pickups. I’ve written entire treatises on what makes this guitar so special; but essentially, it has the perfect combination of simplicity, playability, & sonics. It has the punch of the perfect Telecaster, but better bass response & sustain.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Robert – I consider the G&L SC-1 to be my signature guitar. In fact Leo Fender & Dale Hyatt did a special run of three of the then-discontinued SC-1s for me in custom colors in 1989. These were the last three SC-1s made. I suppose since I sometimes use humbucking pickups because of noise issues, a signature model would be like the dual MFD pickup models I had made for me, having the ability to humbuck the bridge pickup.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Robert – A signature pedal would combine a low-noise Tube Screamer type pedal feeding into a Pro Co Rat or MI Audio Crunchbox-style distortion pedal followed by a three band parametric EQ followed by a Behringer SNR2000 Multiband Studio DeNoiser-style noise gate/downward expander circuit. Composer/Hardware Hacker Nicolas Collins did make a few pedals expressly for me. One of them is the Fuzz Dicer. (see www.amazon.com/Handmade-Electronic-Music-Hardware-Hacking/dp/0415975921)

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Robert – More than 20 electric guitars & electric basses.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Robert – In a closet &/or hanging on the wall &/or guitar stands.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Robert – A better weight-to-strength ratio. A slip pocket in the wide space under the guitar body.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Robert – Sustain rich in overtones.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Robert – It's possible now to get a fine Asian instrument for \$300. Guitars should definitely cost less than the new \$3,000 & \$5,000 Les Pauls bought by dentists.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Robert – I've always been a player rather than a collector, so I have modified pickups on occasion.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Robert – I obsessively research & ruminate, but buy impulsively.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Robert – I've had the pleasure of owning almost every guitar I've wanted over the years. I've bought & sold dozens & dozens of instruments. I wouldn't mind another hollow body electric with Filtertrons & a 25.5 inch scale neck. I would like a Rickenbacker 1998 (Peter Townsend model.). It would be fun to have a well functioning AC30.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Robert – A first guitar should tune & intonate properly, & have decently finished frets.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Robert – Worst: Rickenbacker 610 I had custom ordered had that terrible R tailpiece & squealed at realistic volumes. Looked cool, though. Best: When I discovered my first G&L SC-1 & bought it used for around \$200. A vintage 1960s Jet Firebird I bought at a pawnshop for \$235 was a rather good deal, as was a wonderful 1970s Cherry Sunburst Les Paul Deluxe (that I wish I still had) that I got for \$375.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Robert – I loathe the Roland Jazz Chorus amp. I don't really like Fender Stratocasters. That thin bridge pickup & that dreadful out-phase-Mark Knopfler sound. Ugh.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Robert – An arpeggio figure from the song “You Were An Optimist” to check intonation & harmonic balance as well as open string drone sustain & overtones.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Robert – 12.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Robert – 30.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Robert – A great potential for abuse in wrong hands, while the search for transcendence takes discipline to avoid tired clichés.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Robert – It's a good first instrument, because with a little effort one can feel musical & play tunes & songs. My first instruments were piano & trumpet & I failed miserably at those.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Robert – Ally.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Robert – I don't name my guitars or think of them as living beings. I think of them more as magical deities.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Robert – I smashed a Guild solid body at a club in New York City in the early 1980s after I felt the headstock snap. I was angry. The crowd was frightened, because my rage was real.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Robert – Mentally run through possible compositions.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Robert – 0 to 10. I play less now, because I know more & I am distracted by composing, working, internet, domestic life....

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Robert – Light colored Fender medium. They are easy to see on an amp or locate on the floor.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Robert – .010 - .046 used .009s when I was a young blues rock lead player.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Robert – I almost never break strings unless using a set of 9s.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Robert – When up top speed from touring and/or recording, my right hand.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Robert – I do my own set-ups unless there is a truss rod or nut problem I can't solve myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Robert – I started using the five string Keith Richard tuning for some songs in 1972 after reading an article about him in the London Times Sunday Magazine. I use regular most commonly, but have several songs written in & for my own special oddball tunings that no one else uses.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Robert – I am incompetent at writing/reading conventional musical notation. I usually rely on recordings & oral instructions along with descriptions & drawings that I have trouble deciphering later.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Robert – Longish, but not cartoonishly long.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Robert – Not playing enough for my own pleasure.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Robert – Bass.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Robert – I sometimes wish I had learned fingerpicking & bluegrass guitar, as well as Blind Boy Fuller style.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Robert – Touring at a high enough level to avoid more of its unpleasantness.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Robert – I've never been interested in guitar tricks.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Robert – Using an EL-34 as a slide. I've never seen anyone else do it. (Now the secret is out.)

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Robert – Someone taught me what an E chord & how to make barre chords.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Robert – Many guitarists do not know how to listen to precise rhythms. Most play before they have really listened & absorbed. We used to have auditions for guitarists in Band Of Susans & applicants would hear what they thought was a very simple chordal part & then, thinking they had mastered it, would embellish it with all sorts of imprecise clichéd garbage. Next!

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Robert – My style is rather subtle, but it is amazingly consistent. Anyone listening carefully could recognize my signature approaches to chording, rhythm, & lead playing. No one bothers, of course.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Robert – I use a Bigsby, once in a while, for gentle vibrato. That’s about it. I do some extreme bends using my left hand that others would use a vibrato bar for.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Robert – I occasionally only roll off if I’m getting unwanted feedback squeal.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Robert – Ego & a sense of narcissistic entitlement. Lead players usually see themselves as musical athletes in some sort of macho competition to see who can play the fastest, with the most complexity &/or can make video-ready grimaces to try & give the impression that playing an Albert King riff badly is somehow more difficult than it really is.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Robert – No.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Robert – It would be cool to own the Gretsch played by The Dutchess when she was with Bo Diddley. One of Mike Bloomfield's Les Pauls.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Robert – I don't have an answer for this. Maybe I'm just jaded.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Robert – A good place to start would be these three Band Of Susans CDs: *Love Agenda*, *Veil*, *Hope Against Hope*.

QRD – Anything else?

Robert – Listen to the music of Rhys Chatham & Phill Niblock. Listen to 1960s & 1970s Dave Davies, Mick Ronson, Mick Taylor, Albert King, Mike Bloomfield. But really listen. & seek out those out of print Band Of Susans records.

Sarah June
July 2010

Name: Sarah June

Bands: Sarah June

Websites: SarahJune.net - silbermedia.com/sarahjune
- myspace.com/sarahjunesound

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Sarah – My first guitar was my grandfather's. It's a Fender San Luis Rey. I still have it - it's an acoustic, but has an electric headstock. I played it when I first started doing live shows when I was 17-19.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Sarah – For recording, I have my Gretsch hollow-body jazz guitar plugged into a standard amp (I have an old Epiphone amp) & I just put the amp in the back corner of the room & then I play & sing into the mic, so that most of the guitar is mic'd acoustically, but some of the amped sound is also picked up.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Sarah – My guitar. I don't use any effects (except some reverb if the sound-guy at one of my shows puts some reverb on my guitar). My guitar is so important because I do so much intricate fingerpicking. I have to have a guitar I'm very comfortable with & that has a very specific sound.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Sarah – Right now I have a Spider amp from Line 6, & also an old (70s) Epiphone Pathfinder. The first one was just cheap & I don't really need much as far as amps go & the other one just has a great sound because it's old, huge, & just looks cool.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Sarah – I have a flat black Gretsch hollow-body archtop. I like jazz-box guitars. The features that make that guitar my main guitar is that it has an incredible sound just acoustic -- very warm & jazzy. It also is very sturdy & stands up to how hard I play it very well.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Sarah – It would be flat black with ivory piping, a jazz-box archtop that is loud even when not plugged in & only a tone & volume knob. I like simple.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Sarah – I like the chorus pedal -- but I would like to have the chorus effect, but with some of the loop-station pedal effects. So I could tap it once to change to chorus effect & tap it twice to record a loop.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Sarah – I own 4 guitars - a Gretsch, an Eastman El Rey, a Takamine small acoustic-electric, & a Fender.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Sarah – I store the Eastman El Rey in its hardshell case & my Gretsch is on a stand because I play it daily.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Sarah – Right now, I wish I could just find some non-standard size cases. I can't fit my Gretsch into

any cuz it's too big. & believe me I've shopped around everywhere.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Sarah – The sound when played acoustic. I like fairly high action. No fret buzz. I like guitars that are weighted well -- not a very lopsided feeling when playing it, like the body is super light & the neck is really heavy. I like small guitars with a big sound, because I'm a very small person so a large guitar can be hard to play while standing.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Sarah – Well, it seems that the very good guitars run between \$2500 - \$5000 or more. But my best guitar was only \$1000. The most expensive one I own was \$4000, & I play it less!

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Sarah – I customize them minimally. Mostly I change the action (usually it is too low), & I always put flat wound nickel strings on. I also usually have to adjust the intonation, but other than that I don't really change anything major.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Sarah – Basically I just play it. I don't really research much.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Sarah – Nope. I play it until it falls apart usually.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Sarah – I have a very signature style of guitar playing, so I don't change it up drastically. But I do change my tone & sound up at times for different bodies of work. But my playing style still doesn't change much.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Sarah – Guitars - I like hollow-body jazz guitars. I love Gretsch. I also would love to get a really nice Taylor acoustic someday.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Sarah – Personally, I think that if someone wants to play guitar, it's good to start off hard. That may sound weird, but it worked for me. I started out on a huge acoustic with insanely high action & very big strings. My fingers bled & it was so hard to hold strings down & even get my arms around the damn thing. But when I finally got good on that guitar, playing any other guitar since then has been a piece of cake.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Sarah – Worst guitar purchase was from Musician's Friend online. Sorry. They just really screwed me over. Sent me an Epiphone with literally a chunk of wood hacked out of it.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Sarah – I don't like a tone of unnecessary distortion or fuzz, when it is not artistically layered. I don't like Epiphones that are mid-range because they are all made like crap - you can see how they are just slapped together. I also don't like the 80s metal style guitars in the shape of stars or V's or stuff like that. It's like a mid-life crisis car.

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Sarah – Weird, but I play my little version of “God Rest Ye Mary Gentlemen,” because it’s become a very quick little practice of fast fingerwork. I also usually will test out “Blackbird” since that involves a lot of moving up & down the neck & any intonation issues will stand out while playing that.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Sarah – 13 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Sarah – 19 years old I think I reached being “very very good,” but I’m better now only in that I can play things with less concentration & more ease due to muscle memory.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Sarah – It is intimate to play. I like that it is an instrument that reverberates against my body while I play it. I grew up playing classical piano & while I loved it, I felt detached from the instrument, since

I wasn't actually touching the strings & was sitting at a chair in front of it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Sarah – I think that it can be a frustrating first instrument, because if you're trying to actually play well, it's not very easy. & I mean fingerpicking or playing classical or jazz or blues. & doing it well. But I think it's a great instrument to start with.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Sarah – My ally. My guitar part is the first part of writing a song always.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Sarah – Joni Mitchell, Nick Drake, Ani DiFranco

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Sarah – Yeah, that's silly

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Sarah – Somehow I scratch up the back of the neck of every guitar I play. Like scratch all the finish off. It's weird.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Sarah – I do practice scales & all that crap. I also practice a lot by just turning on a song I like & making my own improvisational part to go along with it.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Sarah – I play probably 8-10 hours a week. That's pretty good for me. I'm obsessed with playing guitar. I play at least an hour a day usually.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Sarah – I use a thumbpick, & then my fingernails are grown out on my right hand because I play claw-hammer.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Sarah – I use 11 guage nickel rockers.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Sarah – When they break

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Sarah – Whenever I'm about to go on to play a show it seems. Right before I break a string. Totally irritating.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Sarah – I think they are both at the same level honestly.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Sarah – Depends - I do a lot of the simple things myself, but a lot of times it's easier for me to bring it in, just because I don't have all the tools to do everything I need to do.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Sarah – Standard only, because I'm a purest I guess.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Sarah – My own notation system that is loosely similar to tablature. I can read sheet music just fine. I just don't prefer it.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Sarah – High. Not slung low at all.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Sarah – Bad “form” or position of my fretting hand that causes me to cramp sometimes.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Sarah – Piano. Makes your hands work independently of each other & also makes the transposing of chords up & down the scales make more sense.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Sarah – Slide.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Sarah – Slide guitar playing!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Sarah – Flamenco guitar style.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Sarah – Capo!

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Sarah – Playing with a flat pick. I'm so used to claw-hammer that anything else is awkward.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Sarah – I took some guitar lessons when I was 16. I'd already taught myself for 3 years before. I learned a lot of improvisational guitar, bluegrass, & jazz scales.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Sarah – No paper. No writing things down. Everything by ear.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Sarah – Lots of complex fingerpicking, & a lot of mixing styles of jazz, blues, & classical.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Sarah – Not a fan.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Sarah – Not really ever.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Sarah – Lead guitarists have to know how to improvise & know their scales & transposing chords up the neck. Rhythm guitar players need to know basic chords & keep a very steady rhythm.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Sarah – Nope. Everything's got to be good. Otherwise, just be an instrumental guitar group.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Sarah – Ani DiFranco’s guitar. Because she beats up on that thing so it must be sturdy as hell.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Sarah – Ani DiFranco - still.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Sarah – My latest album *in black robes*. I think on the songs “judgment day,” “from my window high,” & “bluesy melody.”

QRD – Anything else?

Sarah – Thanks for interviewing me!

Ted Johnson of National Holographic
July 2010

Name: Ted Johnson

Bands: Current bands: Random FX, Dreamphonic,
National Holographic, Ted Johnson (solo gigs)

Past bands: Groove Stream Attractor, 61 South,
Drive Shaft, Furious George, Scrapyard, Smokin'
Granny (guest musician)

Websites: www.studio713music.com -
www.myspace.com/studio713music

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Ted – It was a cheap Harmony acoustic that I played for about six months. I traded it in on a cheap Japanese electric (Kent).

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Ted – I currently play a black Fender Stratocaster factory-fitted with a Roland GK-2 (synth guitar) pickup. The Strat outputs both (1) a regular guitar audio signal (from the three guitar pickups) & (2) a synth signal from the GK-2 pickup.

The guitar audio signal goes to a set of switches (Whirlwind Selector A/B boxes) that route the signal to various amp emulators & effect units.

These units vary depending on whether I am playing live or in the studio, but usually include a Boss VF-1, a Boss SE-70, a Lexicon MX 200, a TC Electronic Nova Delay (ND-1), & an AdrenaLinn II.

The synth signal goes to a 13-pin switching system (Roland US-20) that sends it to a Roland GR-20 guitar synth module, a Roland GR-33 guitar synth module, &/or a Roland VG-8 guitar system. The audio outputs from these units are typically sent to a Lexicon Vortex, a Lexicon MX 200, and/or an Electro-Harmonix Super Memory Man delay.

The overall system is stereo, so I send the various output signals through a stereo mixer to two Roland KC-300 keyboard amps.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Ted – A guitar with a Roland GK (synth guitar) pickup is essential to my rig.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Ted – Currently, I use two Roland KC-300 keyboard amps (or a stereo PA) to amplify the stereo signal from my rig. Because the rig includes various guitar amp emulators (VF-1, GE-70, VG-8, etc.) that provide gain & distortion effects, I don’t need a guitar amp at the end of the chain.

In earlier days when I played through a guitar amp, my favorite amp was a Mesa Boogie Studio 22 which I still own. I also have a Fender Super Champ, a Fender Pro Reverb, & a Music Man combo.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Ted – Currently my main guitar is a black Fender Stratocaster with a factory-installed Roland GK-2 pickup. The GK-2 pickup is essential to my current style of music (ambient/electronica/experimental), since it enables me to produce a wide variety of spacey sounds using both a guitar synth & a traditional guitar with effects.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Ted – It would look pretty much like my current guitar (see above). I might like to have a mini-Kaoss pad installed on it to enable me to manipulate sounds as I play them.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Ted – I would like to have a stereo stomp box combining distortion, delay, & phaser effects. The

distortion & phaser section would produce a smooth, swirling sustain. The delay section would have a digital readout of the delay tempo (bpm). You could set the delay tempo by either a knob or by tap tempo. Adding distortion & phaser effects to the TC Electronic ND-1 (Nova Delay) pedal would do it.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Ted – I have two Fender Stratocasters, a Fender Telecaster, three Gibson SGs, & a Univox U1800B Hi-Flyer bass (Mosrite copy).

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Ted – I store them in their cases. The location is a secret.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Ted – Fast neck, light weight, good tone, & the ability to mount a Roland GK pickup.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Ted – Upwards of \$1,000.00 (new).

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Ted – I tend to stick with the guitar as purchased.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Ted – If possible, I will borrow the piece of equipment from the store & try it out in my rig. I also read the online reviews at Harmony Central.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Ted – The rig keeps evolving as I replace old effects with new ones.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Ted – Because of the types of music I play (improvisational, experimental, ambient), I like to produce as many different guitar sounds as possible.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Ted – Although they are not considered good guitars, I would like to own a Vox Phantom 6 & a

Mosrite Ventures model because I think they look cool. As for effects, I would like to own a rack-mounted Eventide Harmonizer.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Ted – Locking tuning machines & a good chromatic tuner.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Ted – Best: Fender Stratocaster with built-in Roland GK pickup. Worst: Seymour Duncan Convertible amplifier.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Ted – I particularly like the multi-effect units produced by Roland (VG-8, VF-1) & Lexicon (MX 200, Vortex). My favorite recently-purchased pedal effect is the TC Electronic "Nova" delay pedal. I also like Electro-Harmonix pedals, particularly the Stereo Memory Man.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Ted – I typically improvise in the Dorian mode.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Ted – Twelve.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Ted – I hope that I'm still improving.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Ted – In my opinion, the guitar is more versatile & expressive than most other instruments (with the possible exception of the synthesizer). But mainly I like the looks of an electric guitar.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Ted – Yes. The guitar is relatively affordable, it's portable, & it can play both single notes & chords.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Ted – Definitely an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Ted – Carlos Santana, David Gilmour, early Jeff Beck, Neal Young, Wes Montgomery, & the Ventures.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Ted – Although I have never named one of my guitars, I don't see any harm in people doing that. I think it's natural for a guitar player to treat his or her favorite guitar as a good friend.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Ted – I mistakenly asked a guitar tech to dress (file down) the frets on a Fender Telecaster. It never played as well afterwards.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Ted – I often improvise in different modes (scales) to a drum track or looped bass pattern.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Ted – I think I average about four hours a week playing guitar (including jam sessions).

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Ted – I use heavy-gauge Fender “confetti” picks. I can’t play with a thin pick.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Ted – I use a set of D’Addario regular light gauge (nickel wound) electric guitar strings (EXL110). The gauges are 0.010, 0.013, 0.017, 0.026, 0.036, & 0.046. They seem to have the right balance of tone & bend-ability.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Ted – Not frequently enough. Maybe once a year or when a string breaks.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Ted – About once a year.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that affect your style?

Ted – I think they are about equal in proficiency. Although both could use improvement, I don't feel that one is holding the other back.

QRD – Do you set up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Ted – I generally have a guitar tech set up a newly purchased guitar to ensure that the neck & bridge are adjusted correctly. I make fine adjustments to the intonation later as needed.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Ted – I use standard tuning (even for slide). Someday I hope to experiment more with alternative tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Ted – I prefer standard musical notation, but I don't have a problem with tab.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Ted – The guitar pickups are level with my belt buckle.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Ted – Leaving the volume up when I'm not playing.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Ted – Probably piano because it enables you to hear how melody lines sound combined with chords & bass parts.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Ted – Jazz rhythm guitar with complex chord progressions.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Ted – Playing a duo guitar gig with Brian John Mitchell.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Ted – How to use backward delay effects.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Ted – Reggae rhythm guitar. It sounds so simple, but it's so hard to get right.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Ted – I took lessons for less than a year at a music store in Charlotte, NC. The most useful thing I learned was the concept of the movable chord.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Ted – I think the guitar is inherently more fun (& rewarding) to play when you can improvise. Consequently, I would focus on scale structure (modes) & simple harmony theory early in the lessons. & I would encourage the student to begin improvising as soon as possible, rather than waiting until he or she has mastered all the basics.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Ted – Combine smooth sustain with delay & phaser effects. Improvise interlocking guitar parts. Play too many notes.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Ted – I don't use them because of past problems keeping them in tune.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Ted – I don't know many guitar players who consider themselves “rhythm guitarists.” In most of the groups I have played in, the two guitar players shared lead & rhythm duties.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Ted – Yes, but I particularly enjoy bands in which the musicians are evenly matched.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Ted – I would like to own the guitar rig that Pat Metheny used on “Phase Dance” & other songs from the *Pat Metheny Group* (white cover) album. I want to make those harp-like tones.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Ted – I really can't answer this one because there are just too many great guitarists playing these days.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Ted – I have archived the best bits from several years of jam sessions by Random FX at the following five sites:

www.archive.org/details/SelectedJamSessionsFromStudio713-Collection1

www.archive.org/details/SelectedJamSessionsFromStudio713-Collection2

www.archive.org/details/SelectedJamSessionsFromStudio713-Collection3

www.archive.org/details/SelectedJamSessionsFromStudio713-Collection4

www.archive.org/details/SelectedJamSessionsFromStudio713-Collection5

There are additional examples under the “My Band” tab on my [FaceBook](#) page & on the Studio 713 page at [MySpace](#). I hope to release some new material later this year.

QRD – Anything else?

Ted – Thanks for including me in your survey of guitarists. I look forward to reading the other responses

Jon DeRosa of Aarktica

August 2010

Name: Jon DeRosa

Bands: Aarktica, Jon DeRosa

Websites: [Facebook](#), aarktica.net, [twitter/aarktica](https://twitter.com/aarktica), reverbnation.com/aarktica, myspace.com/aarktica, silbermedia.com/aarktica

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jon – I started out studying flamenco guitar on a classical guitar when I was about 10 years old. It was an inexpensive, decent pre-owned model that my Mom (very lovingly) got for me. I beat that thing to shit, playing metal ballads on it & eventually saved up to buy a Hirade classical guitar which I still play to this day. Hirades are I guess kind of the higher end series of Takamine guitars.

My first electric guitar was a red Yamaha, not sure of the model, basic Strat-like body. Possibly the RGX or a precursor to that, right around the time Yamaha was promoting its Pacifica series. Anyway, my dad got it for me for Christmas when I was about 10 or 11. It was actually a pretty solid guitar, I played the hell out of it. It took a beating. Many years later I think I traded it in towards a Telecaster. I'm sure I didn't get more than \$65 for it.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jon – It changes all the time. I’m moving toward a cleaner signal, cleaner tone these days than I did in the past. The order changes from time to time & the items in parenthesis aren’t used often. But right now it’s like this:

Gibson Nighthawk ----> Morley Volume Pedal ---->
(Fulltone Octave/Fuzz or Digitech CM2) ---->
(MXR Phase 90) ----> Akai E1 Headrush Delay ---->
Electro-Harmonix Cathedral ----> Gibson Digital
Echoplex ----> TC Electronics ND-1 Nova Delay ---->
Kustom Commander (2 x 12”)

The Echoplex is a rack unit with a foot control that I primarily use for looping. You can loop very long passages, multiply loops on the fly, reverse loops, add & subtract parts. It’s got a lot of functions. I also still use my Line 6 Delay, Alesis Nanoverb, Boss DD-5, or Boss Super Feedbacker from time to time.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jon – Guitar.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jon – If I'm playing clean or with minimal effects at home (which I do often), I use my 1970 Fender Vibrochamp. It's the best sounding small amp I've ever heard.

The only other amp I own right now is the Kustom, an early 70s model which sounds incredible, but really needs to be turned up a bit to sound great. I use it for gigs & recording. It's a monster to haul around, but it sounds very nice. I picked it up last year for like \$400. I had played through Fenders most of my life & always felt like I wanted something a bit ballsier, bigger. A bit more color, different. I found it at Main Drag in Brooklyn. The reverb was fucked up on it, but I'd never use that aspect of it anyway. So I disconnected it & it sounds incredible.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jon – Gibson Night Hawk from 1996 or 1997. Gibson only made them for a few years, I'm not really sure why it never took off. Superficially it looks a bit like a Les Paul, though the sound is not as big, not as bottomy & resonant. Possibly due to the smaller body size. I have the 3 pickup version: M-series mini-humbucker, M-series slanted humbucker & an NSX single coil in the middle. It has a push/pull knob that's supposed to divide the tones into single coil variations, but I've never

noticed much of a difference when I activate that, maybe mine's busted. Either way, it offers a hell of a lot of tonal possibilities & it plays really clean & easy.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jon – It would be modeled after an early 70s Les Paul Black Beauty & have an entire set of drone/sympathy strings you could easily adjust the key of from song to song.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jon – Man, I don't know. Something really psychedelic, like a nice analog emulating tape delay with a great reverse feature & envelope sweep. Something that if you teamed up with a Foxx Tone Machine you'd be in stoner metal paradise.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jon – Just 1 classical, 1 acoustic, & 1 electric. & a tenor banjo.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jon – After years of living like a transient & in one-room flops, my girlfriend & I now have a nice space in Brooklyn where we have an additional room that she uses for writing & I use for music. I try & keep them out & in sight because I think that it psychologically encourages me to play more.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jon – Watertight seals.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jon – It's been so long since I've bought one, I'm not really sure. In all honesty, the most important thing is value for the price. I don't care about brands, I don't care about popularity. I care about if it feels good & if I'm going to play that thing for the next 20 years & beyond. I'm willing to pay a little more for a quality instrument to ensure that. But I also like to sniff out "dark horse" models. Like my Night Hawk for instance. It sounds incredible, but no one plays them, there's no market for them (well maybe now there will be, as they began making them again in 2009) & they're not particularly in-style. I bought it in like 2002, when you really never saw them around & it was cheap. Value + quality is kinda the combination for me.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jon – See above. There are deals everywhere. If you have the money & there's a \$5,000 guitar that has exactly what you're looking for, then I think you should be able to have that. But if you don't have that kind of money, I'm quite sure you can still do alright.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jon – Back in my shitty guitar collecting days, I'd pick up cheap Teisco Del Reys & do all kinds of things to fuck with them. But then it becomes kind of a novelty guitar, a one-trick pony. When I have a guitar I love the sound of, I tend to leave it alone.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jon – Before I do any internet research, I tend to go try out a few models cold. I want to make sure I form my own opinions outside of any internet gear reviews. Then with my own opinions already noted, I'll go & do the research online. Those factors combined usually help make a pretty informed decision.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jon – Sure. All the time for different songs. But I mean, I don't have a lot of extra gear outside of what I use from day-to-day, so there's not an awful lot of variation I guess.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jon – I think I have primary tones for all purposes. Meaning, my clean tone is very particular. My warm bed drones have a different but distinct tone. They are the anchors, they tend to stay fairly similar. Above & around them, though, are layers of other tones that change from song to song, album to album.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jon – There are a few Les Paul models that I'd like to have. As far as pedals, to be honest I'm not very in the loop on a lot of the newer boutique stuff coming out beyond Z.Vex & Death by Audio. But I'm sure there are some boxes out there that I would enjoy playing with. I'd also really be interested to try out some amps/equipment by Sunn.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Jon – I guess fret markers to indicate 5th, 7th, etc. I think they can help orient a new player. They tend to not be marked on a classical guitar, which I learned on. I also feel like decent tuning heads. It’s already humiliating enough to suck while you learn to play, do you need to be out-of-tune as well?

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Jon – I really can’t say I’ve bought anything I truly regret. & I consider all my finds “best” purchases.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jon – I’ve always hated anything I’ve tried by Peavey & I’m not a fan of anything I’ve bought from Ibanez either aside from the Tube Screamer (which I feel you need 2 of side-by-side to get the sound I really want from it). Ampeg amps & Roland electronics/amps never have worked out for me either. I mean, I know all this stuff I’m mentioning is consumer-grade stuff, but even the pro lines of the latter two have seemed really shitty to me.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jon – Open A & 2nd finger on 2nd fret on the D string below it. Open 5th. Kinda move that second finger up the neck, listening to the resonances.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jon – Probably about 10 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jon – I have a cassette or two of me playing classical & flamenco pieces when I was around age 16 & I'm pretty sure that I was at the top of my technical game then. Then in my early & mid-20s, I was playing a lot of acoustic instruments with Flare & my fingerpicking got pretty good, maybe better than it was in my classical days. That's also around when I was doing Pale Horse and Rider, so a lot of steel string picking. As far as my sensitivity of sound & ability to improvise, I'm more comfortable now than ever. & I hope that I continue to improve in that regard.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jon – I'm not so sure it does, but it's the one I've grown most fond of. The tambura was my favorite sounding instrument, but at one drone all the time it gets a little limiting as to what you can do with it. & it's very large & inconvenient to cart around.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jon – I actually began on trumpet in school band & got pretty good in just a couple years. Then I discovered guitar & never picked the trumpet up again. I regret that. I kind of think that even though it's not an original idea or anything, piano is probably the best instrument to start out on. & to start very young. It's a very intuitive set up to a child. I think if a kid has a basis in that, he or she can go on to conquer many instruments. If you start playing later in life, I'm not sure it matters as much.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jon – I have no resentment toward my guitar whatsoever.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jon – John Christ, Alan Sparhawk, Brandon Capps, David Pearce, Jason DiEmilio, Loren Connors, Brian John Mitchell. I think La Monte Young's compositions & the ragas that he & Michael Harrison introduced me to had a very significant effect on my playing as well. These questions are difficult, I feel like if I answered this tomorrow I might give you a whole different set of names. These are the ones coming to mind now.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jon – John Christ referring to his guitar as “The Bitch” in the late 80s is both natural & silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jon – I've done more physical damage to my own wrists & hands while playing than I ever have to any instrument. I briefly played in this post-rock/indie/emo band Morning Color Division & I tore up my right inner forearm really terribly. The pickguard on my Telecaster had come a bit loose, protruding edges above the strings. Most of those songs were full strum, palm mute type stuff. So my wrist just kept scraping against the jagged edges. There was blood everywhere & it really stung.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jon – Once in a while I'll take out some old music books, like the Slonimsky book of scales & modes & mess around looking for new melodic ideas.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jon – Right now it's very little, perhaps 2 a week on a good week. I plan to remedy that in the coming months. I can't put a number on it, but I certainly would like to be playing more.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jon – Medium standard on a steel string & medium-light on an electric. But really, it's whatever's around.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jon – Depends on if I'm getting ready for studio, show, etc. I'd say medium lights most of the time & again I'm not particular.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jon – Once every 1-2 months depending on how much I'm playing.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jon – Hardly ever.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jon – I think my left hand (fretting hand) is not as quick & flexible as it used to be, probably because I don't play the kind of classical stuff I used to. My right hand (picking hand) is still pretty solid. Though my metal chops on my right are a little weak. I can't chug nearly as fast as I used to.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jon – I tend to have people I know & trust set it up.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jon – I'm in standard tuning about 50% of the time. I change tunings all the time, tailored to the song. I play a lot of open strings/tunings to get a bigger sound from a single guitar.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jon – I have my own system for notation. I guess it's like a cross between chord diagrams, tablature, & shorthand. It's literally the only way I notate my own music.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jon – I tend to be sitting down when I play. If I'm standing, I know it definitely looks cooler to have the guitar hanging below the waist, but it limits what you can do with your left hand, so I keep it fairly high up on the waist.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jon – Not writing down ideas I have as they arise while I'm playing. I know the only way I'll remember a riff, a progression, a song (etc.) is to write it down using my notation. But sometimes I can't find a pen, or paper, or I'm lazy & it just doesn't get written down. It's a real waste, since 9 times out of 10 I will not remember how it went the next time I pick up a guitar. It's really pretty

terrible. I'd probably have twice as many releases by now if I didn't have this bad habit.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jon – I would guess that many of the bowed strings would be helpful, but I think in terms of understanding tonal relationships & also improving dexterity, piano would be the one I'd think would help most.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jon – Flatpicking using plectrums. I have never been able to get the hang of those things.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jon – I had hoped to work my way through all of the Segovia / Fernando Sor "Estudios," but I only made it through the first third of the book. They get very difficult.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jon – No idea. I steal all my tricks from BJM.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jon – I guess tuner, if that counts. I like to use a capo all the time lately.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Jon – I’d like my metal chops to be back where they used to be. Faster chugging, better note squealing-feedback.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jon – I took guitar lessons from age 10 - 17, I think. My teacher’s name was David Cohen & I still keep in touch with him to this day. Beyond that I was in college & studied piano, voice, & composition. After that I studied classical Indian vocal music with La Monte Young & Marian Zazeela, & later Michael Harrison. My guitar lessons provided a very in-depth foundation for everything I would do musically later in life. Some have argued that traditional learning limits your mind as far as what you can do on an instrument. Now at age 31 I can say that I don’t agree with that mindset at all. Having the foundation & understanding of an instrument can only elevate what you do with it. It

just depends on how innovative, creative & dedicated a player you are. I certainly still draw from the well of things I learned as a teenager when I write music today.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jon – I actually did teach guitar for a few years here in Brooklyn. This was while I was in the midst of studying Indian music myself, & I borrowed some ideas from my Indian music training for my guitar lessons. I tried to teach my students to play raga modes on top of a drone (whether the drone was an open string or on a separate recording) in order to really **listen** to the relationships each note had with one another. I think it's helpful to hear how each note in a scale relates to the root note. That's probably something most guitar teachers wouldn't teach.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jon – Be very patient with the way you allow notes to unfold in a piece. Perhaps perform on top of a drone which is playing the root of the song. Be willing to turn off your effects & play clean sometimes.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Jon – I avoid any guitars with tremolo bars. Tuning is just always out of whack with them. I owned this Ibanez Talman for about 5 minutes that had some kind of floating tremolo system where if a string broke, the tension on the system & the whole neck changed & every string went out of tune. Really fucking stupid. No idea why that makes sense for anyone.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jon – It pretty much stays all the way up, or close to it. I don’t consider that a real viable option in changing tone.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jon – Personality-wise & in general? Rhythm guitar players are salt-of-the-Earth guys who are content to lay back & be unnoticed. Lead guitar players may have a little more ego involved. Solo ambient/noise guys like us & the ones we hang out with? Total egomaniacal, deluded assholes. No, no, no, I’m kidding. The sign of a good rhythm player is that you tend to go unnoticed. As in “Wow, there’s something about this band that is just really *working* but I can’t pinpoint it.” If you “noticed”

the rhythm player, it's probably because they're not doing a good job (playing too loud, too sloppy, tone is all wrong, etc.).

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jon – No. I can't think of any situation where this might be the case.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jon – I honestly don't know. Maybe one of Johnny Cash's tried & true D-35 Martins. Seems like you'd be able to channel the man himself with one of those.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jon – I think it's great that Jon Catler is making & working with microtonal electric guitars. It will open a lot of doors for players like us to have them available. You can check them out here: www.freenotemusic.com.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jon – In the drone context, *No Solace In Sleep & In Sea.*

Brian McKenzie of Electric Bird Noise
August 2010

Name: Brian Lea McKenzie

Bands: Electric Bird Noise, Something About Vampires & Sluts, Planet Cock, Catpuncher & the Mayor... every other band in my hometown.

Websites: myspace.com/electricbirdnoise,
myspace.com/savas, silbermedia.com/ebn

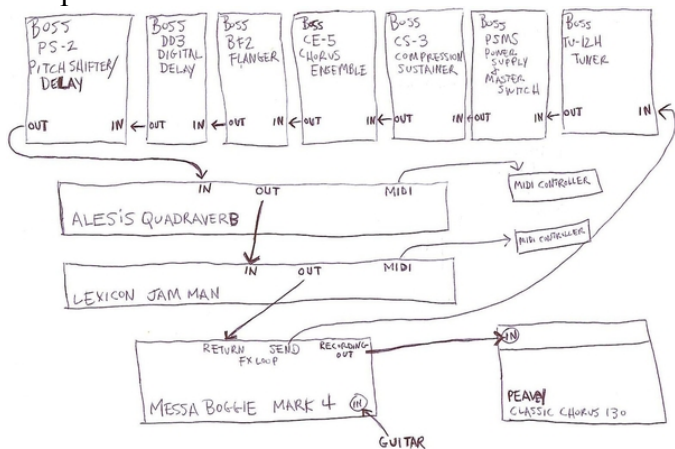
QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Brian – A \$200 Yamaha acoustic... still have it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Brian – It varies from project to project... could be simply a guitar into amplifier (no effects) or a 100 pedal effects into amplifier... or guitar into

computer...



electric bird noise

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Brian – Me.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Brian – Live a Mesa Boogie Mark 4... with 3 separate channels it makes it a pretty versatile amplifier.... or a Jazz Chorus 120 cause I can't get that particular sound out of the Mesa... a Peavey Classic Chorus 130 with Electric Bird Noise.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Brian – With Electric Bird Noise & SAVAS I use a couple Paul Reed Smith EG Series guitars. These guitars are really good at going between single coil & humbucker pick up selections... a Gibson Les Paul & a Gretsch Super Axe get used quite a lot as well.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Brian – I'm so A.D.D. when it comes to equipment... don't think there's one guitar I could be married to for too long. Any six string on a plank of wood with some magnets (or not) will work just fine.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Brian – One feature only... remove all snare drums from the building! Snare rattle drives me crazy when I'm doing my solo ambient sets.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Brian – 7 electrics... 2 acoustic... 1 bass guitar.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Brian – In cases in my studio.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Brian – Lift.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Brian – Versatility. Playability.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Brian – \$5 & up.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Brian – Stick with what I get.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Brian – I'm very thorough before I pull the trigger.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Brian – I do.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Brian – I lock into one tone remembering it then moving on to another.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Brian – Any that inspirers creativity.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Brian – A tuner.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Brian – Been happy with every purchase thus far... for me all gear has some usefulness.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Brian – I'm a fan of old Boss pedals particularly the ones made in Japan... Mesa Boogie... Paul Reed Smith... Z.Vex... Amplitube.... Why? Versatility.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Brian – Depends on my mood.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Brian – 15.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Brian – 189.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Brian – It doesn't ... I'm pretty tall & lanky, so bass is probably a better fit. You should see me behind a mandolin.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Brian – Sure.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Brian – Ally!

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Brian – My pedals, guitar, amp, & mood have more of an influential pull than any outside source. Not until after I dial up a sound I'm content with will I go, "Hey, this sound reminds me of that guy that plays in...."

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Brian – Doesn't bother me.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Brian – Broke the headstock off a Gibson 335s (a 335 solid body) while rocking out!

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Brian – Golf.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Brian – Around 10 hours... around 10 hours.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Brian – A D'Addario green pick because they're heavy, but not overly heavy.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Brian – 10s... because they're not too heavy & not too light.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Brian – About once every other month.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Brian – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Brian – I feel pretty confident in both... but there's a speed threshold for me so I tend to write slow to medium tempo tunes.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Brian – Sometimes I'll tinker around with intonation & small issues, but there is an art to setting up a guitar to it's full potential... so I do send my guitars off to the pros from time to time.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Brian – Standard 95% of the time...cause I'm lazy.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Brian – Recording a rough draft... or remembering it most of the time works for me.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Brian – Pretty low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Brian – Bad habits lead to mistakes, which leads to inspiring new ideas.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Brian – Tennis racket.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Brian – Anything super fast & articulate.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Brian – See above comment

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Brian – I like the Ebow, capo, & slide... what's a string cutter?

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Brian – I did.... I did.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Brian – No matter how wrong it sounds, keep playing it over & over again & again ...then it becomes the right way.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Brian – Breathe.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Brian – Love 'em!

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Brian – 20% of the time.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Brian – Whoever is louder is the lead.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Brian – I can.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Brian – Any one of those famous 60 hero guitars will do. Why? So I can Ebay it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Brian – Brian John Mitchell... because he loves you.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Brian – Silbermedia.com, myspace.com/savas, myspace.com/electricbirdnoise

QRD – Anything else?

Brian – Naw.

Invisible Elephant

August 2010

Name: Invisible Elephant

Bands: Invisible Elephant

Websites: invisible-elephant.bandcamp.com,
myspace.com/invisibleelephant1,
sonicreverie.bigcartel.com/product/invisible-elephant-the-lights-go-out

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Invisible Elephant – An ancient Korean Zenta that looked like a Strat someone had beaten & burned & dragged out of the back of a car. I didn't have an amp so I used to just play it unplugged. I had it for a few years & lent it to a friend. Never saw it again.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Invisible Elephant – Lead > EHX Big Muff > Boss DD20 > Amp

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Invisible Elephant – Effects. I've played with the worst guitars & the worst amps ever made, but still

managed to make everything sound okay. I've never been able to do that with bad effects. The music I make also means that effects are important & I don't just run guitars through them. The keyboards, drums, vocals all sometimes use effects of some sort.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Invisible Elephant – Fender Deluxe 112. I only use the clean channel which stays clean even if you've taken the volume up to the level of a plane taking off.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Invisible Elephant – Fender Jazzmaster American Vintage. The tremolo, the tone, the weight, the look. All of it.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Invisible Elephant – Probably some sort of mutant Jazzmaster/Jaguar hybrid. Vintage Jazzmaster single coil pickups, floating tremolo, & size. Jaguar controls/switches.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Invisible Elephant – Looping with EHX Cathedral reverb options.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Invisible Elephant – Four. Two electric, two acoustic with different tunings.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Invisible Elephant – On stands, in cases, under beds.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Invisible Elephant – A drinks compartment.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Invisible Elephant – Just the right sound & the right feel when you play it. It's hard to tell until you've picked it up to play & you can see if it "clicks" with you or not.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Invisible Elephant – I've bought great guitars for less than \$100 & spent a lot on crappy ones.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Invisible Elephant – Yes, I put stickers on them. I consider that both upgrading & customization.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Invisible Elephant – I'll read up on a few reviews & have a listen

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Invisible Elephant – Hardly ever. I mainly do recording anyway so I have a million options to make different sounds there.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Invisible Elephant – It all depends on the song. It tends to change from song to song.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Invisible Elephant – I'd like an EHX Cathedral & a nice 12 string acoustic.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Invisible Elephant – Strings are always useful. Besides that; nothing in particular. My first guitar was terrible, but after a few years when I'd got a good one I couldn't believe how easy it was to play. Sometimes it's a good thing to make things challenging at the start.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Invisible Elephant – Best: Fender amp. Have never even thought of changing it. Worst: any multi-effect pedals. I've found it better to think about the sound I need & get a single pedal for that particular sound

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Invisible Elephant – I used to play Gibsons. I've had Les Pauls & an SG in the past; but for some reason, whether it's just bad luck or not I don't

know, they've always been temperamental. I now like Fender guitars & Electro Harmonix effects.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Invisible Elephant – Just make something up off the top of my head.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Invisible Elephant – 15.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Invisible Elephant – Probably about 19/20. At least in terms of technique. I used to play in a band at that time & we rehearsed a lot. I haven't been playing as often the last couple of years but I'm better at getting the sounds I want now. Just not as good at playing anything.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Invisible Elephant – It's so versatile. You can pick a sweet melody or pretty much assault someone with some evil feedback or a riff. I still like other

instruments, but guitars feature on most of the songs.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people’s first instrument as often as it is?

Invisible Elephant – I don’t think it matters that much what the instrument is. Once you can play one kind, it helps when you pick up others.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Invisible Elephant – Ally. One good thing about being solo is that you’re not “the guitarist.” If a guitar’s not working on a song you don’t have to try & force it in. You can play something else instead.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Invisible Elephant – John Squire (Stone Roses). I bought a book of the tab for the *Second Coming* album & learned to play the guitar with that.

Stuart Braithwaite (Mogwai). Just listen to *Like Herod & CODY*. Can do tender & evil.

Johnny Marr. Great player & my friend Nic has a huge crush on him & regularly talks of her sick & probably illegal fantasies involving him. I’m not

sure how this has influenced my guitar playing though.

James Blackshaw. Although there are other older, more famous artists that have influenced him, he was the first I got into. His playing is totally absorbing.

Kevin Shields. Plays dreams or nightmares. Warped, otherworldly, original, ace.

Nick Drake. I always think clean & precise, but that makes him sound boring & the music is just beautiful.

Bernard Sumner. Really under-rated. Doesn't waste any notes & at his best (Joy Division) sounds like he's poking you in the eye with rusty needle. In a good way.

Nels Cline.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Invisible Elephant – Not something I'd do.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Invisible Elephant – On stage, drunk, dropped it. More damage to ego than the guitar.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Invisible Elephant – I don't play a lot anyway. I tend to just picture in my head what my fingers will do & then pick up the guitar when I need it.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Invisible Elephant – Usually maybe less than 1. Maybe 5 to 10 if I'm recording something.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Invisible Elephant – None with an acoustic. With an electric; medium. It's not too flexible.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Invisible Elephant – Flat 12s. They go better with the Jazzmaster & I don't really solo or bend much.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Invisible Elephant – Rarely.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Invisible Elephant – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Invisible Elephant – Fretting. I tend the pick around chords.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Invisible Elephant – It sounded awful when it arrived so it had to go to a tech for a set-up which was well worth it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Invisible Elephant – Usually standard but I sometimes drop to a D & I have a second acoustic tuned to Open C. Just to get a different tone & playing around with the tunings always seems to create a song.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Invisible Elephant – I just scribble very hard to decipher notes in a book like “play melody, do a big swooshy sound, make loud noise.”

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Invisible Elephant – Quite low. Holding it right under your chin is not a good look. Saying that, if you go Hooky-low it's like de-evolution in action & you'll probably get a hunchback. Also not a good look.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Invisible Elephant – Losing concentration. Hogging the swings while other people are waiting for a go.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Invisible Elephant – Playing a keyboard helped a lot with chord structuring. Drumming helps you appreciate how hard it is for those drummer-types to play along with your arrhythmic noise. Getting a stylophone has helped me realize my dream of being like Rolf Harris, which has nothing to do with guitar playing but is cool.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Invisible Elephant – Wish I was better at fingerpicking.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Invisible Elephant – Playing the guitar effectively under water.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Invisible Elephant – I tried to pull one out of a hat, but I ended up just getting rabbits & an extremely long multi-coloured handkerchief instead. I'm not good at tricks.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Invisible Elephant – A slide. Not for nice bluesy slide guitar, but for using as a tool to make high-pitched screeching sounds.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Invisible Elephant – Never took any.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Invisible Elephant – I have no idea. Just to play your own way & make whatever sounds you feel are good.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Invisible Elephant – I doubt anyone would want to bother. I may let them borrow my DMs if they asked nicely & promised to wear clean socks.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Invisible Elephant – Like 'em.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Invisible Elephant – Not very.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Invisible Elephant – It's harder to find a good inventive rhythm player & they're under appreciated.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Invisible Elephant – Very rarely.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Invisible Elephant – I’d have no preference for a famous person’s guitar over a non-famous person’s one if it was one I wanted. Unless it had belonged to the legendary Kriss Akabusi, but I don’t even know if he plays the guitar.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Invisible Elephant – Nels Cline. Always inventive & original. On his own & with a number of different bands.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Invisible Elephant – Either in my bedroom or the kitchen.

QRD – Anything else?

Invisible Elephant – Not that I can think of.

Wim Lecluyse of Circle Bros

August 2010

Name: Wim Lecluyse

Bands: Circle Bros, Pernath

Websites: www.morctapes.com/circlebros

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Wim – This was/is a Maison 190-LPC, as sort of a Les Paul clone. A really heavy guitar, it weighs about 8 kilograms (16 pounds). I got it when I turned 15. My parents paid for part of it. I still use it to this very day. Sure, the pickups aren't that good, the neck is a bit twisted & the frets are worn out... but through the years I got so used to all of these small errors that I really got accustomed to playing this guitar. So I still use it a lot.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Wim – When using a minimum setup: guitar - delay - amp. Any kind of guitar, any kind of delay, any kind of amp. When circumstances are perfect: Maison guitar - Boss Feedbacker - Behringer Ultra Tremelo - Behringer Vintage Time Machine - put into my old Fostex 4track, that I used as a mixing panel/tapelooper - a Boss Pitch Shifter/Delay 3

added to that Fostex, & putting that out to my Fender Rock Pro 1000 amp. I tend to put the microphone into the Fostex as well, so it has the same delay on it.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Wim – These days... I think the effects. I often replace guitar input with vocals, keyboards, stylophone... & sometimes I don't use an amp, but just headphones in the Fostex. So I think I'll go for the effects these days.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Wim – The Fender Rock Pro 1000. The clean channel sounds great & works very well for the effects. I need to have the amp checked though -- it hisses pretty bad because the reverb seems broken.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Wim – These days, I use the aforementioned Maison most. If I want to use a cleaner, more resonating sound, I tend to use my one other guitar: a Gretsch G3900, a synchronatic part of the historical series.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Wim – The people of Maison can contact me any time. Never heard of another guitarist using them. So I guess if they want someone to have a signature model, they'd have to go for me.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Wim – Probably a delay -- I really like both the Boss & the Behringers I use, but I could use separate volumes for the dry sound & the sound with the delay on it.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Wim – Two. The Maison & the Gretsch.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Wim – In their guitar cases in the room where we use them.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Wim – Straps so you could carry them on your back.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Wim – I've only bought two guitars. The first time, I wanted a black Les Paul model, because my favorite guitarists at the time used that sort of model (I thought) & black looked best. For the Gretsch I was looking for a hollow-body. I was thinking of buying one of those cheap Ibanez guitars, but then decided to throw in some extra cash.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Wim – I guess you should be able to find a very decent guitar for around 500 euro, unless you want some really specific features

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Wim – Never upgraded a guitar.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Wim – I tend to ask people about it & test it in the shop. Of course that's not the case when buying a 25 euro Behringer pedal -- that's more impulsive.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Wim – Not really. I sometimes throw out stuff for a while.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Wim – I always thought I locked my tone about 10 years ago, but listening back to old recordings, I do hear quite a big difference. So I think it evolves very slowly.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Wim – Still haven't decided whether I'd like a phaser & a wah-wah. I think that would be a toy I could mess with for a while, but then would get bored of it very fast. I'm happy with both my amps & both my guitars.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Wim – I think the most important thing is that you start with the kind of guitar you'd like to play eventually: don't buy an acoustic nylon string guitar

just “to learn how to play.” If you want to end up playing rock music, or metal, or drones, that would end up being quite a frustration.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Wim – Best: the Maison. Worst: the pick-holder I’ve glued on the back of the head of that Maison.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Wim – I truly hate the Zoom multi-effect processors. They made every beginning rock band I ever saw sound the same. (Added up to horrible songwriting skills off course.) Horrible, horrible sounds come out of it. I truly think I’ve never seen a good band/artist use one of those.

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Wim – A few open chords I think.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Wim – I got my first guitar when I was fifteen. I played a friend's guitar a couple of months before that.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Wim – Best (as in what I like to listen to): maybe five years ago, when I was 25. “Technical”: when I was 17. I listened to a lot of Jesus Lizard-esque stuff back then, & that reflected in the way I played. Since I have no interested in playing music like that anymore, I think my “skills” went downhill. However, I think I definitely grew as a musician because of that.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Wim – It's quite an easy way to manipulate sounds.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Wim – No, I'd like to see more other instruments around. As long as they're not afraid to experiment with the sound.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Wim – I've never thought of it that way. I tend not to blame my guitars when something doesn't work out. In the end, it's a tool.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Wim – When I picked up the guitar: Lou Barlow & Eric Gaffney of Sebadoh & Rowland S Howard of The Birthday Party - still love their music, but I haven't play anything remotely similar for years now. Jason Diemilio of Azusa Plane is a long time favorite - I definitely owe a lot to him - he made me realize you can disguise pop songs as experimental music. In more recent years, Michael Anderson of Drekka showed me that you don't need to use a guitar all the time, or that you can dispose your skills. Ray Raposa of Castanets inspired me because he makes traditional songs sound very bleak.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Wim – Never realized that people do this. Definitely silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Wim – Break a string?

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Wim – I consider listening to music practicing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Wim – I play as much as I want to. So sometimes, I play a few hours a day; sometimes I don't touch a guitar for weeks. In general: that's about one-two hours per week. I know, not a lot.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Wim – I like those Dunlops that are indented on the borders. When playing them with the sides, it makes the string bump a bit.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Wim – Mostly a set of 0.011. Fat strings resonate better.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Wim – Once every two years?

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Wim – Never. Well, not in the last ten years.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Wim – Never thought of my hands as two single units. Since I don't try to shred, I can't say what's my strong point.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Wim – I set it up myself, because I'm not keen on letting guitar shop asshole-types work on my equipment. No idea how I'd explain to them that I don't care about hiss. & also I can't imagine paying someone for this. I'm not a pro.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Wim – EADGBE - so many great songs have been written in this tuning. I think this was my safest choice. All the other tunings I used, ended up being one off experiments. Plus I hate retuning.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Wim – Sometimes I make something that remotely looks like a tablature. Most of the time I'm too lazy, so I just write down chords & a vague instruction on how to play (something like: focus on bass-strings, not more than two notes at a time) -- & I make drawings of how the knobs on my effect pedals are adjusted. But most of the time, I just forget.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Wim – When touching the bridge of my guitar, my elbow has a 110° angle.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Wim – Not picking up the guitar for weeks?

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Wim – These days, I prefer vocals & organ. Pretty much any instrument that makes a sound that pleases you.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Wim – Turning down my amp in the mix. It's always too loud compared to the vocals. I think I need to focus more on this, but I'm confident I'll learn to adjust the volume better than I can now.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Wim – Playing slower. But I learned that already quite a few years ago.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Wim – A capo. I need to buy an Ebow though -- I'd love to try this on our piano.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Wim – Never did.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Wim – I wish more guitarists (& musicians in general) would actually listen to what they play. I'd probably let people listen to something they recorded.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Wim – Listen to lots of Sebadoh (for Pernath) or Azusa Plane (for Circle Bros). You’ll be fine then.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Wim – Never really used one - I’m used to bending the strings without a tremelo. On the Maison guitar, I sometimes bend the neck. Works just fine.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Wim – The one on the guitar is always open - I rather adjust the one on the amp. That one used to be open 100% as well when I started playing. I think I got bored of the piercing sound, & turned it down through the years.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Wim – Egos? I’m not interested in “lead” guitars.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Wim – Not at all. If a band is not good, I won’t notice there’s good guitar work going on. What

each band member does separately is pretty irrelevant in my opinion.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Wim – Lou Barlow’s Rickenbacker bass. Maybe I’d like a bass at some point. & the Rickenbacker has a really nice design.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Wim – My favorite “new” bands of the past 5 years are Castanets & Liars. I’d pick those guitarists.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Wim – I hate to say this, but probably on my latest record, which is *Haven*, out on Morc Records. & for “technical” guitar work, I think the split 7” Pernath did with Fields of Gaffney. Though Steve Morse fans will be highly disappointed.

QRD – Anything else?

Wim – One of my favorite band names ever is: “you can unlearn guitar.” Just use a guitar for whatever you think you need it. If not, stay away from it.

Nick Reinhart of Tera Melos

August 2010

Name: Nick Reinhart

Bands: Tera Melos, Bygones, solo

Websites: www.teramelosmusic.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Nick – My first guitar was a black Memphis Strat copy. I sold it to my best friend. My second guitar was either a Jagstang or a Telecaster. I can't remember which came first. I still own both of them.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Nick – Guitar - tons of pedals - amp. I actually don't know what a lot of the pedals are, as I've either grinded off the name or covered them with stickers. Lots of envelope/synth filters, delays, whammy pedals, chorus, etc. I often change things out as well.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Nick – Hmm. That’s tricky. I could definitely rip an entire set sans effects. I guess I could make do with any amp. So the guitar would probably be most important. But even with a shit guitar I could probably figure something out.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Nick – Right now it’s a Peavey 6505 combo. It was given to me by Peavey as sort of a friendship deal, which was awesome. Before that I was using a Mesa Triple Rectifier out of a 4x12 & I just wanted to scale down a bit. I was tired of lugging around the massive roadcase for the head as well as destroying my back by lifting the speaker cab. The Peavey has got an aggressive edge for the most part, but it’s pretty responsive to dynamic playing when it needs to be.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Nick – Peavey also hooked me up with an awesome custom guitar. It’s sort of a Jazzmaster/Telecaster hybrid as far as the body goes. Seymour Duncan JB’s in the bridge & some single coil jazz in the neck. No knobs. Just a pickup selector & cutoff switch. I also designed the pickguard, which I’m really stoked on. It’s this weird cubist, Adrian Belew inspired polygon. I’d actually like to have it

made for all of my guitars. Also I've always wanted a surf green guitar, the Fender version of sea foam, so that's pretty rad.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Nick – If I could go all out I'd like to have a mic built into a guitar with a selector switch so I could send vocals through my effects. I'd probably have some Simpsons characters painted on as well. Then I'd have a custom case that was in the shape of Larry David's head.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Nick – I'd really like a Line 6 DL4 that didn't break all the friggin time. My signature pedal would be hardwired to my brain & would produce any sound that I was thinking of, like SCRONK, BZZZ OW, YEEEEEE, MGHHHGHHHGHHH. Maybe something with lots of siren sounds too.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Nick – Probably 10 or 12.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Nick – I think most of them are stored below my parent's house. Some of them don't have cases so they're wrapped in sleeping bags.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Nick – A little cash dispenser that shoots out \$100 bills. Most guitar cases don't have that. Other than that they all seem pretty cool to me.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Nick – Fast neck. Solid body. Cool color/shape doesn't hurt.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Nick – Not sure. I've bought more than one rad guitar for under \$100. I'd be worried about spending too much money on something that I know is going to get pounded & thrashed.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Nick – Usually swap out pickups & set 'em up so they're lightening fast.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Nick – I'm more of an impulse buyer. So probably not as much as I should. I'll cruise around Harmony Central & see what people are saying if there's something I'm eyeing. Otherwise it's usually just grab it & go. Then if it sucks it just sits around for a few years. Then I'll rediscover it & be like, "Whoa! I forgot I had this. This thing rules!"

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Nick – By default my rig changes after tours because things break & I replace them with different things - heads, guitars, cabs, pedals, etc. I think it keeps things fresh & interesting for me/the band/the audience.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Nick – I'm not one of these tone freaks that knows amp models & years & which sounds best & blah blah blah. I like a good mid range that rips. I used to just have my ultra clean channel (green), gain channel (orange), & destroyer channel (red). I'm trying to simplify things these days with a semi clean channel & a nice distortion pedal in front of it.

I just really go for that viscous mid range sound, like AC/DC with a little less high end & a bit more saturated. Right now I'm getting it with the Peavey green channel + a Boss Super Overdrive.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Nick – At one point I'd like to own a JCM 800. We recorded our last album with an 800 & it sounded awesome. I'd love a new Fender Jazzmaster. The J Mascis signature is awesome. Not sure about pedals. Boutique pedals seem really cool, but they're usually real expensive. Typically I don't spend more than \$100 per pedal. Although if I had that cash dispenser on my guitar case like I mentioned earlier, maybe I could try some out. I just got a Digitech Space Station, which I've wanted for a really long time. They're super-pricey, but I found a Digitech XP 200 (modulator) for cheap & had my friend Ben Milner mod it into the XP 300 (Space Station). He's a real life wizard. He also plays in The Advantage.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Nick – I don't think there should be any "important" features on one's first guitar. It's good

to be unaware of those features as a beginner & learn through mistakes & the shittiness of a first guitar. It's like when daddy buys his fake gangster 16 year-old son a new BMW for his first car. The fake gangster will grow up to not appreciate what it means to drive an 83 Accord that constantly breaks down on the way to punk shows.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Nick – I don't know if it was my best purchase, but definitely one of my most significant purchases was my Mesa Triple Rectifier. I think I was 19 or 20 & I had spent my entire savings on it. I didn't even know what 150w meant at the time. The only time I've ever needed an amp even close to that loud is when I'm playing in my other band, Bygones, which has pretty much the loudest drummer on the planet, Zach Hill. Since my roots are in loud fast punk music, I just like the comfort in knowing I can always turn up & blast everything away. I guess the worst purchases have been paying to have the headstocks re-glued on a few SGs multiple times. I probably wasted \$300 with all the repairs & I would still just blast 'em off at shows. Eventually I just retired a guitar or two & started piecing the others back together myself.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Nick – I have a love/hate relationship with the Line 6 DL4. It has the coolest delay/looping functions available for what I like to do. They just build them like hunks of cat shit. I really dig Peavey guitars, particularly old ones, 80s-90s, because they're built real well & you can find them for pretty cheap. I have a few Fenders, but I wish I could afford more. They're just classic & legendary. Marshalls, Mesas, & Peaveys for amps. Marshalls sound the best, the Mesas are tanks & the Peavey is kind of an amalgam of the two.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Nick – I usually have a brain fart when I sit down to play a guitar in Guitar Center or something. I'm picturing walking over to a guitar in my room right now & picking it up & playing something. I have no idea what would come out. I think it'd be one of two things – “Solsbury Hill” by Peter Gabriel or a Robert Fripp riff.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Nick – 11.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Nick – I'd like to think that my playing is constantly evolving. So by that thought process my playing is at it's best as I type this. I actually really do like my playing now more than ever. I kind of just pile on new techniques & ideas onto everything I've learned previously. I'm 27 now.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Nick – I'm not sure. I don't know that it does actually. I mean it's the instrument I chose to begin on & practice & move forward with. So it's what I am best at, therefore suits me better than any other instrument. Although, I think it does fit with what I want to do musically very well. I had heard when I was younger that piano was the "most complete" instrument because it has melody, harmony & rhythm elements. Obviously you could say the same about a lot of instruments. I guess I really liked that concept & applied it to guitar.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Nick – People should learn whatever instrument they feel drawn to. Although the ratio of good guitar

players to good drummers is like 10:1, so maybe people should go for drums.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Nick – I heard Jack White say something about how every time he plays guitar it's like a "battle" & he's just trying to conquer it or something. It sounded cool, but then I thought about it & it was kind of stupid. Well, only because he was probably just saying it to sound cool & edgy. Of course the guitar is your ally. It's your device in which you present your art. Although I guess Jack White could have meant that playing on a really shitty old guitar was like a battle & I could understand that for sure. I've played on hunks for years that wouldn't stay in tune & just sucked in general. The adversary thing just seems weird to me. It's like, I'm hungry & to satisfy this need I'm going to eat a piece of pizza & that pizza is my enemy. I will make that pizza my bitch & eat the shit out of it. Then I'll be full.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Nick – Kurt Cobain, Greg Ginn, Frank Black, Adrian Belew, & Robert Fripp off the immediate top of my skull.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Nick – Seems pretty natural I guess. I don't have any names for my guitars or anything. I think it'd be cool if people practiced sexual objectification with their instruments & had sex with their guitars. Actually, that probably already happens.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Nick – I've blown the headstock off of many SGs at shows. One time we played a bowling alley in Texas & I was swinging my guitar around & blasted the headstock off on a bowling monitor hanging from the ceiling. There was another time I threw an SG-X like 20 feet in the air to get it caught in some lights. Got it on the first throw. That probably wasn't very good for that guitar's well being.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Nick – Nothing in particular. Right now the only thing I'll sometime focus on is speed in my left & right hand. Specifically with arpeggio-style riffs. Consistency in picking each note & getting them to sound almost synthetic.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Nick – It depends. We just finished up a week of band practice & I played everyday for around 5 hours. But today for instance I picked up 2 different guitars & played each for 5 minutes. I'll usually play for a while when I'm feeling inspired.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Nick – Usually anything that's 1.0 or "heavy." or anything that's easy to steal. I hate having to pay for little pieces of plastic cut into triangles. I have no idea how people can play with thin, flimsy picks. It baffles my mind. I guess I've never tried it, so maybe it'd make sense if I checked it out, but I don't think it'd be practical for the type of stuff I play.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Nick – I've been using Slinky top heavy bottoms for a while now. They're .52s on the bottom & .10s on the top. They seem to stay in tune well with all the thrashing that goes on throughout our set & they never seem to break. I can only think of one or two times in the last 6 years that I've broken a string live. Right now we've got a bit of a GHS hook up, so that's the brand we're currently jamming.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Nick – My hands don't sweat that much, so my strings sound new for quite a few shows. I could probably go 7 or 8 shows & they'd just start to sound muddy.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Nick – 1-2 times every six years according to my previous answer.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Nick – Both are probably fairly equal. I can set my picking hand to turbo, but it really only accomplishes a noise assault, which is what I'd prefer over shreddy scales anyways. I've developed a hybrid picking/fingerpicking thing over the last couple of years which I'm real happy with. It's totally helped me pushing my song writing into interesting areas.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Nick – I wish I knew how to set up my guitar. I've tried to learn by reading stuff or watching tutorials.

I'm just always scared of cranking the truss rod & jacking everything up. I really should figure it out though. I usually have a friend do it or I'll take it to a cool mom & pop shop called Son & Father Guitars here in town.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Nick – I've always played in standard tuning. I really like the idea of playing outside-the-box things under the idea that there are no tricks (in this case alternate tunings) & that anyone can do it. Although I'm definitely curious about experimenting with alternate tunings. There's a whole other world to explore. Perhaps one day.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Nick – I've never done either of those. I'll usually just play a riff a thousand times until it's burned into my brain. There have been times where I've completely forgotten a riff & that sucks. One time last summer I was practicing with Zach Hill in Los Angeles. We spent an entire day writing a song. I remember being really excited about it. A couple of days went by without playing it & I completely lost it. Sometimes I'll record a riff on my cell phone & then return to it later. But that can also be a problem

because I may have no idea how I actually played it in the first place.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Nick – I don't know the strap length. Pretty high, but not like up-to-my-neck high. I definitely play it higher than the dudes in Korn, that's for certain.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Nick – I'm actually pretty happy with my playing. Not to sound cocky or anything. I can't really think of any bad habits I exhibit when playing guitar. I'm not like wiping boogers on my strap or anything.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Nick – Drums for sure. A good knowledge of rhythm will always help push your guitar playing. I always think about how the drums will interact with whatever I'm working on.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Nick – Stanley Jordan-style finger tapping is pretty insane. I suppose I emulate that a little in some songs, but it's really just scratching the surface of what that guy can do. I've been into Brian Setzer lately. I wish I could play those types of leads. I'd want to take that rockabilly style & expand on it, possibly taking it somewhere untapped. I have friends that laugh when they see Brian Setzer on my iPod. He's legit.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Nick – Getting featured in Guitar World would be a pretty awesome thing for me. My dad had a subscription in the early 90s. I remember flipping through them for hours as a kid. That'd be a really cool full circle nostalgic thing for me.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Nick – I haven't picked up any cool tricks lately. Well, actually my friend Ben, the wizard I mentioned earlier, showed me how to replace the switches in old DOD pedals. The little piece that's underneath the part you step on gets worn down flat, which prevents the pedal from being activated. So I used to ghetto rig it by taping a couple pieces of broken guitar picks over the worn down spot, which would act as a button & temporarily fix it,

but it was really obnoxious. So now I know how to replace those puppies the right way. It had been a few years since I had one of my DODs working properly.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Nick – Hmm, I can’t really think of any common gadgets that I put to good use. Aside from the pedals, it’s pretty back-to-basics as far as my guitar goes. I don’t even use strap locks, I just use a washer & screw the strap to the guitar itself.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Nick – Other than the few things I’ve mentioned, I think it’d be cool to be able to do sweeps. It’s another technique I’d be interested in exploring for the purpose of doing something that hasn’t really been done with them. Typically, sweeps are a metal thing & they’re either super minor sounding or cheesy & epic sounding. I think I’d be able to process the shit out of them & make some pretty weird stuff happen. That’s the kind of thing that you just have to sit down & practice for hours & I don’t really do that with guitar.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Nick – I took lessons for a few years when I first began playing. I'm not exactly sure what I learned from them. There was some theory integrated into learning Nirvana songs or whatever, but it's hard to say what I walked away with. I remember bringing in a NOFX song, "The Bag," & wanting to learn the solo. The dude had it like 85% figured out & wrote it down. I still can't play it the right way to this day. In any case, I definitely feel that taking lessons for a little bit was a positive thing.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Nick – I'd be most interested in helping someone develop their own style. One thing I would have liked to get into earlier was actual songwriting. The idea of being in a band or writing songs didn't occur to me until I had been playing for probably 4 or 5 years. So maybe style & song writing is something I'd emphasize.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Nick – Well just like anyone’s art - one could emulate it, but it’d be impossible to copy it, just by nature. My entire life is pretty much based around music. Most of my thoughts can be traced to a musical root. It’s not so much bands or songs that influence my style, it’s just sounds in general. I guess what I’m saying is that you’d probably have to get inside my head to emulate what I’m trying to accomplish with guitar. As far as tangible stuff goes, I guess just raw, melodic, outside-the-box playing is kind of an overall style I consciously or unconsciously try to encompass.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Nick – All my Peavey’s that had trem/whammy bars I had blocked out. At some point I’d like to mess around with them though. Adrian Belew, a.k.a. the “twang bar king,” is a really cool tremolo player. I think I’ve just never played on a super legit tremolo system that was smooth & stayed in tune. It wasn’t until recently that I got to play on one of the nice Fender floating trem systems, like the ones on Jazzmasters/Jaguars. Those are awesome. My Jagstang had a “dynamic vibrato” system which friggin sucked. One dip on that thing & it was way out of tune. I think anyone that owns a Jagstang will tell you the same thing. I remember when I was 12 or 13 my stepbrother & I took his Fender Strat & taped the shit out of the trem bar so it was all the

way down. We cranked the gain on the 1x10 & jumped around laughing like idiots, thrashing on that thing. Those are my earliest memories of tremolo bars, which is probably why I was never interested in them.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Nick – Never. Absolutely never. Wide open 100% of my life. Well, actually maybe sometimes during recording to get synthy sounds.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Nick – Well the obvious difference is the lead guitar player is the one wailing solos throughout the set while the rhythm dude just strums along. One time we got a write up where our old guitar player, Jeff, was referred to as the “rhythm” guitar player while I was the “lead.” We laughed pretty hard about it. It was pretty lame. I’m not sure where the average musical Joe draws the line. I don’t really have any interest one way or the other.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Nick – Probably not. That’d be tough.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Nick – Greg Ginn’s Ampeg Dan Armstrong guitar would be pretty cool to have. There’s so much history behind it/him/Black Flag. Even forgetting about their music, what they did, & how they did is legendary. I wouldn’t like hang it or have it displayed somewhere -- I’d play the shit out of it. & I’d wear a Greg Ginn skin mask while rockin’ out.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Nick – Spencer Seim, from Hella, is really the only current dude who I can think of that blows my mind. It’s unfortunate because the last few years he’s been playing drums in bands, which he’s great at; but it’s his guitar playing that always rattled me. Ben Weinman, from the Dillinger Escape Plan, is an awesome guitar player as well. Seim, Weinman, Reinhart?! huh??! it’s the “ei” combo in the last name. Yeah right, I’m just kidding. Those guys make me look like a little kid that accidentally shit all over his Pokemon cards.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Nick – On our new record *PATAGONIAN RATS*,
out on Sargent House Records!!!

QRD – Anything else?

Nick – Thanks everyone!

Matt Stevens of Fierce and the Dead
August 2010

Name: Matt Stevens

Bands: Fierce and the Dead, solo

Websites: www.mattstevensguitar.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Matt – It was a £10 Argos Guitar, nylon strings & it smelt of polish, in the end I painted it white & set fire to it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Matt – For acoustic it's an Ibanez Artwood Acoustic, volume pedal, Whammy Pedal, Line 6 DL4 (with a Korg Kaossilator going into one input of the DL4).

For electric it's a Fender Mexican Tele, volume pedal, Whammy Pedal, Electro-Harmonix Big Muff, Line 6 DL4 (with a Korg Kaossilator going into one input of the DL4), Fender Princeton Tranny Amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Matt – My line 6 DL4 Looper delay - vital for the loops & it does some very cool retro delay sounds as well.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Matt – For electric I use a Fender Princeton transistor amp, I love the clean sounds on it. I think Radiohead use them for clean sounds.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Matt – My main acoustic is an Ibanez Artwood -- what I liked about it was that it was cheap & sounded amazing. It had a hole in it, but I loved the sound. For electric I use a Fender Mexican Tele, I love it.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Matt – I'd like something light because I have back problems. Other than that, pretty much my broken Ibanez is perfect especially with the L.R. Baggs pickup I added later.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Matt – I'd like a special edition line 6 DL4 with midi sync, undo, & a longer loop time & multiple.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Matt – Not many... 6 or 7.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Matt – In my spare room or in the front room ready to be played. My wife puts up with a lot.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Matt – Not too easy to play, or can have a tendency to noodle really good sound & really stable tuning because I like to really attack the guitar. Good clean tone & no humbuckers, can't stand them.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Matt – Depends on if it's custom designed for a player - I mean you get something decent for £200 these days, which is great.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Matt – I only do stuff that is essential, my pick up on my acoustic cost twice the price of the guitar, I'm looking for specific sounds.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Matt – I've been hurt before, so lots of testing & I'm always looking for particular things. I want quality basic tones that I can mangle with effects later. I use the Korg Kaoss Pad to mess with stuff.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Matt – I like to add stuff, but I'm really happy with what I have - I normally change the pedals a bit yearly. I was using a synth pedal, a Line 6 Filter Modeler thing, but I swapped that for an Ebow.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Matt – I keep one simple clean tone & mess with it - for example I don't really like really saturated distorted tones. I like fuzz as a specific effect for single notes, but you are so limited in terms of playing clearly defined chords.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Matt – I honestly don't, maybe I'd like a nice Jaguar or Jazzmaster & I'd like virtually all the Electro-Harmonix pedals.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Matt – Decent action & tunings pegs. When you are learning to play, you really need to have an instrument that plays in tune.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Matt – I had a BC Rich during my teenage metal phase & the headstock use to hit the floor if you played it standing up & the best was the acoustic Ibanez I still use today.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Matt – I don't like Marshalls - they feel really flat to me dynamically. I'm not great with Les Pauls or Gibsons in general at the moment, I used to only play them, but I overdosed in my 20s on them. It's

too easy to play fast on a Les Paul, there is no fight on them.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Matt – Probably a Smiths song or the Mahavishnu Orchestra stuff. The stuff I first think of when I play.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Matt – 14, a late starter, I played violin for a bit when I was a kid & a bit of synth.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Matt – 34 in terms of playing interesting stuff, 16 in terms of fast lead playing, 29 in terms of playing over jazz changes.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Matt – I'm not sure it does really, I love music really & it just happens to be played on a wooden thing with strings. I like the expressive vibrato of

playing you can get with the guitar, but I'm always frustrated with its limitations.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Matt – Perhaps, I think the most important thing is that it's an instrument that you love the sound of.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Matt – Both - I find it eternally annoying that it lacks sustain. I'd like to try one of those Moog infinite sustain guitars, it's like having an Ebow in every string.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Matt – Fripp, McLaughlin, Bill Steer & Mike Amott, Johnny Marr, Radiohead. Nick Drake maybe for acoustic.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Matt – Completely silly & daft, they are just tools.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Matt – Smashed the neck off an SG by throwing it on the floor mid-way through a gig a few years back, stupid but the audience loved it. It wasn't done deliberately.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Matt – I practice classical stuff, Bach mainly & jazz chord substitution.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Matt – About an hour a day, I would like to play more, but I have back problems at the moment.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Matt – Heavy Dunlops for precision, I can't stand floppy picks.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Matt – 12 Elixir, I'm an Elixir evangelist, love them.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Matt – Every few months, the Elixirs last ages & retain excellent tone.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Matt – Not very often; I used to, but not since I went up to 12s. The heavier gauges seem to sound better.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Matt – Fretting, I'd like to get the Niles Rogers choc thing going one day with my strumming hand.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Matt – I'm rubbish so I get it set up by a guy in Denmark Street. I need to find someone new because the last time I took my guitar down there he lost part of it!!

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Matt – Just normal, Drop D, or Drop C. I am a big fan of that Nick Drake sound with the open tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Matt – I just remember stuff really. I can read sheet music, but I'm not very good. If you can't remember it, it's probably not very good.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Matt – Above the waist, but not too high. I'm not Slash. Recently I've had to play sitting down because of my back.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Matt – I mostly down pick - I need to improve that & when I hybrid pick sometimes the notes I play with the plectrum are too loud compared with the ones played with my fingers.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Matt – Listening to the violin for melodic playing & the piano for chordal voicing, especially Bill Evans. Singing is great for working out melodies as are glockenspiel & melodica.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Matt – Funk guitar like Chic would be useful but I fear turning into some horrific Red Hot Chili Peppers guitar shop player.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Matt – Open tunings, using Ableton live, slide guitar. There are lots of things still to learn.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Matt – Using an Ebow & I love it for nasty synth sounds combined with a whammy pedal.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Matt – Some of the percussive flamenco things. Slide would be very cool, like lap steel.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Matt – I had lessons with a guy called Richard Beaumont for about 10 years. He was amazing; we did chord substitution, odd timings, all sorts. He

really pushed me & got me into the Mahavishnu Orchestra & the Groundhogs. He's an amazing guitarist.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Matt – Chord substitution & harmony. How to come up with interesting parts when you are playing in bands, not just barre chords. That's the difficult thing & what people really want from you, to be interesting.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Matt – Learn what arpeggios work well together to create multiple harmony parts. Use a looper to orchestrate multiple parts & fade in & loop chords using a volume pedal. Learn odd timings, subdivision of 3 & 4. I mainly use extended arpeggios plus chromatic tones for leads, I'm not really thinking of scales.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Matt – Not into them really, although the ones on Jags are very cool. Not good if you want to play guitar actually in tune though.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Matt – There should be no difference – it's all about rhythm & melodies. The hard bit is coming up with parts that really work together well, the parts that really make records.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Matt – Nah. It's all about the band performance for me - not interested in noodles.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Matt – I wouldn't mind a go on one of Eddie Van Halen's guitars just as something I always thought was cool when I was a kid.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Matt – Nels Cline maybe or the Radiohead guys. Both use interesting harmony & effects in a pop/rock context. Very cool. Also Sonic Youth & Omar Rodriguez Lopez.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Matt – Not really for me to say, but I like the lead playing on *The Fierce & The Dead* first EP the part 1 19 minute track on Bandcamp. People seem to like it. For acoustic playing there are some fast leads on my first album *Echo* & I'm really pleased with the layering & chord progressions on my second album *Ghost*.

QRD – Anything else?

Matt – I think that's covered every thing!! You can get all my stuff as pay what you want downloads from www.mattstevensguitar.com or Itunes, emusic, etc.

Dan Cohoon of Moral Crayfish

August 2010

Name: Dan Cohoon

Bands: Moral Crayfish, Empty Shapes, Taken Girls

Websites: Moral Crayfish -

moralcrayfish.bandcamp.com,

myspace.com/moralcrayfish

Empty Shapes - emptyshapes.bandcamp.com,

www.myspace.com/emptyshapes

Taken Girls - myspace.com/thetakengirls

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Dan – It was a no name acoustic guitar that my brother & I glued back together after it was sat upon.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Dan – I currently play a Hondo II Professional (it survived a house fire before I owned it). For distortion I use a Boss Metal Zone MT-2 distortion, Fulltone Fulldrive 2 FD2 -MOSFET, the distortion pedals are on perma-loan from John Gibbons from Bardo Pond. I have a Digitech RP70 Modeling Processor multi-effects processor, touchy as hell but lots of sound options. I also have a Digitech XDD

DigiDelay Pedal (also very touchy) & a Danelectro DJ-17C PB&J delay. For an amplifier I have an Epiphone Valve Junior Half Stack.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Dan – Since I play prepared guitar I would say the objects I use to alter the sound of my guitar. I shove objects like screwdrivers, chopsticks, & small wooden objects into the strings of the guitar. I then hit, rub, twirl screwdrivers, maracas, drumsticks, etc. against the strings. I also use a Gillette M3 Power Vibrating Razor neck as a cheap ass Ebow.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Dan – I have an Epiphone Valve Junior Half Stack. I like it because it is all tube & there is only one chicken head knob for the volume. Since my bandmate just got a Marshall Cab that he is running his Fender Twin through, I might have to add an Epiphone Valve Senior Combo to my set up.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Dan – I have a HONDO II Professional that a friend gave me after it survived a house fire. The conditions of keeping the guitar was that I was not

allowed to remove the stickers that read “WORK”, “Spend” & “Pain” on a plastic flower, the crowning jewel is the 90210 sticker with the girls from the original series. For a Sears guitar it is surprisingly well built & heavy, it has taken a lot of abuse & still keeps on kicking.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Dan – I would want something that is solidly built. Something that I would not feel bad about hitting with screwdrivers & dragging across the floor.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Dan – I love delay. Maybe something that could have multiple loops & delays going at the same time.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Dan – Just one.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Dan – Not very carefully, in the gear bag.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Dan – More pockets for my screwdrivers.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Dan – Sound is the most important, how well it is built.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Dan – It all depends, I got my guitar for free & it is great. I would try & find an interesting used guitar before I bought a brand new one. Considering my budget a couple hundred bucks is where I would max out.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Dan – I replace stuff that gets broken. Guitars are just tools, I don't fetishize them that much.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Dan – I read up on it on the inter-web. Go to a few shops & see the price range.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Dan – Only when things break.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Dan – I am self taught & only vaguely aware of this thing called tuning. I like to twiddle knobs & see what I can get.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Dan – I would like to get a Jazzmaster, but I would feel pretty silly buying the Sonic Youth model. I could go for the J. Mascis model because it is purple. A Marshall Stack would be cool to have, but I would be happy with a Fender Twin.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Dan – Strings. My first guitar kept on getting less & less strings because I did not know how to re-string it.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Dan – The best is my Valve Jr. Half Stack, it looks good & sounds great & was cheap. The worst: the Digitech RP-70. I will never buy a pedal made solely out of plastic again. It has a habit of breaking right before a show.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Dan – I am not a gear snob, I like my Epiphone amp a lot. You get quality for a good price. Boss pedals are built like tanks. Brand I don't like is Digitech, they are touchy as hell & are constructed & designed poorly.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Dan – I usually start by jamming a screwdriver through the strings & then bang on it some with another screwdriver.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Dan – Fifteen or sixteen maybe?

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Dan – I still don't know how to play chords after 15 plus years of playing.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Dan – I played saxophone in middle school, but anything beyond 8th notes eluded me. I wish I knew about free jazz or I would of stuck with it. I like the ease of getting sound out of the instrument.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Dan – I wish I had some formal training in guitar. I think whatever instrument inspires one to make sound they should use that instrument.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Dan – An ally on most nights, I have been known to break all the strings on my guitar on stage though.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Dan – Glenn Branca, Lee Ranaldo, Thurston Moore, Dean Roberts, Keith Rowe. (Not a guitarist, but John Cage's influence on me cannot be underestimated.)

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Dan – The way I treat my guitar, it would be a bit sick if I called by a nickname.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Dan – One night I broke all the strings on the guitar, shoved a drumstick through the pick guard. I ended up screaming the lyrics of "Freebird" through my pickups.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Dan – Since what I do is mostly improv, I don't practice per-say. I like to experiment getting new sounds out of my instrument.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Dan – I am very lazy. Sometimes never. I should do more.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Dan – Whatever the kind my bandmate has.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Dan – Um, I just sort of pick them at random, kinda like a chance operation.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Dan – When I break the strings.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Dan – I can go months or days it all depends.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Dan – I guess my fretting hand because that is what I use to put objects into the strings & I like to mess with the strings high up on the neck.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Dan – Luckily my band mate Jack in the EMPTY SHAPES is pretty handy with guitar fixing. I generally have him work on it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Dan – When I do tune I use open tunings, I am slowly learning how, but still need my bandmates to tune for me.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Dan – I am totally self-taught so I record my ideas if I want to remember them.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Dan – A little above waist height.

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Dan – Being lazy, not playing unless there is a show.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s guitar playing?

Dan – Piano, maybe, I am totally self-taught & don’t play either instrument in the traditional way.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Dan – At some point I think I should learn about such things as tuning & chords. If I could I would like to play like Jack Rose.

QRD – What’s a guitar goal you’ve never accomplished?

Dan – Learning chords, I just recently started “tuning” my guitar.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Dan – My bandmates taught me open tuning.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Dan – I use the neck of a vibrating razor blade as a ghetto ass e-bow. I can use it to either vibrate the strings directly or place it near the pickups & cause strange noises to occur without touching the guitar strings.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Dan – One day I would like to play a real song on the guitar.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Dan – I have no formal training on the guitar. I did take saxophone lessons from 5th grade through 9th. The last two years I faked it because 8th notes eluded me.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Dan – How to shove foreign objects into there strings, how to feedback effectively.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Dan – Be completely unskilled & be willing to abuse their instrument.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Dan – If the guitar has it I will use & abuse it.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Dan – I use the tone knob a lot to adjust the tone of the drones I am making.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Dan – I guess Mike Watt had the best line about that, “Be a Ball Hog or Tug Boat,” he was talking about bassists but it could apply.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Dan – NOOOOO! I prefer crappy guitar work versus guitar wanking & no soul.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Dan – Lee Ranaldo's, he is an inspiration to me. John Fahey for the same reason.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Dan – If you asked me last year I would say Jack Rose, sadly he passed away. Glenn Jones was a close friend & collaborator with Jack. I really admire him, not only for his acoustic work, but his work with his great band Cul De Sac.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Dan – The Empty Shapes split with Carlton Melton. Jamie our bass player spent an insane amount of time mixing it. He made me sound like I kinda knew what I was doing.

QRD – Anything else?

Dan – Don't let your own musical incompetence stop you from making sounds, it never stopped me.

Clayton James Mick of Booze Brothers
August 2010

Name: Clayton James Mick

Bands: Satisfaction LTD, Horizon, Starfire,
Wooden Nickel, Booze Brothers

Websites: www.boozbroz.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Clayton – The very first guitar I ever seriously tried to play was a Danelectro model just like the one Jimmy Page played, which was loaned to me by my friend Doug Lippert, the lead guitarist in my first band Satisfaction, LTD back in 1981. Being young & stupid, we refinished the guitar & had it painted black with yellow Van Halen stripes on it. I still have it in my collection. I beat around on that axe for a few months before getting frustrated with how hard it was to play. My first real guitar was a gold top 1977 Gibson Les Paul Signature. I was in heaven when I got that axe. The neck & action were so much better than the Dano & made things a lot easier for me to learn. Plus, with the semi-hollow body, I could get my quasi Ted Nugent vibe going. LOL. I also still have that guitar as well.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Clayton – I’ve experimented with different rigs over the years. I started off using a Peavey Standard transistor head & a cabinet with 2x15” speakers... it was a back-breaker! This was back in 1981 & they hadn’t gotten it quite right with transistor amps yet. I bought various effects pedals, etc. to try & get a good sound, but could never get a sound I liked with that rig. Eventually, I sprung for a Marshall JCM900 2x12 tube combo. I loved the Marshall tone, but couldn’t get a clean sound that suited my ear. These days for live gigs, I usually plug my Epiphone Les Paul standard through a Germania Treble Booster & into my Behringer GMX212 V-Tone combo. Pretty straightforward. For recording, I love those little Marshall Lead 12 amps. They have a great distortion sound. I also have used Behringer’s V-Amp (with which I recorded the entire *Everybody’s Happy* album) & just purchased a Line 6 Pod Studio, which I’m looking forward to recording with. It’s gotten to the point for me where smaller is better. I don’t plan on lugging around any Marshall stacks anytime soon!

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Clayton – I’d have to say the guitar. You have to have an axe that feels good in your hands. That’s where it starts.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Clayton – My Behringer GMX212 V-Tone combo. I had purchased one of Behringer's V-Amp units & liked the sounds I got from it, so I did some research on the GMX212 & tried it out at the store. Got my amp used for \$125! Brand new, they only sell for around \$260. The amp does everything I need it to do. I can get everything from a clean Fender Twin type tone to a Marshall raunch. It has a bunch of effects built in, but I'm not a big knob twaker. I usually set it up for one or two echo or reverb effects & leave it.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Clayton – I seem to gravitate toward my cherry sunburst Epiphone Les Paul standard for live gigs. Got it off Ebay for around 300 bucks. It got lost by UPS for 2 months & when I finally did receive it, the fretboard was cracked from the nut down to about the 5th fret. I re-glued the fretboard, repaired the nut & its been one of my favorites ever since. For recording, I mostly use a wine red Hamer Special that I bought from my friend Evan Peta. The Hamer is probably my all around favorite axe. It has that magical quality for me...great neck, great action. It originally had P-90's, but I replaced them with Bill Lawrence mini-humbuckers. I've used the

Hamer on just about all of my albums since *Burner*. My first album, *Twist Off*, was done mostly with the Les Paul Signature gold top. *Burner* was done completely with the Red Baron, a Strat-type guitar I built myself that had a single DiMarzio Dual Sound pickup at the time. I've since added a Bill Lawrence rail humbucker in the bridge.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Clayton – It would definitely be a double cutaway type guitar, 24 3/4 inch scale. I probably would slap a DiMarzio Steve Morse in the bridge position & a DiMarzio Super 2 in the rhythm. I may throw in coil splitting for Fender type sounds. Two volume, two tone controls. Relatively thin neck width & thickness-wise, rosewood fingerboard with medium to high frets.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Clayton – I'd call it the "MICK-O-NATOR". When I plugged into it, it would make me sound like a combination of Rory Gallagher, Peter Green, Billy Gibbons, Michael Schenker, & Rick Nielsen with a dash of Hound Dog Taylor thrown in to give the perfect mojo! LOL.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Clayton – I own around 20 guitars. It's been awhile since I counted. Most of them are 300 dollar specials that I picked up on Ebay. I own at least one of each of my favorite models... Flying V, Explorer, SG, Les Paul, Strat, Tele. I also own a few acoustics, bass guitars, & a mandolin.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Clayton – I have a space for 'em. Can't afford any kind of specially sealed humidified vaults.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Clayton – Decent guitars inside them... there's a lot of crappy guitars out there. LOL. Seriously, maybe more storage space & adequate protection.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Clayton – Relatively low action, medium high frets, a neck that isn't too fat like a baseball bat or wide. I also tend to gravitate toward Gibson scale guitars with humbuckers. Set-neck over bolt-on. I like at least 2 volume controls... 2 tones are OK, but I can live with 1. No tremolos, thank you.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Clayton – Depends what your intentions are. If you like to brag about a guitar as if it were the size of your manhood, then I'd suggest spending thousands of dollars for a status symbol type of axe, putting it up in a display case in your den & then go around to every musician you know & spew. If you want a guitar that you can actually play & don't have to worry about putting a scratch on, then spend around 300 bucks, work with it a bit to get it setup the way you like, pick it up & have fun & beat some glorious shit out of it. It's up to you. I guess I'd rather have fun.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Clayton – Other than the aforementioned Les Paul Signature, I don't think there are too many guitars I own that I haven't modified in some way or another. I really enjoy working on guitars. I usually change out the pickups & tweak the setup to my liking. I completely remodeled a cheap Squier Bullet that had a single humbucker & routed it out for the regular Strat setup, slapped in some noiseless single coils, a string through body bridge, re-worked the frets, & now it's a fun guitar to play. I've got an Epiphone SG & would like to shave

down the neck a bit so it wasn't so clunky. That might be one of my next projects.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Clayton – I will usually do some snooping around on the internet on a particular item that I'm interested in. If a music store in the area carries the item, I may go in & try it out. Sometimes I just go for it & the gamble pays off... sometimes not. When that happens... well, that's why there's Ebay. LOL.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Clayton – Not too often. I usually stick with a setup for quite some time. After ditching my initial Peavey rig, I ran with the Marshall combo for many years before switching over to the Behringer for band gigs. I play in a two-piece band & sometimes I get lazy... so I just run directly into the PA with effects pedals. For that setup, I'll use my Germania, an old Ibanez compressor & a Boss Super Overdrive pedal... that's it. Even though I don't have a direct box, it works pretty well. I did try to use my Behringer V-Amp, but even though it works great for recording, it was a bit too noisy for a live gig.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Clayton – I guess I bounce around a bit depending on my mood. There are times when I get in a Fender mood & then I'll bring out either my Telecaster or one of my Strats & pretend I'm Rory Gallagher. LOL. The single coil sound is nice for some things. I upgraded all my Fenders with noiseless pickups, which helps a lot. In the end, I usually end up back with my Les Paul.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Clayton – If my house was big enough, I'd probably own a lot more stuff. I'm a bit of a pack rat that way. Let's put it this way...if I won the lottery, Ebay would keep me quite busy!

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Clayton – When you are just starting out, in my opinion, it is almost essential to have a guitar that has low action & a decent neck. I think having a guitar that is as easy to play as possible is the key. If you have to fight too hard with your instrument, it's

not much fun & you lose interest rather quickly. If it doesn't have the greatest pickups, you can get by with that, but it's gotta be easy to play or forget it. I know that's how I felt coming from the Danelectro to the Les Paul. Back then, I didn't know how to setup my own guitar & the Les Paul had been setup properly by a technician. The biggest improvement was the neck & action... not just that it was a Les Paul. It could have been a Japanese veg-o-matic guitar as long as it was setup properly.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Clayton – The best purchase would have to be my Hamer Special & my Epiphone Les Paul. I'd be lost without those. The worst? My Epiphone Les Paul! It got lost by UPS for 2 months & when I finally got it, the fretboard was cracked loose & the nut was broken off. I had to repair it myself, but after doing so, it became one of my favorite guitars. So, as Cheap Trick said, everything works if you let it! LOL. Another worst guitar I ever bought probably was a Samick acoustic-electric on Ebay. The electronics are awful. It's almost impossible to get a decent tone when plugged in. Also, the control panel/battery holder will pop out if you move suddenly, which sucks when you are playing live.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Clayton – I really like what Behringer has done. They make a lot of quality stuff for a decent price. I guess the only kinds of guitars I don't care for are those really pointy Schecter & Dean axes & EMG pickups. Flying Vs & Explorers are pointy enough for me. Sorry, but I guess I'm kind of old school that way. I like curves.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Clayton – It's always some kind of blues stuff. I like to pick up & just jam out on blues riffs & then work my way up in speed a bit. I run some scales, do some finger picking, etc. Kind of a variety.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Clayton – Eighteen. I fiddled about with guitars before then, but not seriously until after high school.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Clayton – I know that about the time I recorded my *Burner* album, I had gotten to the point where I

knew my way around the scales pretty well. I don't think a person ever stops getting better. You've got to keep moving forward.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Clayton – Because I didn't make it on the cornet. LOL. Too bad... who knows? I could have been the next Herb Alpert.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Clayton – Sure, why not? The guitar is a great place to start, especially if you're a rocker. Then I'd say move on & try some other stuff too. I actually started out on the cornet in school band. Then it was guitar, mandolin, & now I'm dabbling with piano.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Clayton – An ally for sure! Guitars are our friends. Treat them nicely.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Clayton – My favorite guitar player is Rory Gallagher. I tend to gravitate towards blues based players such as Peter Green, Clapton, BB, Hound Dog Taylor. For rock guys I like Michael Schenker, Frank Zappa, Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick, Leslie West, Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, Bill Nelson of Be Bop Deluxe, Angus Young, Eddie Van Halen, Uli Jon Roth, Ted Nugent, Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Tony Iommi, the obligatory nod to Hendrix. Also, Richard Thompson, Steve Morse, Albert Lee, Roy Buchanan, any decent blues type guitar players.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Clayton – We name everything else, why not guitars? Can't say I do it too much, although I have one Strat-type guitar that I built that I call the Red Baron.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Clayton – I've been fortunate enough to never have seriously damaged an instrument. I've bashed into a few cymbals & mic stands. One time, I was playing a gig with a band in January when the temperature outside was like 30 below zero. My guitar was cold & when I opened the case & the guitar hit the heated air, the finish cracked like a shattered mirror.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Clayton – Listen. I try to keep my ears open to a variety of music. It all finds its way into your playing in one way or another.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Clayton – Not nearly as much as I used to. Life tends to get in the way sometimes. But, I do as much as I can with the time that I have. If I could, I would play at least an hour a day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Clayton – I use Dunlop Tortex picks, the .60mm orange colored ones. I like a pick that's about in-between as far as thickness. Thin picks break too easily & heavy picks don't flex enough. These don't break & they flex the right amount for me.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Clayton – I use Ernie Ball stainless steel extra light strings starting with an 0.08 on the high E. They are brighter sounding than regular strings & I prefer the extra light gauge because it's easier on my hands.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Clayton – When I run my finger along the length of the wound strings & can feel pits from the frets, I usually change them out.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Clayton – Not that often these days. Guess I must be mellowing with age... LOL.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Clayton – For where I'm at right now, I'd say it's about equal really. Although, I do use tremolo picking quite a bit when I get up to speed, so maybe I do lean a bit more toward my picking hand.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Clayton – I'm a do-it-yourself-er. Who better to know how it should play than you? Besides, I enjoy working on guitars, so for me its fun.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Clayton – As a rule, I generally tune a half-step down to Eb. Once again, it's easier on the hands & gives a little bit heavier sound. Of course, a lot of bands do this including Van Halen, Kiss, Thin Lizzy, etc. On my *Reality* album, I tuned down to D for a couple songs. I also do experiment with open tunings & I like the celtic tuning that Rory Gallagher used on the song "Out On The Western Plain."

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Clayton – I have written down some things, but about 95% of the time, I just use my little hand-held cassette recorder to save them. I have been known to call my answering machine & leave an idea on it if I'm away from the recorder. I've also emailed myself lyrics & other ideas so I won't forget them. Now that I have a Droid, I installed a recorder app, so I'm good to go anywhere!

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Clayton – A little higher than Jimmy Page but not as high as a jazzer... LOL.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Clayton – Sloppy picking technique. I need to work on my articulation a bit more.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Clayton – I think that piano would be a big help. Everything is laid out right there.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Clayton – I envy the acoustic blues finger pickers... players like Blind Blake & the like. They didn't need any fancy amplifiers or effects... just a guy & a guitar. That's what it's all about!

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Clayton – I think I pretty much answered this one with the last question. But, I haven't given up yet... I keep on trying!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Clayton – Playing the guitar with my teeth... my dentist appointment is tomorrow....

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Clayton – I'd say the slide. If done right, you can get some really nice sounds.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Clayton – Probably playing the slide. I mess with it from time to time, but I'm not really proficient at it.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Clayton – I've never had a formal lesson. There were friends who would show me this or that along the way. I listened to a lot of records & learned to play by ear, although I can read music. I used to subscribe to Guitar Player & picked up a few tips there & I bought a few books & videos.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Clayton – Don't close your mind to other styles of music. If you really want to develop your own style, I think it's a good idea to listen to a variety of music. You can learn something from them all that will make its way into your playing & help you develop along the way. I have music in my collection from just about every genre.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Clayton – I don't know that anyone would want to, but if you want to follow a similar path, see above.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Clayton – They are great for guys like Hendrix or Van Halen, but I don't care much for them. I built my Red Baron guitar with a Kahler tremolo & ended up locking the bridge down. Makes a great solid bridge if you're not using it as a tremolo!

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Clayton – Not often. I usually leave it at about 8 or 9. Once in awhile, I'll twiddle it to get a wah-wah effect. I also turned the tone completely down for the second middle solo in the song "Rover" off the *Burner* album.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Clayton – A lot of times, a lead guy will focus on solos & forget to work on rhythm. Solos are great, but without good rhythm & the ability to play in time, it's not much. A lot of frosting & no cake. Take a guy like Eddie Van Halen. I think his rhythm style is much more interesting than his leads... don't get me wrong, his lead work is great, but listen to his rhythm playing sometime.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Clayton – This is sort of the frosting & the cake analogy again.....

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Clayton – Rory Gallagher's Strat... or what's left of it! Rick Nielsen's checkerboard Hamer standard or Peter Green's Les Paul would also be quite nice!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Clayton – I can think of a couple guys. One is Richard Thompson. Not only is he a great

songwriter, but he makes noises come out of a guitar like no one else on this planet. The other is Steve Morse just for sheer excellence in technique, but never being boring.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Clayton – I have flashes of good stuff scattered around my albums. The wildest stuff is on *Burner*, but there are some good things on all my albums. I still am striving for the perfect guitar album... maybe if I ever get good enough, I'll record it someday. LOL. You can download all my music for free at www.boozbroz.com. Plus, there's video of me playing live at various local clubs. Some fairly good jams too!

QRD – Anything else?

Clayton – I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to do this interview. It was very enjoyable... always wanted to do an interview like this!

John Trubee
August 2010

Name: John Trubee

Bands: Ugly Janitors of America, Zoogz Rift, Debt of Nature, Lozenge, Nude Women Blistex

Websites: Google my name

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

John – It was a nylon string acoustic my Mom bought me for \$40 from Ferrari's Music Center in Princeton, NJ in 1970. It was lost or thrown out after my parents divorced & sold our old family home. I was long gone by then.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

John – 2004 Mexican Sunburst Maple Neck Stratocaster into 2 Dynacomp compressors into "The Weapon" by DigiTech (used infrequently to add a bottom octave) into a Peavey digital effect unit for a cathedral reverb, then into a small Ibanez practice amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig ' guitar, amplifier, or effects?

John – The guitar, of course. Those compressors boost to sustain the naturally thin, trebly Strat sound which otherwise decays too quickly for my taste.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

John – The Ibanez. I own 2 Ibanez small amps, a Fender Deluxe Reverb, & a bigger Peavey amp. I will only use the bigger amps when I play live, which is very rarely.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

John – The 2004 Mexican Strat. I carried around a 1972 Strat for years & was glued to it forever, but the newer Strat has lower action & a better tone & feel, so I use that more now.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

John – I dunno. I just like to play what I got.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

John – Would like to get multiple effects like wah, Leslie effect, & reverb & echo effects.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

John – Four. The two Strats that I mentioned, a black Telecaster with Maple Fingerboard, & a 12-string acoustic Takamine.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

John – Why let the thieves know?

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

John – Tons of free cash to make my life easier.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

John – How it feels & sounds to me.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

John – Supply & demand. Whatever the market demands & supplies. I cannot impose my infantile wishes upon that.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

John – I have so little free time to fuss with things. I am happy to have a few hours on my days off to play guitar. Forget fussing with & fetishizing them!

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

John – I play it & use it. If it meets my needs, I buy it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

John – Nope.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

John – I lock into one, vary the pickup combos & how I pluck the strings to change the timbre.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

John – Mesa Boogie Amp. Les Paul guitar, SG, Rickenbacker electric 12-string.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

John – Good action, good strings. When I bought my first Strat it took a year for a guitar teacher to let me know I had incredibly thick, dull sounding, flatwound strings on it used more for jazz guitars. I promptly put some Ernie Ball Super Slinkies on it & it played much, much better.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

John – I bought a Peavey amp I was stuck with for years as a teenager with no money. It buzzed horribly & had an electrical short problem with it. Also had a crappy tone.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

John – I hated those Kustom Transistor amps with that damn padding all over them. They sounded like shit. We stuck with them in a teenage band until we upgraded.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

John – Warm-up exercises of my own invention.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

John – 13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

John – I have not yet achieved it, I have so far to go, & I learn new things every day & am humbled by all I must yet learn.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

John – Because I got into rock music in a big way at 13. Guitar is the main rock instrument. I learned to appreciate other types over music over the years.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

John – I don't care either way. People ought to do what makes them happy. I'm not God.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

John – Ally!

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

John – Clapton, Hendrix, Zappa. The biggies.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

John – If B.B. King wants to name his guitar Lucille, who am I to tell him he can't? I can't anthropomorphize my guitar because I have a hard enough time even anthropomorphizing people!

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

John – One time (young & stupid) I ignorantly shaved the frets on my Strat with a metal file to get the action lower. It screwed up the harmonics, the action, & certain notes wouldn't sound or just buzzed. I committed a guitar atrocity! Thankfully I had a pro fix it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

John – I invent songs by trying different chord patterns & melodies against each other. I use the guitar to compose.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

John – Long afternoons on my days off. Would prefer 24/7. The reality of earning a living gets in the way.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

John – A small, heavy, teardrop-shaped Jazz style pick made by Fender. I love the pointy tip - let's me scrape & create harmonics & color the tone with a lot of versatility. I hate & cannot & will not use soft picks.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

John – Light to medium light gauge steel strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

John – Whenever they need it. If the sound is dull, I can see the fret grooves in the strings, etc.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

John – Sporadically, mainly the higher ones.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

John – Both do their jobs.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

John – I am not some rich rock star. I set up all the stuff myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

John – Standard tuning. Time does not permit me to experiment with esoteric tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

John – Prefer sheet music, just read the notes on the staves plus chord symbols.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

John – Medium. I don't get that slung low crap. How can they play with any proficiency like that?

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

John – Being more disciplined in learning actual songs to expand my repertoire. I go off on tangents to develop musical ideas all the time.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

John – Electric bass.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

John – Flamenco & classical.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

John – Learn to play pedal steel. I have to buy one first!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

John – Well, I call them techniques. Working on a hand tremelo thing.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

John – No gadgets, just my hands on the strings.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

John – Learning more obscure chord forms that I rarely use.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

John – I learned the basics from teachers, pointers on practicing, making the pieces musical.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

John – Dunno.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

John – Lots of extreme vibratos, hitting the strings hard with a lot of passion - almost overplaying. All of life's frustrations come out on the guitar.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

John – You mean those electronic tremolos in Fender amps or vibrato arms on guitars? Tremolo on amps has a use; someone show me a vibrato arm on a guitar that doesn't screw the string intonation & I might consider using it!

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

John – Keep on high treble all the time. My high frequencies in my ears are gone, sadly.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

John – I play both. One of them gets more girls, maybe.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

John – Nope.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

John – Brownie - held captive in that glass case in the museum in Seattle. Because the *Layla* album blew my mind at age 13.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

John – Steve Vai. I also am amazed by Pat Metheny's mechanical orchestra he connected to his guitar.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

John – I will play live around Santa Rosa & San Francisco (& other locales if anyone will have me) sometime before hell freezes over.

QRD – Anything else?

John – If you want my band for live gigs, dead gigs, & have opportunities & cool stuff I miss by being a self-willed hermit, here's my e-mail:
johntrb09@gmail.com

Ichirou Agata of Melt-Banana
August 2010

Name: Ichirou Agata

Bands: Melt-Banana

Websites: a-zap.com, tzadik.com,
myspace.com/azap

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Agata – My first guitar was a handmade guitar by myself. I built it using cardboard & elastic. It broke in one or two days.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Agata – Guitar > Pedal board > Amp > Cabinet

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Agata – ALL.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Agata – Sunn Beta Lead, I like the sound & it is loud enough & not so heavy to bring, especially to bring into the airplane.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Agata – Gibson SG. It is lightweight. & the headstock is big enough. I can't play a guitar that has small headstock, I don't know why though. The size of an old SG's neck fits me too.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Agata – I'd add a volume on/off switch.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Agata – Some very small box with different effects, & make it possible to connect like Lego blocks.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Agata – 5 guitars.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Agata – At home hung on the wall.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Agata – Lightweight, less than 2kg, & still as strong as flight case.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Agata – Same size of neck & body as the guitar I have now.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Agata – I've no idea.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Agata – I customize it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Agata – Play it at the music store. If it's a pedal, I basically like the pedal where I don't need to read manual.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Agata – Not really. Once I like it, I use it for a long time.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Agata – The former.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Agata – More Sunn Beta Leads in good condition.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Agata – Big headstock, of course not too big.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Agata – Best > Gibson SG.

Worst > Yamaha guitar, I forgot the name of it. I already sold it.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Agata – Sunn & Gibson. Maybe also Digitech because of the Whammy Pedal. Lightfoot Labs because I like the Goatkeeper. Fulltone, too. I like

Boss, too; that's because I can find it easily during the tour in case those pedals are broken or stolen. I don't have brands which I dis-like so far.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Agata – Strings? I'm not sure what you mean. I think it's harmonics.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Agata – I built my first guitar when I was 6 or 7. But I was not serious at all.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Agata – I don't know, maybe around 22.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Agata – Because I played it for a long time.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Agata – It was piano for me & I think it is better than guitar for people's first instrument.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Agata – I have no idea. I use it anyway, so it does not matter for me.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Agata – Now I'm not sure anymore seeing many great guitar players. I was also influenced by scratch djs, sax players, & noise musicians.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Agata – It's natural thing. I don't have names for my guitars, but I wish I had a good name for each guitar.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Agata – I use my guitar in a normal way, I even don't like breaking guitars for the performance, but there were so many small scratches on my old SG. That's because I was using a metal pick & slide a

lot. It is like a pin a day is a goat a year. Once a guitar collector guy asked me to buy the guitar at \$10,000, he was from NY & he said he collected guitars. I thought he was drunk but he was serious & he liked my guitar because he has not seen a Gibson SG beaten that much. I got a new old SG now, & I use it at home for the recording.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Agata – Nothing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Agata – Sometimes I don't play guitar at all. When I'm writing or recording, I play guitar all the time when I'm not doing basic things like sleeping, eating, etc. So it depends on the day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Agata – I used to use metal picks that my friend made. But these days I use a Jim Dunlop nylon pick. My wrist hurts using metal picks & it's kind of hard to keep the tuning ok, so I changed it to nylon picks. There is no big reason why I chose the nylon pick. I just found it at the music store first. When I was thinking about the pick, we (Melt-

Banana) toured with Tool & I noticed Adam (from Tool) was using the same pick. I remembered about the nylon pick, so after that I picked up the Nylon pick at the music store & now I like it.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Agata – 10-46, I don't know why, but now I'm using this. It is comfortable.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Agata – During the tour, I change strings every night. But I'm thinking I'll change it every 2 or 3 shows on the next tour.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Agata – Since I changed picks to nylon, I have not broken strings yet before I change to new strings.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Agata – I feel I'm bad with both. That's why I use many pedals.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Agata – I ask someone to fix or change parts.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Agata – Open tuning. Because it is easy to play for me.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Agata – I prefer recording a rough idea directly to the recorder.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Agata – Around the navel.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Agata – Sticking out my tongue, but I hide it wearing a mask.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Agata – Drums & vocal.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Agata – Play 10 guitars at the same time.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Agata – Play everything perfect at the show.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Agata – Palm mute.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Agata – Slide.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Agata – I don't know much about guitar technique. So I don't know. & I think I'm not so much interested in so called technique.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Agata – No.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Agata – Feedback is the first thing I liked about the guitar, so it will be how to get feedback.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Agata – Buying a slide.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Agata – I don't like it as I don't like to worry about tuning.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Agata – When I need to do it. Not so often. It depends on the songs. Mostly I don't change it.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Agata – I don't know about the difference. Is there any definition? I guess a lead guitar player play more solos or melodies & a rhythm guitar player plays the rhythmic part. Or lead guitar player plays higher notes & rhythm guitar player plays lower

notes. Or lead guitar player uses front pickup & rhythm guitar player uses rear pickup....

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Agata – Yes.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Agata – I'm not a guitar collector....

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Agata – Marc Ribot. He was amazing when I saw him playing guitar during his soundcheck in Australia.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Agata – I hope it is at the Melt-Banana show.

QRD – Anything else?

Agata – Thank you for the interview.

Bones Denault of Shady Lady

August 2010

Name: Bones Denault

Bands: Shady Lady, L.D. & The Monkey Kings,
Twenty Twenty, Hero, Drive, C.U.N.T.S.P.A.S.M.
Band

Websites: myspace.com/shadyladyrocks

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Bones – It was a Stella. I gave it to my younger brother, but I don't know what he did with it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Bones – Gibson V or G&L Strat, DOD Digital Delay/Sampler, DigiTech RP150, 1968 Fender Super Reverb.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Bones – Guitar!

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Bones – A Fender Super Reverb. Tone.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Bones – Currently a G&L Strat... its features that make it so are its tremolo & tone.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Bones – Something like a custom made Outlaw Palomino guitar with its chambered body, Gibson style neck, locking tuners, & Bigsby tremolo because every inch of it is top of the line.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Bones – I don't know. There are just so many good pedals available with a wide variety to choose from. I really can't answer this without a lot of thought put into it.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Bones – I have fifteen at the moment.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Bones – Most are on String Swings on my walls.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Bones – More storage space.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Bones – Quality of workmanship & feel.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Bones – \$500.00 to whatever you are willing & can afford to pay.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Bones – Yes, I do upgrade & customize them.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Bones – Thoroughly, I look for the quietest place in the store. Then go sit down & play it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Bones – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Bones – I like to change the tone a lot.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Bones – Nothing really. I have plenty that suit me just fine.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Bones – Ease of playing.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Bones – Best purchases - a brand new 1967 Martin D-18 (which I let Jimi Hendrix play one night at our house), my '65 Guild Thunderbird, a 1929 Rickenbacker Hawaiian lap guitar with original case & amplifier.

Worst purchases - Music Man 210-HD amplifier

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Bones – Like -- guitars; Fender, Gibson, Martin, Gretsch

Like -- amps; Fender, Mesa Boogie, Bogner, Vox

Like -- effects; Digitech, Danelectro, Boss, Vox

Dislike -- guitars; any brand that the guitar is poor workmanship

Dislike -- amps; any brand that is solid state

Dislike -- effects; any brand that is too noisy

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Bones – An E chord to see if it's in tune.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Bones – I was twelve.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Bones – At about 23 or 24 years of age.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Bones – Well, it's the instrument that I put the most time into.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Bones – Sure why not?

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Bones – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Bones – That's a very complex question. Many guitarists have influenced me over the years, but none have totally influenced my sound.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Bones – What's wrong with that? I name mine, but I really think that is totally up to the individual.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Bones – My Guild Thunderbird's neck got broken once when I left it out at a Shady Lady rehearsal studio & a guy named Velvert Turner broke it during a midnight jam.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Bones – Jam weekly with various musicians other than Shady Lady.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Bones – At least 4 or 5 hours a week.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Bones – A heavy thumb.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Bones – Elevens or heavier for attack.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Bones – When they lose brilliance.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Bones – Not very often. Once in a great while because of heavy strings & I do hammer hard!

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Bones – Both are important to me because they both PERFECT my style.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Bones – Myself because I learned how a long time ago & because I am a cheap bastard.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Bones – Standard & open tunings for slide.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Bones – None, I use recording devices.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Bones – Low enough so that it doesn't rub my nipples!

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Bones – Falling on the floor in the middle of my solo.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Bones – Anything with strings.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Bones – Hmm... You mean playing with my teeth like Hendrix perhaps???

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Bones – Performing at Carnegie Hall.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Bones – Honestly, I don't remember.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Bones – Slide.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Bones – I would like to master my improvisational skills.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Bones – No.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Bones – Well, today the teaching levels cover just about everything. So there is probably nothing that I could teach them that any other good guitar teacher wouldn't teach them.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Bones – Firstly be accomplished & think simple... sometimes less is more. & have fun.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Bones – Love them.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Bones – Every song & in some songs more than once.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Bones – I don't believe there is a difference.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Bones – Let's just say I can appreciate individual good players in a not so good band.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Bones – One of Les Paul's used instruments. Why??? Because anything Les Paul used was a super fine instrument.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Bones – I don't know if he is the most innovative guitar player, but Jeff Beck gets my vote.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Bones – On the Shady Lady - *Raving Mad* album.

QRD – Anything else?

Bones – Yes, I want to say thanks for the interview & to anybody out there thinking about picking up guitar, PRACTICE!!!

Eric Hausmann

August 2010

Name: Eric Hausmann

Bands: solo projects, Brainwarmer, Tres Gone,
Dead Air Fresheners

Websites: [Facebook](#) , twitter.com/hausmann,
erichausmann.bandcamp.com,
myspace.com/spilling, vimeo.com/hausmann

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Eric – My very first guitar was a half-size acoustic from a department store. I'm not sure what happened to it, but I remember taking it all apart so I could spray paint it metallic black.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Eric – It varies quite a bit for each instrument, the style of music & if it's for live or a recording session. A couple of effects I always like to have in the chain are phase shifter, reverb, & delay.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig: guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Eric – Absolutely the Roland VG-99. It's the heart of most of my sounds.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Eric – Playing live, I have a pair of Roland KC-500 amps. They are full range amps so I use these specifically for the stereo output of the Roland VG-99. When I don't need to lug around something so large, I use little ZT Lunchbox amps. They are tiny & extremely powerful.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Eric – My main guitar is a Brian Moore iGuitar 91.13. Mahogany body, rosewood fretboard. It has 2 humbuckers & a single coil in the middle. In addition it also has an RMC piezo pickup for acoustic sounds which are separately outputted via a stereo output. This guitar also has built-in USB & a 13-pin jack for accessing MIDI devices such as the Roland VG-99.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Eric – That's a tough one. I love the gadgetry. Effects, coil tapping, tremolo bars. But somehow, I think my ultimate guitar may be more attractive to

me in a more organic way. Perhaps a fat hollow body with a single mini humbucker. A piece of wood that just feels right.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Eric – I don't use stomp boxes very often since everything I need is all controlled out of one box, but the one pedal I always use is a simple volume pedal. I've never found one I like. The closest is the Ernie Ball, which has a nice weight to it. But I would take this design & give it a longer throw & a base that is wider than the actual pedal. Then it would be perfect! (For me, anyway.)

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Eric – I have 16 guitars, including basses. I'm in the process of selling some though.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Eric – They are mostly kept in their cases, except for an assortment of 3 or 4 I tend to keep nearby when I'm recording.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Eric – I'm fine with cases the way they are. I only use them to hold the guitar & don't usually keep anything else in there. Some of my guitar cases are missing latches though.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Eric – I'm a sucker for weird, unconventional electrics, like Japanese budget guitars from the 70s. Some of them have good construction, cool colors, & fun designs. I'm drawn to things like big rocker switches, lots of buttons, weird shapes.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Eric – If you wanted a guitar with rare tone woods, you're obviously going to pay a heck of a lot more than a machined ash body Tele. Then there's all the rest of the bazillions add-ons & options. It can quickly get quite expensive. But I think some of the mass-produced guitars coming from factories in Korea, Indonesia & China are getting better & better. Not exceptional, but very solidly built & nice playing guitars that rival guitars two or three times the price. Last year I purchased a guitar by a Korean company by the name Rally & for a few hundred dollars, I have this beautiful new flame-top

maple guitar with very nice details & it's a great feeling guitar.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Eric – Sometimes. I change pickups a lot. Some guitars I like changing more aesthetic things like pickguards, knobs, etc.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Eric – I usually read as many reviews as I can.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Eric – Not too drastically. I'm pretty happy with the rig I've got now. I do tweak my patches a lot, looking for new sounds to work with or tweaking existing ones.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Eric – I have a handful of sounds that I use regularly, but I do like to try working with new sounds.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Eric – The Moog guitar is fascinating. I also like the Gibson Robots. I would like to get my hands on a Mohan Veena. There's also an instrument someone recently told me about called a Sympitar. Basically, it's an acoustic guitar with the addition of resonating sympathetic strings like you would find on a sitar. The sympathetic strings run beneath the fingerboard & pass below the soundhole. It's a beautiful instrument, each one custom made by a luthier named Fred Carlson. It's fascinating & they look like beautiful instruments. Someday.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Eric – Like any instrument, it should at least be made with some measure of quality. It should stay in tune & not be overly difficult to play on. Otherwise, someone learning may become discouraged.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Eric – I bought a Dean 5-string acoustic bass a couple of years ago. To call it firewood would be mean to firewood.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Eric – There are a lot of good things out there by a lot of different companies. It's pretty easy to give you a few names I'm not very fond of. Dean (see above), some Behringer items are poorly designed.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Eric – The low E string, an open strum, harmonics.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Eric – I started playing at age 13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Eric – I'm still learning, & I honestly feel I'm a better player now than I was last year.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Eric – I play a variety of instruments; some better than others. My percussion skills are getting better

all the time, but I'm more at home with a guitar than anything else.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Eric – I think learning any instrument is a very rewarding experience. My first instrument was the violin.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Eric – Sure, it's an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Eric – Although I don't think I really sound anything like them (or at least not in an obvious sort of way), I'm heavily influenced by Adrian Belew, Pat Metheny, Neil Young, Bill Laswell, Steve Tibbetts, Joe Perry.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Eric – To each his/her own. I don't name my guitars. Although I could think of a few choice names for that Dean acoustic bass.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Eric – I was practicing with my band when I was about 17 or so. We were rehearsing on the stage where we were to have a show the following week. I took a few steps backwards while playing & didn't realize where the edge of the stage was, right behind me. I took a hard drop to the floor & the headstock of my guitar struck the side of my head. I was bleeding from a cut above my eye, but the guitar fared much worse. The neck bolts pried away from the body of the guitar, pulling wood with it, & leaving the neck bent forward & destroyed. Ta-daa!

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Eric – I sometimes read about guitar techniques & I like looking at chord charts & scales. Sounds nerdy & I guess it is, but scales, in particular, are interesting if you can hear what the notes sound like by looking at them. Sadly, I'm not able to do that with printed chords.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Eric – Not enough. Some weeks I barely play at all & then other weeks I'm deep in a project that has me playing a lot.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Eric – I like standard thin picks, like Fender thins or anything similar. I feel very uncomfortable trying to play with a rigid pick.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Eric – It depends of the guitar but for the most part I use 10s. It's just what I'm comfortable with & I like the tone of thicker strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Eric – On a guitar I play more frequently, about once every 5 or 6 weeks. If it wasn't such a pain, I'd change them every week. I love playing with new strings.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Eric – Almost never. I can't even remember the last time I busted a string. Fat strings & a thin pick probably helps.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Eric – Interesting. Definitely my fretting hand. Just for fun, I like to play things one-handed on the fretboard. I think it's good exercise & practice. My picking hand could use a lot more work.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Eric – Some things I do myself. I can make basic adjustments & whatnot, but for more involved work, I take my guitars to a little shop called 12th Fret here in Portland. I've been taking guitars there for many years & they always do a superb job.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Eric – In addition to EADGBE, I also like DADGAD. & sometimes I even use BAGDAD, which I tuned to as a joke, but then I started liking it. Joni Mitchell uses a lot of interesting tunings I'd like to experiment with.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Eric – I scribble notes all over the place on a nearby piece of paper. I'm not sure they would be easy to understand. Sometimes I find old pieces of paper I was writing on & think, "What the heck is all this?"

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Eric – When I was younger, I used to play with the guitar hung real low because I thought it was cool... very Jimmy Page. Now I keep it right around the mid-section. It's a comfortable place for the guitar to be. But when playing acoustic, I really like to lean into it, hunched over & keep the thing real close.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Eric – I play in the key of E too often. It's just because I love the resonance of a guitar ringing with open strings. I'll bet that would change immediately if I started playing on a 7 or 8 string guitar.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Eric – I think probably any other instrument can help. I think it really depends on what you'd like to accomplish.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Eric – Fingerpicking. I still don't know how to fingerpick.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Eric – Does owning a 1957 Les Paul goldtop count?

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Eric – I'm not really into guitar tricks per se. I do however enjoy learning new phrases & chords though.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Eric – I love the bow, & my small glass slide.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Eric – Playing like Prasanna. He plays in a very different way. Let's just say, you'll need several cans of the aerosol product Fingerease to even attempt it.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Eric – I took a few lessons when I was a teenager. I didn't really learn anything from them. I'm completely self-taught.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Eric – Probably something fun, like how to mess around with controlled feedback.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Eric – The main ingredients are a volume pedal, stereo reverb, & a phaser.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Eric – I like hearing a tremolo well implemented. You can do so many cool things with a tremolo bar. But even after all these years, I still feel like the tremolo bar is this long stick that is distracting & cumbersome. Then I saw Junior Brown play. He has no trem arm, but he sometimes grabs the bridge with his fingertips & pries it forward. I'll sometimes do that but I'm also not comfortable with

that either. I want a short, stubby tremolo knob instead of an arm. Maybe I'll just take one & saw it in half.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Eric – If I'm not playing through the VG-99. If my rig is something more conventional, like a guitar straight to a tube amp, I will often roll it back about halfway. I don't adjust it very often while playing.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Eric – Sometimes. I do have difficulty listening to guitar players who are technically very good, but are putting out really bad music. In the end, sometimes it doesn't matter how good or bad you are. If you have good ideas & are able to convey them effectively, you can produce an amazing piece of music.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Eric – Pat Metheny's Pikasso guitar. An acoustic guitar with 42 strings & 3 necks.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Eric – It’s not easy to narrow it down to one, so I’ll give a couple of examples. Adrian Belew - he’s an obvious choice. He’s not only a very very good player, but he has created more cool sounds than just about anyone in some very unconventional ways. Same goes for Fred Frith. David Torn - he combines organic & electronic elements into wild textural sounds. And he is more innovative with a tremolo arm than I could have ever imagined possible.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Eric – Probably on my latest release, “Slow Ambient Dub.” As you may well imagine, judging from the title, it’s not like a constant guitar in your face sort of listening experience, but since it’s the latest work I’ve done, I think it probably represents some of my better playing.

QRD – Anything else?

Eric – Don’t slip on the ice & watch out for rockets.

PD Wilder of Hotel Hotel

August 2010

Name: P. D. Wilder

Bands: Hotel Hotel, Chaos vs. Caverninha, P. D. Wilder

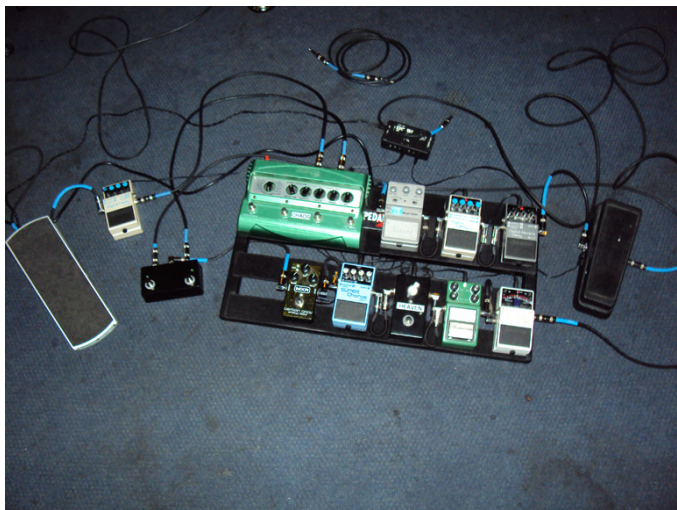
Websites: myspace.com/hotelhotel,
myspace.com/chaosvscaverninha,
myspace.com/pdwilder

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

P.D. – I got my first guitar when I was 14. It was some cheap off brand, a Strat clone, but that's all you need when you're first starting out. In high school someone broke it, on purpose.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

P.D. – Photo below...



QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

P.D. – Hard to say, although, I have toured with just my pedals, borrowing guitars & amps along the way, but ideally, everything works together in one beautiful mess!

For sure, I used to say effects. I was always buying pedals whenever I could. Constantly introducing new ones, rotating others in & out of service, & switching them around in the line-up. I've managed to live with the same pedals for about a year now, but I do have a few new ones in mind that I'd like to get a hold of.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

P.D. – As far as amps go, I've been using an old Fender Twin Reverb for Hotel Hotel. I've gotten really used to that sound now, so all the other amps I use just don't compare. For solo stuff, I find I can pretty much drone out with nearly any decent sounding amp. I own two Fender Blues Junior amps I normally use for solo shows so I can go stereo.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

P.D. – I have two Epiphone Les Pauls, one's black, one's red. They were cheap & I didn't have a lot of money when I got them. I've had both of them rewired, the saddles sanded down, & I'm planning on replacing the pickups soon.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

P.D. – I've actually been talking with my friend, Ian McPhedran (Ostrich Tuning), who's building his own guitar. We've been talking about features & how to make a better drone guitar. He's gonna build me a custom drone guitar after he finishes the one he's working on now. I've always preferred humbuckers over single-coils & I like the look of

Fender Mustang bodies, so it'll probably look something similar to that.

I've only read about them, but I would really like to play on one of those Lee Ranaldo Jazzmasters! He's one of my main influences & after reading about them; it sounds like something I'd be into. Also, I like Mick Mars' idea of taking an old Fender Strat & modifying it with 3 humbuckers.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

P.D. – A great distortion or overdrive is hard to find. It would probably be some kind of custom blues driver pedal with reverb & delay. The ability to loop is always a plus.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

P.D. – Two acoustics & two electrics.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

P.D. – I usually kept them in their cases until I need them. I keep one of my acoustics (which is just some old cheap off-brand, but sounds amazing to me) out because I play on it more than any of the others.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

P.D. – More room! I always need to put some extra stuff in there: more strings, cables, batteries, etc.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

P.D. – Lightness is always a factor, cause when you rock out, your guitar can't be weighing you down. & of course, sound, but I haven't bought a guitar in quite a long time.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

P.D. – \$500, more or less! Good guitars are so costly. It seems I always want that nice \$3000 limited edition guitar & drone don't pay that much, so I don't see that ever happening. It'll be really nice to have my own limited edition custom drone guitar.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

P.D. – It's all about the custom since I don't have money to buy a costly guitar, I usually end up putting something or other into them. For example,

I want to replace my pickups soon. Hopefully, it will help me get some new nice tones that I've been searching for.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

P.D. – These days, I put all my money into touring, so I try to research as much as possible. I've got a couple of buddies that build pedals, so now I'm trying to only buy custom pedals.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

P.D. – In Hotel Hotel, we've been progressing together, changing our tone in waves. You want to remain true to the foundations while expanding upon it. I think we've found a good set-up that works for the band at the moment, so no, I don't change around my set up for the band often. But for the drone, it's all about tone, so I'm constantly trying to change everything ever so slightly. I'm always moving things around to get some new sounds.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

P.D. – I just found out that Boomerang is back, so I'm gonna have to pick up one of those new pedals. & I wouldn't mind that Lee Ranaldo Jazzmaster!

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

P.D. – That's hard to say, I think there's never really been a worst purchase of something. I've been completely unhappy with repairs though. Finding a good amp, effects, guitar repair guy I like & trust here in Austin seems near impossible.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

P.D. – I like Gibson electric guitars, Larrivée acoustic guitars, Fender & Ampeg amps, Ibanez Tube Screemers, Boss Delays. But Crate anything is just not my sound.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

P.D. – I don't have anything in particular that I like to play first. I'm usually just trying to work out some ideas I have for songs.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

P.D. – Playing with great musicians makes you to play better. Sometime last year, while on tour with Hotel Hotel, we were playing a show & I thought, “Man, we’re really on to something here.” I thought I might finally understand how to play. We got into this deep musical vortex & it felt like we really understood each other in a way we never had before.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

P.D. – When I first wanted to play music, I wanted to be a drummer. I liked banging on things, but my problem is, I can’t keep a steady beat. I just wasn’t a good drummer, so I ended up on guitar. If I had the money now, I’d probably buy a nice drum kit just to jam on.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people’s first instrument as often as it is?

P.D. – This is actually something I think about often, there should be more art/music in schools. Everyone knows learning music at a young age does nothing but help kids in learning other things. I wish I learned the piano when I was a kid. I think that should be everyone’s first instrument.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

P.D. – Ha! That depends on how I'm feeling that day. I'd say it tends on the ally side, but sometimes I wonder why I'm still playing the guitar at all. I've broken a few guitars when I felt let down....

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

P.D. – Different people influenced me at different times in my life. When I was a kid, I would listen to my Father's records all day, Pink Floyd was the first band that really made me want to play music, so David Gilmore for sure. Later in high school I found Sonic Youth & Led Zeppelin. Shortly after that I discovered lovesliescrushing. These days, I listen to a lot of blues: Buddy Guy, Albert King, Muddy Waters, etc.

I've got some wide varying tastes these days, but my list will always have: Lee Ranaldo, Scott Cortez, Buddy Guy, Roy Montgomery, Mark Kozelek, Robert Smith, Jimmy Page, & Jimi Hendrix on it. & being a Texan, I've got to give mad props to Billy Gibbons & Stevie Ray Vaughan.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

P.D. – I've never named any of my guitars & don't imagine that I would, unless calling them by their colour counts.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

P.D. – I’ve beat the hell out of some guitars & completely smashed them to pieces. But that gets expensive, so lately, it’s just been accidental damage, I’ve dropped my guitars a few times. I had to get those guitar strap locks cause the strap was constantly slipping off at shows. Once the strap slipped off on my red electric & the guitar landed face down into my pedals. But the worst was when I dropped my black electric on a hard wood floor & a piece of the wood chipped off. It was in a gig bag, but I guess it just hit at the right angle & cracked. The body damage wasn’t the main problem; the guitar just hasn’t sounded the same since. I’ve even had it rewired!

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

P.D. – I think daydreaming helps. I’m a big daydreamer. I guess that’s why I still make music. You kinda have to be.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

P.D. – During a normal week I work a lot, so I don’t get to play as much as I like to. I don’t even know

what a good amount of hours would be, maybe 3 or 4 hours a day? I constantly feel like I should be recording or practicing more than I do. I always look forward to life on the road though, touring let's me play a different city every night. I never feel like I'm playing enough unless I'm on tour. I'd probably spent 6 to 9 months touring out of the year, if music paid enough to do that.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

P.D. – I use those green turtle picks - the Dunlop Tortex Standard .88 Green. It's rare, but sometimes I'll use the orange ones for my acoustics. These have the just right feel about them. I've been using them for as long as I can remember. Anything thinner or heavier just doesn't work for me.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

P.D. – I use D'Addario Blues/Jazz Rock 11-49 strings for my electrics & D'Addario Heavy 14-59 strings for my acoustics. Kinda the same thing with picks, I've been using these strings for so many years; I'm use to the gauge. I never liked thinner strings, they're just too bright & that's not the sound I'm going for.

QRD – How often do you change strings/break strings?

P.D. – I used to constantly break strings on my electrics. I finally got the saddles sanded down, so now that happens less often. I almost never break strings on my acoustics. I try to switch strings out about every three months or so if none have broken by then.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

P.D. – I usually let the professionals handle stuff like that, although one time I took my black guitar in the shop after I had dropped it & the guy set my pickups way low, so when I got home it was too quiet. I thought my amp or my guitar was messed up, so I had to take it back. He told me that's the way he likes it & that's great for him, but this is my guitar! That's the problem with taking gear in, guitar shops set things up the way they like it, not the way you want it.

Luckily, Evan Caverninha (Chaos vs. Caverninha, Hotel Hotel) knows how to set-up guitars. He'll usually look over my gear about once a year.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

P.D. – I stay tuned normal or in Drop D with Hotel Hotel. Those seem to work the best when interacting with violins & keyboards. If I'm playing solo or with other musicians/bands, I'm

more inclined to try out different tunings. The last time I sat in with Northern Valentine, Bob & I were tuned to B flat. Now that's a great drone tuning!

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

P.D. – I don't write down a lot of my stuff, especially since most of it is improv, however I recently bought a sheet music book, because I've been thinking about writing down some ideas for later.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

P.D. – I keep my strap lower than I should, an old habit from when I was younger. Although, it has been moving up slightly over the years.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

P.D. – I guess I should look at the audience more when I'm playing live?

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

P.D. – The guitar is pretty much the only thing I play, sometimes I'll mess around on a keyboard, so I don't know. Different things help different people.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

P.D. – I've been getting more & more into the blues over the last couple of years. Right now, I'm trying to combine everything I know into some kind of post-rock Texas drone blues!

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

P.D. – Hmm, probably playing “The Star Spangled Banner” live at Woodstock....

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

P.D. – I recently read an interview with Billy Gibbons about getting a fuller sound, but I haven't had time to try it out yet.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

P.D. – Ebows are fun, but I rarely use mine. I've never really used capos, but I do like my string

cutter, I've got the kind that also doubles as a string winder.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

P.D. – Maybe tuning by ear, but I hear that's overrated.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

P.D. – I don't care for them on guitars, none of my guitars have them, but I'm on the lookout for a good tremolo pedal.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

P.D. – On the guitar, it just stays in the same place, all the way up, I move knobs around on the amp a lot though.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

P.D. – In Hotel Hotel we have three different lead instruments: guitar, violin, & piano. We all trade back & forth between the lead & the rhythm. The lead gets the solo while the rhythm lays back with the beat.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

P.D. – No, usually not. Of course everyone's tastes are different, but I feel like songs should be great as a whole. Music is such a personal & emotional thing, so why listen to bad or half-bad songs.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

P.D. – I haven't really thought about this much. I know Jimi Hendrix gave Billy Gibbons one of his guitars after Gibbons opened up for Hendrix in Houston, cause he was so impressed. I always thought that was awesome. I'd like Billy Gibbons, Lee Ranaldo or Stuart Braithwaite to give me a guitar cause they were so impressed, but I don't see that happening....

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

P.D. – I have no idea about innovation. I think my problem is that I see so much incredible stuff & absolute nonsense when I'm out on tour or seeing shows while at home that I'm into & use to a kind of sound that others may think as innovative or extreme or experimental, but to me it's normal. Half the time nothing & everything makes sense!

There are no rules anymore. I mean that Bon Iver album, *For Emma, Forever Ago* I consider flawless, but so is lovesliescrushing's *Glissceule* as is Ali Farka Touré's *The Source*, you know what I mean?

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

P.D. – Hotel Hotel's next album! Which we're currently recording. Seriously, wait for it! Or at our live shows, if you can't wait. For drone that would be my last solo album, *f/m*. Evan Caverninha & myself did a release with another buddy of ours called: *When Black Holes Collide* & that's got some fine guitar work on it!

QRD – Anything else?

P.D. – Thanks! & buy any of my albums from me or the labels that put them out & I can mail you a bunch of live shows or something for free! Please don't download struggling musicians' (like myself) albums for free; if you have to download, download U2 or something shitty like that!

Ryan Wasterlain of Summer of Glaciers
August 2010

Name: Ryan Wasterlain

Bands: Summer of Glaciers

Websites: summerofglaciers.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Ryan – My first guitar was a twelve-string acoustic from a company called Konn or something like that. I got it at a garage sale & promptly took off the higher set of harmony strings to make it a standard 6 string. I played for a while, wanted to put all 12 back on, but didn't know how to tune it (early days of the internet, no YouTube yet). I ended up giving it to a friend.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Ryan – My setup keeps getting more & more complicated. I run my Gibson SG into a Danelectro Distortion, Electro-Harmonix Tremelo, MXR Distortion +, DL-6 delay, Holy Grail Reverb, into a Motu Firewire breakout box, into a MacBook pro running Ableton Live, back to the Motu, & out to a Fender Blues Deluxe & Fender Twin.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Ryan – The most important part of my setup now is Ableton Live in combination with my APC 40. I used to use loop pedals & drum machines, but really wanted to get more complex & dynamic. Creating beats in Ableton, making live guitar loops, starting & stopping all my loops independently with the ability to effect the individual sounds has expanded my sonic capacity. I couldn't do this (easily) without looping in Ableton.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Ryan – I have used a Marshall Plexi in the past & it was just too damn loud. To mellow this out & be less offensive to club owners, I got a Fender Twin & Blues Deluxe. I love the combination of these two amps. The twin is bright while the deluxe is warm & heavy. Blended together they sound really full.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Ryan – My main guitar is a Gibson SG. I love the warmth of this SG. It is from 2000 & is heavier than my one from the 70s. But it is really versatile &

allows me to have subtle variations when looping 12 guitar lines.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Ryan – Honestly it would probably be a cross between a Rickenbacker & an SG (if that is possible). I would also want multiple outputs & a midi pickup built in.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Ryan – I am a reverb fanatic. A custom pedal for me would be the most realistic/unrealistic & dynamic reverb possible. Add some strange circuit bending abilities to effect only the decay & I could probably geek out for days.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Ryan – I own 4 guitars.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Ryan – I live in a small studio apartment in San Francisco. So I store them wherever I can. All except one have cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Ryan – Weapons, like in *El Mariachi*.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Ryan – Comfort mainly. It can be the nicest Les Paul in the world but if my arm is severely bruised from playing it... what's the point?

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Ryan – My 2 favorite guitars were bought used for under \$400. One is a Gibson SG from the 70s, the other was a Harmony semi-hollow. I got that for super cheap because it is super cheap. Despite that, I love playing it. Gear isn't always about the best name. It's also how you feel when you play something.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Ryan – Usually just stick to what it is. I am starting to meet some people who have better mod skills, so eventually I might start tweaking things more; but for now I just work with my limitations.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Ryan – I research the hell out of things. For months. But generally I don't try it out much. I just buy it & hope for the best.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Ryan – Somewhat. I am always trying to be more efficient or trying new techniques. Often that means changing gear. I try to not do it too often so that I can just master what I have & not always be in a learning curve.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Ryan – Because my set is loop based, there really isn't one tone I am going for.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Ryan – I have always really wanted a Rickenbacker. Guy from Fugazi is a huge influence & I have always loved his tone. A real Space Echo is on my list of effects. That thing is un-fuck-with-able

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Ryan – Tuning pegs & strings

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Ryan – Best: my 70s SG.

Worst: envelope filter that I didn't understand at the time. I thought it only did disco. So I sold it. Then saw some noise bands using it in ways I never imagined.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Ryan – Some weird pattern that I have played for years. It gets into most of my music.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Ryan – 12 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Ryan – I think around 20. I really started doing things that weren't so standard. I am not a technically great guitarist, but in my 20s I learned how to embrace that. I think this is when I started to grow exponentially.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Ryan – Because I know how to play it. Also there are things you can do with strings emotionally that you can't do with other instruments as easy. Piano would be my other instrument if I knew how to play it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Ryan – I actually think piano is better. It teaches you to multi-task better.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Ryan – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Ryan – The guitarists of Slint, Hot Cross, Guy from Fugazi, & Kaki King.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Ryan – Silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Ryan – I broke a chunk out of the back of my SG. It was when I used to play in my old punk rock band & would jump around a lot. I jumped, used my back & the guitar to land.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Ryan – Sadly, I just play right now. I don't have much time anymore.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Ryan – Currently I probably can only play 2-3 hours a week. I would really like to have at least 8 hours to practice & record.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Ryan – Dunlop Standard Tortex picks. Green .88mm.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Ryan – D’Addario EXL 115 Nickel Wound Blues/Jazz .011 - .049. I used to play really heavy strings, but I switched to these. Now that I play more notey guitar lines, I don’t break them as much anymore.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Ryan – Not enough.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Ryan – Usually only at critical points in my show.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Ryan – It is actually a mixed bag. My fretting works great for some stuff, not others (can’t shred). My strumming is usually strong, except palm mutes.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Ryan – Not set it up at all. I’m kind of lazy.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Ryan – Dropped D for the most part. It just feels more comfortable. I really want to start working with some open tunings, but just haven't done it in Summer of Glaciers yet.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Ryan – I actually don't write ideas down. I try to always practice with some kind of recording device. I use my computer in my rig now, so often I will just record through that while working out ideas.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Ryan – Low. I grew up in the grunge era.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Ryan – Melting people's faces when I solo.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Ryan – Piano. It is my unicorn. I feel like if I could really grasp how to play the piano, I could play anything. But then I guess drums would probably become my new unicorn once I mastered piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Ryan – I actually really wish I could tap. There is some amazing math rock that utilizes tapping in a strong rhythmic way. I would love to be able to incorporate that.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Ryan – Mastering it.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Ryan – Don't know if I really know any tricks.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Ryan – Tuner. More musicians should be diligent with those.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Ryan – See above about tapping.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Ryan – I took them for a few weeks. I really didn't want to learn how to read music. I just wanted to learn how to play jazz. I didn't end up learning either.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Ryan – The joy of pedals & experimentation.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Ryan – Suck pretty bad.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Ryan – Eh, I guess it works for others. I've never really had the need.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Ryan – Not often.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Ryan – I really don't separate the two much. I always thought I played rhythm because I couldn't solo, but it turns out I just did very rhythmic leads. It's all music.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Ryan – Not at all. You're only as good as your weakest link.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Ryan – Jimmy Page because I could sell it & buy a home.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Ryan – Hmmm. I'm not really up on current guitar music. Although, I have to say that Christopher Willits is doing some great guitar/technology work right now.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Ryan – My latest album *Concentric*.

summerofglaciers.bandcamp.com

QRD – Anything else?

Ryan – Thanks for reading down this far & thanks to Brian for setting up these interviews!

Miguel Baptista Benedict
August 2010

Name: Miguel Baptista Benedict

Bands: Miguel Baptista Benedict (solo project),
Puberty, Divorce Party

Websites: miguelbaptistabenedict.bandcamp.com,
puberty.bandcamp.com, divorceparty.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Miguel – My first guitar was actually my mother's. I think that was her father's guitar before her. I'm not sure of the brand name. It was extremely worn out, no strings, couldn't read any labels that remained on it. Acoustic of course. I got it restrung & learned to play on it when I was about 10 years old. I hadn't touched another guitar until I was about 13; it was then that I realized how warped the neck was on the guitar I was using.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Miguel – I usually just go through whatever the venue offers me. I used to have a Crate amp, but that got lost in the shuffle through out the years from moving & what not. I use a lot of effects pedals & usually an Ebow. I am not that great at

the guitar. I don't "shred," rather, I loop different notes to create different chords & I try to create a more orchestral & atmospheric experience. On the contrary, I like to create a lot of harsh noise as well. I typically use somebody else's electric guitar & I run it through different delay pedals & pitch bending pedals. Mostly Boss equipment. If I'm using an acoustic guitar I scratch the e-bow & I amplify the acoustic by pressing record on an old hand-held tape player that I own & plug an 1/8" to 1/4" chord in to the ear piece of the recorder; this makes it so the recorder acts as its own microphone, & I typically get a riff or chord down that I like & manipulate the sound through a Kaoss Pad.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Miguel – All parts of my rig are the most important parts depending on the performance & the night.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Miguel – I enjoy Crate amplifiers. They are built to last. I like the smaller ones especially. When they're turned up too loud they get a really unique distorted sound that makes the listener really have to pick out what's being played. I like incidental things like that that force you to pay more close attention to what's going on.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Miguel – My main guitar right now is a First Act children's guitar. I like how twangy everything sounds. When I record, it gives it a dark, analog sound that I don't hear too much anymore. It's more organic sounding in my opinion. The mistakes in the manufacturing of the instrument make it more honest & real. A lot of recordings these days don't sound like real people playing, but rather manufactured sounds that you could get out of a drum machine.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Miguel – If I had a signature guitar it would be one of those Coke bottle & string guitars, but it would have a setting on it that turned it into something like a theremin. The base of it would be the reactor, so the further down the neck you got toward the pick up, the louder & more harsh the sound would be.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Miguel – If I had a signature pedal, it would be a multi-effects pedal that was really touch sensitive, & the effects would switch randomly every time

you pressed the pedal so you could never compute what effect would happen next. Also, I know it already exists, but if I could go back in time & invent this myself, it would be one of those Kaoss Pads that are built right into the body of the guitar.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Miguel – I own three.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Miguel – I store them in random places. Right now since I'm in LA, I have one here, one hidden in my parents' attic (from my brother... if he got a hold of it it'd break), & one in my friend's basement back in Michigan.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Miguel – I wish guitar cases had wheels, or blades that came out of them. Either one.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Miguel – I look for authenticity & sub par craftsmanship.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Miguel – I think guitars should cost whatever it takes to make it with a little extra for the manufacturer. I don't think people should pay for labels.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Miguel – No.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Miguel – Pretty thoroughly. If I find one I like, I put it on hold, after playing with it for about an hour in the store or wherever it's coming from. I come back the next day, do it again. I really think on it (because I'm picky & I try to be frugal) & then if I like it three days later, I usually buy it. That goes for any instrument.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Miguel – Yes. I never used to. But there are certain things that I like to do from time to time that require a rig change.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Miguel – Yes, I think one of the most unpracticed settings on a guitar are the tone knobs. Personally I like either extreme, nothing really in the middle. Either extremely muffled & bass-y or really treble-y & twangy.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Miguel – I really like Orange amplifiers. I know that before I said I like Crate amps, but that was speaking in relativity. If I could afford it, I would be the biggest Orange amp fan the world has ever scene. Also, I really like broken Casio keyboards. If you're into circuit bending, then you know why.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Miguel – I think if you're buying a guitar for the first time, buy one that will make you want to keep playing. All that bullshit about gear doesn't matter if it's Greek to you. If you want to play the guitar, go for your own particular aesthetic. Let the knowledge come on its own time & play a bigger

part when you're buying your second or third guitar. I'm not saying people should go in to a guitar shop without doing a little research; but as long as you know what is complete shit versus what you're getting ripped off on, then it should be okay.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Miguel – I bought one of those little cranks that make it easier to turn the tuning knobs. That was a waste of \$5. It didn't even save me that much time.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Miguel – I really hate the way flanger pedals sound, & phaser pedals. I just think they're really corny. Chorus pedals are boarder-line for me in that respect as well.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Miguel – Harmonics or something I've written myself really quietly. Because I hate when people play loudly in social situations.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Miguel – About 10 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Miguel – I haven't. I'm not bad. But I'm not great. I think it'd be unfair to myself to set a concrete level of "greatness." I think it'd be unfair for anyone to do to themselves.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Miguel – I don't really. It's just easy to fill in the blanks with a guitar. Like a piano making up for parts in an orchestra.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Miguel – No. I think the piano should be. For obvious reasons.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Miguel – Most of the time. That or the piano. Mostly guitar though.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Miguel – I really enjoy hearing my friends play the guitar. It's a more tangible connection & it's more motivating. It doesn't matter the skill level. What matters is the collaboration. Eventually you come up with sounds together & you can take that for yourself & develop on your own, or you can choose to keep growing with that other person/people.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Miguel – I don't do it personally, but I definitely do things that personify my guitar in my own right, so no, I don't think it's silly. Some people spend more time with their instruments & learn more about themselves than when they're around their husbands, wives, friends, or family. Why not make that relationship with your instrument to the next level?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Miguel – I smashed a guitar on a glass table because I was angry & I thought it would be a good way to make myself go out & get a new one, or learn another instrument.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Miguel – Listening to music helps. Listening to your own recordings helps, especially after giving them time to brew & going back to them months after the initial recording. Anything that makes you pay attention to subtleties is a good thing. It's important not to concentrate on the actual technical part, but rather how the over all sound expresses who you are. Anyone can learn to play “Free Bird,” but can they make it their own?

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Miguel – I don't play too often. Maybe about 2 hours a day? I record a lot, so it really just depends on the project that I'm working on.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Miguel – No pick.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Miguel – Not sure, I usually just pick them out. I know it's not what a “guitar player” should do; but I like to mix things up a bit, so if I ever have to use someone else's guitar I don't have to be an asshole

& apologize to the audience because “the strings aren’t what I’m used to.” That kind of stuff is lame.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Miguel – After the second or third one has broken on the guitar.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Miguel – About every six months.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Miguel – Fretting. Depends though, because I also play bass. I can slap very well, & I’m proficient with my thumb when playing 16th notes or 32nd notes on the bass. So it depends on if I’m playing the bass or the guitar. As far as style, for the guitar I’m not that great with my strumming hand, so I concentrate on chords a lot more. With bass, I’m pretty good with both hands, so I try to create bass lines with my left hand, & counter melodies with my right. With bass, I use a lot of distortion & other effects, so it depends on what I’m working on.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Miguel – Not at all. Because every guitar is perfect in its own way.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Miguel – Standard tuning mostly. I often tune the B string & the high E string a quarter or a half pitch away from each other, so the tune is a D#+ or just a D#. I do that to other strings sometimes too. Mostly in the winter.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Miguel – I like to record my ideas when I get them if I can. Otherwise, I just forget about it. I don't not believe in writing things down, I just generally don't do it.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Miguel – I'm usually sitting down. So I'm used to holding it at about my mid-stomach.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Miguel – Not using my ring & pinky fingers more while finger picking.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Miguel – Piano. Bass. Mostly piano. It's easier to learn an instrument if you know a little about music theory, or you can visualize how far away notes are, things like that. The piano is a good musical road map in my opinion.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Miguel – It sounds cliché, but blues guitar. I wouldn't play it publicly or anything, I would just really like to know how to play the guitar in that style.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Miguel – Playing the blues guitar.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Miguel – Not sure.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Miguel – I like the Ebow & the slide.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Miguel – Hmmm... not sure. I'm pretty content.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Miguel – No.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Miguel – Not to think that guitar playing is about learning other people's solos & songs. Sure it's nice to know that you can play them & I'm not saying that it's not important to learn these things for technical ability, but the best guitar players, or musicians in general, are the best because they haven't their own style. Otherwise, you're just another studio musician with a shit-load of technical talent, but nowhere to channel it & you get stuck as the lead guitarist for Miley Cyrus.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Miguel – Be a dude.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Miguel – I think they have their time & place.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Miguel – I usually just set it to a dark tone. I like dark tones...mostly for the same reasons that I like cold weather so I can wear sweaters.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Miguel – One's showing off more than the other.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Miguel – Heavens, no. Then we've got another Aerosmith on our hands.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Miguel – I would like to own John Frusciante’s guitar. It’s just really beautiful & I would know how much of him has been channeled through it. I wouldn’t play it; I would just look at it like an empty house.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Miguel – Either Ryan St. Claire or Logan Seguin.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Miguel – On my album *Catastrophic Domination*.

QRD – Anything else?

Miguel – People should not limit themselves to one instrument. Music isn’t an instrument, that’s why an instrument is simply called an “instrument.” It’s a tool to show who you are or what you want to express with a lack of words. Again, these are just my opinions, but I don’t think that people should limit themselves in any art form by comparing their skills with other musicians, but rather they should really try to use music as a way to find themselves instead of just trying to find hidden hand muscles so they can play Slash’s solo from “November Rain.” I think with honest playing, technical skills will develop on their own in their own time.

Jim Dennis of Random FX
August 2010

Name: Jim Dennis

Bands: Random FX, Purr Factory, Monomania

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jim – My first guitar was a \$30 piece of junk that I got for my 11th birthday. I hung it on my wall & whenever someone asked me what I wanted for my birthday/Christmas I would tell them money because I was saving up for a REAL guitar. A year later I bought a Madeira dreadnought & six months after that I took the wall hanging guitar outside & smashed it Pete Townsend style.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jim – I have different setups depending who I am playing with or what I am doing. For my “spacey” jams sessions I use a 1997 Fender Strat that I installed a Roland GK pickup system in. That goes to a Roland VG-8 for guitar sounds & also a Roland GR-20 for synth sounds. The stereo output then goes into a Line 6 Delay Modeler pedal. No amp used, just straight into the mixing console from there.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig: guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jim – The guitar. If I don’t feel comfortable with my instrument, I can’t concentrate on the music to be made.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jim – I have a Teisco Del Ray Checkmate 25. Basically it is a Fender Princeton type head (all tube with reverb & tremolo & about 12 watts) with an open back speaker cabinet with a single 15” speaker. Electric guitars sound great through 15s. Ever heard *Led Zeppelin I*? The Teisco sounds full & even on lower volume & breaks up perfectly when you get her over 6 on the volume knob. The higher the volume the more breakup & tube distortion.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jim – I have a Fender Made in Japan ‘60s Strat made in the 80s that is Daphne Blue & 100% stock. The only thing I have changed are the strings. It’s the perfect example of a Stratocaster with a nice slab rosewood fingerboard. Everyone that picks it up gives me this surprised look about 6 seconds after they start playing it. I paid \$180 in 1990 for it.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jim – Fender Strat with a small headstock, rosewood fingerboard, & nickel hardware. Single coil regular pickups, 13 pin Midi pickup, & piezo kinda acoustic pickup. Locking tuners with a LSR roller nut & a two pivot point bridge. It would have to be blue & weigh less than 6 pounds.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jim – It must have a signal to noise ratio of 130db, run for ten years on one 9 volt battery, be able to run in mono or stereo, handle 4 types of connectors & 6 different signal levels (line, instrument, lo z, etc.) & be able to handle a thirty foot drop & a thirty minute fire & keep working. It would sound like you are playing through 10 different amps setup all over the room you are in & it would bathe you in sound.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jim – I have about 26 instruments with strings. Most of them are guitars, but I also own a mandolin, bowed psaltry, & an eight stringed Kenyan Harp.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jim – I use a bedroom in my house as a music room & have several “String Swing” wall hangers for some “go to” instruments. I also have two stands that hold 5 guitars each. Half of my guitars are in cases in the closet.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don’t?

Jim – A little pocket that would hold the little paper label from a set of guitar strings. That way you could put the label in the pocket when you change the strings. If you put the guitar away or own several instruments you would always know what strings (brand & gauge) are on it.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jim – How it sounds acoustically when you play chords in the first position. Does it ring out? Are all the strings balanced in tone & volume? That’s the first thing with an electric or acoustic guitar. The sound of the instrument. Then I check neck profile & radius. Is it going to be comfortable to play for an entire evening? Next I look at craftsmanship & tolerances starting at the bottom strap button & going all the way up to the tip of the headstock. Hardware I check last. As far as

playability goes, the guitar can have some leeway, as long things aren't too far out of spec. I always set up my instruments, so as long as it can be adjusted I don't worry if it doesn't feel exactly perfect. It can be somewhat perfect.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jim – \$400. I think great guitars could cost more than \$400.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jim – When I bought my '97 Strat mentioned earlier, the guy told me he would sell me the guitar, but he wanted to keep the pickups. I clipped the two wires at the output jack, unscrewed the pickguard & handed him the whole assembly - pickups, selector switch, pots & all. Those items are easy & fun to change & replace & experiment with.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jim – I generally know what I'm getting into if I am putting out cash for gear. I like to find out how it holds up from other players before I buy most

things. Sometimes when I know a particular product line well I can rely on my past experience also.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jim – No, but I use three different rigs right now for different purposes. I have the “main rig” I detailed earlier that I schlep around to my friends’ studios plus a different one that stays plugged in at home for recording. I have a rig with the Checkmate 25 amp plus some pedals for traditional band situations. I also play acoustic guitar with some friends about once a month.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jim – I enjoy playing different types & styles of music & that requires different tones. I also like to be able to pull up a sound that blends well with whatever happens to be thrust upon me when improvising with others.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jim – I would love to own an Eventide Harmonizer. As far as guitars go there are a few I could stand to own. A nice old Gibson Firebird with mini

humbuckers, Les Paul gold top with P-90s, Greco Icedman, Danelectro doubleneck, Chapman Stick, Harp Guitar.... I could go on.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Jim – Really good tuning machines. It’s hard enough to learn without the instrument fighting you just to tune it.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Jim – I bought a Boss TU-6 Tuner 25 years ago & it still works great. I have set the intonation of many instruments with it & even tuned a few autoharps as well! The worst is when you buy something that turns out to have been misrepresented by the company or the seller or the instrument itself.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jim – I think Electro-Harmonix makes the most fun out there today. Crazy pedals. Weird stuff. Would you name a product “Flanger Hoax” & expect to sell a bunch? I also like the fact that they have over two dozen pedals for less than \$100 & even the Big

Muff is true bypass. As far as amps go, did anyone else notice that for 25 years the tone controls on Marshall 50 watt & 100 watt heads didn't do anything? Most guys would turn them up to ten & leave them there. One of my big personal guitar heroes is Adrian Belew & he has his own model of Parker guitar. As many times as I have picked up a Parker I have never found one that did it for me. They have great craftsmanship & materials, but they always seemed a bit sterile to me.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jim – I play a G major chord first.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jim – Twelve.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jim – I think that next year will be my best. Until the year after that....

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jim – It seems like a natural & ergonomical way to make music. It keeps your mouth free to sing & your legs free to do whatever legs do. Both hands have to work together to play a chord or note, but the fretting hand has to do its job a fraction of a second before the strumming hand for it to work. Maybe the guitar is just loud & portable.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jim – Yes. Both hands work together (unlike piano) & you have frets (unlike violin).

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jim – We both fight for the same team.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jim – I am an amalgamation of everything that was on FM radio in the 1970s when I was growing up & that includes much stuff from the sixties too. Some of my heroes are Jeff Beck, Adrian Belew, Chet Atkins, Bill Frisell, Frank Zappa & Pat Metheny.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jim – I don't name my instruments, but I do consider them to be my friends. When people ask me what they should look for in a guitar, I tell them to find one that seems like a friend. My amp tech has a 1964 Jazz bass named Francine & that seems to make sense to me....

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jim – I burned an orange guitar. I did it with lighter fluid & a lighter. It was fun.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jim – I make up songs in different styles or try to play songs I have never played before. It's good for keeping your mind limber as well as your fingers. I should do it more often.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jim – Right now I play about 3 hours a week of real playing time. I would love to play over an hour a day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jim – Fender 351 medium because I have used it forever & it's ubiquitous. If I forget to bring a pick to a studio there WILL be a Fender medium laying around.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jim – 10 - 46 regular light gauge. Smaller strings don't give guitars enough output & bigger ones make my hands tired too quickly.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jim – I am very lucky to have been born with the perfect skin pH for guitar strings. If I don't sweat on them I can keep them going for months on end.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jim – Only once a decade or so.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jim – I think they are pretty evenly matched, but sometimes they don't work together as well as they should....

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jim – I set-up my own guitars & also set them up for other guitarist. I have also taught several people to set-up guitars.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jim – I keep my guitars in standard tuning. I also play baritone guitar which is down a fourth B - E - A - D - F# - B & I keep my lapsteel in DADGAD.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jim – I generally will record my musical ideas so I don't lose them. I find it easier to get the "feel" of the piece by listening back then decoding rambling notes on paper.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jim – The strings are just above my waist. Most importantly, I try to keep my left wrist straight when I play.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jim – Moving my fingers more than necessary to accomplish the next task. Have you ever watched someone that has put lots of effort into that? When they play it looks as if their fingers don't really move enough to do what you hear.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jim – Hard question. I am going with percussion for \$50 Mr. Trebek. I think that rhythm & dynamics are the two areas that should be higher on the agenda & percussion is a great way to demonstrate & concentrate on not playing notes & learn to put them at the front of your practice regimen.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jim – Can you hear a Thelonius Monk tune on one guitar with a walking bass line, chords & a melody? That's not me. I would have to quit my job & play ten hours a day just to find out if I could learn how to do that.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jim – Record a Guitar Army album. Imagine standing in front of an orchestra of 40 people playing. Now imagine all 40 people are me & I'm playing guitars & the music may sound similar... or not.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jim – Re-amping. I record a track & then send it back through a chain of guitar processing (real or software plug ins) to give it a completely different sound. Let's say I'm tracking a rhythm guitar by playing my DeArmond through an Adrenalin (amp modeling & cab simulator with effects) & recording this as a stereo track. I take a dry signal of the guitar (pre-Adrenalin) & record it as a mono track. Then, this mono track looks just like a guitar to whatever you plug it into. So I can replace the track with too much reverb with a better blend or no reverb. Or turn down the gain for a warmer distortion. Just what a guitar player needs, more options....

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jim – Ebow. So favorite I don't pull it out for months at a time for fear of overusing it & becoming "that Ebow Guy." I just love using it with a guitar synth & a bit of echo. Yummy.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jim – Western swing or gypsy jazz style of playing passing chords. That's the one thing that would make me take lessons at my advanced age.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jim – Speaking of lessons.... No. When I was a kid we lived out in the country so there was never a real guitar teacher. When I bought my guitar at twelve I also purchased a chord book, pitch pipe to tune, & two books of songs that I was familiar with. I figured I know how the songs should sound & I can look up the fingering for the right chords to play, so all I have to do is teach myself how to strum. That was my teenage logic.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jim – How much dynamics can add drama & style to music.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jim – Use a slow vibrato at the end of a bend.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jim – I think they are great for folks who are mechanically inclined. If you want something to fiddle with, get a guitar with a trem. If the thought of changing your strings makes you go a bit green, you should probably work on your finger bending technique. I'm being a bit dramatic. If you go there, you should be ready to learn how it works so you can troubleshoot things like tuning problems & pickup height.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jim – Never. Guitars have tone knobs?

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jim – I really like Jimi Hendrix as a guitarist as well as a musician. When I listen to him play, what really blows me away is his rhythm work with all the passing notes & phrases. How about the untitled instrumental from Woodstock? In other words, I think all guitarists should be rhythm guitar players first so they will know how to be great lead guitar players when it's time for that. In the strictest sense of the words, one could argue that the

rhythm guitar plays throughout a 3 minute pop song & the lead gets about 4 bars. I think you have to be a good guitar player to play all three minutes well.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jim – If ignore is not a black & white word, but has many shades of grey....

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jim – Frank Zappa. I hope that he will be remembered as a great American composer & a wailing modal lead guitar player.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jim – Hard question for an old guy like me. I don't really live on the cutting edge these days but Adrain Legg comes to mind for oddly tuned 12 strings & fingerpicking. Pat Metheny playing with mechanical machines is pretty edgy....

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jim – I’m not really good at getting my stuff out there, but go back to the interview with [Ted Johnson](#). I am on most of the tracks he had up at the Internet Archive. That’s a couple of hours.

QRD – Anything else?

Jim – I like the fact that you can use many types of pickups & hardware, frets & tunings & shapes & sizes for a guitar & under it all is a piece of wood with it’s individual grain & density. The wood is part of the “intangibles” that make every instrument different & some even more like people.

Jon Attwood of Yellow6
August 2010

Name: Jon Attwood
Bands: Yellow6
Websites: yellow6.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jon – It was a 3/4 size acoustic which came from a flea market & cost less than the new strings it needed. I had it for about 15 years (mostly unplayed for the last 14 of those) & finally gave it to a friend's son who wanted to start playing.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jon – Volume pedal
Boss TU-2
MXR Super Comp
Boss FZ-5 Fuzz
EHX Holy Stain
Pigtronix Philosopher's Tone
Z.VEX Distortron
Diaz Texas Tremodillo
Boss DF-2 Super Feedbacker
EHX Freeze
T-Rex Replica

T-Rex Roommate
Boss RC-50 Loop Station

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jon – Guitar. I couldn't make the sounds without the guitar (though the looper comes close second).

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jon – Carr Hellraiser II. It's got a lovely clean & warm sound.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jon – Gretsch Black Phoenix. Has a volume control, pickup selector, Bigsby & it feels just right. So comfortable to play & it sounds great.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jon – It would either be a simplified Jazzmaster with no rhythm circuit or tone control (very like the Sonic Youth Signature Models) or a Gretsch Silver Falcon with no tone control, but added kill switch (basically a Black Phoenix).

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jon – It would probably be based on the EHX Freeze sound retainer pedal, but with built in looper & swell pedal.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jon – 8.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jon – Either on wall hangers or in cases at home.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jon – Stabilisers.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jon – Playability - must feel right.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jon – A fair price for the materials & workmanship... you get what you pay for & cheap

materials should be cheap to buy & expensive should be what it's worth, not half the price for the name not the quality.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jon – Stick with what I get - if I didn't like it I wouldn't buy it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jon – Generally very thoroughly, but there's been the occasional Ebay buys for things that just look good.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jon – Yep.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jon – I like to change around every now & then so I don't get stuck in a rut. I've sold effects that have defined my sound a couple of times, just so I have to find another new sound.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jon – I would love a Les Paul Junior (like Johnny Thunders') or Gibson 335, a Shergold Masquerader (maybe a 12-string), the perfect reverb (still hunting), Z.VEX Lo-fi Loop Junky, Fender Twin.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jon – Playability... it should always be something that has a good tone & a good action so it is encouraging rather than be off-putting.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jon – Best: Gretsch Black Phoenix, Fender Jazzmaster, Fender Bass VI, Fender John5 Triple Tele Deluxe, Texas Tremodillo, Freeze, any looper
Worst: Fender Jazzmaster AVRI (Ebay - didn't feel right), MXR EVH Flanger, Lap Steel

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jon – Like: Gretsch guitars, T-Rex pedals, Carr amps

Dislike: Stratocasters, Marshall amps, Line6

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jon – An odd sort of A chord that I don't know the name of.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jon – 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jon – 30.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jon – It's the only one I ever really wanted to learn & put in the time & effort. I tried trumpet & violin, but didn't take to either.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jon – No - some people are put off by the fact it isn't that easy to get a good sound quickly. Start with piano & take up guitar if you love music enough.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jon – My ally.... It's the creativity (or lack of) that is the adversary.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jon – In no particular order:

Steve Jones

Sterling Morrison

Bernard Sumner

Daniel Ash

John McGeogh

Alan Sparhawk

Ron Asheton

Robin Proper Sheppard (God Machine/Sophia)

Graham Sutton (Bark Psychosis)

Adrian Utley

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jon – I guess you spend a lot of time with them, so why not... people name their cars.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jon – Broke a headstock off a Les Paul copy throwing it across a rehearsal room at a band manager (I missed!).

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jon – Nothing... just play.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jon – About 3-4, but would prefer double.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jon – For years I only ever used a white shark fin (perfect weight & blunt/sharp edges), but then they weren't available for a long time so I switched to the pink Tortex which are a good weight & I don't break them.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jon – Mostly 11-49 as the heavier strings give a fuller sound. I use an 009 gauge on the John5 as that's what it came with.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jon – When they need it... every couple of months depending on use.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jon – Almost never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jon – Strumming... makes playing a bit more rhythmical & I'm not so good with the fiddly fretwork.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jon – Mainly not set up at all... if it feels good when I buy it then why mess around (& I'd buy it because it feels good).

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jon – Standard for most things as I can't get my head around other tunings. Open E used for lap steel & occasionally drop-D tuning. A-A tuning on the baritone.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jon – I can't read or write music, so I use own form of tab/chord charts.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jon – Medium to low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jon – Hitting tops of fingers on strings when playing more aggressively.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jon – No idea.... I only play guitar.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jon – Flamenco.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jon – Learning scales.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jon – Proper use of a Jazzmaster tremolo arm.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jon – Ebow, but I don't use it much any more as everyone uses them... getting into slide more recently.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jon – Slide guitar.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jon – Nope.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jon – Absolute perfection in technique is not as important as having a feel for the instrument.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jon – Un-learn proper technique.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jon – Love-hate... love Bigsby & Jazzmaster tremos as they can give a subtle effect, but hate dive bombs etc.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jon – Very rarely (& the Black Phoenix doesn't have one).

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jon – Application, confidence, & desire for the limelight (or maybe a good right versus left hand).

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jon – No.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jon – Quite happy with what I've got.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jon – Mike Timmins (Cowboy Junkies) as he's not afraid to do something different & unexpected.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jon – *CUT* (2010 album release) & *Painted Sky* (2007 release)... www.yellow6.com

QRD – Anything else?

Jon – No, but thanks for asking.

Travis Kotler of Pineal Ventana
August 2010

Name: Travis Kotler

Bands: The Banned, The Lab Puppies, JF Kennedy's Brain, Graveshift, The Stumblers, Pineal Ventana, & something with Brian, Nicole, & Patrick that I can't remember. A few tracks on Tenth to the Moon's debut. Played bass with the Mudclowns once or twice.

Websites: [Facebook](#)

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Travis – Japanese Strat copy. Dark blue. I don't remember.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Travis – Just an acoustic Guild jumbo & a sitar I brought back from India. All other musical instruments have been donated to the divorce industry of Watauga County, North Carolina.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Travis – Guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Travis – Early 80s Peavey Deuces & Maces. Very cheap, very durable, very loud. Big sound.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Travis – Guild JF-30. Easier to get around when living out of a car.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Travis – Part Rickenbacker 330, part Browning M2 .50 caliber machine gun.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Travis – Compressor/Limiter/Sampler. Honesty, logic, & the sound of about fifty metal chairs gently knocking on the concrete in front of the rooms on the hill on a sunny day.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Travis – One.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Travis – Cases at the foot of the bed.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Travis – Sane women.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Travis – If anyone in the store would notice if I stole it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Travis – See above.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Travis – Not really. Put a Bigsby on a Gibson 135 once.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Travis – Not at all. Instant attraction is everything.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Travis – Yes. It is necessary to help prevent infection or hepatitis.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Travis – When I lived in cities I needed to create space with a guitar. I have a lot of space, now, so acoustic is best.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Travis – None.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Travis – Sodium Pentathol.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Travis – No regrets. I have loved them all.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Travis – All sorts. Variety.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Travis – Beer pong.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Travis – 13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Travis – Today.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Travis – I don't.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Travis – No.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Travis – Both.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Travis – Johnny Smith, Ida Presti, Steve Stevens, Keith Levene, Pepe Romero, John McGeoch, Jimmy Page, Vilayat Khan, William Reid, & this guy:

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Travis – I don't care.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Travis – Rockfight. Pine Canyon Campsite #2. February, 2009. Gianninni acoustic (RIP).

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Travis – Scales, note reading, moderate drinking.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Travis – Not enough. More.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Travis – All sorts. Variety.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Travis – Heavy. Better for alternate tunings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Travis – Not often.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Travis – Lots.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Travis – That is very, very personal!

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Travis – Myself. The nearest guitar tech is about 100 miles north.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Travis – DADGAD - when I'm feeling pretty.
CGDGCD - when I'm feeling shy. DADGBE -
when I'm feeling NASTY. BEADF#B - when I
want to cry.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or
some other notation system for writing down your
own ideas?

Travis – I keep everything in my head, then forget
all of it.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when
playing (strap length)?

Travis – Again, very personal.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish
you could break?

Travis – Vomiting.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think
can most help someone's guitar playing?

Travis – Flute.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish
you could do that you can't?

Travis – The kind that makes me some money.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Travis – See above. Also, world peace.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Travis – Selling it for more than I paid for it.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Travis – Wire coat hanger.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Travis – Plate tectonics.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Travis – Charles Williams taught me how to move my fingers & figure out how to play what I heard on record or tape. David Case taught me classical.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Travis – How to make your fingers bleed.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Travis – Buy the first round.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Travis – Bigsby. Lots of sounds on the other side of the bridge.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Travis – That's what she said.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Travis – Hopefully I don't.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Travis – I would ignore the rest of the band anyway.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Travis – This one: most-expensive.net/guitar-in-world

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Travis – Me. Because I've got so much love to give.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Travis – Probably Paint Gap Hills # 4, sometime in September.

QRD – Anything else?

Travis – April 25th is Parental Alienation Awareness Day. Please take good care of my sons.

Brian Elyo of mobdividual
August 2010

Name: Brian Elyo

Bands: Four-Track Fuckers (dead), Lego Dynasty (dead), mobdividual (current)

Websites: mobdividual.bandcamp.com/releases,
[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/mobdividual), [last.fm/music/mobdividual](https://www.last.fm/music/mobdividual)

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Brian – I started on bass, a generic P-Style, then I bought a Hohner acoustic guitar (new). I bought an electric Ibanez, used... & got rid of it... replaced it recently with a Gretsch re-issue... I eventually traded the bass for a sweet electric blue guitar & I still have the acoustic, & consider it my main guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Brian – Guitar to a stereo delay... L to delay (L-to another delay-Amp - R-Amp) - R to pitch shifter (for some low-end)-Amp-Delay-amp. I use a lot of delays - one of which has some reverb... sometimes I run clean into my Vox so you can hear a clean guitar signal plus the mountains of delays & reverb....

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Brian – My mind & my hands... but also delays.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Brian – Well, for years it was my Marshall 65R cause it was loud & raw, but now I have a twin Vox & it sounds better & is louder...

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Brian – My acoustic. All my songs, no matter how wacky, start on my acoustic.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Brian – It would have a built-in dual delay that would be able to feed into itself & have four outs (2-left & 2-right). It would probably look pretty traditional, like an SG or something like Cobain where I would cut two in half to make one.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Brian – Delays & loopers.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Brian – 4, I gave a couple away... so now I just have my acoustic, my Gretsch electric, that blue guitar I traded my bass for, & a pawn shop guitar for noise making... & a Daion bass - I also play drums, so I have a 4-piece Gretsch Catalina.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Brian – Basement in cases....

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Brian – A recording device.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Brian – Feel & range of sound. I don't play a "style;" I like to capture sounds, so... I like guitars that can go from metal to twang in a heartbeat.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Brian – I'd balk at anything more than \$600.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Brian – Out of the box.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Brian – Ad nauseum....

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Brian – Yes, but trying NOT too much more....

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Brian – I change my tones & tunings constantly... but I like to lock it in & balance different tones against each other.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Brian – Some of the old school tape delay pedals would be sweet if I could be able to afford. I'd like a really, really nice Tele & Princeton amp, classic, vintage P-bass, any high quality vintage tube amp,

like a Vox or something; man I'd love an SG like none other & a full Marshall stack, rock that shit!

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Brian – My first electric Ibanez had a tuning lock; which was really nice for a beginner, because it went out of tune a lot less.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Brian – My best was catching a guitar store going out of business. I picked up like \$450 worth of stuff for like \$150. No horror stories, I'm pretty conservative when it comes to spending money on equipment... & a "purist" in that sense... creativity not equipment....

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Brian – Boss, you can't go wrong....

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Brian – A C chord or an A minor... I have no idea why, it just happens, then I run through some scales & start working on the song I was playing last....

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Brian – 22.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Brian – 30.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Brian – The range of expression that an audience can feel also.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Brian – No, piano.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Brian – Ally - I think I make guitar music, but I'm also disillusioned....

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Brian – Originally... Billy Corgan, Lou Reed, Sonic Youth, Pink Floyd (Syd in approach & Gilmore in style) & John Fahey; now I would add Omar Rodriguez.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Brian – Natural, but I don't nor probably ever will.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Brian – I haven't ever done anything fun (like smashing one). I cracked the head on my Ibanez while getting emotional while experimenting

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Brian – Smashing Pumpkin songs & scales.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Brian – 16-20. 80.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Brian – I actually just started to feel the difference & I really like Dunlap 60s, they just feel good, & I drop them less for some reason.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Brian – Heavy... I tune low & I like the thicker sound.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Brian – Not as often as I should.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Brian – Not as often as my music may express.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Brian – Strumming... I do a lot of strum/beat emphasis....

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Brian – All by myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Brian – Standard down about 1.25 steps... it seems to be better in tune with my voice/body resonance... but I don't sing so go figure.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Brian – I created my own notation system for myself; but if I have to deal with someone else, I use tab.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Brian – John Lennon.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Brian – Getting stuck in the same old runs & I probably don't have the best fret-hand positions.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Brian – Piano, drums (mostly to understand rhythms better).

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Brian – Classical. I wish I was classically trained so I could throw it all out the window.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Brian – Properly learning some of the songs I've set out to.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Brian – I'm not very adept at many tricks, so I usually do those as overdubs, just started getting into finger tapping though.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Brian – Capo, then my Ebow.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Brian – Two - 12 bars blues in the form of black magic women.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Brian – How to make up their own chords & the variety of ways they can be used.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Brian – Not know how to play! & get really good at beats & rhythms.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Brian – Meh... I use them once in a while, but....

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Brian – Never.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Brian – Usually the ability to understand chords & then the ability to understand “beat” separate from “rhythm.”

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Brian – No, absolutely not.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Brian – Syd Barrett... kind of off-the-wall.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Brian – Omar Rodriguez... the creativity that spews out of his fingers is just unmatched... from record to record, consistent & constantly different, not afraid of his “style” versus his “sound” versus “the song.”

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Brian – My latest EP, but I haven’t really done a “guitar centric” album... yet....

Joe Morgan of The Late Virginia Summers August 2010

Name: Joe Morgan

Bands: The Late Virginia Summers (TLVS),
asentimentalsong (solo project), occasionally sit in
with other bands or friends (virgineola, hotel hotel,
andrew weathers, p. d. wilder)

Websites: myspace.com/asentimentalsongmusic,
myspace.com/tlvs, hardingstreet.wordpress.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Joe – My first guitar was an Epiphone Dot, which is basically a cheap version of the Gibson ES-335. I saved up & bought it when I was 15 & quickly found it was made of some pretty cheap hardware. I upgraded the parts & pickups & used it for a while. I still have it, but don't really play it anymore. I mostly just hold onto it because it was my first guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Joe – Gibson Les Paul (special promo model made for the band Alabama that I was able to buy off a friend) into a Pro Co Rat distortion pedal --- Ernie Ball Jr volume pedal (with tuner output to a Boss

TU-2) --- Boss GE-7 equalizer pedal --- Boss RV-5 reverb pedal (stereo out from here until end) === Boss DD-20 delay pedal === Line6 DL4 delay pedal === Electro-Harmonix deluxe memory man with Hazari delay pedal === Boomerang III looper === into two different amps (Fender Blues Deluxe reissue & a Peavey Classic 30 for when I play with TLVS. Fender Blues Deluxe reissue & a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe when I play solo.).

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Joe – Effects definitely. I feel naked without them. I need them to create the sounds that I play.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Joe – My main amp is a Fender Blues Deluxe reissue. I chose this because it seemed to be an affordable amp that had really great clean tone. I use my effects to create all of the differences in my guitar sounds so I wasn’t worried about on board effects or overdrive or any of those types of things in an amp. This amp just seemed to do what I needed.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Joe – Gibson Les Paul. I bought this guitar off a friend of mine. It is a promo guitar made for the band Alabama. It isn't fancy in its looks, but it has some nice features. It has a slim neck, ebony fretboard, & the body is made to be lighter than normal Les Pauls. It plays really well & sounds great.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Joe – A Les Paul. Honestly I really like how my guitar is now. I don't know enough about guitar specs to really come up with any neat features.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Joe – Oh this could be really interesting. I'd love to have some type of delay/loop pedal. It would have some really neat features to help create washes & drones. Something that would cut out most of the attack on the guitar & really muddy up the sound to make things really hazy.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Joe – I have 2 electric guitars, one regular acoustic, & one 12 string acoustic

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Joe – My acoustics just sit around the house at my house. My electrics are either in the case or on a guitar stand.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Joe – Well the handle on my Les Paul really squeaks a lot. I don't know what else.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Joe – Honestly I've only bought 2 guitars in my life. The first I was too young to know what I was doing. The second I just bought off of a friend. I've always liked Gibson guitars because I feel they just have good workmanship. Again since I really haven't "shopped" for a guitar in years I really don't know what I'd look for.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Joe – Well if you are going out to buy a guitar at a store new I'd say at least probably \$800-\$1000. I mean you may find some decent stuff cheaper, but the way things are these days I feel a lot of the

companies just charge too much for junk & you have to really look at the higher end stuff to get something of value. I mean for something like a guitar that is extremely important to you as a guitar player, wouldn't it make more sense to spend a decent amount of money on a quality instrument instead of saving some money on a cheaper model that really won't last as long?

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Joe – Well I did on my first guitar, but with the one I have now I haven't. I really think it just depends on the guitar.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Joe – The items I've bought most are effects pedals & I really do spend quite a lot of time researching them before buying one. I watch a lot of demo videos & read blogs or forums. I don't really spend much time trying out stuff because I think it is hard to really be able to do that unless you are using it in your own setup.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Joe – Not really. I have taken a few pedals out in the last few months that I feel I didn't really use ever. I do want to experiment more with the order of my pedals, but I am pretty comfortable with the current setup I have.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Joe – Yeah, I'd say I'm pretty much after one tone. I do use different effects to change the sound of everything, but as far as setting & such I really just leave things the same on my amp & guitar.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Joe – Well as far as amps I really would like a Cox AC30 & a Fender Twin Reverb. For guitars I really don't have any that I desperately want. I would like to get a decent acoustic. Maybe a Gibson Hummingbird or a nice Taylor or Takamine. I'd always be down for another Les Paul. As far as pedals I'd like an Electro-Harmonix Cathedral Stereo Reverb & I'd always like to try out some more delay or looping pedals. Also I kinda want to get a few more EQ pedals to use to filter my sound a ton.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Joe – I really don't know. It is hard to say when you are learning & don't really know what style you are going for & all that. I just guess my biggest piece of advice is don't buy a crappy guitar.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Joe – Well my Les Paul was definitely the best purchase I've made. Great guitar & it was really cheap. My first Epiphone guitar was too expensive for the quality. It started falling apart way too soon. Besides that I don't think I've had any other really bad experiences. I did buy a pedal on Ebay once & the guy totally ignored all my emails when I never got the pedal & then he ended up finally sending it after I had already gotten my money back from Ebay. Then he didn't even send the correct stuff. It was a huge mess & in the end he lost out.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Joe – I used to play on a Crate amp when I was learning. I don't think I'd ever buy a Crate. I guess beyond that I'm really not a fan of solid state amps.

I really hate it when amps have digital effects built into them. I mean seriously it is an amp & not a delay/chorus/flanger/phaser/etc. pedal. I guess I'd also add a lot of the multi effect units to this as well. I like to have control over what I do & I feel these really limit what you are able to do as far as customizing your sound until you sit down & laboriously tweak settings that would be so much easier to tweak if you had just bought several regular pedals. I guess this isn't really a brand related answer, but those are a few things that I dislike. As far as things I like, I like Gibson guitars. Always have enjoyed playing them more than Fenders. I like Boss pedals & Electro-Harmonix a lot. I think Boss just makes good reliable pedals & Electro-Harmonix comes up with lots of neat little effects that can be really fun to experiment with. I look forward to getting more of them.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Joe – Probably a G chord to make sure it is in tune. Or I start playing some stupid lead around the 5th fret.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Joe – I think I started around when I was 13. That is when I think I started seriously trying to play.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Joe – Well I like to think I could always improve. I always want to learn more & become a better guitar player. I think I've come into my own style though in the last few years.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Joe – Well for one it is the only instrument that I am really comfortable playing as it is the only instrument that I can really play. I guess it just feels natural.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Joe – Probably not. I think some things about guitar make it really easy to pick up the basics & way too many people just learn a few chords & think they are a master. If you really want to learn music I'm sure piano would be a better choice. It is still something I wish I could play.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Joe – I'd say it is my ally. It is more about if I can come up with any good ideas to actually play on the guitar.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Joe – I would definitely say the Appleseed Cast had a huge influence on me. I'd also credit Explosions in the Sky & Mogwai. I know these are all huge typical influential bands, but I really think I do pull from their style a lot. I also feel my style constantly change based on what I'm currently listening to & how I am evolving as a musician as I get older. Their are guitarists or bands that I feel really effected my taste in music & my love for music, but that doesn't really come out in my style of playing.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Joe – I dunno. Never really thought about it. I never have & I don't really think I will, but I suppose I can understand the attachment to an instrument & wanting to name it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Joe – I don't think I've really ever done any physical damage on purpose. I might have dropped a guitar here or there by accident, but that is about it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Joe – That is really about it. Sometimes I am at home & get an idea & just grab my guitar & try to flush it out. Other times I just turn on my amp & start screwing around & maybe I come up with something neat. Maybe not. I don't really do much else to practice. I just play.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Joe – I have no idea. Probably not that many. Again this depends on whether or not I have a show coming up or not. Sometimes I do just play to play, but a lot of times I'm busy & don't even spend much time at all playing. I guess it just varies based on what is going on & how much free time I have.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Joe – Jim Dunlop picks. I'm not sure how thick. Probably something in the medium range. I don't like picks really thick or really thin. I like medium because it can hold up well if you start to play hard, but not feel incredibly bulky.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Joe – Well I'm sort of in the phase of trying to find what strings I like. I'm interested in maybe a medium gauge set of strings with a heavier bottom string section. I like my strings to really resonate & ring out & have a fuller tone & it seems the thicker strings do this better. I also don't really like super thin higher strings because I hate breaking strings. I also dislike having a wound third string on my electric guitar.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Joe – Not hardly as much as I should. I had strings on my guitar for at least 2-3 years & just finally changed them like a month & a half ago. They weren't in too bad of shape so I just never did. I am trying to get better at it though.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Joe – Honestly I don't think I've broken a string in 2-3 years. I just don't play that hard & I use heavier gauged strings.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Joe – I think I go back & forth. I feel both are pretty equal. I'm not the best with either & each has its strong points & weak points. As far as my style I don't think it effects it that much. I think getting better at both will just give me more stability in general. I don't think becoming better with any one is going to make a huge difference in my style.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Joe – I like to take it to a shop every now & then to get it setup right. I probably could do it myself. I might try in the future. It is just nice to get someone professional to do it from time to time to make sure everything is right.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Joe – Mostly standard tuning & every now & then I use Drop D. I also have one song where I tune the G up to an A. basically the different tunings help me

to let more strings ring out to provide a fuller tone. When I'm the only guitar playing I really have to use whatever tricks I can to make the sound as full as possible.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Joe – I usually write all my ideas in tab. I really can't read sheet music hardly at all. Sometimes I just write down a mess of effect settings & such as well because they play such a big part in my sound, but usually all the notes are written in some type of tab format.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Joe – I guess I would say normal level. Not really high & not super low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Joe – Writing too many songs in 4/4. Also I guess I get fixed on some patterns in songs & feel I use them over & over. Maybe a chord progression or a note progression that sounds good & I just play the same idea in different keys based on the song. I feel

sometimes I just revisit the same trick that I used for another song & I wish I could be more original.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Joe – Well I really can't play much else. I've messed around with the bell kit & piano, which essentially teach the same things as far as understanding the music scale. I think learning notes on a piano or chords can help understand how to make up chords better in regards to what notes make up a chord & this could really help with understanding what you are playing with guitar chords better.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing do you wish you could do that you can't?

Joe – I guess I wish I could sweep pick & play really quickly. I don't think I would ever use this in my style of playing guitar, but I think it would be nice to be able to.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Joe – I remember as a kid I just wished I could one day have an electric guitar with distortion. It finally happened one day. It is still something I think back

on from time to time & it makes me happy to think about. As far as something I've never accomplished, I'd really like to do a solo record of just ambient guitar stuff. I've always wanted to record more & work out songs I've written, but just have never made myself do it.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Joe – Wow, I really have no idea. I don't feel I've learned many new tricks lately. I guess maybe just tweaking a pedal until I found a neat sound.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Joe – I'd probably say Ebow if we are using that list of things. I use it more & more as of late & I am enjoying figuring out how useful it can be.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Joe – Again, as I said before, probably playing faster. I like to use scales & things just to warm up & build finger strength. I feel a lot of times I just am not really very quick at playing scales or I feel one hand gets ahead of or behind the other. I wish I could play faster & more precise when I'm playing fast.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Joe – I never did. I just used some instructional books & tried to play along with songs I liked.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Joe – I'm not sure. I guess maybe not make thing so textbook & teach them more to just play things that sound good as opposed to things that are supposed to be played based on the key you are in & the scale you are playing & all that. I guess I'd say don't worry so much about being technically right. Just learn to play things that to you feel are right & sound good. Play music that makes you feel something.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Joe – Well you need a lot of delay pedals. Other than that I guess just be able to layer lots of sounds over & over that hopefully work together. Also you need to be able to keep good time so that your looping doesn't sound all over the place & out of sync.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Joe – Honestly I've never had one on a guitar I've owned, so I really don't have much of an opinion on them. Maybe I would like it, but as it is right now I'm pretty much indifferent to them.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Joe – On my guitar I never really do. Only a little bit while recording. On my amp I might a little bit, but I mostly stick with the sound I have now.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Joe – I have always felt a rhythm guitar player could get stuck playing too many boring parts. I guess it all comes down to your style again & how complicated the music you write is. I like to think that a band can exist without a lead & rhythm guitar. I think music should just be written so that it all sounds good together & it isn't classified as rhythm or lead. Of course in some styles you have to have these two different parts & I guess the lead part just seems to often get more attention, as opposed to the rhythm part which basically holds the structure of the songs together. Both are often necessary & missing one can really change a song for the worse.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Joe – Well, I guess that depends on what you mean by not being good. Maybe a band has a strong guitar presence & the drums/bass/etc. are there to just accommodate the quality guitar work. I guess this doesn't bother me that much. If the other instruments are just not played well, then yeah I definitely think this can lead to not wanting to listen to the band.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Joe – Can't really say there are any that I really want to own.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Joe – I think the way Christopher Willits has his setup is pretty unique. He has this great big pedalboard/mixer/laptop/etc setup that he has all hooked together to sync up with the computer to do some pretty neat things. Beyond that there are a lot of people who have neat setups & things, but I don't know who I would say is the most innovative.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Joe – myspace.com/tlvs for The Late Virginia Summers

myspace.com/asentimentalsongmusic for my solo stuff.

These are also on Facebook. You can also check out the local label here for some more stuff at www.hardingstreet.wordpress.com

QRD – Anything else?

Joe – I tried to do my best to answer these questions, but honestly I don't really think I have a huge insight on the things I use & play. I just research effects that I buy & I try to experiment to come up with good ideas. I always want to get better & learn new tricks & things. I guess my final thoughts are that I really enjoy making music & hope to continue to expand my abilities & the equipment that I own to help me develop new ideas. I hope that the things that I create can in some way touch people & that they can really listen to them & feel something. I love music & I hope that I can make music that other people will love also.

Bill Horist of Master Musicians of Bukkake
August 2010

Name: Bill Horist

Bands: Master Musicians of Bukkake, Nervewheel,
Ghidra, Paul Rucker Ensemble

Websites: myspace.com/billhorist, facebook.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Bill – When I was 14, I took two guitar lessons while living in Chicago & had some unremarkable acoustic. I traded it later for a skateboard that took over my life until I was about 17 & got into music for real.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Bill – When I'm playing a standard electric it's typically my SG 69 reissue into a tuner, Digitech Whammy Reissue, Fulltone Fulldrive II, Vox Wah, one of a number of distortion/fuzz pedals - could be a Rat II, Mid-Fi Electronics Glitch Computer, Taz Tube, or Devi Ever Dream Mangler (my latest acquisition), Ernie Ball Volume Pedal Jr, MoogerFooger Ring Modulator, Electro-Harmonix 16 second delay & a Line 6 DL-4 before heading to

an Electro-Harmonix Micro Holy Grail & into my 1969 Fender Bassman.

For my prepared guitar setup, it's some of that stuff but way less & add a Tech 21 Bass Compactor compressor. I prefer to let the sounds of the guitar itself, as coaxed by unusual objects, to take center stage as opposed to layers of 7 pedal dip.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Bill – It's all important, but I'll have to go with guitar on this one.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Bill – I use a 1969 Fender Bassman with a 2x12 cab. It's growly & warm, not a lot of bells & whistles mucking up the circuit.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Bill – Hmm, main guitar... I have been using a Teisco (model unknown) for my guitar experiments. It is well abused, but still works well. Plus it has on/off toggles for the pickups as opposed to a select switch, which I find particularly fun. Otherwise it's cheap, old, & has a set of incredibly awesome microphonic pickups.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Bill – I shudder at the thought. Lots of different strings & fretboards & pickups that are wired into a several channel mixer.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Bill – I'm happy enough with what I find. I do have a guy that is a master at modding existing pedals so I feel pretty sated.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Bill – Probably around six or seven

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Bill – In closets, some in cases, gig bags, some without.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Bill – A mini bar.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Bill – The same thing I look for in an amp - How long does a simple E chord sound good? The longer I like it as it decays, the better I like the guitar or amp.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Bill – Whatever someone is willing to pay. I have good guitars that cost \$5 & good ones that cost close to \$4000.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Bill – Not typically. I'm more apt to customize & mod pedals. I have gotten nice guitars in the past that have had some shoddy workmanship & I will have those things attended to. Not so much an upgrade as maybe just a "grade."

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Bill – Not very thoroughly in most cases, but I will wait a long time before I commit. I'm not sure if anything benefits from that strategy. I do get very particular about returns!!

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Bill – In little ways

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Bill – If I'm gigging, I like to stay with some consistent ideas, if I'm recording, I'll fuss around a lot more.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Bill – I'd love a pre-CBS Fender Jazzmaster. As for pedals, there are just too damn many makers out there now for me to even have a concept of what I'd love.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Bill – Good intonation & good tone in general. The better it sounds when you're learning, the more you'll play it. Took me YEARS to realize this!

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Bill – I had a 1964 Fender Twin & it was awesome, but only on indefinite loan; so when it was returned I bought one & it was a nightmare - always breaking down somehow. Some are tanks & some of them just, tank!

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Bill – I hate Cry-Babys, they break all the time.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Bill – A D chord.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Bill – Except for two forgotten lessons at 14 after which I quit, I started at 17 but didn't get serious until about 19 or 20.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Bill – Hmmm. good question. Things started feeling good around 30, but there's always the

sentiment that anything I was doing 2 or 3 years ago was much better than what I'm doing right now.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Bill – I'm not actually sure it does! It is, however, what I went with.

QRD –Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Bill – I think piano might be best.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Bill – It's both. I think it's true with any instrument. As I play guitar, it's my go to construct when making music & I need to remember that sometimes a part or riff is best played on another instrument.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Bill – Fred Frith, J. Mascis, Danny Ash, Greg Ginn, Nels Cline, Robbie Basho, & Hans Reichel to name a few.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Bill – I honestly don't feel strongly one way or the other.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Bill – Given the nature of what I do when playing solo electric, all my approaches to eliciting sound from the guitar is damage-invoking.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Bill – Stretching & listening to other music.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Bill – Right now not enough!! I've had varying success setting out a minimum practice routine as sometimes such structures can have the opposite effect to what I wanted.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Bill – Yellow Dunlops. I like them, but I don't feel strongly about particular pick brands.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Bill – Different on all my guitars. I like heavier gauges sometimes for their tone & it's difficult to squeeze too hard & throw your intonation off. But lighter strings are nice for making me feel more dexterous than I actually am. On my prepared guitar I use anything that can withstand files, nails, threadwire. The only thing I avoid are GHS Boomers. You can hear the tone dying on the vine.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Bill – After three or so shows. They rust & break. I can barely get two uses out of my acoustic guitar before that damned G string breaks. I've always wondered why that one is so temperamental.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Bill – More often when I play standard guitar instead of attacking my guitar with sharp bits of metal.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Bill – I'm actually a lefty who plays righty, so I'm completely backwards! My fretting hand is way more frenetic & my strumming hand is a little

developmentally disabled. I play with the reverse dominance in my solo stuff a lot more. I think with standard playing it lends itself to a more angular approach, but I will admit my rhythm suffers!

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Bill – Depends on what it is. Basic intonation I'll do, but refrets are left to the pros. I worked at a guitar store & got comfortable handling basic setups. Plus it's handy on the road!

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Bill – I use a number of tunings for my acoustic stuff. I'm into a lot of drone-based music so open tunings lend themselves to that. I also like tight clusters & intervals, which ironically call for long stretches on a standard tuned guitar.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Bill – Being an untrained guitarist, it's expected that I can't read or write. In truth I can, but I'm VERY slow. Obviously writing standard notation is best, especially if you want other instruments to play specific parts.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Bill – I'm a fan of keeping it up pretty high. Yes, not as cool looking but the effect of low-slung guitars on backs, arms, wrists, & tendons is no secret anymore.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Bill – Growing up on a steady diet of punk & then playing a lot of free improv, I suffer from being ahead of the beat all the time. Playing slow & in the pocket is very difficult for me.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Bill – Playing ANY instrument will help someone's guitar playing. Maybe horns or reeds as they force you to learn chord tones, something most guitarists (present company included) are very weak with.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Bill – I really wish I could handily tap into any worldwide idiomatic guitar playing. I've always done it my own way, which has given me a pretty

distinguishable sound. Traditional saz playing would be first on the list.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Bill – I've never finished a more rock-based guitar record where I have been the bandleader.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Bill – I've been working on some acoustic techniques involving simultaneous fingerpicking & up/down strumming with my thumb.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Bill – Surgical hemostats!!

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Bill – How to make answers to technical guitar questions much more interesting! No, I really wouldn't know where to begin for this question. There are some things that are so basic that I'm too embarrassed to say!

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Bill – I took a total of around 10. I didn't learn much because it was at a time when, even though taking them willingly, I was too strident to be willing to learn. Certainly something I regret.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Bill – I have reluctantly taught in the past, but I quit because I realized that I was telling these kids they need to practice & I wasn't really practicing. My students didn't need another hypocritical adult telling them what is best without demonstrating its importance.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Bill – Go to a hardware store & think of patterns on the fretboard in terms of triangles as opposed to squares.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Bill – If they stay in tune, I like them!! Had to get a guitar without for a while. I tend toward hyperactivity & am prone to, um, whammy abuse.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Bill – Only when it needs it. Quite often, actually.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Bill – I didn't even know these terms were still in use? Seems like there is such a blur in more contemporary music. A lot more dual or tripartite unison playing. But in terms of these traditional roles, I'd say rhythm guitar is harder!

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Bill – No the only instrument this works with are drums. They're simply the most important. Great band with shitty drums sucks/mediocre band with great drums sounds much better. Keep that to yourself, we don't need drummers realizing how critical they are; hence all the drummer jokes.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Bill – I think I’ve been out-nerded with this one. I simply have no idea or interest. The celebrity factor does nothing for me. This is like one of those home run baseballs & I’m just not in that deep!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Bill – I really have a hard time answering any questions with terms like “most” in them! I’d say see my list of guitar influences.

Azalia Snail
January 2011

Name: Azalia Snail
Bands: Azalia Snail, LoveyDove
Website: www.azaliasnail.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Azalia – First acoustic was a Harmony; but I so wanted electric so I snuck my bank savings & bought an electric guitar/amp special for \$500. Then my Mom heard my screeching & called my father who had to take the door off the hinges of my bedroom to take it away from me.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Azalia – All Boss effects - DD3, Chorus, Heavy Metal to Fender Deluxe Reverb circa 1977-ish. (Traded a Marshall amp for it in Arizona on tour 1996.)

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Azalia – All equally vital.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Azalia – Fender Deluxe Reverb; love the purity & the resonance.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Azalia – Rickenbacker natural wood; circa 1976; shaped like a bass. Easy to play, nice to hold, signature Rick sound makes it melodic & pure.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Azalia – I suppose I'd have to have it custom made to look like a Snail. That would be too silly, however, & I probably would never play it live.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Azalia – I'm so satisfied with the Boss DD-3, so I can't really improve on that.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Azalia – 2 acoustic; 2 electric.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Azalia – 1 in the bedroom, 1 in the living room, 2 in a back room.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Azalia – I love bright colors so you can tell which one belongs to you. Patterns would be fun as well. Glow in the dark bits so you can see it on a dark stage or stowed away somewhere.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Azalia – I've done most of my research from articles & books about my favorite musicians. & even better, watching them play live to see what they use & how it sounds.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Azalia – I'm a vintage girl, so back in the day, I got great deals. The Rickenbacker was \$200 from an ad in a paper. My old Gibson Melody Maker was \$250 from a vintage guitar shop on 23rd St, next to The Chelsea Hotel (it's still there). My 12-string Yamaha was a gift from my record label at the time; it had supposedly belonged to Leslie West of Mountain at one time!

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Azalia – The 12-string was “customized” with red velvet & sequin flowers.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Azalia – Gotta play before you pay.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Azalia – No.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Azalia – I’ve always wanted a nice little Gretsch, double cutaway. Someone, please?

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Azalia – Get one easy to play. That’s most important when you’re just getting started.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Azalia – Boss, sponsor me!

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Azalia – An old song of mine called “So Much More to Go.”

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Azalia – 11.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Azalia – 29.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Azalia – Actually, I’m more into keyboards now. I’m a unique guitarist, but there are so many superior players!

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people’s first instrument as often as it is?

Azalia – No. I would recommend bongos first.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Azalia – Beloved companion.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Azalia – Mark Bolan, Lou Reed, Brian May, Mick Ralphs.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Azalia – No, but I've never done it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Azalia – I wore the hell out of my Fender acoustic until it got nabbed in Chicago.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Azalia – Worshipping the instruments.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Azalia – Used to be many; now very few.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Azalia – Herco Gold (I even wrote a song called that. Love them!)

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Azalia – Medium.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Azalia – Rarely.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Azalia – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Azalia – Strumming!

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Azalia – Me.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Azalia – Many open tunings. Much more variables to songwriting.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Azalia – Notebooks, college bound.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Azalia – Banjo.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Azalia – Finger picking. Wild lead guitar riffs.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Azalia – Picking.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Azalia – Capo followed by slide.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Azalia – Very young; teacher made me play dumb kid songs which really turned me off.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Azalia – Open tunings!

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Azalia – Lots of delay!

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Azalia – NO!

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Azalia – Mark Bolan, bar none.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Azalia – “Retribution” off the Hail/Snail album
How to Live with a Tiger. “Fiery Skies” single on
Dark Beloved Cloud.

Alan Sparhawk of Low
December 2010

Name: Alan Sparhawk

Bands: Low, Black-eyed Snakes, Retribution
Gospel Choir

Websites: www.chairkickers.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Alan – There was a Harmony Stella acoustic guitar in the house as I was growing up. I am not sure where it came from, but it was unplayable. I borrowed a Harmony electric from a friend at around age 12 & learned a few chords. First guitar of my own was a Japanese copy of an SG bass. Still have it. Then I think my dad gave me an Aria Pro 2 ZZ Deluxe - a baby blue Explorer-shaped thing. Once I could buy my own, I traded it in for a stripped 1964 Mustang. Still have that.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Alan – Right now, it's a Les Paul with P-90 pickups & a Bigsby trem into a Z-Vex Octane 3, an SIB Mr. Echo, a Z-Vex Lo-fi Loop Junkie, & then a Z-Vex Super Hard On. Amps vary, but I like the 1965 reissue Fender Twin with the 15 inch speaker, &/or

a Traynor Bassmaster head into a 1x12 cab. With Low, I'll use smaller amps - a Carr Mercury, Fender Vibroverb, or just a Champ.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Alan – Guitar first, I suppose. I really need a good amp, but I can get by with most anything in a pinch.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Alan – I have various amps for various situations. Fender Twin is great because it's clean & loud. It's not my favorite, but it's reliable. I have an old AC30 that's really beautiful sounding, but too fragile to travel with, the Traynor Bassmaster heads are my special favorites & I love the new Fender Pro Jr. amps. I love great amps, but I'm wishy-washy.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Alan – Black late 1980s Les Paul standard with Rio Grande P-90 pickups & a Bigsby trem. I have a few Les Pauls & they're all pretty exciting to play (most Les Pauls are not), but this one seems the most reliable & consistent. It's a very heavy piece of wood & whoever had it before me played it a lot. I

used to play telecasters with a humbucker & Bigsby, but then I crossed over like DRI. In the studio, I'll usually use several different guitars to get different textures, plus it kinda helps justify having more guitars than you really need. On tour, I'm usually doing it all with just the one.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Alan – Les Paul standard, P-90 pickup in the neck position, Bigsby trem. Black & dirty. If they wanted to go vintage Low, it would be a bound Tele with a humbucker in the neck & a Bigsby.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Alan – A delay pedal probably. Analog, with a bit of wobble.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Alan – Around 25.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Alan – Irresponsibly, in a secret cave.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Alan – A decent shoulder strap, more pockets. Reinforcement & no zipper on the bottom where the strap thing on the bottom of your guitar sits.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Alan – the way it makes me feel. I tend to be attracted to guitars that have been played a lot - the wood just feels more musical.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Alan – It really varies. The guitar I've played the most all my life cost me 250 bucks. Vintage guitars are really great & deserve to be expensive, but I'm too scared to travel with one. I think if you know what to look for, you can still get a great guitar for less than 500 dollars.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Alan – I tinker a bit. The Bigsby is easy to install, & most guitars can benefit from upgraded capacitors. Most guitars are just fine as is.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Alan – Not much. I'm more of an in-the-moment consumer.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Alan – I change amps from time to time. Effects have been similar for a long time. I try different guitars & I have a wide variety to use, but I'm usually attached to one at a time & that position has only changed 2 or 3 times in my whole life.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Alan – I've probably had the same goal from the beginning, with various levels of accuracy. I like a very large dark tone, right on the edge of distortion - usually a tube amp turned up to breaking point. Delay has been a constant live crutch. Even as I play louder in Retribution Gospel Choir, I'm generally shooting for the same ideal.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Alan – I used to lust after gear a lot more. I always wanted a 1960s blonde Telecaster with a rosewood neck - for some reason it just seemed the epitome of electric guitar. Now I think it would be cool to have one of those Roland synth guitars - the silver one with the support arm that goes to the headstock. That shit is bold.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Alan – If it has strings & puts out signal, you're in business. Used is better. Get a tuner.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Alan – Fender Pro Jr. amp is still the best buy out there - 15watts, tube, simple circuit. The Traynor Bassmaster head can be found pretty cheap, but it's one of the best sounding amps in the world. Over the years I've found things cheap here & there - a Micro-Moog synth for \$150, the first Roland drum machine for \$25, the Silvertone I use in the Snakes, etc. I've had to buy gear on the road in emergency situations & it always goes bad - a Victoria Tweed amp, a JMI AC30 copy, newer AC30s.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Alan – The Z-Vex pedals are great - they don't degrade tone, & they're extreme. I like that they don't eat batteries as fast as other pedals, too. Amp companies can vary. Fender makes a lot of shitty amps, but a few models are still the best. The simplest equipment is usually the best. As for guitars, I'm a slave to the kings - Fender & Gibson. I've got this thing against Boss & DOD pedals. Nothing good comes of them.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Alan – Probably some 3-note blues riff, then I quickly try to cover it up with something obtuse.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Alan – 12 or 13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Alan – I know this sounds desperate, but think I'm getting slightly better even today. I'm always

playing at the very edge of my ability, so it's hard to detect, but I do think I'm getting better.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Alan – I can't read music, so it's a more practical instrument to learn & write on, to a certain point. The guitar is cool & I want to be cool.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Alan – I'm not sure. I wish sometimes that I had learned piano as a kid, but then I guess I wouldn't be the way I am. My kids are taking piano lessons, so I'm learning a little about that. I can see why the piano would be an ideal first instrument.... The guitar is an easy companion, easy to set in the corner & pick up for a few moments. It's portable & intimate, yet has the potential to blow the ceiling off.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Alan – Ally. The guitar wants to make music. It feels like a battle most of the time, but the guitar is a true friend & it always gives back more than you give.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Alan – Besides early punk like The Clash, The Edge (U2) was a big influence on me early on. I liked his simplicity, choppy rhythm, & delay effects. Pink Floyd had a huge early impact on me, too, & I still love Gilmore's work. He's so soulful & grand. I can never play like him, but the emotion & reaching he always has really resonates with me. Then, by college, I'd found Husker Du, The Cure, Joy Division, Bauhaus, REM, Replacements, Swans, & Jesus & Mary Chain, who all had influence on me & led me back to stuff like Velvet Underground, Sabbath, The Stooges, & Neil Young. Sonic Youth, My Bloody Valentine, & The Pixies were yet a new level - an exciting time for guitars. I love Ali Farka Toure & a lot of the other recent African desert blues guys. Dan Littleton from Ida is an extremely good player & I've been lucky to be around him enough to know that. There's also a guitar player named Marc Ribot who I have always idolized.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Alan – I suppose it's natural. I don't name them, but a few of mine have names that other people gave them. The one I use a lot lately is called

“black eagle.” There’s a “white eagle” too - symbol of freedom & America....

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Alan – I’m not proud of it, but I smashed a Les Paul studio in half on stage & then chucked it into a festival crowd of about 5000 people. It was stupid, irresponsible, & unexplainable.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Alan – Mostly just fiddle around. I try out some of the song fragments I’ve been working on, on rare occasions I’ll do finger exercise scales. Sometimes I take out The Beatles fake book & try to learn a song.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Alan – I try to play every day - for at least a half hour. On the road it’s more & when I’m writing it can be quite a bit more. I would always play more than 2 hours a day if I could.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Alan – The thickest Jim Dunlop nylon ones with the textured grip. & I use the blunt corner.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Alan – Heavy - 11 to 54 or heavier. D'Addario or Ernie Ball, even though they don't give them to me.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Alan – On the road, usually every 3 or 4 gigs.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Alan – Hardly ever in Low, but in RGC I break one once every 4 or 5 shows. String breakage is about accuracy.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Alan – When I was younger, I was into the rhythmic right-hand U2-meets-funk thing. The right hand is very expressive & visceral & the left is more logical & ordered. The right hand doesn't have to know anything. I try to get a lot of different sounds by just the way I hit the strings.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Alan – I can do my own set up (intonation, etc.) I have someone else do electronics because I don't know enough about it & I'm a messy solderer. Unless a guitar is way out of whack, I'll usually adjust to its feel & work with whatever it's doing.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Alan – Open G, exclusively. I started messing with tunings when I was 19, mostly because of Sonic Youth. I settled on one I liked because I only had one guitar & didn't like retuning. I later found out that it was open G. It seemed interesting so I just stuck with it. Now it's all I know.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Alan – Notebook. Usually just lyrics with a couple chord notes at the top.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Alan – About mid-height. Too low is too hard to reach & too high takes your elbow out of the game.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Alan – I catch myself doing the guitar-face too often, but I can't help it. I would have to think about myself too much to stop. Also, I tend to dwell too far up the neck when I'm improvising - sounds better further down.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Alan – Lots of great guitar players are drummers too. I started on bass & I know it effected the way I approached guitar. Singing gives you new ideas....

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Alan – I've always loved the way Steve Cropper plays, though I've never been in a band that would need that. I envy good reggae players - that shit's more than just up-strokes. Flamenco guitar blows my mind, but those guys have been doing it intensely their whole lives - I could never catch up at this point.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Alan – I've never had big aspirations - when I was young, I thought being able to play "Eruption" by Van Halen would be the ultimate, but I knew I never would so I set some humbler goals.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Alan – Shutting off the delay pedal for just a moment here & there during chaos can put some nice unpredictable clarity in - just enough to keep things together. Also, A min to C min is interesting.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Alan – Capo, though I don't use it much. Sometimes a capo can change everything.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Alan – Flamenco.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Alan – I had 2 or 3 random ones as a kid - mostly from guys my dad played music with. One guy showed me the relationship of the I, IV, & V chords

- that was probably the most useful & influential thing I learned. Took a few lessons in college from this older jazz guy - he mostly told stories about gigging, but that was probably more useful to me than any chord charts he'd send me home with.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Alan – A few chords, the I, IV, V pattern, & encouragement to play every day. I'd tell them to write a song with what they know &/or learn each time. It's never too early to write or improvise.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Alan – Open G tuning, mostly. Big strings. Choke up on the blunt corner of the pick, so the skin of your finger is hitting the strings, too. Play slow & take lots of random unnecessary micro-pauses.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Alan – The Bigsby is the only one I can deal with & I've come to really depend on it. I'm sort of always riding it a little - it helps blur intonation & reacts well with a little delay. I've always loved the sound of warped records.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Alan – Never. Always full up.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Alan – The line between the two has been pretty well blurred by now. Anyone who would call themselves a lead guitar player at this point is probably a complete dick.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Alan – I suppose it's possible, but rare. I usually don't notice the guitar work, but I'll notice if a band is lame.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Alan – Pops Staples'. His guitar is holy - it saves souls. I'm not sure if I could OWN that, now that I think bout it. It belongs with him & God, I imagine.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Alan – I think Johnny in Radiohead is making a valiant effort at the modern possibilities. Nels Cline is very good -- very in touch with his gear, & yet still so musical. That kid in the Yeah Yeah Yeahs brought some new things to the table. I still love seeing Marc Ribot -- he can play circles around you yet still sound like rubber bands on a sardine can.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Alan – The first RGC tour EP has a song called “El Coro” that’s about the best tone I’ve ever gotten on tape. I’m really happy with how the solo guitar record went - it was the right moment at the right place. The solo on Low’s “Breaker” is good. I’m usually underwhelmed by my guitar tone on record, so I don’t get my hopes up; but every once in a while it will surprise me.

Jesse Grey of Wild Dead Rabbits
December 2010

Name: Jesse Gray

Bands: Wild Dead Rabbits, The Pointless Forest

Websites: myspace.com/wilddeadrabbits,
myspace.com/thepointlessforestnc

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jesse – When I first became interested in musical instruments I played on my dad's old guitars that were put away in closets & under beds with ages of collected dust. The first guitars I played were an old Kay (probably an early 1950s model) originally set for nylon strings, but the saddle was replaced to hold regular acoustic strings. The other guitar was a very old Martin acoustic, early 1940s model I believe.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jesse – Ahhhmmmm? I go either into my overdrive or distortion directly after my volume pedal. Then tremolo, then reverb, then delay, then memory pedals. I use several custom pedals in the line that add unique elements to the others effects, so combining effects has been an onward drive for me

as a musician. The ever vast wonder into creating sounds. I use two lines out where I use two tube amps, a Fender Twin Reverb & an Epiphone Blues Custom 30. Other effects in recordings & performances are added such as cassette tapes played either through my guitar pickups or straight from the recorder into the amplifier.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jesse – Effects.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jesse – I use two with an ABY switch, but I'd have to say my Fender Twin Reverb.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jesse – Bill Lawrence / Swamp Caster. A little info about this instrument. Bill Lawrence worked directly beside Loui Fender known mainly for Fender Guitars. He was in charge with designing & making the electronics for the guitars, especially the pickups for the Fender Company. Later he started making his own custom made guitars based off the Fender Telecaster & Stratocaster designs. Since Fender guitars owned the patent on his designs for

the pickups he began to design his own personal pickups for his custom made guitars. I have been told the wood for the guitars is handpicked out of Louisiana swamps (Louisiana Swamp Ash). I replaced his single steel plate pickups with some original 1951 Telecaster pickups. The action on the guitar is perfect. I've never played a guitar that feels so comfortable.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jesse – I'm quite fond of the American made Fender Jaguar 1965 models with the blocked fret boards. Black with a white pickguard, wax potted lipstick pickups.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jesse – It would be a mix of the Empress Super Delay, original Space Echo, Death by Audio Supersonic Overdrive, & a something like the Digitech Memory pedal.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jesse – 3 or 4.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jesse – Properly in their cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jesse – Better interior straps that could be used to hold the neck of your guitar. More storage.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jesse – Sound & condition. Check out the tuning pegs, saddle, fret board, any inflections that could worsen with time & wear. I am interested in particular models/brands/& years of certain guitars I have played & would like to own,

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jesse – A free guitar is always a good guitar.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jesse – Yes, I replace frets, pickups (sometimes), interior wiring (if needed), adjust action, it all depends on what is or isn't going on.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jesse – I spend a good deal of time doing research before investing \$ into something. I check online reviews, call stores & try my best to find someone that has had or has that particular item & ask questions in person. I always like to try out whatever I'm looking at a couple of times to make sure it is the right thing.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jesse – Yep. When experimenting with things. Always looking for new ways to create music. I've gotten to a point I have found these sounds I have created with the use of a number of combinations/pedals. I have no need to re-arrange anything should I say "soon." But I do more so now build loops & samples to play with the use of other instruments & then guitar over that, vice versa.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jesse – Depending on what's going on with the song; yes, I do change my tones. I like the diversity of the tone settings on my guitar. Adjusting the tone to me is like adjusting the mood of the piece.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jesse – Death by Audio stuff, vintage amps of all sorts; Twin Reverbs, Bassman's Band Masters, Music Man amps are outstanding if you enjoy the sound Fender produces. Guitar wise, Fender Jaguars & a particular guitar called a Steelcaster!

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jesse – Don't go by looks. Never go by looks or brand. Make sure you are comfortable with how the instrument holds & that it's the proper size.

QRD – What has been the worst guitar related purchase you've made?

Jesse – Mexican Made Fender Jazz Master from the Guitar Center in Raleigh, North Carolina. Awful guitar!!!

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jesse – Never been a huge fan of Morley equipment, though you will find flaws with anything. Also Marshall amps have never been

much of a turn on for me. I guess you could say I'm a pretty big Fender fan. I like to customize things according to the sounds I'm looking for. I'm into effects ranging from different types of reverb, overdrives & fuzz, delay & echo pedals. Not too much into tremolo even though I do use it slightly. I'm going to keep repeating myself about Death by Audio effects. Absolutely amazing out of this world sounds (but expensive)!!!!

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jesse – Usually something in Am. Don't know why?

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jesse – About 14. I found music an interesting alternative to what had been normal to me all before (baseball, basketball, & football year round). I came to an age where I found music to be more self-absorbing & personal, that was a huge turning point in my life.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jesse – About 26. About the time I got out of the Navy & was able to commit to spending more time playing, starting a band, & once I began recording things a lot changed & became somewhat fine tuned with more of a direction.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jesse – Good question. I don't know. After playing for so many years, it really is the only thing I can sit down with for hours & lose myself into the music. Having extreme A.D.D this has almost been an abstract form of meditation/concentration.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jesse – Not really. Personally I think learning piano will teach you more about rhythm & definitely music theory. I started playing drums before I picked up guitar, which kind of led me into the interest of the instrument.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jesse – Ally, but more like a companion.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jesse – Connor Oberst of Bright Eyes, Oliver Ackerson of A Place to Bury Strangers, Kurt Cobain from Nirvana.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their guitars are natural or silly (e.g. naming their guitar)?

Jesse – They are the type of person that could very well be in a Judas Priest tribute band that plays in denim & leather at Bone Daddy's or the Berkley.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jesse – I think I burnt one one time? I can't remember, I was told by a friend I did it. I threw a MIM Fender Jazz Master through an amp one time because it was just a piece of shit guitar & drove me insane with its shitty always feeding back pickups. Fender should be ashamed about that line of guitars.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jesse – I like to record practices. Create phrases & play over them with other instruments. Sometimes

I'll make notes on things I am positive I will forget (then I lose the sheet of paper, HA-HA). I relax in a different way when I play music. I don't consider it practice, but I like to go to shows & see what is going on in the music scene wherever I live.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jesse – Everyday about. Maybe 10 hours a week give or take.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jesse – If I could only use one pick for the rest of my life it would be the Dunlop .53 (the red ones). They are the perfect thickness that allows me to strum extremely fast without causing the strings to go on a carnival ride. Or maybe an eggbeater would be pretty cool.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jesse – Usually a medium gauge string, like 12's. I guess I don't like slinks because they break pretty easy since I play fairly heavy at times.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jesse – Always before tour, usually every few months, possibly the night before a gig.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jesse – In the past 20 shows I've broken 2 strings. One will break at practice every few months. I'm particularly careful about not breaking strings because I think it's a bitch to put them on (even after 15 years of playing guitar).

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that affect your style?

Jesse – Definitely my strumming hand when it comes to an acoustic due to all the finger picking I do. With my electric guitar it's kinda a different style with my effects so my fretting hand is more prominent in this style.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jesse – Myself unless I need something major done such as re-fretting or straightening out a fret board. I'll go as far as installing new pickups, cleaning electronics, changing strings, adjusting the action, & changing strings... those kinds of things.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jesse – Standard. Every once in a while I'll Drop D to revisit the 90s.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jesse – None of the above. Just remember with the old brain, maybe make notes.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jesse – Usually I always sit down when I play, more comfortable & able to use the entire fret board with ease. Though when standing, I prefer to have my guitar low belly, not punk or jazz geek.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jesse – I don't use my pinkie when I finger pick. That bugs me. Sometimes it's like I can't feel that finger when I play.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jesse – Drums & piano or if you want to go to the extreme a harp, no questions!

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jesse – Honky tonk.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jesse – Acquiring a vintage Fender Jaguar.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jesse – Hammer ons & pull offs back when I was 15, recently probably finger tapping.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebaw, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jesse – I use the capo for particular pieces. Ebaw is cool, but makes my brain feel like a microwave after awhile. I like playing the harmonica through my pickups sometimes.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jesse – Fast finger tapping.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jesse – Yes I did. I learned quite a bit about music/guitar theory which was very helpful starting out.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jesse – Finger stretching exercises.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jesse – Drink a lot, forget who you are, wake up in strange places, do what you can to make your mama proud. In between all that pick up a guitar & sing to the moon.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jesse – Uuuuhhhmmmm? Not much, tremolo is okay if it fits the piece. I don't use much tremolo, but see where it would add a nice element to some of my compositions.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jesse – Often, usually during each song.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jesse – I think a lot of lead guitarist have these wack-ass egos & I think in “some” bands the rhythm guitarist just takes up space on stage. But that’s being one-sided, I’d rather see a band with one guitarist pulling off both kinda styles.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jesse – Yes & no. Please explain. What if someone else just plain sucks or lord forbid freezes up.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Jesse – Kurt Coban’s acoustic guitar from their unplugged show in New York

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jesse – Don’t know. I would have to say Oliver Ackenson of A Place to Bury Strangers; he builds all of his own effects. I appreciate the time & effort & energy that is put into that mindset.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jesse – The Pointless Forest - *silent amongst frozen black plains.*

QRD – Anything else?

Jesse – Not at the moment. I am very short with words these days. Come to the show.

Michael Shiny of Shiny Around The Edges
December 2010

Name: Michael Shiny

Bands: Shiny Around the Edges

Websites: www.shinyaroundtheedges.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Michael – Peavey T-30... traded it in for a Fender bass... I think... it's been a while.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Michael – Guitar... cord... amp...period.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Michael – Amp. It is a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe 1x12 that has a Weber Blue Dog speaker, resoldered connections, & replacement capacitors. It is tuned hot which helps the dynamic between my guitar & amp perform like a theremin on command. Unfortunately, I burn out a bunch of tubes this way.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Michael – See above. Plus, the tone of the Hot Rod Deluxe with the Blue Dog is unbeatable. I also use a late 70s (?) Fender 2x15 cabinet.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Michael – Stock Mexican Fender Telecaster. It is comparatively inexpensive & if I lose it, break it, etc. it can easily be replaced. Tone-wise, the thickness can't be beat.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Michael – I am currently working on deconstructing my '81 Fender Musicmaster, beveling the back a bit, switching the pickup to a P-90, using a Strat neck, & eliminating the remaining gloss finish with a sander so the tone can breath.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Michael – Funny, I've actually have been talking to a friend of mine, Ethan Hahn, about this subject. He designs pedals for people via his company, ProTone Pedals, & does an amazing job. I'm looking to develop something that would have one button & be the ambient audio equivalent of fractal geometry,

picking up the last phrase & running with it. But... I don't use pedals & we are usually at a house party in Denton when we get on to this topic, so we are consistently at a vague impasse.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Michael – Six-ish.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Michael – In our rehearsal space in our house.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Michael – A very dry Martini & a generous amount of Russian beluga caviar.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Michael – Is it durable? Comparative weight. Tonality.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Michael – The amount one can make working for a few months part-time after school in 11th grade.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Michael – My Tele is stock. The Musicmaster is a work in progress.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Michael – I can tell in five minutes if a guitar is going to work for me.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Michael – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Michael – One particular guitar tone.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Michael – Well... I wouldn't exactly say "lust," but I really like the guitar Ronnie uses in Neon Indian. I have never seen anything like it. It is basically a flat screen monitor in the guitar that displays trippy graphics during their sets. It is a perfect match to

Ronnie's formidable playing talent & the aesthetics of the band. It wouldn't work for me, but I am glad that it exists without a doubt!

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Michael – A piece of paper that says, “Find a friend & start a band immediately.”

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Michael – My Hot Rod Deluxe amp was the best; don't really have a “worst.”

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Michael – Gibson Les Pauls are just way too heavy.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Michael – A “D” chord.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Michael – 16.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Michael – Maybe last year? Many of those shows were righteous. Eh... I'm still learning.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Michael – Piano is really hard & trumpet is almost impossible.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Michael – Guitar is a great way to jump into the making of music.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Michael – The guitar is an extension of myself in the process.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Michael – Greg Ginn, Lou Reed, Bill Carter (Screaming Blue Messiahs), Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Kim Gordon, Norman Westberg (SWANS), Leo Kottke, Arto Lindsay (DNA), too many to list....

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Michael – I've never thought about it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Michael – Various nicks, scratches, cuts, bloodstains, etc... playing shows.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Michael – At Shiny rehearsals, we enjoy having cocktails, talking endless about how badass we are & occasionally spilling out onto the lawn, throwing things, etc.... We find this adequately prepares us for our shows.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Michael – I've never kept track of this.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Michael – Medium orange ones. Thin ones fall apart & thick ones break strings or pop out of my hand. Orange because that's what McBrides in Denton has a huge back stock of at the moment.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Michael – Medium. Light do not produce the required sound & heavy rip up my hands.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Michael – Every few weeks.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Michael – Not often as we tune fairly low. However, when the seasons change in Texas, I'll break a bunch.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Michael – I am good with my hands.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Michael – Guitar tech. If a guitar is not set-up, you are inviting a mess of mathematics that will kill your playing ability.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Michael – Half-step down standard with a Drop D. It brings the rock in sufficient doses.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Michael – I make notes in tabs because I am not formally trained.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Michael – It is relaxed as far as it will go. I'm 6'4" & have long arms.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Michael – Doing shots that audience members buy us during our sets.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Michael – Piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Michael – I enjoy Adrian Belew's work with King Crimson, but could never control pedals like that.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Michael – Greg Ginn recently sat in with Shiny Around the Edges, so I'm good.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Michael – Correctly using a digital guitar tuner was an uphill battle.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Michael – Don't have one.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Michael – At Built to Spill shows, I've seen Doug Martsch tune his guitar while soloing. I am in awe of that.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Michael – My sister taught me how to play some folk songs from the 60s. How to play & write a song.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Michael – When you are supporting a band on tour, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD... make sure the members in your band know EXACTLY which brand of beer was on your rider.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Michael – Play like you may not have the chance to play a show again.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Michael – Always out of tune.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Michael – I set it, then don't touch it.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Michael – Lead players are good at leveraging their brand across multiple revenue streams.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Michael – No.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Michael – Eric Clapton's so I could sell it & make a bunch of cash.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Michael – Our bassist Kerm. Half the time I don't know what he is doing, but it sounds like the apocalypse.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Michael – Our latest album, Denton's Dreaming captures it pretty well.

QRD – Anything else?

Michael – Buy a guitar, find a friend, start a band.
Everything will work out just fine.

Robert Brown of Northern Valentine
December 2010

Name: Robert Brown

Bands: Northern Valentine

Websites: northernvalentine.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Robert – My first guitar was, & still is, a red Yamaha. I got it from a music store in Delaware in 1993 & I'm still using it because I love the way it sounds. The only thing that has happened to it would be the one dent that it mysteriously acquired through airport security on our way to Iceland in 2008.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Robert – I usually run custom patches from my Boss multi-effects through a delay pedal & a BBE Sonic Maximizer to clean up the sound before it hits the amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Robert – My guitar, pedals & my customized settings & tunings are the most important to my sound.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Robert – My favorite is my 1980s Peavey with two inputs, which is nice for when I'm playing along to loops.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Robert – My Yamaha is always at my side. I have it tuned just the way I want it & I know my way around it.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Robert – Guess I sound like I'm glued to this thing... my Yamaha is signature to me. I think the only thing I'd add to its features would be to permanently attach the tremolo arm instead of having it screw into the guitar. It's fallen out a few times while I'm playing.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Robert – I would like to have a delay pedal that I could operate with a breath controller. Instead of tapping in a tempo or tweaking knobs, it would be fun to control that with my breath & shift the delay like that while I play.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Robert – In addition to my Yamaha I have three. That includes a bass & an acoustic guitar along with a Fender Katana that I'm modifying. I had another electric guitar, but someone stole it after a show in Philadelphia.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Robert – Usually in our rehearsal space in our house.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Robert – I like guitars with thinner necks, because it's easier for me to play them. Also, something with a fixed tremolo arm that doesn't screw into the guitar is nice.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Robert – A good guitar can be any guitar if you know what you want to do with it. I think some of the ones that I've played that are between \$600-\$800 still seem reasonable in price to me.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Robert – I don't do much to the body of my Yamaha other than change the strings occasionally. The guitar I'm modifying will be different though, I'm going to have a little fun tweaking it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Robert – I do way too much research on gear... let's just leave it at that.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Robert – Occasionally I will add in some different effect pedals or go through a different amp set up. Lately, for consistency, I've been using mostly the same rig.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Robert – I'm always looking for some new tones from my guitar, but I do have some favorites tones that I like to call on when it feels right.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Robert – I would love to sit & try out different gear all day if I could. I have tried out so many pedals & amps & said to myself, "Sure, I could use one of those." Lately, I've been impressed with most of the pedals made by Electro-Harmonix & some of the Marshall amplifiers.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Robert – Tone controls knobs or switches... get as much customizing as you can out of the tone right from the guitar.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Robert – I have purchased some really bad distortion pedals over the years, only to realize that I'd do better to just use the amp & play a bit louder to get the effect I wanted. My Ebow, on the other hand, was the best guitar related purchase I've

made. It's like an extension of my hand at this point... I love it.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Robert – I like reliable gear that does what I ask of it. For that reason alone, I use mostly Boss & Electro-Harmonix pedals, Marshall amps, & the previously mentioned 1980s Peavey amp. I play my Yamaha guitar & it's been very good to me. I also like Fender guitars for the reliability & sound.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Robert – I just start playing notes & making a new piece or music each time. I also play each string alone; to make sure it's tuned to what my ear is waiting to hear in order to know it's ready to play.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Robert – 21 or 22, I don't recall exactly.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Robert – I think I hit a good comfort level around 30.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Robert – It's the only instrument that feels like it can make the sounds in my head come into the real world.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Robert – Not really, I think it's a highly romanticized instrument. If someone feels drawn to it, they should definitely give it a try. I just don't think everyone who does necessarily should. Someone might be better at another instrument, but just never try it because of something they are aspiring to be by picking up a guitar.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Robert – It's usually my ally. The previously mentioned tremolo arm has fallen off a few times during a show...not as friendly at that moment!

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Robert – My playing & sound has been influenced by a lot of different music other than guitar, however I would say that some of the guitarists have included Kevin Shields, Robert Fripp, Takaakira Goto, David Gilmour, & Jeff Pearce.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Robert – Somewhat natural... though it seems to me to be more of a “guy thing” to name an inanimate object like that.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Robert – I’ve never intentionally damaged a guitar.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Robert – I listen to & create a lot of loops. That puts me in the right frame of mind.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Robert – It varies from week to week & I’d play all the time if I could.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Robert – I don't really have a pick type, just kind of go with a medium of whatever is around.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Robert – I switch it up depending on what I'm doing. Usually an Ernie Ball super slinky will do. Sometimes something a little heavier is nice though.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Robert – Again, it varies. Not as often as some other people though.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Robert – Not very often... I don't do a lot of bends or attacks to them. It's usually from age if one breaks.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Robert – I'd say more of the effect comes from my fretting hand, but I think my hands balance it out most of the time, just from how I play.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Robert – I set it up myself... I just like to know it's been done the way I want it done.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Robert – I use non-standard tunings, because I have a sound in my head & I can only really duplicate some of it when I tune the guitar to the way it makes sense for me.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Robert – I am very unconventional with regards to this. I don't do tablature or sheet music. I write down notes from time to time, but I've got a visual notation system that works for me.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Robert – I don't know exactly how high it would be, but it hangs at hip level if I'm standing. I sit quite a bit to play, so the strap tends to fall down anyway.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Robert – If I'm really into a loop, sometimes I end up swaying without realizing it... I've been told it's comical to watch.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Robert – Anything with strings has been helpful for me. It makes you focus on how you pick, strike, or strum & gets you used to the way you need to grip that instrument to make the sound you want.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Robert – I don't think I have a type that I don't play. I'm playing exactly what I want & loving it.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Robert – I'm still looking for the perfect tone... it's my holy grail at this point.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Robert – I'm not sure if it's really a trick, but learning to use a sonic maximizer to clean up & manage sound has really opened my eyes. It's so simple yet overlooked.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Robert – Some of the layering & sequencing that I've seen people do in a live setting. I haven't had the time or money for some of the gear to do that the way I want to do it.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Robert – Never took lessons.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Robert – How to use an Ebow.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Robert – Learn their way around a guitar tuned to the sounds in my head. Knowing it & playing around the frets is the only way to get it.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Robert – I like the variations out there now. From a stompbox tremolo perspective, I'm interested to check out the Z.Vex tremolo that lets you control in real time as you play. I'm a fan of tremolo if it's used in the right way.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Robert – I think rhythm guitarists get the music that I play more often than lead guitarists. Their rhythm sense just kicks in once they hear the loops or layers of music.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Robert – It's a package deal to me. I can't listen to a guitar, no matter how well it is played, over top of bad music.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Robert – I'd like to own one of Kevin Shield's Fender guitars from the early 1990s...any of them would be fine. I just think it would be cool to play

on the same guitar & channel some ghosts of *Loveless* era MBV.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Robert – I've been kind of a recluse lately, holed up in the studio & working on our stuff a lot. That hasn't afforded me much of a chance to listen to current music other than ours.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Robert – Tough question... my best work is buried in the mix of some of our songs, but floating over top of others... it's hard for me to pick that. I think the first song, "Born Yesterday", on our Silber Records album *The Distance Brings Us Closer*, is still one of my favorite improvised moments that I've done.

QRD – Anything else?

Robert – Thanks for the questions... gave me a chance to reflect on a lot of what made me want to play in the first place.

John Booker of I Was Totally Destroying It December 2010

Name: John Booker

Bands: I Was Totally Destroying It (previously - but always as a bass player or drummer, not a guitarist: Strunken White, io, On The Beach, Erie Choir, Sorry About Dresden, Des Ark ...to name a few)

Websites: www.iwtdi.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

John – My first acoustic guitar was a birthday gift from my parents in 1994, a Yamaha FG-401. 6 months later at Christmas I got a '94 Japanese Fender Stratocaster. The Yamaha is hanging on my bedroom wall, hurts like hell to play & is basically a piece of crap. The Fender works great & has actually gone up in value since it was issued. A Strat isn't my usual go-to tone, but it definitely gets used here & there for special occasions - it's popped up on a song or two on our last couple of albums.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

John – I currently I run an early 2000s Gibson Les Paul Special Double Cutaway through a full board of effects (Boss GigaDelay, MXR Micro Amp,

MXR EVH Phase 90, Boss RV-5 Reverb, Boss Super Shifter, & recently a Line 6 M13- to name a few) to an early 2000s Orange AD140 head, run through a Marshall mid-90s “Lead-1936” 2x12 cabinet. I switch out guitars for certain songs though. Lately, it’s been an early 70’s Les Paul recording, which is incredible, or an ‘89 Paul Reed Smith (very rare model/look- I can’t figure out the exact name- maybe a “studio” or “special”?).

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

John – Ooh, tough one, but I’d have to go with whatever guitar I’m using at the time. I love effects & I wish I used them even more, but I’m more of a songwriter than a player so they’re never 100% crucial. A good amp is super important, but I like lots of different guitar tones so if it’s a half decent model, I’ll be able to get something I can use. But a guitar that is poorly intonated (or has any other technical issues) can kill the mood for me instantly. Playability is super important as well, so yeah, I’d say the guitar, being the most temperamental of all the elements of the rig, is the most important.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

John – The Orange AD140, but I’ve fallen out of love with it a bit recently. I’m sure it’s just a phase,

but for example we just finished recording our new album & in the past the Orange AD140 or AD30 were the main amplifiers on every recording, but it's barely on this latest album. We ended up using a Vox AC30 almost exclusively & I think it sounds way better than the older recordings with the Oranges. I go back & forth though. Sometimes I want the sound of a Fender Reverb, sometimes I want a Marshall 900 crunch, sometimes I want a Roland Jazz Chorus & sometimes I want our usual Orange rock sound. It just depends. I'm way too picky, yes.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

John – Currently it's that Gibson Double Cutaway. It actually belongs to our bass player Joe Mazzitelli - he has done a lot of modifications on it over the years, constantly tweaking the factory setups to make it better & better. I absolutely love the sound of the P-90s - I had never played a guitar with P-90's until I played this one - now I'm hooked. So it's a combination of the super powerful, clear tone, as well as one of the best playing necks I've ever touched, great intonation, lightweight body, & so on. It's a fantastic guitar & I'm lucky our bassist let's me play it so much.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

John – This is something I have never thought about. I'm more inclined to just find what I like that already exists.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

John – A pedal that was constantly oscillating & morphing an input sound in a very synthetic & unpredictable way- just incredibly out there sounds that never repeat themselves.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

John – We have over 30 in our house, between the 3 guitarists that live here; but I personally own 3 acoustics, 3 basses, 6 electrics, & a few guitar-related odds & ends like a 1920s resonator.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

John – We just use some of those multi-racks, or “boats” for easy access at band practice. I have my acoustics wall-mounted in my bedroom.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

John – Climate control for when we're on the road!

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

John – Playability, low-enough action (but not too low!), great intonation, sturdy hardware, & a tone that fits what I'm looking for at the time.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

John – I'd love it if they cost \$5, but seriously it's a tough call. I'd say the \$800 & up neighborhood is where you start dealing with real quality pieces of craftsmanship, though.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

John – Absolutely upgrade & customize. I'm not a stickler for needing all original components on a vintage guitar, for example. If it needs an upgrade to play or stay in tune or sound better, I'll do it. I've spent tons of money on various upgrades - usually through a local luthier.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

John – I have been known to be an impulse buyer, but I try to sit with a guitar as long as I can - make sure it doesn't fall out of tune every 30 seconds, make sure it sounds how I want it to sound when I play a variety of my guitar parts on it, etc. I've made some bad Ebay purchases, but usually if the guitar is in front of me when I'm considering buying, I make a choice I'm happy with in the end.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

John – Not for live applications. Familiarity is really important for me. The rooms we play from night to night sound so different, I need to have as many controlled factors as possible.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

John – If I had the resources, I'd run an insane rig with 5 different amps I could switch between, tons of outboard gear, etc.- but with my current two-channel amp & a few pedals, there's only so far that you can take it. I try to maintain a middle ground - a median sound between all the sounds I've gotten on past albums, so that I can approximate them live.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

John – This list could get real long real fast. Guitars: 70s Gibson ES-335, any Gibson Les Paul Goldtop, I'd love to get a Reverend someday, a Fender Thinline. Amps: Roland Jazz Chorus, any classic Fender Reverb, an antique Vox AC30. Pedals: all of them.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

John – A lot of entry-level guitars are really tough to play & can have major issues. Maybe this is a good thing, because it breaks you in & can make you a more versatile & adaptable player, but it can also be discouraging. It'd suck to give up guitar just because you never knew a better guitar would feel way more comfortable in your hands than some cheapo beginner model.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

John – The best would have to be my Martin DX1K acoustic I bought in 2005. It sounds incredible & is the very bottom line of Martin guitars (\$500). I have friends with top of the line or vintage Martins, & they often prefer my DX1K. I just lucked out hard on that one, I write almost all of my songs on that thing. The worst purchase was probably about

a year later when I won a '73 Gibson ES-335 on an Ebay auction. I got it at a STEAL price & was so excited because it's kind of my dream guitar & it looked incredible in all the pictures. It previously had a headstock repair, but the seller swore it had never been an issue in his many years of ownership. The guitar arrived at my house, & I opened up the beautiful vintage case to find the headstock snapped off. The seller had not released the tension on the strings before shipping, because he was an idiot, but he had insurance on the package & was able to convince UPS it was their fault (I wanted to argue that it was obviously his, but it would have been a lot tougher for me to get my money back that way). So UPS took the guitar & gave me my money back & I've never found an ES-335 for anywhere near that price since. In retrospect, I should have just kept the guitar, taken it to my luthier, Andy Danser, & had him fix the headstock for a couple hundred bucks & I'd still have that gorgeous guitar today...

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

John – Just focusing on pedals - MXR is super reliable & makes some great stuff, but Electro-Harmonix are horrible. They have great ideas & make really cool sounding pedals, but they all break to such a degree that you wonder how they get away

with it. I went through 4 Holy Grail reverb pedals before giving up & using a nice Boss RV-5.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

John – I generally strum a big open E or D - just something so familiar to check the tuning, then I maybe play some more jazzy chords that I like up & down the neck to get an idea of the intonation & fret-wear in the different areas.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

John – I was 13 when I got my first guitar & started lessons.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

John – Man, I feel like I was better maybe 5 years ago, so roughly 24-25 years old. I was playing non-stop around that time & playing a bunch of different styles, as well as playing bass in a bunch of bands. Now I just play the songs I write & don't do much practicing on my own. I feel like if I was playing a bunch of covers & still jamming along with my favorite CDs I'd be better. The amount of time this band eats up has maybe turned me into less of a

musician & more of a performer, if that makes sense.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

John – I wouldn't say that it does, necessarily. I've always thought of bass as my main instrument & I might even be a little better at drums (I started on drums before anything else) when I'm well practiced than on guitar. But guitar is my songwriting instrument, so I have a more special connection with it. I can maybe be more of a "player" on other instruments, but with a guitar I'm a "songwriter" & that inspires me a little more, so I've stuck with it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

John – I can definitely see how it can limit your understanding of some other instruments if you focus too heavily on it, but yeah it's definitely a good way to introduce a budding musician to the way music works - they just need to keep an open mind & keep learning about all the differences between a fretboard & keyboard, for example.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

John – Ooh, good question - both. It's becoming more & more limiting to me. I often think I'm "done with guitars" & I'm only interested in synthesizers, etc - but I always come right back, because with a guitar is how I write music, plain & simple. It's my gateway that works the most often so I have to just embrace it.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

John – I'd say I learned the most from people I've been in bands with - seeing what they'd do as I was playing bass with them. Ben Flanagan from a band called The Trophy Fire taught me a lot about music in general & Joe Hall from a band called Hammer No More The Fingers has a very distinct chord style that I learned a lot of strange jazz chords from when we were kids. I also seem to have stolen a lot from bands I used to cover in high school - Foo Fighters, Weezer, NOFX, Hot Water Music, & The Who.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

John – I've never done it myself, so yeah, I guess a little silly, but more power to 'em!

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

John – Not much - all my guitars are pretty damn fancy so I treat them as such. Just a few dings here & there.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

John – I should do a lot more - I really don't have any routines currently. I basically only pick up a guitar at band practice or when I'm writing a song. Luckily, I do both of those VERY frequently.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

John – Somewhere between 8 & 10 hours a week. I should & could play way more.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

John – I've been messing around with some super light picks lately, but usually it's just whatever medium-ish gauge is laying around.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

John – I usually use Ernie Ball “Regular Slinky” 10s because it's what Joe, our bassist & resident guitar tech, suggests. I use 10s on everything except my Strat with a tremolo bar, because the 9s

on there bend way better for that shoegazey My Bloody Valentine sound.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

John – We change strings super frequently - if we are on tour & playing shows every night - at least once a week. If we're home & practicing twice a week but we have a show about once every two or three weeks - we'll change them before each show. & if we're home & not playing out at all, but still practicing twice a week - we'll change them at least once a month. I am just obsessive about having that new string sound, but I am very slow with it - so Joe changes my strings for me! He likes to get all zen & zone out having re-stringing sessions....

QRD – How often do you break strings?

John – Pretty much never, because they are always new.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

John – I'd have to say my strumming hand - I've got a lot more technique with strumming & rhythm than say, fast fretting/soloing. I'm a lefty who plays righty, by the way. I wonder if I had learned the

proper way if I'd be better at fretting than strumming?

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

John – Our bassist Joe does the small repairs, & our luthier Andy Danser does the big jobs. We take guitars to Andy once or twice a year for various reasons & he always fixes things up nicely.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

John – We are usually in standard tuning, but we have maybe a dozen songs (out of 80 or so - yeah, we have a lot of songs) that are in dropped D, a couple of songs that are tuned a half-step down, & a few tunes where we use capos. There's also 2 or 3 where I drop the high E to a D as well.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

John – I don't really write down my own ideas, but if I had to it'd be tablature. I knew how to read sheet music a long time ago... not so much now.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

John – Right over my beer belly.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

John – I want to find ways to break out of my personal style/go-to tricks. I'd love to be more versatile.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

John – Playing bass can make your hands stronger & make you strum & fret with better aggression, or piano can give you an understanding of an instrument that's not set up by 5ths.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

John – Being able to solo way faster than I can....

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

John – Being able to solo way faster than I can....

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

John – Wow, ha-ha, probably pinch harmonics or something like that, but that was 12 years ago, ha-ha.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

John – I love them all, but I'm very big on capos - been using them a lot lately.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

John – Being able to solo way faster than I can...

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

John – I started taking lessons when I was 13, I had a great teacher, he taught me all the right basics to get me started. I stayed with him for a number of years, & even switched to bass, violin, & piano lessons with him at various stages. I was horrible with piano & violin, but I learned a ton & got way better at bass in a very small span of time.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

John – Hmm, maybe thrust them into a band setting sooner - let kids pair off & have to collaborate & see what happens - a lot of people don't learn how to leave room for other players & focus on the song instead of the riff.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

John – Suffer a severe head injury? Hmm, I don't know. I just play really hard & clean & evenly with my strumming hand & I play a lot of jazz-infused power chords with my fretting hand. Pretty much just copy the same people as me....

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

John – I love them & wish they were on more guitars, but they create tuning issues & stuff so it's probably best that they aren't.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

John – Never. They're at 10 all the time.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

John – I am 100% a rhythm guitarist. I am horrible with lead/soloing work. So I guess the difference is that lead guitarists are better than me?

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

John – No. I'm a songwriting guy. The songs & melodies need to be in place first, then I'll pay attention to the individual elements.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

John – I'd love to steal various pieces of gear from The Edge... because he's The Edge.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

John – It's still The Edge, he invented a particular style of playing and it can be heard from the smallest indie bands on college radio to the biggest hits out there right now - & that's been the case for a couple of decades. But no one can touch him; they just vaguely emulate his tricks.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

John – I'd say the best guitar sounds & playing for I Was Totally Destroying It, as a whole, can be heard on our upcoming album, *Preludes*, out April 12th 2011 on Greyday Records.

QRD – Anything else?

John – Thanks for the questions!!

Steven Mitchell of The Heligoats

December 2010

Name: Steven Mitchell

Bands: The Heligoats, Ulysses S. Grant, Hungry Mountain

Websites: theheligoats.com, ulyssgrant.wordpress.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Steven – My first guitar was a Fender Squire that I received for Christmas in one of those Squire packs that comes with a mini practice amp & cable. I still have the guitar & it is currently in my closet.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Steven – 2000 Fender American Strat into the Boss Tremolo (TR-2) & Boss Delay (DD-3) pedals into a Fender Deville "212" tube amp. I use the built in drive on the amp, controlling it with the footswitch pedal.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Steven – All of it is important equally. We are all in motion together, from brain to fingers to guitar to pedals to amp.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Steven – The Fender Deville “212” tube amp, I have had it for about 10 years & absolutely love it. I love the warm crunch that you can get from it & it’s loud as hell.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Steven – 2000 American Stratocaster. I’ve always liked the classic sound of a Strat. I have played guitars & enjoy playing on Fender Telecasters as well, but I have always just gone back to the Strat.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Steven – A hollow-body made out of glass. With 1965 Danelectro pickups. & the standard 3 knob controls of a Fender Strat (volume & 2 tones).

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Steven – Analog Tape Delay Drum Machine. Combining the new full sounds of drum machines with the warmth of an analog delay all in one pedal.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Steven – 3.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Steven – The electric guitars are in hard cases & the acoustic is on a guitar holder all in my room.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Steven – Antlers.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Steven – Tone.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Steven – Hundreds of dollars.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Steven – Stick to what I get.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Steven – Usually I'll try out something that a buddy has & if I like it I'll go buy it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Steven – I have been recently. Mostly experimenting with pedals.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Steven – I try to lock into a tone based on who I'm playing with & the mood of that band.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Steven – A Gretsch 1964 Country Gentleman guitar, Binson Echorec pedal, Vox Tone Bender fuzzbox pedal, Vox AC 30 amp.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Steven – Mute button.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Steven – Best & Worst was my Estaban guitar tutorial.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Steven – Like - Fender. I just always have like that classic sound.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Steven – A minor.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Steven – 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Steven – 18, haven't changed much.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Steven – I like all instruments, but I like the piercing crunch you can get from a guitar.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Steven – I'm with the old school of thought that a piano should be first for everyone.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Steven – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Steven – Syd Barrett, Sterling Morrison, Kurt Cobain.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Steven – No, I love my Bessie.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Steven – Smashed it. On the train tracks in front of some hot ladies in the 8th grade. I wanted them to think I was cool. Didn't work out quite the way I wanted it to.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Steven – Listen, Listen, Listen to music all the time.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Steven – About 14hours a week. I'd like to triple that.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Steven – Whatever I got laying around. Cause it's easy.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Steven – .10

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Steven – Once a month

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Steven – Not as much as I use to.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Steven – Strumming, I'm more of a driving/straight forward player.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Steven – I set up myself because I haven't received the check from this interview yet to pay my roadies.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Steven – Standard, I'm into the classic sound.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Steven – Tab is how I used to do it. Now I just play it over & over until I can lay it down on tape.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Steven – Medium

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Steven – My need to smoke before I play.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Steven – Piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Steven – Classical finger picking.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Steven – Classical finger picking.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Steven – The one when you throw the guitar & it makes a loop around your body & then you catch it & just keep wailing on that riff.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Steven – Capo.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Steven – Classical finger picking.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Steven – I did take 4 guitar lessons when I was young. I learned you shouldn't go to guitar lesson high.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Steven – To be themselves & come up with their own style of playing.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Steven – Hold back. Hit when it's right.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Steven – I'm for tremolo. Surfs up.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Steven – I find a tone based on who I'm playing with & then let it ride.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Steven – Amount of groupies.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Steven – Yes & no. You can admire the guitar work while still not liking the band. I find that if a singer is really good I am able to forgive the band easier.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Steven – Neil Young's "Old Black" 1953 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop. Epic Sound.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Steven – Jonny Greenwood has been doing some interesting stuff for the past 15 years. I like the sound of the guitars that Nathan Williams has on the new Wavves album *King of the Beach*.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Steven – The album *Goodness Gracious* by The Heligoats & the upcoming EP from Hungry Mountain.

QRD – Anything else?

Steven – Thank you! Guitarist unite.

Ian McPhedran of Ostrich Tuning
December 2010

Name: Ian McPhedran

Bands: Ostrich Tuning

Websites: myspace.com/ostrichtuning

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Ian – I bought my first guitar when I was fifteen. My mom gave me a bit of money for my birthday & the rest I made by cutting lawns. My cousin (who was two years older & had been playing in bands for some time) took me to one of the big music stores in downtown Toronto & helped me pick one out that was in my price range (very little) & that I liked. At the time my favorite bands were Nirvana & Sonic Youth, so I really really wanted a Fender Mustang or a Jaguar & had no idea that these would be way too expensive. I settled on a black Squire Stratocaster with a white pickguard & three single coil pickups, which seemed to be the closest approximation to what I wanted & I could afford. I remember my father, who is generally quite dour (a stereotypical Scotsman) & I thought didn't really care all that much about music surprised me by being really excited about it. It's strange how it became a bonding moment between us -- he pulled out a bunch of his old records & made a list of

songs I should learn. He also kept referring to it as a “rhythm guitar” which was quite endearing & would later inform some of my musical explorations/ideas. I think he thought (& probably still does because I have never questioned him about it) that there were two types of guitars, “rhythm” & “lead” & that they were different instruments, probably because of the credits in the liner notes of some of his records.

Overall, it was a great first guitar. I played it a lot & by tinkering with it, I started to learn how guitars worked. I made some cosmetic changes to it (I put on a tortoise-shell pickguard & vintage white knobs & pickguard covers). I didn’t really have an ear for/understanding/interest in the differences in tone that were possible at that point & since I was playing in mainly noisy indie/post-hardcore bands, I would keep it on the bridge pickup & turn everything all the way up so it would feedback like crazy. I played it really aggressively & it put up with a lot of abuse, but it held together beautifully. It also held the early alternate tunings I experimented with relatively well.

Sadly, I left this guitar at a former bandmate’s house in anticipation of further practices for a project that ground to a halt. I kept putting off going to retrieve it because I was playing other instruments in other bands & figured it would be safe. In the interim (maybe half a year?) his parent’s sold the house & had a huge garage sale where they

sold stuff they thought was just junk -- including my guitar. It still really upsets me that he did this & then kind of shrugged it off when I freaked out about it. I still have the receipt from the purchase with the serial number & keep hoping one day I will find it again. Since the advent of Craigslist, I check everyday & hound anyone selling a guitar that resembles it (not too many Squires have the tortoise shell pickguard & I know every nick I put into the body), but have had no luck tracking it down. At times, I muse optimistically that whoever bought it is loving it as much as I did & using it in some amazing project. Other times I get sad thinking about it gathering dust in someone's closet like the velveteen rabbit. I debated putting up posters in the bandmate's parent's old neighborhood, but that's probably going a bit too far -- I just need to let it go.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Ian – (Instrument) > (Pedals) A/B/Y switch (A) > Bass Booster > Brass Master > DOD Bass EQ > (Amp(s))

(B) > Noise Swash > Digitech Whammy > Nobels Tremolo > Planet Waves Tuner > Boss RX 20XL > Reverb > (Amp(s))

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Ian – The guitar & effects are definitely the most important. I like using my own amp(s) but will happily borrow/use other people's at shows to save set-up time & car space. However, unless it is a completely spur-of-the moment/impromptu show, I prefer to use my own instruments/pedals.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Ian – Since my present set-up is geared toward bass-y sounds, these days it is a 197? GBX Bass driver. It has been a bit touchy & required a bit more maintenance than it previously did the past few years, but I am reluctant to get another because it has a unique warm tone that is often absent in newer amps. I like to couple it with a Fender Princeton Chorus amp & run the (A) through the GBX & the (B) through the Princeton.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Ian – Presently it's the "McPhedran Dronemaster" I built myself a year ago. As the name implies, in the band we play in the all-D "ostrich tuning" developed by Lou Reed for the song "Do the Ostrich". To achieve this effectively, the guitar has to be specially set-up & modified slightly to take the tuning. For a long time, I had wanted to try building my own guitar so I could learn more about the inner

workings & hopefully do my own modifications to get closer to the sounds I wanted without having to depend on techs. I was really inspired after a great conversation with a tattoo artist friend who builds all of her own tattooing equipment & insists that her apprentices do so as well. It's amazing how much it broadens your perspective, creativity, & understanding of music when you build your own gear -- especially for musicians that love to tinker with stuff & experiment.

Part of my vision for it was for it to be a true "rhythm guitar" like my dad talked about -- I spent a lot of time thinking about what that would be/sound like & how it would differ from other guitars. I imagined it having a deeper tone that emphasized bass frequencies & could work either as bass or a guitar, depending on what was needed. Aside from optimizing it for ostrich tuning, I changed the electronics to emphasize the warmer bass frequencies & cut more of the high end treble without muddying the tone too much. I also got rid of the stock pickups that came with the kit & put in a P-90 neck pickup & an overwound 1960s style telecaster bridge pickup in it, which allows it to keep some of the characteristic telecaster twang if needed. I replaced the typical telecaster three-way pickup selector switch with a four pole, five way switch & did a custom rewiring so that it would keep the stock tones (neck/neck + bridge in parallel/bridge) & have two extras (bridge + neck in

series/out of phase). This expanded the tonal possibilities for the guitar & has interesting effects. Overall, I love how it plays—it has a unique sound that works well with my effects set-up & allows me to play it as a bass, a guitar, or both.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Ian – Right now I am working on a new “dronemaster” build project that combines my favorite features of various guitars, but is optimized for ostrich tuning & improves upon the “rhythm guitar” principles outlined above. Since I have some experience now & know what I want, this time I decided to source all of the parts myself as opposed to purchasing another kit. It has a Stratocaster style neck with a jumbo paddle headstock (a bit smaller than the first build) & a body shaped like a Vox Phantom. I decided to go with mini-humbuckers, which will be wired in “super seven switching” to allow for a multitude of different settings (coil tapping each humbucker, out-of phase, series/parallel, etc...) & even greater tonal versatility. I always loved the look of the old Teisco guitars (like the Spectrum Five) with tons of switches, so the seven switches is a nod to that. I debated having a floating tremolo/vibrato system in it, but realized I don’t actually use it that much & would rather have a Telecaster style set bridge that

strings through the body for improved sustain. I also designed a custom split tortoise shell pickguard for it, so it definitely combines the elements I love about my other guitars & also has some nods to the lost guitar. I tried a different finishing technique that uses Danish oil on both the neck & the body, which will give it a different look & feel than my other guitars & emphasize the wood grain. It has a satin finish, so it won't gloss out like many other guitars. Throughout the process, I realized how much I personally dislike finishing attempts to make guitars look like sports cars -- it's just not my thing.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Ian – I have been building my own pedals for some time & more than half on my board are now custom builds -- I only use manufactured ones if they have complex circuitry I can't physically or economically build. Aside from the aesthetics of the finishes, I didn't diverge too much from the many designs freely available on the internet. Along with learning about the various components, through reading the material on great sites like Aron Nelson's DIYstompboxes.com, & General Guitar Gadgets, I learned how to make slight modifications to the designs to get the sounds I was looking for. Like guitar building, it is easy & a lot of fun once you get going.

Like many others, I am on a quest to build a perfect fuzz pedal. I can hear it in my head, but am not sure how to produce it just yet. It would have expanded EQ control like some of the Electro-Harmonix builds, but also a foot pedal that would allow the user to control the amount of fuzz/feedback & build/subtract as needed.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Ian – I own 4 electric guitars & am building my fifth. I have an Epiphone Dot, a 1969 Teisco Del Rey that I just finished rebuilding & am using primarily as a lap steel guitar because of its extremely high action & the aforementioned “Dronemasters”. I recently built an experimental “tabletop guitar” that I have been playing with a lot—it has two bridges with separate outputs & is perfect for adding springs, clips & other ‘prepared’ objects.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Ian – I have well-padded gig bags for the ones I use & transport most frequently & two hard cases for the ones that stay put.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don’t?

Ian – I have never really given this a lot of thought. A good case should be durable & protect the guitar well, but also be lightweight for easy transport. I find that the cases I use are great for my purposes -- I just need them to hold the guitars & the straps. My cords & pedals have their own case.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Ian – I suppose this is a fairly obvious answer, but it's always a balance between aesthetics, playability, & sound. I am sure there are people scoffing at this, but for me the look is as important as the feel & sound -- if you fall short on any of the three, you end up with a guitar you won't enjoy, which will just gather dust. I love the look & feel of offset bodies & hollow bodies & prefer the look of natural wood. I prefer a low/medium action setup & generally prefer the sound of humbuckers & P-90s to single coil pickups. The weight also needs to be right—I don't want a guitar that is feather light or conversely, so heavy it pulls too much on my shoulder. I also believe it should be fairly priced -- too often high & even medium end guitars are way out of most folks' price range & given the fact that so many are now machine assembled in factories as opposed to hand-made by luthiers, I know the markup is completely ridiculous for what sometimes ends up being inferior craftsmanship.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Ian – It depends entirely on how & where it is made. A fair price should reflect the quality of the parts & the craftsmanship. If it is hand-made by an independent luthier, it may be reasonable to spend thousands of dollars if their work is impeccable & fits what you need. I think most of the mass-produced high-end guitars that I have browsed are way overpriced given the parts & the quality of the work on them. Even some of the boutique reissues that I have tried out at local shops are a bit too expensive for what they actually are. They cut corners all over the place, skimp on some materials, & in some cases, use shoddy electronics. Compared to the US, most of the instruments/amps/gear sold in Canada are horrendously overpriced -- I'm not entirely sure if this is because of duties paid, store mark-ups, or the general lack of competition in the country, but my best guess is some combination of the three. There aren't direct online stores (though some of the American ones will ship to Canada for a hefty shipping fee), so you are limited in terms of options.

It also depends on what is needed. Sometimes a "good" guitar is the low to moderately priced one. Like all other mass-consumed, mass-marketed products, guitars have reputations & connotations associated with a brand. If you are just beginning (&

even in cases where you have been playing for some time), a higher end model isn't necessarily going to be better or make you a better player. It's kind of like the Air Jordan fallacy where kids were convinced they could dunk better with \$125 shoes when, really these had little to do with performance -- in tests, Stephon Marbury's Starbury line of \$10 basketball shoes proved just as durable & effective as their high end/Lebron James endorsed counterparts. There is a whole community of people who fetishize "authentic" vintage parts as well & pay ridiculous amounts of money for "real" stuff, when perfectly good, functional, & aesthetically pleasing alternatives are readily available.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Ian – I have customized & upgraded all of them. Through experience, you figure out what you like & what you need & now that there are so many options out there, it is easy to take a base model & customize it into something that will really suit your style. There's nothing wrong with sticking with what you've got -- I have just never found a guitar at a reasonable price that had everything I wanted.

I strongly disagree with collectors & others who argue that gear should not be modified drastically so it holds its value. To me, the most valuable gear is stuff you use & get a lot of enjoyment out of & if

drilling extra holes, mixing & matching vintage & modern, painting/re-adorning etc... allows you to do this & pushes you to keep making music, then it is the best investment you can make. Although many people listing stuff on the Toronto Craigslist for musical instruments seem to think otherwise, unless you have a rare/vintage piece (in which case you probably bought it knowing it was such), like cars, all gear depreciates almost in half the second it leaves the store. We could all stand to be a bit more adventurous & stop worrying about preserving everything in the “immaculate” condition it rolled off the assembly line in. There are enough private collectors keeping beautiful instruments locked in cases in perfectly climate-controlled rooms around the world to do that for us.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Ian – I go a bit overboard & read everything I can about it (reviews, specs etc...). I also listen to YouTube samples, which usually give a rough idea of what it will sound like, though will always have some asshole wanking off with a prolonged blues-rock solo. Since I’m not going to be doing that, sometimes it doesn’t really tell me much about the gear. Just once I would like to see a demo for gear that has a long sustained drone, which arguably would tell you just as much about its capabilities,

but I guess wouldn't be most people's cup of tea. If I can, I like to try it out, preferably on my own stuff. Sometimes its hard to find someone willing to let you borrow a piece of gear to test & you just have to go with your gut instinct on whether or not it will do what you want it to do. I love reading about new equipment & have gotten much better at resisting the impulse to buy everything that could be awesome. I think we all go through period's of G.A.S. (gear acquisition syndrome) -- there is so much out there, it makes it easy for someone to stop playing/experimenting with the stuff they already have & covet some crazy expensive item. It is important to keep it in perspective & question how integral something will be to the overall sound.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Ian – No -- I have finally gotten to a point where I am really happy with the effects chain & amps that I have. It took a lot of experimentation & trial & error though to get there, so if you don't feel satisfied, you should tinker with it until it feels right. This doesn't necessarily mean you need more stuff. Sometimes just changing the order of effects does wonders!

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Ian – For performances, I have a definite idea in my mind of what it should sound like & have locked in. This way, I know what to expect & can improvise/build off of it effectively. As previously mentioned, this is the result of a lot of experimentation -- so really, I see the two as part of the same continuum.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Ian – Guitars: I would love to have a Teisco May Queen & I think that I just might build a similar one in the future. I have also always wanted a Rickenbacker twelve-string, but will probably never be able to justify spending that much money on a guitar. I have mused about buying one of those Rogue electric sitars based on the old Coral designs, which I think counts in this category as well.

Amps: I really like the ones I have, but it would be great to have a Vox AC30.

Pedals: Again, I am pretty happy with what I have, but maybe a Digitech PDS Pedalverb 3000?

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Ian – I think the most important thing that's often missing is a good setup. All guitars, especially a

first guitar, should be setup properly to maximize the enjoyment of the instrument. This is easily done & usually for a reasonable price, but so many people don't think to do it or don't know that it can be done & then get frustrated when the guitar really just needs some minor adjustments. I also think it is good to have a fairly versatile, but uncomplicated guitar like a Stratocaster or a Les Paul that can give you a taste of all of the myriad of sounds & possibilities that are available, but still be simple & intuitive to use (which I think is one of the main reasons they have both remained so popular).

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Ian – For the most part, I have been really happy with the things I have bought. I think buying the kit to build my first guitar was one of the best purchases I made. I learned a ton, it was fairly inexpensive & a lot of fun. My Teisco guitar was a \$30 Ebay purchase, which I invested about \$20 in new parts & though it could still use a lot of work, it now plays reasonably well & was also fun to rebuild & modify. My GBX bass amp was \$300 & despite a few maintenance issues, worth every penny. Value wise, buying GFS pickups for my builds & to improve my other guitars is probably hands down the best -- they sound as good or better than pickups three or four times more expensive,

improved the tone of my guitars dramatically & so far, they have proven quite durable.

I don't have too many purchases I regret. Recently, I had a lot of fun building a Boss Slow Gear SG-1 clone, but feel it is pretty useless (though this might change with further experimentation) & was really disappointed. On my latest guitar build, I bought some imitation vintage Fender tuners, which turned out to be really poorly made & didn't fit properly, but they were fairly cheap & sometimes you get what you pay for.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Ian – It totally depends on the individual item. I am not partial to one company or style for any of my gear -- I just buy what works for me. I hate that Fender rip people off with ridiculous prices on some high-end guitars & amps, but think some of their low & moderately priced stuff is a decent value. The same goes for Gibson & pretty much all of the others.

If I had to come up with stuff I don't like, most of it would be purely because it doesn't fit with what I do. I don't particularly like the look or sound of B.C. Rich guitars or PRS's, but I am sure they are great since many swear by them. I like a lot of the boutique stuff that I've played or used & think it's wonderful that so many people are trying to make a go of it, but it really bothers me that a few of these

companies seem to be overcharging/gouging people for stuff that is inexpensive & easy to build -- a sort of gear-based “emperor’s new clothes.” The mark-up on some of these pedals would even make the Fenders & Gibsons of the world blush with embarrassment. It is not okay for someone to take freely available information (in some cases, shamelessly copying it without giving credit to the true innovators that spent years developing & perfecting it), \$30 worth of parts, & a few hours of labour & suddenly start charging like \$300 for it.

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Ian – I always start with a few sustained strums of all of the strings, which sounds amazing in ostrich tuning. Then I usually drone on one string while fiddling on the one directly below it.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Ian – Fourteen. But I had been dreaming of doing it since I was much younger.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Ian – I'm a really late bloomer & I'm still years away from reaching it.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Ian – I am not sure that it does -- I also love playing the bass & the drums. But I am definitely drawn to the sound & wide range of possibilities it offers. It is the easiest to make horrendous & beautiful noises with.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Ian – People should play whatever is readily available. Due to its versatility & ease of play it is usually the guitar, but it doesn't have to be. If the opportunity presents itself, people should try out/learn as many different instruments as they can until they find the one they like best. While not always directly transferable, the skills learned on one instrument often lead to interesting new ways of approaching another.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Ian – Neither really. I just see it as a (McLuhanesque?) extension of my mind/body. It is

up to me to use it as creatively as possible & build it/keep it in optimal shape. While I have definitely projected animistic properties on my instruments, in this sense, I just think of it as a tool -- like a hammer or a screwdriver.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Ian – In compiling a list to answer the question, I now realize that all of my influences appealed to me for the same reason -- with slight variations, they all emphasized the importance of simplicity & stressed that anyone could play the guitar in an interesting way regardless of “technical ability” if they just worked at it until they found a way that worked best for them. Kurt Cobain was an important early influence, because Nirvana songs were the first ones I learned to play & he always seemed to stress in interviews that anyone could do it. That meant a lot to me & helped me break down ideas that I had internalized that somehow you had to be a child prodigy to do something meaningful with an instrument. Along the same lines, I remember reading a John Lennon quotation from an interview when I was first playing that became a sort of mantra -- “I’m okay; I’m not technically good, but I can make it fucking howl.” The Glenn Branca influenced experimentation of Thurston Moore & Lee Ranaldo also fit in here for the same reasons,

especially their use of alternate tunings/prepared guitar techniques. It didn't matter that I wasn't technically very good (I'm still not -- part of the appeal of the ostrich tuning is its simplicity & ease of play) as long as I was making it my own. I started getting into the Velvet Underground, especially the first two albums when I was first learning to play as well, which obviously had a huge influence on me & also seemed to prove that interesting music could be made by people doing deceptively simple things. Later in high school, one of my good friends got me into My Bloody Valentine (Kevin Shields) & Spacemen 3 (Pete "Sonic Boom" Kember & Jason "Spaceman" Pierce) who also fit into this aesthetic. Like countless other fans, I was amazed at the otherworldly textures that could be created with a guitar & a few pedals playing songs with relatively simple (in some cases one chord) structures. A later addition to the list, but for similar reasons as the others would be Char Vinnedge from the Luv'd Ones, who also played with alternate tunings & had a fearless spirit of experimentation.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Ian – I don't know if I would use the word "natural", but it does make sense to me that people get attached to things that are pleasurable. Guitars

have a great deal of personal relevance & are often attached to important memories for people who play frequently. Each one I have played feels a bit different, depending on my relationship with it. This could very well be a projection on my part, but I think there is also a certain vitalism in special/reverential objects.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Ian – Mainly just nicks & scrapes from accidentally knocking it. I chipped a decent sized chunk out of the clear-coat on my Epiphone when it fell after I leaned it up against an amp once. With the exception of modifications (which I don’t consider damage), I have never really been into damaging guitars on purpose, though some people have told me it can do interesting things to the sound. I suppose there is an element of nihilism there as well, but I can get at that in other ways.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Ian – Sometimes listening to others is just as important.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Ian – I try to play for at least an hour every day depending on my schedule, but if I have the time, it is usually a bit longer.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Ian – I just use whatever is available, but my favorites are the Dunlop stubby picks. I like them because they are relatively thick & I find it easier to make slight adjustments with them.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Ian – After a lot of experimentation, this is what I use:

D/6 - .062

D/5 - .036

D/4 - .034

D/3 - .034

D/2 - .014

D/1 - .014

In an ostrich tuning, you can't use a standard set, so I order custom sets made up of single strings from an online site. I've found that even with the shipping, it is cheaper to do it this way & it ensures I can get the exact ones I want. When you buy single strings from a guitar shop, you don't always know what they will have. Often they don't have any beyond a 56 gauge, & you have to settle for the best approximation. I guess you could try using a

standard set, but the 5/"A" string won't hold a super slack/low d tuning, & it would put excessive tension on the neck to tune it up to the middle d. There are a lot of misconceptions, particularly on the internet about alternate tunings -- despite what many people say they will not warp your guitar as long as you use the correct gauges. Ideal string tensions are based on simple physics formulas that calculate the thickness necessary based on the length of the neck & the desired pitch. There are a number of good sites on the internet that will do these calculations for you. At their ideal length & size, the force applied by each individual string will be more or less equal -- thicker strings do not necessarily put more tension than their thinner counterparts. While the formulas work in theory, it does take some experimentation to figure out exactly which gauges to use. When you have two strings tuned to the same pitch, they will produce different sounds if they are different gauges, which can make interesting sounds. In some cases, it is better to go slightly thicker or thinner to get the ideal feel. The action & the nut also need to be properly set for whatever tuning you are using, but this is relatively simple with some practice.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Ian – Every 6 months/when one breaks, whichever comes first.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Ian – Not that often anymore. When I was younger & played really hard, I would break them all the time -- I now play with a much lighter touch. More importantly, if everything is properly set up & the correct gauges are used, they shouldn't break until they are fairly worn.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Ian – They both need a lot of work, but I think my strumming hand is actually less proficient. The tuning I use is fairly forgiving of mistakes, so it balances out.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Ian – I do it all myself because I know what I need & want. I think learning how to do this adds a whole other dimension to your playing, because it allows you to fine tune your guitar for optimal performance whenever it's needed. Unless you pay a guitar tech to accompany you whenever you play, there are times you could need adjustments & there would be no one there to assist.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Ian – Mainly the D ostrich tuning, but sometimes DADGAD. It helps maintain a drone & simplifies playing drastically, which works with what we do. It also creates a great “chorus” sound that you can’t get from a pedal.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Ian – While recording I sometimes make brief notes, but usually I don’t write anything down. If I come up with something I like, I try to record it on the spot (at least roughly) so I can develop it later. Most of the time I just rely on memory.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Ian – I like it so the bottom is slightly above my belt, so I guess relatively (but not too comically) high.

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Ian – I often inadvertently bend strings when fretting & raise the pitch slightly. I'm working on cleaning up my fretting.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Ian – I think the drums are a huge help, or really anything percussive that allows you to work on your timing -- a lot of people overlook this.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Ian – I always wanted to learn how to fingerpick effectively & have never been very good at it.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Ian – Effective fingerpicking.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Ian – Making a third bridge/prepared guitar changes the scale dramatically & brings in new notes.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Ian – I love the Ebow & play mine all the time -- it is great for drones & noises. I also like attaching paper-clips to strings to get a chimey effect.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Ian – Effective pinch-harmonics -- I keep practicing but they aren't quite there.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Ian – I never took formal lessons. Friends would (& continue to) show me techniques & tricks & I would just play around with them until I figured it out. Listening to other recordings & watching how other guitarists play also helps me learn new things.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Ian – I would open up the control cavities & explain what the electronics do.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Ian – Build your own gear, pick a note, & get lost in it.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Ian – I like them some of them, but only have one guitar with one -- I’m just not that into using it. With set bridges, I like that there are fewer pitch changes when a string breaks. The Stratocaster-style tremolos on my Jagmaster & on my first guitar are pretty unforgiving if a string breaks & will throw everything off. I like the look of the Jaguar/Jazzmaster floating tremolos, but have never played them extensively, so I’m not sure how good they are. The old Bigsby style ones look cool, but again, I haven’t used them so I can’t evaluate their performance. I never liked the Floyd Rose style ones, but I’ve seen people do neat things with them.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Ian – Rarely if ever -- usually it’s “set it & forget it.” I might make a minor adjustment or two if using someone else’s amp, but these are usually relatively minor.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Ian – I don't think those distinctions should exist -- they are based more on hierarchy than anything. The distinction is moot if you are working outside of the traditional confines of pop/rock/metal/whatever.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Ian – No -- bad singing & guitar work are the most obvious to the casual listener, but if you don't have a decent drummer/rhythm it throws everything off.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Ian – Lee Ranaldo has one of Yuri Landmans's Moonlander Stereo Drone-Guitars. It has 18 strings, two headstocks on top of each other, plays in stereo, & is really neat looking. Mainly I would want it so I could learn firsthand from Landman's luthier technique, but it also makes some really fascinating sounds.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Ian – I'm really drawing a blank here. Sadly, it is probably someone holed up in a bedroom that we will never hear.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Ian – They'll have to wait until what I build replicates what's in my head. Most likely the two will never converge.

QRD – Anything else?

Ian – This was a great idea & I look forward to reading what other people have to say. I'm sorry about the length -- feel free to cut whatever seems unnecessary.

Josef Echter of Draff Krimmy & Apokrypha
December 2010

Name: Josef Echter

Bands: Draff Krimmy, Apokrypha

Websites: www.apokrypha.de,
www.myspace.com/apokrypha,
www.draffkrimmy.wordpress.com,
www.flutteryrecords.com,
www.draffkrimmy.bandcamp.com,
www.myspace.com/draffkrimmy

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Josef – My first guitar was a Peavey “Falcon Series” Stratocaster. I still have it, but it’s broken.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Josef – Mostly I play a very spartan set-up, just a guitar & an amplifier. That’s it.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Josef – I think you can recognize a guitar player no matter what stuff he’s using. The guitar work comes from the heart & soul & flows from your fingers to

your fretboard, which is a kind of connection between you & the audience, so I would say the guitar is the most important part.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Josef – Marshall - it’s loud & reliable.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Josef – My main guitar is an ESP Horizon. It has got a neck through which makes it quite comfortable to play especially when you go up the scales. The Floyd Rose never goes out of tune, so it’s a guitar just for playing & not tuning.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Josef – It would have the classical Stratocaster shape, a Floyd Rose, & humbucker pickups; so it would just look like the main guitar I play.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Josef – I don’t need any pedals, but if there’s someone who wants to build one for me: it would

be a delay with foot-controllers for delay-time & repetitions. That would be nice.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Josef – Including the broken one I've got five guitars.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Josef – My main guitar is hanging on the wall, so that I can pick it up whenever I want to. The others are stored in cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Josef – The part the neck lies on should be a little more padded. One of my guitars got some annoying scratches because the wood showed through the padding.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Josef – I'm very open-minded concerning that, a guitar should lie comfortably in your hands. But mostly I end up with a kind of Stratocaster guitar.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Josef – Nothing - anyone want to offer me an endorsement deal?

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Josef – I really like Seymour Duncan pickups, which are installed in my ESP. I upgraded my Fender with some Hotrods, put some jumbo frets on the fretboard & changed the tremolo system.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Josef – Usually I go straight to the store & test the guitars, amplifiers, or whatever by myself.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Josef – Back in time I changed my rig nearly every month. Now I ended up with just a guitar & a Marshall.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Josef – I'm after the tone the song demands & I feel comfortable with. So I don't change that often.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Josef – Oh, there's a lot of stuff I'd like to check out. Maybe Schecter guitars or Mesa Boogie Amps or...

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Josef – A really qualified sales clerk. They are so rare. What a shame...

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Josef – Dr. Duck's Axwax is amazing. You can use it for the whole guitar & maybe even drink it. Disappointing are the Elixir Nano Web strings. They say, they last a long life, but what about the great tone they speak of?

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Josef – I don't like Ibanez guitars. The quality seems to change from guitar to guitar. They once built really reliable axes, but those times are over. My favourite amps are built by Marshall. They

always sound like Marshall. Nothing more, nothing less. What you see is what you get.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Josef – Mostly some arpeggios or scales up & down. Nothing special, technical stuff.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Josef – I was eleven years old & started right with an electric guitar.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Josef – Maybe at seventeen? I don't remember.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Josef – Because a guitar looks pretty cool.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Josef – People should choose an instrument that fits them & not choose the guitar because their neighbor got one.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Josef – The guitar is my way to express myself, so it's definitely my ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Josef – Oh, there are a lot: the guys of Skid Row are great, Slash. But also friends or bandmates inspire me, just like Tristan Visser of Metalforce or Joe Stump.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Josef – I heard of guys doing that & it sounds pretty funny. Why don't they try to get a girlfriend?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Josef – There's a scratch on the headstock of my ESP. It got there when I took the guitar out of the case. Very annoying.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Josef – I practice a lot, just like arpeggios, sweeping, alternate picking stuff, tapping, eight finger tapping, ... & all combinations of it.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Josef – I wish I could play guitar all day, but there's still a job to do; so it's sometimes just a few minutes a day & another day two or three hours.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Josef – Dunlop Jazz III. They give you the best control over the strings & are not too big.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Josef – I use 10-46 strings. My guitar is tuned down to D, but with the stronger strings they don't hang loose.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Josef – Right before every gig or studio session. You should always give your best, that means also delivering the best sound.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Josef – Never, even though I hit the strings pretty hard. This can be traced back to the fact I use Graphit All Guitar Lube. It's amazing.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Josef – Can you focus on just one hand? Your style should only be effected by yourself & not be limited by your hands.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Josef – Once I had the chance to be Annihilator's guitar tech; so learned a lot about guitars, how they work & how they are set up. But somehow I missed the chance. Bummer! But now I can do all (concerning guitars) on my own.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Josef – I don't use any special tuning. My guitars are tuned down a whole step so they sound (hopefully) mightier.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Josef – Even though I studied musical theory I guess it's pretty hard to write down what you feel. If there's an idea to keep, I record it immediately.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Josef – My first hero was Slash, so my guitar was hanging in the early times very low. After that I appreciated Paul Gilbert very much. But doing all that arpeggio stuff forced me to shorten the strap a little bit & I still stick to it now.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Josef – Breaking my guitar amps. Don't know how it comes to this. Just kidding! I'm quite satisfied with my playing.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Josef – Definitely drums.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Josef – Flamenco. Those guys are amazing.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Josef – Getting an endorsement deal.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Josef – It's something Joe Stump showed me. He taught me how to make use of economy picking while playing scales. Pretty simple, but very effective.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Josef – Stringwinder. It makes changing strings way more easy!

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Josef – As I've written before the flamenco guitar style is very impressive.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Josef – I had guitar lessons for six years. When I think back, I just wanted to learn how to play songs by Metallica.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Josef – Having fun while playing guitar. Some guys are too serious.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Josef – Others shall judge that.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Josef – I love it! Can you call a guitar without a Floyd Rose a guitar? Joking aside, tremolo systems are a great invention.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Josef – Just to turn my guitar on or off to avoid noise.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Josef – No, I don't think so. Music is complete artwork, so everyone in the band should give their best.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Josef – I don't like used guitars. They become battered by me.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Josef – I think he has been mentioned a lot, but I guess I agree with many others by saying Steve Vai. He has an incredible technique & always tries to break frontiers. The same applies for Buckethead with the difference that he may be crazy. But amazing!

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Josef – Come to the shows, buy the CDs. I need the cash! For the people who are as poor as I am: check out the MySpace pages.

QRD – Anything else?

Josef – Thanks for reading & don't take yourself too seriously.

Jordan Barger of Arte Povera
December 2010

Name: Jordan Barger

Bands: Arte Povera, The Diana Situation

Websites: myspace.com/artepoveramusic,
Soundcloud.com/personal_records

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jordan – An Oscar Schmidt by Washburn Acoustic with a flame-top maple style. It was my Step-Chad's guitar before me. I found it in a closet in my house & started teaching myself in the summer of 2008 then played my first show with CJ Boyd & My Empty Phantom in winter of 2008. It's been a great guitar since then. Although I recently broke the headstock in a show in Roanoke by throwing it. I'm surprised it's lasted this long, my sets have been known to have theatrics including the guitar, throwing it, hitting it against cymbals etc. She's in the shop for now; I hope she's alright.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jordan – Usually, the acoustic guitar through my crappy pedals (a mixture of Danelectros, homemades, & low end craigslist Boss pedals) on

my awesome custom pedal board me & Step-Chad made. This all runs into my “I don’t have much money but I want something loud” 2x12 Crate. I just got some nice pedals for Christmas & I’m eyeing a Fender Twin Reverb.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jordan – For me, it’s an understanding of how all the parts work together because of the acoustic guitar. If you’ve ever played an acoustic guitar through pedals, it’s not quite as easy. So, I’m very hesitant to borrow equipment because of that. I once borrowed an amp from Bryce Eiman for a Chapel Hill Nightlight show; when I pressed my first pedal, it was all feedback.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jordan – I have a Crate 2x12. I have it because it’s cheap & it’s the best I could get. It isn’t a bad amp, it puts up with the constant moving I put it through with being a college student & traveling musician. I also have a small Peavey practice amp that was my dad’s. It’s like 30 watts but it’s a beast. Me & my friends call it the “instant shoegaze machine.” It has two irrelevant buttons that say “Thick” & “Saturation” that just give you this great dirty hazy tone. We use it for little jams, but it doesn’t have

enough power for shows sadly. (And I'm too poor to get a PA or play venues with PAs)

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jordan – The acoustic Oscar Schmidt is what I play all my shows with as Arte Povera. It's my show guitar because it is the perfect blend of good tone & cheap guitar to create “noise folk” with (my own little genre I've carved for myself). It also carries my aesthetic well. (Which is the equivalent of Gene Simmons of KISS loving his ugly axe bass.)

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jordan – A hollow-body Jazzmaster with an f-hole, active delay circuitry, & lots of fret buzz.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jordan – A combination reverb & fuzz pedal, kind of like how Devi-Ever makes those twin pedals. It would also be made of wood or Lego's.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jordan – Now, sadly only two. My acoustic & a Squier Jagmaster. The Squier is pretty great, but I always look at it & wish it was a Jazzmaster. Oh well, once again any guitar that puts up with me throwing them around is a good enough guitar for me.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jordan – Nowhere special, wherever I am, they are.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jordan – A special place for capos. I'm a capo man & I always have to take it off & lose it in the abyss of tabs, notes, scales, & picks.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jordan – If I can trade in my Jagmaster & my Xbox in for it or not.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jordan – I think guitars are rightfully priced. Keeping nice guitars out of grubby handed young'un's hands is a good thing. I don't need the

\$1200 Jazzmaster I want & a nice Taylor or Martin wouldn't last three shows with me.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jordan – No, I stick to what I have usually. I think about it a lot & never go through with it. Unless you count adding a pickup to my acoustic. It's the LR Baggs model; it's a great pickup.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jordan – Very much so. It's more of a love affair/readying the nest kind of thing. Like looking a girl up on Facebook before going on a date with her.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jordan – No, very rarely. Sometimes if I have to travel light or decide if I'm using my phonograph or tapes.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jordan – I like my tone to be as close to the actual sound of my acoustic as possible. & then the noise to be as close to Flying Saucer Attack as possible.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jordan – Aforementioned Jazzmaster & Twin Reverb. Fender owns my soul. I also would like a 12-string acoustic. Also, Fender Jaguars, Hopf Saturn, old archtop jazz guitars, the whole Devi-Ever pedal line, & some more Boss pedals would be nice too.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jordan – Maybe soft strings or something. I always tell everyone I know that guitar is one of the easiest instruments to play & they stop because their fingers hurt. That & a built in laptop to look up their favorite artists' tabs, that's how I learned.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jordan – Best was that LR Baggs pickup. It's a solid Tim Duncan in my guitar squad, does all the work, performs wonderfully & doesn't have an ego.

Worst was a Boss Distortion DS-1 that I stole from Best Buy. Thought I was cool for stealing it, then I plugged in the wrong adapter & it popped & smoke went everywhere. So, now it's my albatross in my pedal collection. A busted DS-1.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jordan – I'm not crazy about Line 6 amps & amp modeling. I like amps to have their own personalities. All of those amps sound so digital as well. But some people like that for speed metal & all that. I also don't like Deans & all those guitars that look like you could get stabbed by them.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jordan – “The Moon” by The Microphones. It's one of my favorite songs & I can check if the bass strings are in tune. I can tell high string notes by ear but have trouble with lower notes. Comes from my unavoidable Western conditioning.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jordan – 17. I'm 19 now. Am I the youngest ever on QRD? I'm only two years older than QRD, hope Brian is okay with that.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jordan – Definitely now. I work very hard at guitar playing I must say. One of the few things I work really hard at. I finally feel at home with a guitar & I sometimes even improvise live. Beforehand, everything was very heavily rehearsed & composed (even when I went into practice sessions with other band members).

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jordan – I believe I think in patterns & guitar rewards that. It's a very pattern oriented instrument, with fingerpicking patterns & chord progressions. I also feel at home with its universality & variety. Guitar is probably (next to voice) the most varied instrument in style. You have jazz, rock, experimental, metal & world & millions of styles therein. & no two guitarists are the same, which may be true for other instruments; I might be biased.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jordan – No, I do love guitar but I think piano should come first. Piano is a wonderful visualization of notes & our Western 12 note system that we use. Even for experimental musicians, knowing piano is incredibly important.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jordan – Definitely as an ally. I see my writing process as wandering around with my guitar & me picking out what sounds I want to. So, I may steer & select, but it really all comes from the guitar.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jordan – Firstly & foremost Phil Elvrum of The Microphones/Mount Eerie. Also, Flying Saucer Attack, Rob Crow of Pinback, The Tallest Man On Earth, Six Organs of Admittance, Thuja, CJ Boyd, Andrew Weathers, & Remora.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jordan – A little bit, if it gets out of hand. I only go as far as using female pronouns for my acoustic & sometimes referring to my Jagmaster as Jagmeister with a soft J, as my friend Thorbjorn called it in honor of him. I haven't slept with any of them yet or anything like that.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jordan – Very recently cracking the headstock by dropping/throwing my guitar. I've also cracked both of my guitars by hitting them against cymbals. It's a shame that doing so makes such great noises. I love the sound of all your pedals on & a dropped guitar. Beautiful.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jordan – Work on fingerpicking patterns with or without a guitar. I'll tap on a table or just use a simple G major chord & see how many different ways I can pick it.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jordan – I try to play at least one hour a day. If I'm not busy or just not paying attention I can play for 3

hours no problem. I'd love to just live in the country side & do nothing but play guitar & teach myself cello, but I have to go to college right now.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jordan – I use those blue ones with the turtle on them. Tortex? I use them because they're made in America, they're covered in chalk & they have the perfect balance of hardness & flexibility. You can tremolo pick, strum or pick with those things. Not that I use picks for much of anything except hard strumming. I'm a fingerpicking kinda guy.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jordan – Elixir mediums on my acoustic. D'Addario Jazz/Rock on my electric. Elixirs because they just sound great & are golden. Jazz/Rock's because they sound okay & break a lot.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jordan – When I break them or they just look gross.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jordan – Acoustic, rarely. Electric way too often. I forget that electrics don't matter how hard you strum them.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jordan – For the longest time, I've put more emphasis on my strumming hand for fingerpicking. But I've been trying to match them by adding embellishments with hammer-ons during picking. Getting fancy. Also, I really hate barre chords. Does anyone actually use those stupid things?

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jordan – I'm really terrible about things like string action & fret buzz so I usually just ignore it & live with it. I don't mind some fret buzz on high frets, since when I'm using those frets I usually have all my pedals on anyway. So, no I rarely do it myself or send it to a tech.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jordan – Standard & lots of capo. Whenever I toy with tunings, I end up ruining guitars. Like I once borrowed my best friend Daniel's Squier Strat after my electric was stolen. In grieving my stolen guitar, I painted the Strat & put in a low F-G-C-D-D-low F tuning. Putting a low E string where a high E goes

pretty much destroyed that guitar. It sure sounded cool though.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jordan – With my own ideas, I try to keep them to memory. That's how I know they're good & worthwhile to me. I'll tab out themes sometimes & other times write down chord patterns. When I get a collection of songs down pat I write them all down together.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jordan – Pretty low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jordan – Switching from fingerpicking to pick strumming faster. I just don't practice it.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jordan – For me, banjo & bass.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jordan – Barre chords to see if they're actually worth it. That or rhythm guitar. Being able to blend into a band better would be awesome for me.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jordan – Learning note placement.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jordan – Hammer-ons during fingerpicking. Makes you sound REAL fancy.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jordan – Capo for sure. They're cheap & open up so many possibilities for sure. I'd love an Ebow, but they're too expensive for me to rationalize buying one for myself. Rather get a new pedal or a cheap Squier Strat.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jordan – Bends & tremolo bars. For someone who loves dissonance, I can't seem to find a way to utilize these techniques.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jordan – Before I started teaching myself, a man named Cyrus Pace gave me a couple lessons. I learned a G Major Chord, that's all.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jordan – Lose your pick in between every song, throw your glasses off as you play & fingerpick.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jordan – I've never been able to use them with a clean tone. From a design perspective, I think they look great. I have a Jagmaster, which is basically a Jazzmaster with humbuckers & a Strat tremolo instead. With that tiny tremolo system, it just doesn't look nearly as beautiful.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jordan – I like putting it all the way down & having that Grouper tone. You know, like your underwater or something. Rarely in serious situations though.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jordan – I see the lead as the person who directs the song, both compositionally & sonically.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jordan – Not usually. As much as I love guitar, I usually look for singing if there is anyway, than just basic band dynamics.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jordan – Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine's Jazzmaster. I'm waiting & hoping for the day they release a signature Jazzmaster for him & Tom Verlaine of Television. I'd also love to have that cool archtop acoustic that Jeff Mangum always used. I think it was a Silvertone?

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jordan – I'm a big fan of Rob Crow of Pinback, it's so good because it's technical but you can't even tell. It's tight, spindly & melodic but not showy He plays a lot of piccolo bass too, which is a sweet instrument you don't see much of. My other favorite guitarist is whoever arranges guitar for Dilute. Some of the most beautiful stuff I've ever heard with just a clean tone. I'm jealous of that. I also love the guitar work of Storm & Stress, The Tallest Man on Earth, Mount Eerie, & Do Make Say Think.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jordan – In my newest songs, a collection of songs entitled Archipelago. Songs about how man is not an island, but a chain of islands. It's me finding me place between The Tallest Man On Earth & Dilute stylistically. I'm gonna record them all acoustic & release them off of my label, Personal Records.

QRD – Anything else?

Jordan – Silber, & now QRD, has always been so good to me for little to no reason. Big thanks to Brian, Andrew Weathers, & CJ Boyd; you guys are my music mentors & you might not even realize it.

Zachary Corsa of Lost Trail

December 2010

Name: Zachary Corsa

Bands: Lost Trail

Websites: twitter.com/losttrailnc,

losttrailnc.wordpress.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Zachary – My very first guitar was an inexpensive acoustic that a cousin gave me for a gift when I was seven. I don't recall if it even had a brand. It's no longer playable, but my mother's an artist professionally, so she had the skills to turn it into some really awesome collage/wall art. So currently it's in my music room (extra bedroom), on the wall. My first electric, at ten, was a Washburn Strat copy. No idea what became of it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Zachary – My primary guitar is a red & white Ibanez Jet King (dual humbucker edition). This is run through –

1. Morley Pro Series volume pedal
2. Boss Blues Driver overdrive/distortion
3. Behringer Ultra Feedback distortion/sustain

4. Behringer Space Chorus
5. Danelectro Tuna Melt tremolo/vibrato
6. CoPilot FX Android ring modulator
7. Danelectro Dan-Echo delay
8. Boss RV-5 digital reverb
9. Danelectro Surf n' Turf compressor

I also run a separate channel off my board which begins with a CoPilot Arrow white noise generator & runs through a Boss Super Phaser & a RAT distortion/fuzz on the way to the amps. This secondary channel generally goes to a small Fender Frontman 65R solid state, while the guitar channel goes to a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe. Besides this, I run any other samples/loops off of my MacBook. For accessories I like to use anything from an Ebow to a violin bow to a glass bottleneck slide to a screwdriver.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Zachary – I'd say effects have the most to do with the sound of the works, although I definitely couldn't be producing music like this relying on a solid state amp alone. I think the warmth a tube amp provides is crucial for this music. I think when I'm playing live that using both amps for a stereo effect is fairly crucial.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Zachary – Hot Rod Deluxe. The tube amp sound, the warmth that especially a tube amp provides, is unparalleled. I also own a vintage early-1980s Peavey Bandit that I adore but is badly in need of repair.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Zachary – Ibanez Jet King. I LOVE this guitar. I’ve had it for about three years. Prior to this I owned a Jazzmaster & I had the option of a Mustang in the shop instead of the Jet King, but what impressed me about the Jet King was its ability (surprising for an inexpensive guitar) to successfully mimic the sounds of many more expensive instruments. With inexpensive parts it’s needed a lot of upkeep, especially the input jack, but it’s been well worth it. Any guitarist should know how to properly solder to begin with. I should also note that it’s had professional intonation & neck-straightening services performed. I’m not a fan of most other Ibanez guitars or products (too metal for my tastes), but this one’s a real “hidden gem.”

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Zachary – Well anyone who’s seen me play has seen how much kitsch I glue & stick to any

available surface of an instrument to make it my own, from toy birds, to fake panic buttons, to stickers. I suppose a Zachary Corsa Jet King would have to reflect that DIY aesthetic of making an instrument “your own.” As far as playability, there’s almost nothing I’d improve on the Jet King’s design, except that my model would have a tremolo bar, which my JK sorely lacks.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Zachary – It would have to be something that made a hellish sound. My wife & my friends definitely know how much I love pure feedback & white noise. I always tell people I go for an effect that sounds something like “a vacuum cleaner melting in hell.” Boss/Digitech/MFX, take note. Harness that in a pedal, please.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Zachary – Besides the Jet King, I own a seafoam Danelectro U2 reissue & two acoustics, one a Fender & one a Yamaha. I own many, many instruments besides guitars, which I couldn’t even begin to inventory here.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Zachary – They're almost always in their cases or bags when I'm not recording/touring/playing shows, although since I tend to sit around with one slung around my neck a bit, I can get kind of slack in this regard. My wife keeps saying I need guitar hangers, but I can't remember ever owning any in the past.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Zachary – Bigger pockets/compartments! Or at least ones tailored for certain things, like a certain pick compartment, certain string compartment, etc. Or they could be covered in candy. Candy is always a plus. Like the witch's house in Hansel & Gretel, but in the form of a guitar case. I guess then you'd eat the whole case, though.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Zachary – I think playability is something that should be high on any guitarist's list. A guitar with quick action is important to me. I don't want my fingers getting tangled by a substandard fretboard. Playability & action. I think another concern, with how hard I play guitar, is how well it retains its tuning throughout the various adjustments & knock-arounds. A guitar that can really keep its tune is worth its weight in gold to me.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Zachary – Glancing through the catalogues lately, it seems like the price of a good instrument is only getting higher, while the budget brands are just becoming cheaper/more cheaply made. The gap between is distressing & that's where the price of a decent instrument should fall, in my opinion. The Jet King I own was about four hundred dollars new & I can't imagine paying much more than a couple hundred over that for an instrument, not with how hard I play. I would be way too cautious to play in my normal style with some ridiculously pricey Les Paul. Also, I think people make the mistake of buying inexpensive instruments for their kids when they're learning, out of worry they'll give up on it. But little is more discouraging than learning on an inferior instrument & that could cause someone to give up anyway. I think an instrument is what you make of it, but I do think a fine quality product also aids you in becoming a better player.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Zachary – The Jet King was immediately taken to get the neck straightened/intonation done, & the pots & knobs replaced with higher-end components. Other than that, I'm pretty happy with the stock

humbuckers & such. I'd rather buy a new interesting pedal than customize my guitar too much. My guitar stays on the same pickup & tone settings usually, but my effects are always shifting. They're the things I like to toy with.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Zachary – I definitely take more time with guitars than effects. Effects I usually go by what my musician friends tell me & the reviews online. I'm a bit of an introvert to just go down to Ye Olde Music Shoppe & start jamming away. So I guess the opinion of my peers is just as crucial to me as trying the item out myself.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Zachary – I'm constantly looking for a better, more efficient way to chain my effects together, within my limited budget. I'm lucky to have the support to do music full-time, but the caveat is that I certainly can't afford all the toys I'd like. So I tinker endlessly to try to get as much as I can out of my inexpensive gear. I've never needed a complicated rig of effects (rack setups & all that is just beyond my technical understanding as a person, anyway), just the basics. But I do like to make the most of what I have & milk it for what it's worth.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Zachary – With the kind of ambient/post-rock/avant garde stuff I tend towards, there's a pretty standard setup that I try not to fuss with too much. You know the story: lots of delay & hall reverb with added or subtracted components here & there. That seems the base element in most of the Lost Trail songs that feature guitar, which are still somewhat of a minority compared to all the piano recordings.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Zachary – I'm very happy with my guitar, if you didn't guess by now, but just for variety of sound, it would be lovely to still own the Jazzmaster I had in college (sold for bill money) & I've always wanted to find a good condition original Mosrite Venture. Amps, I've always very much desired a nice Orange stack, just for the sheer power. My pedals are basically enough for me, but Matt Guess of The White Cascade recently posted one hell of an Ebay find on his Facebook that I burned with envy over, a 1986 Japan-made Boss HF-2 Hi-Band Flanger. Rare oddities like that are when I wish I had the disposable income to pull the trigger.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Zachary – If we're talking electrics, thorough pickup selectors & tone selectors of an easily-understandable variety. Sometimes it seems like these companies skip on the features like that & it really hurts a new player. Understanding the differences in tone & neck-vs-bridge pickup are as important as learning scales & tuning & stringing, in my opinion.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Zachary – Best was the Jet King, hands down. No further comment needed. Worst wasn't that bad, but probably a vintage 1964 Teisco knockoff/pawnshop guitar that I won off Ebay for around seventy bucks. The guitar just didn't translate to modern amps, & the pickups were so painfully microphonic that you'd get a god awful knocking sound any time your pick tapped the pickup covers. Flat, flat, flat sounding. Lesson learned, what looks cool/kitsch sometimes just plain sucks.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Zachary – Danelectro & Behringer are two pedal companies I like to speak out in defense of against ritual abuse. Yes, they make cosmetically lousy pedals, cheap plastic & easily breakable. But the sound has always been interesting in Behringer's case & dependable in Danelectro's. & Danelectro has some of the nicest customer service people in the world, the kind that will send you more replacement parts than you asked for, free of charge, no questions asked. I've had two Danelectro guitars I've enjoyed as well. In terms of pedals I also own two really unique boutique units (white noise generator, ring modulator) by a company from the Dominican Republic called CoPilot FX & I can't say enough on what these have done for my sound, with fine craftsmanship & very affordable prices. You certainly can't go wrong with Fender for guitars or amps – in both cases, nothing sounds like either one. I've never been a weighty/bluesy guitar guy (Gibson, Gretsch). It always has to be that bright, clear, wet Fender sound & the Fender tube amp tone is just golden.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Zachary – I guess it varies. Usually I just play around with random notes & chords to warm up a bit. There isn't a particular warm-up song I go for, though there was a time when I played the theme

music from “Fargo” quite regularly as a nice, gentle warm-up. It’s still a beautiful, haunting piece I’d love to cover properly someday.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Zachary – Seven, but I didn’t begin getting serious until ten or so.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Zachary – Probably my very early twenties. At least, I think I developed what I consider as my “personal sound” around then. That’s when I really settled into my identity as a guitarist & became comfortable with my limitations & my specific skills. Once you peak out as a technical musician, you can begin to tear those walls down.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Zachary – Guitar is an incredibly versatile instrument, one of a few that you can truly compose music on unaccompanied. I also think it’s a great beginner’s instrument. But there have been times when I wished I was trained in classical instruments from a young age, as well, for the technical balance,

as I can't read music & I'm entirely self-taught in this field, which has caused miscommunication when recording with more classical players, such as string performers. Partially as a challenge to myself & partially out of feeling boxed in by just being a guitarist, I've branched out into other instruments in my own clumsy way, such as drums, & especially piano. My growing love for piano was the genesis for Lost Trail, though I certainly don't really know what I'm doing on piano most of the time. But I still consider myself simply a guitarist.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Zachary – In concordance with what I said above, I think it's a great first instrument in many ways & it's understandable why people go for it so often, but also a limiting one in other ways. For the serious music student, I would recommend learning both, to give you the perspective of something as primal & instinctual as guitar, with also the classical discipline of something such as violin or piano. I also think guitar makes a great first instrument in terms of affordability on the parents' end. Of course, I'm also of the mindset that everyone, no matter their chosen field in life, should know a little bit of one musical instrument.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Zachary – For most of my musical life it's definitely been an ally; pushing the sonic boundaries of the instrument, seeing new things I can do with it has brought me great pleasure. When it feels adversarial, in the past it's frustrated me, as I didn't know how to play anything else. When I felt I wasn't getting the right sound across with guitar, I'd throw up my hands. That's why I've branched out into other instruments, for color & texture when guitar won't do. It's given me a second wind in my love for music & broadened my palette, so I can see guitar now as more of an arrow in the quiver, rather than the only weapon in my arsenal.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Zachary – When I was younger, my two twin poles of guitar influence were definitely Billy Corgan for colorful guitar bravado & Jonny Greenwood for inventiveness & using dissonance as a weapon in the song's favor. Thurston Moore & J. Mascis were important a bit later on & when I began to shift towards the post-rock end of things, Efrim Menuck & Stuart Braithwaite (another proud Danelectro pedal user). If I had to pick an absolute favorite influential guitarist though, it would be a painful

three-way tie of Ira Kaplan, Ian Williams, & Doug Martsch; & with a gun to my head I'd say Ira Kaplan would probably win. If there's one guitarist whose style has influenced me the very most, then I would say Kaplan hands down.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Zachary – I think it depends on someone's personality. For me, my guitar is definitely a friend, a companion, even a loved one. But it isn't a person & doesn't compare to my wife, my family, my human friends, even my cat. So I see no point in naming it, nor naming cars. Giving a house a name, however, might be an exception....

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Zachary – I have no moral objection to smashing instruments in the name of art (although it has become a bit of a cliché/showboat moment over the history of popular music), but it's not something I can afford to do. Basically, to get the kind of noise I want & the visual spectacle I hope for, I'm as rough with my guitars as I can be without seriously harming them or their playability. What I do looks worse than it actually is. I don't know if I'd be

different if I were Mr. Moneybags, either, sweet noises from the smashing or not.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Zachary – My mind kind of goes into a trance-like little nothing place when I'm absently practicing, so I guess I don't really think much on it. Half the time I'm multitasking on the computer, too, so I'm not paying a terrible amount of attention, probably. Guitar is something I can give partial attention to throughout the day.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Zachary – Ironically, & I think a lot of my peers would say this, I've found that as I've gotten busier with shows & booking tours & recording, I've paradoxically begun to play/practice much less. I usually write melodies in my head when I'm doing other things (out for a walk, driving around on errands) & that's when I race home & drag everything out & record it so I don't forget, either for real or on a pocket recorder. Otherwise, I'm often too busy answering emails or spending time with my wife & friends to be bothered dragging it all out & setting it all up in our little house. I guess I'd like to play more than I do, but I'm a goal-

oriented guitarist. If I don't have a song I'm recording in mind, it's harder these days to just sit there & aimlessly pluck, which has until now been my habit. If I had a more proper space to play in, I'm sure I would play more often.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Zachary – Dunlops, the orange ones. I used to use the Grey Nylons religiously for years, but the thickness of the orange ones is just about perfect for what I do. I've never even broken one that I can recall.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Zachary – 10s, usually Ernie Ball or GHS. Strong enough to handle my playing but not to weigh down the sound too much or hinder my dexterity. They also rarely break on me, though if I'm guilty of one vice as a guitarist, it's that I don't change my strings enough.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Zachary – When they break (pretty rarely!). I hate changing strings, something about it bores me to tears & makes me impatient to just get it over with & then I hate having to constantly retune for hours afterwards. So I'm very, very careful.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Zachary – Very, very rarely. My guitar playing is a lot of single-string picking & the noise I make isn't thrashy power-chords. The effects pedals I use let me make noise without being too hard on the strings, which I'm grateful for. There's nothing worse than popping a string during a set.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Zachary – I think they're about equally matched. My fretting hand is fairly strong & I've worked hard on my strumming hand over the years to where I'm happy with how I play things & the way I approach the instrument. I think my dexterity with my fretting is very important to my compositions.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Zachary – I do minor repair work myself, but I've taken anything major or intensive to Bluesmaster Guitars in Durham. They do a great job for a very reasonable cost & their turnaround is pretty quick as well. I'm not a technical person with guitar/electronics whatsoever. I trust others who use that part of their brain to do me a solid.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Zachary – Standard. I've never used alternate tunings, partially out of fear that I'd find something cool & forget what I was tuning to. Not being able to read music certainly doesn't help in this regard. Standard seems to work appropriately for the mood I want my music to get across. The only time I tune down is when my elderly 1915 piano falls enough out of tune that I have to find somewhere between keys to match the guitar to what I'm doing on piano; which happens, unfortunately, too often.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Zachary – I can read tab & did when I was younger, but if I come up with something I'm very good about committing it to memory. If it's something I think I'll forget, I carry around a little Sony digital pocket recorder for quick idea recording. Since a lot of my stuff is willfully lo-fi/bad technology, there's been times when I've preferred what I've recorded on there & its rather limited sound quality & that's what I'll transfer into Logic. There's something about impulsive recordings, less pressure to get it exactly right, that appeals to me. On occasion I have written things down with the vaguest of notes. If I write something & then note "creepy Emin buildup"

or “uplifting G-D-C progression” then I tend to remember what that means.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Zachary – It’s at its lowest setting for comfort, but I play sitting down for convenience.

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Zachary – Over-thinking what I’m doing & worrying too much about replicating what I’ve recorded in the live environment instead of leaving any room for improvisation. I also play the soft melodies too softly at times.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s guitar playing?

Zachary – Piano. I wish I had started trying to learn piano years & years ago. It’s given me a whole new appreciation of guitar.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Zachary – I’m mediocre at a lot of styles (finger-tapping, slide guitar, bow, screwdriver) at which I

wish I could improve, actually. I've never been one to envy virtuoso showboat Yngwie types, though. I hope one thing my music gets across is a sort of subtlety.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Zachary – I've never come away from a show saying to myself, "That was a perfect show, you really impressed them." I think I'm too much of a perfectionist & self-critic to ever be satisfied with any live performance. I'm much happier recording, though there are things I love about playing live, that sort of charged, intense environment. Perhaps someday I'll feel like I put on a really great show, but I think some self-criticism in the name of improvement is helpful for artistic development.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Zachary – I've recently begun experimenting with a violin bow & screwdriver playing. Both of these are difficult enough to be a challenge, but also rewarding enough to be thrilling. I hope to utilize these more in the future. Treated/prepared instruments fascinate me, ever since I discovered John Cage & Glenn Branca.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Zachary – I use slide more than anything. That mournful, almost train-whistle sound really has a firm place entrenched in a lot of my guitar-based work, & because I feel like the atmosphere of where I live, the identity of the region, is important to the works, it has a certain Southern quality I really appreciate. I love my Ebow, but I find I use it less now that I’m not playing as traditional ‘post-rock’ anymore. I’ve never really used a capo, though I think there’s one around somewhere. One thing I used to have was a sustain clamp that fastened to the headboard of the guitar that improved sustain & clarity. I wish I knew where that thing went....

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Zachary – Bow playing. Absolutely. What Jonsi does with a bow is mesmerizing. & I’ve always wanted to learn cello or viola, so maybe this is the closest I’ll get! To me, guitar will never sound as beautiful as a cello.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Zachary – I took about a year of guitar lessons when I was ten & eleven, from a teacher at Performance Music in Westfield, Massachusetts, just before I moved to North Carolina. That year was incredibly beneficial in terms of disciplining me & getting me to really focus on learning the basics & techniques of guitar. Before that I was very aimless & haphazard in my interest, but the lessons really crystallized my connection with it. Once we moved to NC, I felt I was learning swiftly enough on my own that lessons were no longer crucial.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Zachary – It's probably a cliché to say I would teach someone how “not to play their instrument,” but I think that has some truth with someone self-taught like myself. I think the way I play guitar, the uniqueness of my style & some of the more unusual, creative things I do, both sound-wise & technique-wise, come from me being mostly untrained & self-taught. I think there's an advantage to learning something against the grain of an accepted status quo, as opposed to an art school mentality of unswerving rigor.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Zachary – Half the time I'm not so much playing as making as much racket & pure sound as I can. I think I would tell someone trying to emulate my style to “make noise first, try to play guitar second.” So much of what I do is in pursuit of the most affecting feedback or colorful noise swell. There's something mad-scientist-like about pushing the listener's limits/endurance that really thrills me & charges me. I try to make everything such an experience.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Zachary – One of my favorite pedals is my Danelectro Tuna Melt tremolo/vibrato, though I don't use it a whole lot. I just love the sound. I very much wish I had a tremolo bar on my guitar, just to have another toy to mess around with live. However, one downside of those is certainly the compromises in the tuning you end up with.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Zachary – Never. I don't do harsh crunch, as noisy as I get I like a thick & creamy fuzz. So the tone is always jacked to 10. If any of the pedals have a tone knob, that's jacked, too.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Zachary – I think in terms of a more “classic rock” band it makes sense. One guitar solos & creates a counter-melody within the framework of the piece, while the other holds the structure-end with the bass & percussion. But even in more traditional bands I’ve played in, I’ve never understood the assigned roles in that way. I’m neither lead nor rhythm as a guitarist, I don’t think. When I’ve played with other guitarists, the lines of context blurred & we were just different style guitarists doing different things, to different ends.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Zachary – Not to me. As I’ve said, I’m a perfectionist, especially in terms of rhythm & a poor drummer can especially ruin a band in my opinion, since its one of the more audible instruments. I cringe at shows when this happens to be honest & if a drummer goes off-beat it ruins the experience for me. I’m not the most skillful drummer, but I try to stay conscious of what I’m doing beat-wise. I think if a lot of drummers stuck to their basics more instead of anticipating the fills & little flashes, there’d be more success to that end. But I’m a guitarist first & a drummer second, so I’m probably inexperienced to judge this. To me though, there’s a special electricity when a band is all locked in together just right & if one part of that is

off, it's like a car with an engine problem. The cupholders & the stereo may be pretty & functional, but you're not leaving the parking lot.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Zachary – Jimi Hendrix's. Not to play it, but so I could auction it off for a pretty penny at Sotheby's & finance building a really nice recording studio & practice space. There's an abandoned factory in downtown Graham for sale that I would love to turn into something really special. I think a swiftly plotted heist is in order.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Zachary – As long as Mr. Jonny Greenwood is alive, he will be not only one of the most innovative guitarists in my book, ever, but one of the most innovative musicians. I also think the triple guitar attack in Fang Island is doing something special & I think Isaac Brock from Modest Mouse is more creative than people tend to give him credit for. At least, that used to be the case. No one does harmonic bends like Brock did in the 90s.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Zachary – Come see me live! I try to play as much as possible, not just for the Benjamins/Cristal/bling, but because the people who really appreciate what I do are so kind & awesome about it. Or just pop over to the Lost Trail MySpace & scroll through all those pesky piano tracks until you find something with guitar in it. All the piano playing has made me miss guitar & rediscover my love for it, so there'll be more guitar songs to come. I'm especially proud of "Pilot & Passengers/Seventh Continent" from a guitar perspective, simply for the noise holocaust I managed to pull off at the end.

QRD – Anything else?

Zachary – It was a lot of fun doing this interview. Really creative questions that I think people don't ask musicians about their instrument very often, & I was glad to geek out & answer them. Thanks!

Ed Ricart of Matta Gawa
December 2010

Name: Ed Ricart

Bands: Matta Gawa; New Atlantis Collective;
Quartet w/Herb Robertson, Jason Ajemian, Andrew
Barker; Quartet w/David Taylor, Dominic Duval;
collaborations with Peter Brotzmann, Marc
Edwards, G. Calvin Weston, Marshall Allen of the
Sun Ra Arkestra, etc.

Websites: www.myspace.com/mattagawa,
www.newatlanticcollective.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Ed – My first guitar was a Fernandez Decade - a copy of a Fender Jaguar. I tried everything possible to turn it out & make it something unique - different pickups & other modifications without necessarily understanding what these things would do to the tone of the guitar.... I ripped all those modifications out a couple of years ago, sanded the finish down to natural, & I'm going to put some single coils in it & hopefully use it again. It's sitting in a case in the closet right now, in pieces!

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Ed – I generally run the same rig, regardless of the project, for the sake of convenience & to maintain the integrity of all my cables & what not - this means I probably play through much more than I use for any one gig. I run a Gibson ES-335 into a Teese Picture Wah, Boss PS-3, Boss DD-2, Ampeg Sub-Blaster, Crowther Hot Cake, Boss DD-3, Klon Centaur, Catalinbread Semaphore, Sweetsound Mojovibe, a custom 4ms Photocell Delay, Moog Ring Mod, Moog Phaser, Moog Freq-Box, Boss DD-20, Boss PS-5, Akai Headrush, Boss PS-2, & an Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail into a '66 Fender Bandmaster w/a 2x12" cabinet (with one Celestion G12h30, one Celestion Vintage 30). Now I'm sending an out from my Headrush or my DD-20 into a Gallien-Krueger GK-400RB pushing a Mesa/Boogie Road-Ready 1x18" (a monster cabinet built into a flight case!) to reinforce some of the loop stuff that I do.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Ed – Generally, any nice guitar into a tube amp will do me fine, with or without effects, but I am definitely partial to my own guitar - an ES-335 with an ebony fretboard - the humbuckers help keep the signal hot & the semi-hollow body feeds back beautifully!

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Ed – Though I primarily play improvised music, I grew up playing punk & rock influenced by releases on Touch & Go, Dischord, Homestead, & SST. Before downsizing to the ‘66 Bandmaster, I was running a Sunn Model T into an Ampeg V4 4x12”. To get a good sound out of a tube amp, you need to turn up the juice & get it to sing - & while it is impossible to capture the massive bottom-end resonance of a nice 4x12”, turning up a 100+ watt amplifier like the Model T to hit its sweet spot is kind of impractical when you’re playing improvised music - the Bandmaster is a solid simple circuit & it is not as obscenely loud as the Model T, even when you turn it up - so I guess the defining characteristic I value here is “versatility.”

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Ed – It is a Gibson ES-335 with an Ebony fretboard & block inlay. It is a “limited edition” model from 1999 that I found in the Czech Republic at a ridiculously low price - & it is blue.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Ed – I guess it would have to be this ES-335.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Ed – My 4ms Photocell/LFO delay is a custom job- it is basically a slap-back delay that can be synched to an LFO, & controlled with an expression pedal - the rate can also be controlled by a foot-switchable photocell, for some pretty wild sounds.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Ed – Right now I just have 3 & a bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Ed – In the closet, in their cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Ed – Cases are fine the way they are!

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Ed – I try not to buy guitars any more. I generally look for sustain & a nice full tone. Unless you want something else... I think it depends on the application you're purchasing for.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Ed – Fender recently upped their prices & the nice Gibsons are almost all overpriced custom jobs. Guitars are way more expensive than they should be - a nice guitar will probably cost a couple of grand, but I would obviously prefer to pay much less.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Ed – I try to buy what I need & stick with it or sell it!

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Ed – Typically, I'll check out what I can online, but I need to actually get my hands on something before I buy it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Ed – Not anymore!

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Ed – I do try to change tones as often as possible, for variety's sake.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Ed – I actually have my needs met right now- but I would love to get my hands on a Fender Bass VI or 1960s SG - also looking at getting a decent vintage combo & something low-wattage with EL84s.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Ed – Generally, the necks suck & are poorly finished - for example, sharp frets on student guitars overhang & poke over the edge of the neck/fretboard. That can easily discourage a kid from playing.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Ed – Everything I have now, I love. The ES-335 is particularly special - I haven't made too many terrible purchases, & when I do, I try to unload them as quickly as possible. I had a great DOD Buzz Box that was fun, but I never really used it & it's gone now unfortunately.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Ed – No qualms with anybody here!

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Ed – I try to keep it fresh & just play.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Ed – I was 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Ed – Hopefully I am still on my way there.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Ed – Guitar is just an instrument with a specific (though dynamic & multi-faceted) function - I try to play as many instruments as I can.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Ed – Drums were my first instrument, & I still love to play them. I think people should play whatever they are most drawn to & enjoy it! Though people have many great opportunities to make valuable statements with music, the process is supposed to be fun - & if people aren't doing what they want to do with their “hobby time”, they will probably not stick with it & do something else.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Ed – It's definitely an ally with a very useful purpose & whole range of unique applications.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Ed – Some favorites include Sonny Sharrock, Duane Denison from the Jesus Lizard, Fred Frith, Hendrix, Greg Ginn, Derek Bailey, Bern Nix, Masayuki Takayanagi, Marc Ribot, Agostino Tilotta from Uzeda, etc.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Ed – This is not for me to judge!

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Ed – I take good care of my gear & have so far been blessed with only minor scratches.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Ed – Nothing. I try to simply play as much as possible. I’d like to slow things down & play more on my own later this year!

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Ed – I generally play for at least 3-6 hours per week. I would like to play much more frequently. It really depends on whether I am in “gig mode” or “rehearsal mode” & what else is happening with curating my live music series & all that stuff. If possible, I would be playing all the time.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Ed – I use a Dunlop .88 Tortex pick, but may need to switch to something heavier!

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Ed – I use D’Addario 11s, but my Telecaster is strung with D’Addario 12s.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Ed – Usually after every gig - if I’m on the road, then I change strings after every three gigs.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Ed – If I don’t change them after every gig, it becomes possible for me to break them the next day.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Ed – They’re not quite equal, but generally, they can work together pretty well. My picking hand has to work a lot less.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Ed – I try to work on it myself, but often use a guitar tech to save myself the time.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Ed – I stick to standard tuning but mess around with a host of different tunings that sound pleasing to me.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Ed – I generally don't keep notes of what I'm working on & try to record ideas I would like to save for later. I prefer using abstract/graphic notation or simple tablature to get ideas across, but really it depends on the idea & who I'm presenting it to.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Ed – Around my waist.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Ed – I have been working on not using clichés, or stock phrases - I hate repeating myself musically & try to break free from repetition or copying myself.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Ed – Drumming helps, but I think musically inclined people should bite the bullet & just play everything they can get their hands on.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Ed – My fingerstyle playing needs work.

QRD – What’s a guitar goal you’ve never accomplished?

Ed – Probably fingerstyle playing - it needs work!

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Ed – Most of the tricks I’m learning involve tricks & techniques with pedals. My duo Matta Gawa with drummer Sam Lohman involves a lot of real-time looping of textures & “bass” lines all generated from the guitar & then blowing over the top of the loops. There’s plenty of cool loop manipulation & guitar processing, that often strikes me as stuff I haven’t done before. I try to play in a whole range of different settings, so that I’m forced to come up with new “tricks” on the fly.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Ed – I'm not a gadget man!

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Ed – I took some lessons from a great instructor in Prague named Tony Ackerman - an outstanding person & instructor & a student of the great trumpeter (& avant jazz legend) Bill Dixon. He really encouraged me to jump in & just play & it wasn't until years later that I recognized his connection to improvised music after reading an interview with him online. He succeeded in piquing my interest about music & did so with positivity & creativity that many guitar teachers are sorely lacking. I also took classes at Berklee, though they were primarily Gen Ed courses unrelated to music.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Ed – I think being able to trace a major scale up the whole neck of the guitar is a pretty important fundamental that keeps a lot of guitarists from soloing very early on in their relationship with the guitar. Once you can do that, you can play along to pretty much anything.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Ed – I try not to have just one style - hopefully the records I am making are different enough from one another to throw people off of my bag of tricks.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Ed – If you're talking about whammy bars, they're a drag & high maintenance, but some of them can do what they're designed to do without knocking you out of tune. If you're talking about tremolo pedals or vibrato units in amps, they're OK in my book!

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Ed – Often!

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Ed – In much of the music I listen to, the guitarists I really enjoy most are players who can bridge the gap & accomplish both at once - stepping up front & moving the melody along like a soloist, but still laying the rhythmic/harmonic foundation that rhythm guitarists are expected to accomplish - I am not a huge fan of the idea of anyone being a

dedicated “lead” or “rhythm” guitarist! The instrument allows for you to do both & any good soloist should be making a solid & unique rhythmic statement as well.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Ed – Everything needs to be firing on all cylinders to make a record work for me. Might be easier to listen to a bad guitar player with a killer band than a “good” guitar player with a terrible band.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Ed – I would probably go with Steve Albini’s Travis Bean. Those guitars are very special instruments & Albini has been a significant musical figure to me. He has obviously had some pretty outstanding guitar tones.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Ed – Kazuo Imai, Olaf Rupp, & Bill Horist are all outstanding, unique guitarists.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Ed – It is still to come- I would recommend some of the forthcoming Matta Gawa stuff to anyone interested in hearing the noisier/rockier/effects-drenched side of my playing. The two quartet records - one with Herb Robertson (trumpet), Jason Ajemian (bass), & Andrew Barker (drums), the other with David Taylor (bass trombone), Dominic Duval (bass), & Jay Rosen (drums), & the New Atlantis Octet records with Roy Campbell Jr. (trumpet), Steve Swell (trombone), Aaron Martin (alto), Jason Ajemian + Vattel Cherry (bass), & Sam Lohman & Andrew Barker (drums) are all decent examples of my playing in a jazz context.

QRD – Anything else?

Ed – Thanks very much!

Yair Yona
December 2010

Name: Yair Yona
Bands: Yair Yona
Websites: www.yairyona.net

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Yair – The first one was a bass guitar, G&L L-1500. I sold it three years later to buy a Fender Jazz Bass, which later I traded for my beautiful heartbreaking Rickenbacker.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Yair – I play acoustic guitars now, so I often use a mic to amplify the guitar, but if I'm in need to plug it, I go through the Boss tuner, Electro-Harmonix Reverb, "Levana" EQ booster, & the Line6 delay pedal.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Yair – The guitar, this is where it all starts.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Yair – My six string acoustic guitar En. En Guitars is a new manufacturer & my guitar was the second guitar he ever built.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Yair – I guess it will look like a Martin David Crosby signature & sound like a Lowden.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Yair – It will be an amazing pre-amp who can ditch the annoying mid-high of the strings.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Yair – Five.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Yair – I listened to my great great mentor Michael Jackson – & kept it in the closet?

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Yair – A more comfortable grip for the hard cases, it usually hurts badly after two minutes.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Yair – Sound & comfort, the looks isn't interesting.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Yair – What's a “good guitar”?

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Yair – I usually stick with what I got for couple of years.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Yair – Just play a couple of my songs. If it sounds better than the album – the guitar is mine.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Yair – Nope.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Yair – I prefer the warm & “woody” sound, but I’m open.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Yair – I would love to put my hands on an electric Rickenbacker slide guitar.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Yair – I think it’s very personal. I think the answer to that will be given by that person, after one year of playing & learning what to expect from a guitar.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Yair – I must say that all my purchases were great, it was years later I needed a better guitar.

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Yair – Some sort of a chord melody progression.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Yair – 15.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Yair – 27.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Yair – I don't. I still want to be a drummer, pianist, & a sax player.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Yair – I think, as much as it is a cliché, that it chooses you. Once you pick it up, you know if you are hooked by it or you should search for something else (piano?).

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Yair – So many. I think mostly it'll be Bert Jansch, John Fahey, Robbie Basho, Pierre Bensusan.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Yair – Natural. It's a part of you, like a third hand.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Yair – Banged my Rickenbacker bass to the wall while I was over-excited on a VERY small stage.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Yair – Reading interviews like this, to get some ideas from other players.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Yair – Lately I am hardly touching the guitar; of course I'd prefer it to be a 24/7 thing, but that thing called "life" is stuck in the middle.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Yair – A Dunlop thumb pick, the big ones. The most comfortable of them all.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Yair – 0.11 – it's a combination of strong strings that won't break easily as a result of my often changing tunings, but still light enough to play on.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Yair – Once every three weeks

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Yair – Once a week.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Yair – My strumming hand, it turns on my flamenco passion. Sadly, I'm not a good flamenco player.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Yair – I don't trust myself enough to fix the guitars, so I'm using the services of the Levana studio.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Yair – Open D, Open G, Open C, DADGAD, & other strange ones. I just search for an interesting harmony.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Yair – I don't write them down, I take the video camera & shoot myself playing, the best way to understand how I played a part.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Yair – I'm sitting.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Yair – The fact I'm impatient.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Yair – Piano, THE instrument.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Yair – I don't think I "can't" -- I just think I don't practice enough -- chord melody.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Yair – Play like Rory Gallagher!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Yair – Clean the guitar with lemon juice – does great things.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Yair – The partial capo -- I love it, everything sounds so exotic on it!

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Yair – Flamenco.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Yair – I took just a few, started with modes but didn't continue.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Yair – Listen to the thousands of records I've heard over the years. It all stars there.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Yair – I respect it & it respects me.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Yair – NO.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Yair – Richard Thomson's Louden – have you heard it? That's why.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Yair – James Blackshaw & Glenn Jones, these two are in a constant search.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Yair – On my first album Remember.

QRD – Anything else?

Yair – I'm tired.

Jeff Schneider of Arab on Radar
December 2010

Name - Jeff Schneider (aka Mr. Clinical Depression)

Bands - Arab On Radar, Made in Mexico

Websites - arabonradar.info, myspace.com/zodiaczoo,
youtube.com/madeinmexicoband

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jeff – A Peavey T-20, I sold it to a band member & bought an amp.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jeff – Travis Bean (Artist or Standard) guitar, through a Gallien Krueger head, through a Peavey tweeter cabinet, through a 4/12 Hi Watt guitar cab.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jeff – The tweeters definitely.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jeff – It really doesn't matter much, but the GK has mucho power & that works best.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jeff – “Yoko” my Travis Bean (#1118) Artist, she has an aluminum neck & has the direct, treble sound I enjoy. Plus, these guitars are workhorses, could be dropped out a 10 story building & still be in tune, no need to have a major set up often.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jeff – It would be one of these electrical guitars (a Travis Bean style guitar), they look real nice & I would have it be a shiny silver, possibly chrome colored body, almost like a Veleno but not so weird looking, more playable.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jeff – I guess it would be a remade Gibson Maestro FZ-1A Fuzz Box. It would just have a nasty fuzz that’s all. Maybe a wah wah. I always wanted a wah that stayed open, with some sort of a ball or rubber piece that you had to push down (with opposite resistance) I dislike how wah’s are just free hanging. I like the compressed sound of a wah, left open. So whatever that is, that’s what I’d like, ha

ha, guess it depends on what you are trying to play really.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jeff – Five.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jeff – Very poorly. Some are in cases, others just laying around my pad... it's bad, don't want to think about it.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jeff – Light weight, flyer friendly... some of these things are so bulky & weird that I can't use them. I just need a place for my picks, cords, & strings & pliers... a little pouch inside perhaps.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jeff – All sorts of things, but mostly, that they have a treble aspect to them. I like extreme sounds & when people describe that “creamy Hendrix tone” I puke. I prefer the opposite tone.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jeff – \$1000.00

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jeff – Some of them. But it is usually changing tuning pegs or the color of the guitar. I am a utilitarian player honestly.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jeff – I am always looking at Travis Beans, you can catch me on the forums about these guitars often. I usually play one first, be sure I am buying the exact model etc. that I like. I shop for tone & practical reasons.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jeff – I am in two bands – Arab On Radar & Made in Mexico, funny huh? For AOR I never change. For Made in Mexico my tone emulates a trumpet at times (tonally) & I do change amps often, guitars often (From Gibson SG to Fender Tele) & I sometimes use this Pod thing that I don't really like too much.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jeff – Mostly I have created my own tone, there are many underground bands out there right now (that most people will never hear of), but in that subculture my tone is known & people try to get at it & usually do. It is pretty organic actually, what I call “natural distortion” because I play clean through the amp, but once it hits & overdrives those tweeters it provides a very direct & amazing guitar sound. It takes distortion to a totally other level. Far beyond what a pedal could do. People seem to like it.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jeff – Oh, that Veleno. That guitar is a gem. I am sad that so many dipshits own the existing ones, people who never play guitar even & if they do it is such horrid music... For amps, I am not too picky. I'd love to build my own speaker cabinets some day, it'd be basic, just a 4/12, but with some real nice speakers in it.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jeff – A thin neck. I think you can learn better on a thin-necked guitar than on some thick one. It will be more rewarding to learn all those AC/DC riffs on a fast guitar.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jeff – I bought a hot pink Ibanez once & put a hot pink locking strap on it & a hot pink Andre the Giant sticker on it, & none of that was a good idea. The best was when I bought my Travis Bean Artist for \$300 in Nashville. It was one of those moments where the person selling it hated that “damn heavy metal guitar” & I was just sweating trying to keep from giggling like a child at it until I got out of the store. I got a steal on that one.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jeff – The list is too long in regard to effects. Amps, I dislike Ampegs because many of those amps are huge, bulky, not loud enough, weird tone, & farty. I also don't like Orange amps much either for the same reason. Guitars, I don't like Fender Strats because of the tone, Jaguars because of the tone & the tuning issues. I dislike most guitars built after 1980. I particularly hate those Paul Reed Smith guitars, sorry.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jeff – All kinds of crazy shit that scares the bejesus out of people. I play my own stuff, which is probably the most unorthodox riffage ever known to this planet, ever. I know that sounds arrogant, but I can think of very few exceptions to this claim, possibly improv, but that's it.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jeff – Twelve.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jeff – Oh, probably when I was 24.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jeff – My guitar is a part of me. Or more like my favorite tool, like a hammer that I use to build with. It matches my guitar playing perfectly.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jeff – Sure! I love guitar. You can always play bass after learning guitar.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jeff – Most definitely my ally, it channels like a lightning rod the signals I am projecting into the cosmos. I need it very much to make it all happen correctly. If my guitar is having a bad day then I am too. I always try to spend time with her before we do anything serious (big shows, recordings, etc.).

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jeff – Rowland S. Howard of the Birthday Party, Jimi Hendrix, Helios Creed of Chrome, Keith Levene of Public Image Limited, Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead & Noe Fachin of Juaneco y su Combo (Peru).

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jeff – Yes! That's why I laugh at myself for naming my guitars "Yoko", "Excalibur", "Tropicali", "Twangy" & "Gunny".

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jeff – I threw a hissy-fit at the Knitting Factory in NYC & threw my Travis Bean across the stage into their grand piano, chipped the piano & dented the headstock on my guitar. It was very very stupid. I am usually a calm person.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jeff – I/we do a lot of talking & setting up some reference points for what it is we are going to try to do. My music is real abstract & songs are an organic jam based process that is then subjected to a detailed editing process, then a song is present. That said, you need to be on the same page somewhat so that people aren’t playing “Free Bird” over here & Crass over there... for personal practice I usually noodle a bit, but that has no connection to the music I do honestly. Back when I was learning I used to play along to songs, I redefined the solos on almost all Hendrix songs! Probably for the worst.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jeff – I practice with a band 2 times per week for 3 or 4 hours per practice. I might play some acoustic on the couch for an hour a week, while watching CSPAN.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jeff – Jim Dunlop nylon picks, something around an 80mm, medium pick.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jeff – I use what I call 13s, which is usually GHS Boomers. I buy an extra 13 gauge single string because I play AADDAA tuning, the top A (typically the high E string) is tuned to a loose string sound, almost dangling. This is how I get some sounds. So it is weird.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jeff – About every 6th time I play the guitar live.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jeff – I used to all the time when I was using hard picks to get a more brilliant sound by those means. Once I switched to nylon, it is very rare. I may break a string due to the thrashing I do on the guitar

at times or over-bending a certain string, but it is rare.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jeff – Hmmm, not sure, I am a unique animal so I never really think of it that way. My guitar playing is very unorthodox & I am not sure people have caught up to understanding what I do for the most part. It is like asking Jackson Pollack about his brush stroke technique, before people understood what he was doing. My right (picking or plucking hand) plays real fast, I have perfected the speed when I need it, such as these mandolin-esque runs I do. My right (riffing hand) can do the job, I do get weird muscle strains at times when I am trying to play riffs that are bizarre & need to be precise. That's all I know.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jeff – If there is a problem I send it to my friends at BSharp music here in Providence, RI. They are just masters. A Travis Bean having no need to be intonated (since the neck goes right into the body as a piece of aluminum) I rarely send it out to them.

But my other axes I do, the Tele I play needs to be set up quite often.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jeff – I developed this raga sort of thing, which is AADDAA tuning, it helps to drone & play heavy low stuff (the low As help) & like I was saying about the top A it is a loose string, so that does all sorts of soaring octaves & weird stuff much like a sitar. It has been years in the making. I think the inspiration came from experimental bands like Captain Beefheart & many of the Chicago 1999 noise rock scene (US Maple, Scissor Girls, Flying Luttenbachers, Lake of Dracula & other bands no one knows). Maybe even a little old Sonic Youth? I hate to say that, but it's true. Once you start on a thing you kind of hone it & honestly (sorry to sound egocentric) but it was from listening to what I was working on & going with that idea to its end. So many tunings came out of this process. I also sometimes play (in Made in Mexico) standard tuning EADGBE.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jeff – I am a cretin. My ideas are communicated in real abstract ways “play something with a

Reggaeton beat” or “play some faster stuff” & the only notation (other than ALWAYS having a recorder going) is to write simple charts that say 8, 4, 8, breakdown, 8, end. Something like that. Or “Raga part for 8, Munster’s theme song part for 4, back to raga.”

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jeff – Bladder height. I play below the belly button & above the you know what.

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jeff – It is what it is & where I am coming from there are no mistakes, there is only raw emotion & an attempt to channel that out through the music. I am not a very technical player. My concerns are more with the mental state of those who I am playing with, meaning -- are they open-minded enough to travel into their own psychic power & tap the energy that makes good music good? I really think we as players are only a conduit for something bigger, not God or whatever (because I know that’s what people say) more like a 4th dimension, synchronicity, subconscious communication, ya know, the stuff we have yet to understand. Pretty hippy huh?

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jeff – Oh piano will certainly help. & any string instrument if you look at it from a physical perspective.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jeff – I wish I could just play straight up, like Robbie Robertson or Keith Richards, ya know, those guys who know all the riffs from a Blues Rock perspective. I envy that. I am way too radical to do it. I am trying to play more standard Salsa & Latin style nowadays so I will need to bone up. How well do trombone licks translate to guitar? I am not sure yet.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jeff – I have never gained any respect as a guitarist. People think it is noise, but they fail to see that it is just different. I would like to find that song or riff that is acceptable enough to open up the rest of the fringe stuff that is too challenging for the uninterested or ignorant ear. That playing would have to be a "gateway" style, like Zappa did, he let the fart joke mentality hook people in then he laid

down the most complex expressions of his time in many ways. I am not a big fan, but you have to credit the guy for seeing that his true stuff was too out there without the “gateway” stuff.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Jeff – Like a “hammer on” or something? I guess I learned how to let the bottom two strings drone while riffing on the top two; which sounds easy, but isn’t. My guitar talks to me, as does nature & I listen to it. I am not sure I can always repeat the exact sound it once made unless it lets me. For instance, I am fascinated with the sounds of environments, birds, cars, talking, yelling, jackhammering, buzzing of the city, which is my zone. I apply that to songs sometimes, like try to imitate a birdcall or a Harley revving up. I do this within narrow margins of what my guitar will do. So I limit myself to odd tunings & odd sounds & what comes out is usually, somehow, a song or musical offering. My tricks are just trying to get that guitar to do all sorts of tricks. Although as a kid I loved to do that “natural harmonic” trick & Eddie Van Halen had some neat stuff he did with the springs for his whammy bar on the back of his guitar. I learned all that shit.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jeff – Most definitely a slide. You can do amazing stuff with a slide. You can massacre a guitar riff with a slide. I love how the Ebow is used by The Edge of U2 in “With or Without You”, really sculpts the sound to bring out the emotions they were trying to convey. I guess that is Eno’s touch there....

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Jeff – Anything Latin... Chicha music interests me very much.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jeff – Horrid stories. Had a junkie guy who would nod off while teaching me, charged my parents for the hour. That was at Luca Music in RI. I showed up with a beat up acoustic guitar that was not intonated, the strings were an inch off the neck. He would just hand me his Jackson (metal guitar) & let me riff out aimlessly while he slept. It worked out OK. I took lessons from guys who went to Berklee. I got real technical in 1995 (when I was young) & then literally had to unlearn all I was taught. I just began to see music differently, more artistically & abstract. I am not turned on by much other than creative, unique sounds nowadays. I

rarely learn a cover song. I had to recently to impress some people while camping. It was all Buck Owens, Byrds, Ian & Sylvia & Beatles stuff though... ha-ha.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jeff – I have taught people before, many times. I think standard theory is good as a foundation. But endless scales & training can become a bore. I usually show them the main stuff get them to build chords, get a book for them to self teach & simultaneously just show them some Black Sabbath riffs (what they used to call power chords, 2 finger shit) so they can impress their friends. Can't lose them to Guitar Hero or Rock Band ya know.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jeff – Lose their mind. Just kidding, they would have to really listen to lot of underground music, collect it like baseball cards or comic books, become learned in what is current in the underground, know the history of what happened between 1990 & 2010 in the underground music scene. They also should research the forerunners to this movement, the nuggets that are out there that

inspired it. So, for instance, The Stooges, Birthday Party, Can, Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band, Chrome, PiL, Tubeway Army, back to Hendrix, Gong, etc. That would be the educational process. The actual playing I would describe as primal. Make noises that are made when you hand someone a guitar that has never touched one before, those are the best riffs. Hand someone a guitar who has never touched one before & ask them to try to play something that sounds like an army charging down a hill during the Civil War. Whatever that is would be close to what I try to do, but I am coming from the funnel at the other end. I do it intentionally & make some structures out of it that seem to appeal to the masses.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jeff – I am sorry I don't have one really. I am neutral. If you want it or need it then use it.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jeff – Never, took it off, duct taped over it.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jeff – Tone usually. Rhythm players are usually milky, creamy, muted & lead players are usually

trebly & do the solos loud over the other guitar. I am thinking of the Rolling Stones of course. If you look at good usage of this standard instrumental set up, a band like the Desert Rose Band (country rock), Chris Hillman sings & strums some rhythm guitar under the sweeping riffage of John Jorgenson. It is a supportive role aimed at filling out the sound & being a “solid band”. I think that works.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jeff – Sadly, no... I think it is the drummer that makes a band. You can absolutely suck, but if your drummer is good then the band is good. It is the audience’s fault for this. It’s the kick drum actually... that’s all. A good, fast, punchy kick drum is all you need to succeed.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Jeff – Well, that Veleno once owned by Keith Levene of PiL would be nice to own, because it is beautiful, amazingly made, rare & my fiancée collects modern lamps & décor & it would look nice in the loft I live in. Also, a Chet Atkins signature Gretsch would be nice, just because I bet it plays amazingly.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jeff – I think (& you should all Google this) that Marnie Stern is a guitar player's dream. She is tapping & doing some old school riffage that should be recognized in all guitar circles. She uses some pretty interesting pop melodies to hold it all together. It's kind of like what I was saying about a "gateway" music. I know many other obscure guitarists, but she is the one I'd like to give a shout out to because she is amazing & more people need to catch up to her music.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jeff – Any Arab on Radar record or Made in Mexico. You can go to the following links to check me out – arabonradar.info, myspace.com/zodiaczoo, youtube.com/madeinmexicoband

Jason Handelsman of The President
May 2011

Name: Jason Handelsman

Bands: Haitian Voters, Walrus, Ghost of Dirty, The President

Websites: filthysouth.com,
thepresident.bandcamp.com,
blogs.miaminewtimes.com/crossfade/prunktv

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jason – My stepmom had an old acoustic steel string guitar in the garage next to her boxes of old records (Doors, Hendrix, Beatles, etc.). She never played the guitar & she never listened to those records. They were collecting dust until I got a hold of them. I would sit in the garage for hours as a little kid playing the guitar upside down (I'm a lefty). I remember learning how to play Ratt's "Round & Round" by ear. I was about 10 years old in the early 80s & hair metal was quite mainstream in those days: Ratt, Quiet Riot, Def Leppard, Van Halen, Ozzy... MTV had just begun. That guitar & most of those vinyl records were later sold in that garage during a garage sale. Around that time, we were being taught ukulele during music class in elementary school. The music teacher wanted to put me in LD because I couldn't play it right handed.

She called my Mom & told her that I had a serious disability. My mom yelled at her, explaining that I needed lefty scissors to cut paper & that bitch needed to give me a lefty ukulele. Mom was pissed. Shout out to Mom! This song is on my new album, it's about being left-handed.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jason – Gibson SG, Boss Loop Station, Line 6 distortion & delay modelers. I had a Marshall JCM-800 for a few years, but sold it because I moved to Europe in 2004. There is a video of that amp on the Brooklyn Bridge for this outdoor sound sculpture that I made for the Brooklyn Sculpture Festival in 2003, using lots of guitar effects & a loop station. These days, friends let me borrow their amps, sometimes for long periods of time. I had a Laney cab with a Line 6 head for about 6 months, but I didn't like the Line 6 head... it had too many gadgets. I use my friend Alex's Orange amp quite frequently for live shows & it sounds delicious. I've been using the Loop pedal as a drum machine recently & I don't use any other effects pedals right now. With that Orange, you really don't need any... it sounds perfect when I plug my guitar straight into it. I hope to buy an amp of my own pretty soon.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jason – Right now, it’s the guitar that I have. My black Gibson SG has sentimental value. I bought it in NYC in early September of 2001 for \$1000. It was with me on 9/11 while we stood in a building about five blocks from Ground Zero watching bodies fall from the sky & shards of glass floating through the air. When women dump me, I sleep with my SG. I wake up & say good morning to the guitar. When I play that guitar... I just feel better. It is my BFF. I almost sold it a couple of times during broke periods, but I am really glad that I didn’t sell it. I sold an acoustic around that time for \$60 & wasted that money on a one-night drug binge. I was sleeping under a bridge, but the SG was safe at someone’s house nearby who refused to let me sell it. I am so thankful that I didn’t. It is priceless at this point. We have been through a lot together & somehow I held on to that baby. In 2004 I took the guitar to Europe with me & left it with a friend in London for about six months while I traveled around the world. Almost 10 years later, we are both back in Miami. Every time I pick it up I feel stress free & tranquil.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jason – Right now, the only amp that I own is one of those really small \$30 mini-amps that you can clip to your belt. It runs on a 9v battery. I can walk around the house, backyard, or down the street with it on. It has really good distortion & it gets pretty loud. Sometimes I'll take it to the park across the street & play Black Sabbath, Slayer, & Van Halen for the kids smoking weed in the park. Kids still love metal! I tell you, that little amp gets loud!

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jason – It has been that black, lefty, Gibson SG mentioned above. I had an acoustic Guild lefty 12 string for a while that I really loved... but I traded it for a pedal. The SG is light & the neck is perfect for my small hands. If it's good enough for Tony Iommi & Angus Young, it's good enough for me.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jason – Um...an app for iPhones. Jason Handelsman's Sludge Fest. It would be down tuned sludge & there would only be two or three different chords that were easy to play by pressing different icons, heavily distorted power chord minimal riffage. You would be able to feel the iPhone

vibrate while you played it. If you held the phone close to your face, you would feel a hot wind blowing on you. You would be able to plug your iPhone into an amp... maybe have some app pedals... maybe they already have that...?

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jason – An actual nuclear bomb pedal. If I stomped on it we would all die. But I would never use it. Call it Suicide Bombing is Not Fluffy or the SBiNF.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jason – One at the moment

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jason – In the hard shell case next to my bed or in the bed with me.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jason – A roadie/guitar tech that would carry it around for me, change the strings every day, keep it in tune, adjust the intonations, clean the guitar, etc. Hello?

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jason – Affordable price, weight, just the feeling & sound. Also, the employees at the guitar store & the store itself. I will not buy a guitar from one of those huge chains. I don't care how much I love the guitar; I'm not going to buy it from a Guitar Center employee who has a Slipknot tattoo. But seriously, because I am left handed, the choices are more limited at most guitar stores... they'll have hundreds of regular guitars & then maybe two or three lefties in a corner. Usually the lefties are those Korean made Fender Strats or an Epiphone. Lefties are a minority. But... if I pick it up & it feels good... it's like trying on a pair of sneakers & just knowing that they are the right ones. I spent over a year going to every guitar shop in New York City, Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, Long Island, etc. before I chose the SG. It just felt perfect & it sounds awesome... & most of my favorite guitarists use an SG. It's like the Porsche of guitars.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jason – I once bought a decent Epiphone Les Paul for \$40 from a crack head.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jason – I have never upgraded a guitar.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jason – I try it out over & over until I am sure that I want it...(see above). I am extremely cheap & picky with everything that I purchase: clothes, sunglasses, food, music stuff, energy beverages, books, etc.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jason – Yes. It seems that no matter what amp I play out of, or pedals I use... I basically sound the same. Even if I play straight through a club's PA system... it sounds the same... at least that's what I tell myself....

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jason – I love all types of music, so I like to change the tone. I am usually in the mood for slow sludge riffage with lots of gain & distortion. I love bands like Earth, Sunn))O, Neurosis, & I love to play slow

Sabbathy metal.... But sometimes I like to play around with a wah, or some blues, or improvisational noise... practice scales & whatnot... but again... it all sounds like me. I just close my eyes & blast off. You know that place when you are just in the zone, all alone, forgetting where you are. Playing guitar is a spiritual ritual for me.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jason – A lefty flying V, a Gibson Les Paul, Green Matamp, I had a pedal addiction for years... I'm over it... my friend has this pedal, I think its called a Mooger Fooger that I love to mess around with. I want one!

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jason – All six strings.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jason – The best guitar related purchase was my first pedal: Boss Metal Zone. I saw that Matt Pike was using one when I saw High on Fire's first show in San Francisco in 1998 (I think) & I bought one

the next day. It taught me how valuable pedals are. They really can change the sound. I eventually got tired of that pedal... it's so limited.... I bought a volume pedal once that I loved for about a day. Ebows are amazing to have, you can harmonize feedback with it. An Ebow & a Boss Loop Station = hours of enjoyment. The sound would fill the room & make my adrenalin pump. Imagine if Hendrix had had an Ebow.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jason – I have a lot of Boss stuff. Not just pedals. I have a Boss BR-1180 8 track digital recording “studio”, & I have recorded over 300 songs on it. It is like an instrument in itself. It has almost all of Boss's effects internalized, so you can adjust the tone & effect settings before recording. It even has different amp models. It is also a good friend.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jason – Tune it. Close my eyes & usual play some power chords, start banging my head like I'm a teenager again. Get the pinch harmonic squelches going... a new riff will form... words that fit the riff will pop into my head... I'll turn on the Boss BR 1180 & have two or three songs by sunrise. Burn

them onto a CD & give the CD to Matt from Roofless Records, which is the greatest potential power in the world today. Roofless Records puts out the best music in Miami, which is the best city.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jason – 9 or 10.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jason – When I was 27 a friend gave me a huge stack of tablature books: Robert Johnson, Slayer, Rush, Cream, Beatles, Van Halen, Metallica, Black Sabbath... I was surprised at how easy it was to learn all of those songs & solos via tablature. I started playing around with different tunings... listening to guitarists like Al Di Meola.... Then I started watching videos & spending all of my time & money on guitar stuff. All I did was play guitar & think about guitar... I got technical.... Around that time, I was living in New York & playing in a band called Walrus. I started getting paid to play at this bar in uptown New York. \$100 for two hours. I would sit & play all the songs that I had learned with the tab books, without singing. People especially loved when I played Beatles songs like Blackbird & Here Comes the Sun. But then I started

doing drugs again & stopped playing the guitar regularly for a few years.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jason – Guitar was easy for me to pick up & play. It felt natural, like I had been playing forever. There is so much that you can do with a guitar. I love to play riffs, or just noodle... it's fun... it can be really loud or really quiet... I love banging on drums, but I'm not a drummer... I'm a guitarist... someone like Bob Dylan can play guitar & someone like Kerry King can play guitar. Johnny Cash, Elvis, Muddy Waters, great men play guitar. There is a reason that it's the most popular instrument in the world. They're easier to move than say... a piano... guitars are just convenient. They naturally become an extension of your body. They feel like an extra limb.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jason – BFF.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jason – King Buzzo, Derek Bailey, Sonny Sharrock, Tony Iommi, Jimi Hendrix, Dylan Carlson, Matt

Pike, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, also he is not a guitarist but Thelonious Monk had a huge influence on my playing. I wanted to play guitar the way he played piano.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jason – Both. My guitar has a name: Lolita. But it's sort of just a joke.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jason – Never.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jason – Come up with lyrics.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jason – There are 24 hours in each day... I try to spend at least one of those hours actually playing my guitar. I would like to spend all 24 hours playing my guitar.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jason – Varies. Usually medium. Thin picks are for people who do lots of solos... I rarely solo... heavy picks are just too heavy for me....

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jason – Thicker strings are better.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jason – Not often enough, I wait until they break.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jason – Like once a year.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jason – Myself.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jason – Memory.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jason – Kind of low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jason – Not changing strings often...usually playing them until they break.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jason – Drums.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jason – Randy Rhoades style shredding

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jason – Playing sober.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jason – Ebows are awesome.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jason – No.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jason – Ramones riffs if they were just learning how to play. Ramones riffs are easy to learn, fun to play, & may even impress your friends.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jason – Sleep under a bridge.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jason – Never had one.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jason – It's always on 10.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jason – Apples & oranges. Kirk & James.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jason – No. Drums make the band.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jason – The one that Jimi Hendrix played at Woodstock. Just to hold that specific guitar & play it would be sick.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jason – Lil Wayne. The self-proclaimed best rapper alive plays guitar too. He is not a great guitar player (yet), but he is a great & innovative artist... & hopefully we'll see him progressing on the instrument.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jason – thepresident.bandcamp.com/track/ingrid-abigail

QRD – Anything else?

Jason – Thank you!

Andras Fekete of Boat Burning

May 2011

Name: Andras Fekete

Bands: Boat Burning, Thee Dirtybeats, Triangle Rhysing

Websites: boatburning.com, theedirtybeats.com, trianglerhysing.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Andras – I got my first guitar, a Harmony Stella, when I was 10. It was a very cheap acoustic. Its sole asset was its red finish; in all other respects it was a profoundly bad guitar, especially for a beginner, with absurdly high action & a tone not unlike a coffee can strung with bailing wire. Would like to say that its shoddiness inspired me to work even harder to learn the guitar, but in truth I grew so frustrated that I eventually smashed the thing to pieces & swore I'd never play guitar again. Later in high school, I used the neck for a guitar-like instrument I built in my father's workshop. I believe I smashed that one too. At one point I also had a single coil Kent electric & a little Marvel tube amp; these met similar fates. Guitars were so frustrating for me. The sounds I was getting were never like what I heard on records or the radio. I really resented that.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Andras – My main guitar is an 84 Jazzmaster. I run this through a series of mostly analog pedals & split the signal three ways: (1) to a Fender Deluxe Reverb amplifier, (2) to a small bass amp, (3) to an old Revox reel to reel tape deck, which has the motors disabled so I can manipulate the reels by hand. The effects chain I assemble new every time I play -- I don't use an effects board -- as I like the unpredictability. That said, I usually have some combination of compressor, distortion, phase shifter, echo, looper, & volume pedal. I also use one of those big chrome Morley Wahs & a vintage Telray rotating-can tremolo.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Andras – The guitar, definitely.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Andras – Fender Deluxe Reverb. Small, incredibly versatile, & puts out a lot of sound for its size & wattage. And it's a lot easier to lug around than a Marshall stack.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Andras – A 1984 Fender Jazzmaster. It has some odd features I use a lot, like the separate lead & rhythm circuits with independent volume & tone controls, & especially the generous third bridge. The tone is radically different from other guitars, probably due to the harmonics produced by the third bridge. I fool with that third bridge a lot.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Andras – Jazzmaster-ish in every respect, except with two output jacks (the extra for just the lower two strings) & with a Fender Mustang bridge. Also, a maple neck with micro-tuners. And a whammy bar system actually that leaves the guitar in tune.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Andras – It would be some kind of looper specifically optimized for the live recording & playback of loops during a performance. Should be controllable using footswitches only. Essential: Would include a simple foot-operated mechanism for dynamically adjusting the length of a loop while

it's playing, to help synching with a live drummer. Would also include a pulse output for each loop iteration for triggering external devices.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Andras – Seven: an 84 Fender Jazzmaster, a 72 Fender Custom, a 65 Kapa Minstrel, a Fender Strat 12 string, an Ovation acoustic, an old Epiphone acoustic, & a Galveston chrome resonator.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Andras – Conveniently. I want them handy.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Andras – Compartment covers that don't accidentally open.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Andras – Good action, looks, & the ability to stay in tune.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Andras – Guitars are such a commodity nowadays. \$200-300 buys an astonishingly good-playing low-end Strat, & that's one made by Fender. At prices like that, it's hard to justify paying more, unless you are after a particular sound that can only be had by a certain classic guitar.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Andras – I'm less concerned with modifying the sound of an instrument than in optimizing it for long bouts of really hard playing. So, bridges & tuners I fool with, because that affects staying in tune, but pickups I always leave stock.

I play really hard, so I've had a lot of problems with my strings jumping out of the Jazzmaster's stock saddle bridge. Swapping that out for a Fender Mustang bridge helps a lot.

72 Fender Telecaster Customs, with their infamous 3 bolt necks & 3-saddle bridges, are notorious for intonation & tuning problems. Mine was unplayable until I gave Wes Lambe, a luthier in Carrboro, free reign. He countersunk brass insets to receive the 3 neck bolts, replaced the bridge with 6 independently adjustable saddles, & replaced the stock tuners with micro-tuners. It's now the guitar I reach for when I need something that's in tune.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Andras – Constantly. I actually **like** the disruption that occurs when I change things. Keeps things fresh.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Andras – I change my tone constantly, as I am usually doing several things at once that work best where there are a lot of contrasting textures & tones -- e.g. live playing + loops + mangling my sound with pedals + mangling my sound with an open reel tape deck.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Andras – Back in the late 70s when I was a starving student in Boston, I fell hard for this beat-up baby blue Fender Mustang. I'd visit it 2-3 times a week at Mr. Music on Harvard Street & play it for hours. But I was so poor I never had enough money to buy it & it was only \$150! Still dream about that guitar.

QRD – What do you think are some important

features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Andras – Action, action, action. And the thing must be able to stay in tune. And -- this is most important -- one's first guitar must be inexpensive. You have to feel totally uninhibited to approach your guitar, to use/abuse it, to bend it to your will. Can't do that if your guitar costs a fortune.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Andras – Best: 72 Fender Telecaster Custom \$150
Worst: Galveston resonator

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Andras – I was 10. My younger brother & I played in a band we called “The Wiretappers”, which at the time we thought was about the coolest name ever. We had one gig; it was a birthday party. Since we only knew one song, “Nothing Can Change The Shape Of Things To Come” (by Max Frost & the Troopers), we just played that over & over. It was glorious.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Andras – I was 21, living in Boston, when I acquired my first real guitar, the '72 Telecaster Custom. It was a fluke really; my neighbor owed me \$150, & insisted on giving me the guitar instead. I had no money for an amp, so I fashioned one from an Executone tube PA got for \$10 at a yard sale. Then I got this inexpensive programmable drum machine kit by mail order, a PAiA 3750, for like \$20. I plugged all this stuff together in my basement & played that rig for hours & hours, almost every night for about two years straight, the PAiA in one input jack & my guitar in the other, with the volume at 11. Over time, I found I was able to control the screech & howl of the Tele through the Executone & bend it to the relentless rhythm of the PAiA. Playing along with drum machine at high volume was key in developing my sense of timing, as that little box was utterly unforgiving -- you either rode the rhythm really hard, or it would walk all over you. Later, I got some reel-to-reel tape decks & began experimenting with mechanically manipulating the sounds I was making in real time & feeding that back into the mix. I still have a few recordings of those early experiments. Really raw stuff, but definitely had energy.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Andras – The dual nature of the guitar is really appealing to me. With a guitar, one can create intricate delicate things of great beauty & one can great monstrous things of brutality & ugliness. Weirdly, this can be accomplished in the same composition. I can't think of another instrument that has such range.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Andras – The guitar may just be the perfect first instrument. More or less portable, a guitar can withstand a lot of abuse & with very little effort & zero music theory, a beginner can be strumming simple songs in no time & you can choose to stay at that level or go really deep.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Andras – I just don't elevate guitars to that level. To me, a guitar is just a tool. When I'm not getting the results I want with a particular tool, I ask myself whether or not I can accept the results I am getting. If the answer is no, I find another tool.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Andras – Robby Kreiger & Tony Iommi impressed me early on, as did Robert Fripp's early 70s work with the Red-era King Crimson; later, I thought Roger Miller's work with Mission of Burma was pretty interesting.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Andras – A little silly. Isn't that like naming one's favorite screwdriver?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Andras – In addition to smashing &/or burning my first guitars, I once had this perfectly fine SG copy with which I thought I'd try some rewiring experiments. Then I figured I'd install some different pickups. And then, a center tap switch. After that, I thought I'd cut away chunks of the body I felt were superfluous. Then I figured I'd sand the thing smooth, & paint it flat black. I played this Frankenstein for a while, but was secretly very unhappy with it. It was an important lesson about the slippery slope one can get on with guitar mods.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Andras – The distinction between practice & playing is moot for me. It's all playing, & all playing is practice for future playing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Andras – 10-16 hours a week nominally; more when a show is on the horizon.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Andras – Dunlop Tortex greens (.88mm) or similar. I need a durable pick, as I wear them out pretty fast.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Andras – I use 0.13s, because I play rather hard. It helps, but I still occasionally break strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Andras – Generally only when they break.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Andras – Every gig, just about. I lean into my playing a bit, but it's not just that. I tend to attack certain parts of the guitar (e.g. the bridge, the nut) where the strings are less flexible & more vulnerable to breakage.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Andras – Definitely my right. I played banjo for a while in my teens & that infected my right hand technique to the point that for a long time, I felt more comfortable playing without a pick than with. I still occasionally play an entire show claw hammer style, without a pick.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Andras – I always send my guitars to a tech. These are guys that set up guitars all the time & have the right equipment. Intonating a guitar isn't rocket science, but it's not trivial. I want it done right.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Andras – Standard tuning, mostly. Sometimes I'll use Drop D. Occasionally, I'll invite an audience

member up to snip one or two middle strings with a pair of wire cutters, & play the rest of the show that way. Faced with a sudden limitation, it's amazing what you can come up with.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Andras – I don't write down anything; I prefer to just start playing & see what comes up.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Andras – About waist high. It's an outmoded affectation I picked up during the heydays of punk. I really could benefit from holding my guitar higher. I'm just used to it.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Andras – I draw a lot of right hand technique from what I learned on 5 string banjo.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Andras – A contact mic. Affixed to a guitar's

headstock, a contact mic yields an exotic sound very similar to a gamelan; affixed to a guitar pick, it yields this percussive, banjo-like sound.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Andras – Django Haskins (The Old Ceremony) helped me out a great deal. He's an astonishingly versatile player & far deeper into avant garde playing than most people suspect. I also once took a lesson from Mission of Burma's Roger Miller, who gave me some solid advice on harmonics & the proper use of alligator clips.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Andras – Find a very simple 2-chord song that you absolutely, positively love, a private place that you can play without feeling self-conscious, & play that song, over & over, until you can belt it out convincingly. And then, play with someone. All else is noise.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Andras – Embrace change: in a live setting, inject

some sonic damage, listen to how your band reacts, & go with it. Stay alert & be wary of getting too comfortable; keep moving. Seriously, that's about it.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Andras – Tremolo systems are necessary evils. I love them & use them a lot, but I've yet to find one that doesn't make a guitar go horribly out of tune.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Andras – Most of the time I leave the tone turned all the way down to just a quarter. I do mess with the tone a lot though, using a vintage Morley wah.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Andras – Hard to be, let alone find, a good rhythm guitar player. Playing rhythm guitar requires Zen-like ego-less-ness, a quality not generally associated with rock & roll musicians, as it's the very opposite of the assertiveness required to execute a convincing lead. And yet, rhythm guitar is essential. In Boat Burning, I often have to switch between playing rhythm & lead. The mental shift is quite challenging; I don't always get it right.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Andras – I can't. I don't believe in prima donnas: a band's success or failure is a shared responsibility.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Andras – Being pure improv, Boat Burning is fundamentally a live band & officially shuns recording. That said, there are plenty of unofficial recordings of our improvs on the web, some of which can be heard on the Boat Burning website www.boatburning.com. Keep in mind that everything you hear on that site was created entirely in the moment: 100% improv, no pre-recorded loops, no synths, no computers, no overdubs, no pre-conceived strategies.

I particularly like my playing on the early Boat Burning improv “This Is Not A Road”. On later Boat Burning pieces recorded prior to 2010, Pete Gamble & I switch off playing rhythm & lead. Pete's an amazing guitarist with incredible instincts & emotion, sort of like Jeff Beck meets Sonny Sharrock. Usually I'd set up the piece with a melodic theme or throbbing rhythm & then augment/disrupt the sound with either some noisy prepared-guitar stuff &/or a droney jarring tape

manipulation of our live sound, while Pete concentrated on delivering the searing, lyrical, heavily-processed leads that somehow maintained the continuity. It's a completely different sound & way of creating than "This Is Not A Road" & I find the results equally intriguing. Because of this, on later Boat Burning recordings & shows, I switch between the two styles, either playing as the sole guitarist or with a guest guitarist.

I also play in the retro garage/psych band THEE DIRTYBEATS, sharing rhythm & lead with Jamie McLendon. Jamie's love of maximally fuzzed-out vintage 60s guitar is infectious. I think both guitarists, Jamie & Pete, have been terrific foils for me, as have cellists Josh Starmer & Deborah Aronin, percussionists Ken Friedman & Ian Kleinfeld, & the many guest musicians who've collaborated with Boat Burning over the years. There is such a back & forth: I continually learn new things from playing with them, & feel very lucky & enriched from having played with them.

UPDATE – January 2013

ADDENDUM: In the summers of 2011 and 2012, Andras and Matt Guess of The White Cascade produced [TRIANGLE RHYSING: MUSIC FOR MASSED GUITARS](#), a suite of movements for multiple groups of electric guitars ("guitar mobs") plus cello and percussion. The performances brought together nearly three dozen musicians from

around the Chapel Hill music scene, including members of members of AIRSTRIP, ALPHA COP, BELOVED BINGES, BICAMERAL MIND, BIRDS OF AVALON, BOAT BURNING, ERIE CHOIR, FAN MODINE, GENTLE ROBOT, GOODBYE TITAN, GROSS GHOST, HEADS ON STICKS, HEM OF HIS GARMENT, HORSEBACK, JOY IN RED, LAKE AND HENNEPIN, LE WEEKEND, LUD, MONSONIA, NEUROVINE, ONCE AND FUTURE KINGS, PROMUTE, REMORA, SAVAGE KNIGHTS, SHIPWRECKER, STRANGE LITTLE FOLK, STUDIO 713, THE BILLION, THE CURTAINS OF NIGHT, THE NEW ROMANS, THE OLD ONE-TWO, THE SPACEMEN, THE WHITE CASCADE, THE WINTER SESSION, THE WUSSES, VERONIQUE DIABOLIQUE, VIOLET VECTOR AND THE LOVELY LOVELIES, WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAMED, WOOL, and WRECKLESS ERIC.

Working with a large diverse group of musicians provided some unique insights on composing for massed guitar ensembles:

ON SCORING: One of the goals of TRIANGLE RHYMING: MUSIC FOR MASSED GUITARS was to attract active musicians from the local scene who were passionate about exploring new musical ideas. We noticed that many of the most passionate

players out there have no formal music training at all, so we scored the movements so that sight reading would not be required. The system we came up with was less a formal score than a general one-sheet printed strategy for each piece, consisting of a unique tuning, ensemble orientation, and key of hand signals indicating chord and/or rhythm pattern changes. During a performance, each guitar mob watched the conductor's hands for its next assigned pattern, and transitioned to the new pattern on the next four-bar boundary. In contrast, signals from the conductor requesting a change in dynamics were executed immediately.

ON THE ROLE OF CHANCE: A natural side effect of this loose approach to scoring is that each piece embraces chance while retaining a semblance of compositional integrity. The conductor, whose real-time decisions determine the overall shape of the piece by specifying what pattern each mob will play next, is a natural source of unpredictability, as is the relative ability of each player. While both guarantee no two performances will be alike, the fact that a single mind guides the overall process results in performances that are far more cohesive than if each mob simply played at random.

ON SONIC VARIETY: In pop music there is an assumption that in order to entertain music must be in constant change (e.g. verse/chorus/bridge, loud

vs soft, fast vs slow, percussive vs melodic, dissonance vs harmony). In contrast, much of the joy of a massed guitar ensemble is the thrall of its sheer physicality and power – which must be experienced live to be believed – as well as the subtle interplay of overtones produced by so many instruments attempting to play the same thing at once. We found that a balance had to be struck between the urge to change merely to satisfy the expectations of pop song conventions and exploiting the unique strengths of the ensemble: To maximize harmonic overloading, chord changes were more often than not accomplished by moving a capo to different positions on the guitar neck, rather than by fingering actual chords. To maximize the intense thralling effect of the live performance, the ensemble was often allowed to drone on in certain configurations of keys and rhythms for several measures, allowing the audience time to appreciate the stacked harmonic density and random “phantom instruments” (sonic hallucinations) that often resulted as by-products. At the same time, various percussive techniques, including playing random chimed harmonics up and down the neck, were introduced as a counterbalance the drone, to great effect. Matt’s “A Thousand Points Of Light” is perhaps the best realization of the ideal.

Phil Mitchell of Double Handsome Dragons
March 2011

Name: Phil Mitchell

Bands: Double Handsome Dragons

Websites: doublehandsomedragons.bandcamp.com,
myspace.com/doublehandsomedragons

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Phil – It was a Rosetti Airstream 3 bought from a junk shop in Norfolk, UK for £60. I'm told its worth nearer £300 now. It's still in my guitar rack. I love it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Phil – I have my trusted Gibson SG Faded, a Boss Tuner, Deucetone Rat, & Ibanez Delay pedal through to a Peavey 4x10 Combo (I forget what its called but its awesome).

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Phil – The guitar. It has to be easy to play & easy to throw around. Mine is nice & light.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Phil – I have a Peavey 4x10 Combo as my main amp because it’s small enough to carry around. I also have a vintage Marshall JMP with 4x12 cab which I use on special occasions.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Phil – A Gibson SG Faded Cherry Red. It plays really well & it’s light. I also have a sentimental attachment to it - my granddad bought it for me just before he died.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Phil – It would be bright red, have over-sized pickups, really low action, large knobs & tuners, & be called the Mitchellometer 3000.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Phil – It would make a noise like “waaaarrrrrrrr”.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Phil – Six.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Phil – In my studio in a big rack.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Phil – I wish they were full of a never-ending supply of money.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Phil – It must be red.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Phil – Less than £500. If you spend over that you'll be scared to play it with any enthusiasm.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Phil – Just stick with it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Phil – I go on Harmony Central briefly.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Phil – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Phil – I have my own sound & know exactly where to turn my knobs to to get it.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Phil – None really - I'm not much of a guitar geek.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Phil – A lot of cheap guitars are hard to play. The action is too high.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Phil – Best guitar was my Gibson. Worst was a guitar made of plastic I bought off a friend for £10.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Phil – I'm not a brand person.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Phil – An E Minor.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Phil – 15.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Phil – 29.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Phil – It allows you to be a lot more expressive than other instruments. & you can run around with it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Phil – Yes.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Phil – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Phil – Omar Rodriguez - he changed how I thought about guitar. Before that it was Kurt Cobain.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Phil – It's ridiculous.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Phil – I used it a bit like a surfboard on stage. The neck snapped.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Phil – Nothing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Phil – I don't play enough. An hour at home & a couple of hours at practice.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Phil – A Dunlop .88 vinyl because it gives just the right amount of flexibility.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Phil – 10s because they give just the right amount of definition for my sound.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Phil – If I don't change before every gig they snap. My sweat is corrosive & I play too hard -- bad technique.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Phil – All the time.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Phil – Strumming. I can't do solos.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Phil – I set it up myself -- badly.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Phil – Just the standard E to E - it saves messing about.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Phil – I've never written my stuff down. I don't understand it. I have a good memory.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Phil – It covers my crotch nicely.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Phil – I'm always bashing my fingers on my strumming hand - I wish I had learned properly to avoid that.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Phil – Piano/keyboard. When I play my microkorg it always gives me ideas for my guitar playing.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Phil – I wish I could shred. Shred really fast.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Phil – I've haven't written the best song ever yet.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Phil – I learned how to tap a bit.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Phil – My fist.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Phil – Tapping.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Phil – I'm totally self-taught. No lessons at all. I just learned by writing my own songs. I don't know how to play any body else's songs at all.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Phil – I would teach them that what's in your heart is more important than in your head.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Phil – They would have to have very bad technique & listen to a lot of interesting music.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Phil – They should die.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Phil – Never.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Phil – Lead guitar players are responsible for ruining a lot of good songs.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Phil – No no no. Drums & bass are the most important part of a band - they are the backbone. Good drummer = good band.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Phil – I would like to own a Pete Townsend Telecaster - I don't know why.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Phil – I have no idea. The guys from Battles are pretty innovative.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Phil – On Double Handsome Dragons latest EP, although the previous one was pretty good - just recorded badly.

QRD – Anything else?

Phil – Yes.

Jessica Bailiff

May 2011

Name: Jessica Bailiff Sweet

Bands: Jessica Bailiff, Clear Horizon, Eau Claire, Northern Song Dynasty, Annelies Monseré, Vlor, Rivulets, Odd Nosdam, Red Morning Chorus, etc.

Websites: www.kranky.net/artists/bailiffj.html

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jessica – My first guitar was a plastic one, acoustic-style, with nylon strings (I was a kid, don't remember how old). It was handed down to my younger brother & I don't know what happened to it after that.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jessica – There isn't a typical set-up for me, really. But when I play my Jaguar, it's generally a Boss delay, then a Rat distortion, then a tube amp of some sort. I also play a Martin auditorium-style acoustic, which is usually played clean. Sometimes I run it through an L.R. Baggs D.I. if I use it for a concert & sometimes I'll put the delay pedal in there, too.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jessica – Jag: effects. Martin: guitar.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jessica – My main amplifier is a little Ampeg Jet II, but it needs some maintenance so I never use it. It is the only amp I own, so it’s the main one by default.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jessica – I go back & forth between the Jag & the Martin, depending on what I am doing. For some projects I’ve been involved with, bass guitar has been my main instrument. I have a 1970s Fender Music Master. I like it mainly because it is short-scale. The Jag - it’s been with me since 1993 & it’s been good to me so far. I’m not a gear junkie, nor do I have much in the way of disposable income, so I haven’t really been able to experiment with many different guitars to know why one would be better than another for me. I am happy with what I have, really. The Martin is the best acoustic I’ve ever played. I had a Washburn that was OK, but my Martin somehow became a part of me, I really

bonded with that guitar. Maybe it's the body style & size.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jessica – I have no idea.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jessica – Again, I have no idea.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jessica – Four.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jessica – In their cases, in my studio.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jessica – Ummm...

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jessica – I don't...

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jessica – I have no idea.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jessica – I put racing stripes on my Jag (& an original DIY Low sticker from 1994), & a new pick guard on my bass. Cosmetic things, that's what is important.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jessica – I would thoroughly research something before buying it, then test it out at home, & return it if it wasn't working out for me.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jessica – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jessica – I like to experiment with sound. I record

more than I perform, so a lot of the guitar sound will depend on what else is going on in the song & in the mix.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jessica – I don't, although I do miss my 1973 Fender Twin that I sold to a friend a couple of years ago.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jessica – Proper intonation. Not that this is a feature, but I always hated playing cheap guitars or basses when I was a teenager that I couldn't ever tune. My first bass had a warped neck; this is when I began to learn about guitar intonation. I learned that sometimes adjusting a truss rod will not solve the warped neck of a guitar, & it will never, ever be in tune with itself.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jessica – Best: probably the Boss delay pedal. Worst: the Loop Station pedal, but only because I never used it.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jessica – I'm a Fender girl, but I also like Vox amps & guitars.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jessica – Whatever I need to.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jessica – Technically, maybe 8. Had another bash at it when I was 16 or 17. But seriously, when I was 22.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jessica – I'm not sure; maybe I haven't arrived there yet.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jessica – It doesn't.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jessica – Depends on the person.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jessica – Usually it is an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jessica – Dave Pearce, Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Bridget St. John.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jessica – Do people really do that?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jessica – I dropped my delay pedal on my Jag & put a couple of dents in it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jessica – I don't.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jessica – Do negative numbers count?

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jessica – I generally don't use one, but will occasionally use a felted one when I play bass.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jessica – I don't remember!

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jessica – See above.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jessica – Almost never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jessica – Proficiency is not really a factor or a

concern in my playing. I'd never get anything done if I obsessed about my lack of technical ability.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jessica – I usually set it up myself after paying someone else to do the job who hasn't done it correctly. I'd rather someone else did it so that I didn't have to spend the time, but I've yet to find someone in the area where I live that can do a good job with my guitars, so I end up doing it myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jessica – I usually drop both main guitars a step & a half from standard, then drop the lowest string again - so I guess it would be Drop D tuning, but a step & a half down. I also use DADGAD, also dropped a step & a half. It seems to fit my vocal range, both of those tunings. & if I need to, I'll capo up from there.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jessica – I have my own system that is pretty easy, but probably not very standard.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jessica – I usually sit.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jessica – Not playing.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jessica – It depends on what sort of help someone might need with their guitar playing. I could see playing piano or drums being helpful for different reasons.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jessica – Not even a thought for me.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jessica – Having a different guitar for every tuning, a dream in the mid-late nineties (I used to use

maybe 4 or 5 different tunings). But now I see that as extravagant & unnecessary.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jessica – My bag of tricks is empty.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jessica – Maybe an Ebow, but played on the bass.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jessica – Another thing that I never think about.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jessica – No.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jessica – Be yourself.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jessica – Not care about being a great guitarist & think more about sound, texture, & melody.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jessica – They can be nice sometimes, but I don't really use them. The one on the Jaguar isn't the greatest.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jessica – I have it set to one place on the Jag & the bass, & adjust the amp or effects or board as needed.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jessica – One likes to have all the attention & the other is happy to be in the background. Or, one can't sing, so he plays guitar; while the other one likes to play guitar & sing at the same time.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jessica – No.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jessica – Not interested.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jessica – Innovative? I don't know. But I really enjoy Al Sparhawk's guitar playing. I was really impressed the last time I saw Retribution Gospel Choir play live; he puts his very soul into his playing. He does the same with Low, too.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jessica – I can't answer that.

QRD – Anything else?

Jessica – No, thanks.

Jason Lamoreaux of The Corrupting Sea
June 2011

Name: Jason Lamoreaux

Bands: The Corrupting Sea

Websites: myspace.com/thecorruptingsea

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jason – Fender Mexican Strat - still have it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jason – I work purely with a computer. I run both my bass (Gibson 5 String) & guitar through an Ampeg SVTIII Pro, then through an Omega computer connection mini-sound device & then to the USB port in the comp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jason – Um, my guitar ☺.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jason – Ampeg SVTIII Pro - I love the solid state/tube amp options on this model. The

versatility in tone adjustment is diverse & makes for personalizing it vast.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jason – Mexican Strat 😊. I love the tones it has. It's both warm & tinny at the same time.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jason – 5 Passive Pick Ups for diverse options in sound. The wood would be thick & heavy to get a nice warm low end. Being a bass player primarily, I love a good, warm guitar. The fret board would be made of a dark wood for this primary reason.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jason – Some form of a boutique delay pedal. I'm a sucker for walls of sound. Probably a mad professor deep blue because it produces great vintage tones.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jason – 1 six string; 1 five sting bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jason – When in use, they are out on stands in my office. When not, they are in hard cases or soft cases in a storage closet in my house so they are out of the sunlight, etc.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jason – For me, protection is of the utmost importance & my hard cases do everything I need.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jason – Tone, feel, & passive pickups.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jason – Oh geeze. That's hard to say for a poor dude.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jason – I generally don't mess with my guitars because I'm pretty mechanically inept. Don't let me fix your toilet or anything. 😊.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jason – I tend to read up on a piece of equipment for hours; then, once I've narrowed down choices, I will find a local shop where I can go spend an hour or so messing with it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jason – Nope. Don't have the cash to do so.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jason – Because I'm an experimental musician, I change things up A LOT. Probably every time I begin recording a new track.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jason – Mesa Boogie Royal Atlantic RA-100, Mesa Boogie 4x12 cabinet, Mesa Boogie Walkabout, TC Electronic Flashback TonePrint Delay Looper Guitar Effects Pedal.

QRD – What do you think are some important

features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jason – I think simple is best on a first guitar. Just make sure the pickups are passive.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jason – Hm.... I'm pretty careful, so I can't say I have one.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jason – BC Rich funky ass metal guitars. I mean, how awkward can a guitar get to play? Their Beast, V, & Mockingbird basses feel like shit in your hands. Beyond that, they sound like clunky crap when played.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jason – I make it up when I go along. I love the A Sus chord though. So soothing.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jason – I'm actually a bass player. I started when I was about 14. Picked up guitar here & there along the way.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jason – Haven't gotten close.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jason – I like how it feels in my hand. Also, I have to move around while playing or I go nuts. Pianos are nice, but I just feel stilted by it & drums work but I hate just sitting in one place.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jason – No, hence mine is a bass. 😊

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jason – Yes.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jason – Eric Campuzano, Jason21, Torsten Kinsella, Niels Kinsella, Herb Grimaud Jr., Niel Halstead, Graham Halstead, Robin Guthrie.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jason – Don't care.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jason – None.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jason – I warm up with scales & such.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jason – I play when I record now. When I was younger, I played often & almost daily.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jason – On the bass, I use no pick. On the guitar, I

try to find the flimsiest pick I can. I just love how it feels.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jason – I use a light string on my guitar. I like the high end on them.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jason – I try to do it after two or three recording sessions.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jason – I don't.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jason – Fretting. I tend to play singular notes instead of chords when I record, but that has to do with the style of music I play I guess.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jason – Me. Cuz of cash.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jason – I use standard. Haven't played much with any other.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jason – No notation please. I'm not good at reading it & playing.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jason – Like, measured? Um, don't know. I like to have the guitar at about my stomach.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jason – The “not playing enough” habit.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jason – I think pianos can teach us about chord structures & seeing the notes differently. That can

break us out of seeing our guitar structure in a stagnant way.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jason – Jazz.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jason – I'm not dead yet.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jason – None.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jason – My Guitool.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jason – I would like to be more proficient in going from the high end of the neck to the low without much notice in the jump.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jason – I did. It helped me with chord structures & scales a bunch.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jason – Well, probably the same thing my bass teacher taught me... think way outside the box.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jason – I hope no one ever tries.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jason – Don't use 'em.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jason – On almost every track.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jason – I'm hard pressed to make that distinction anymore simply because the music I listen to doesn't create those barriers or labels.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jason – Hell no.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jason – None. No person makes an object magically more important to me.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jason – Torsten & Niels Kinsella - I'm more about sound innovations & pasting together different tones & these two are masters at doing just that!

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jason – In my head.

QRD – Anything else?

Jason – Nope.

Ben Weyerhaeuser of Rags & Ribbons

July 2011

Name: Ben Weyerhaeuser

Bands: Rags & Ribbons

Websites: www.facebook.com/RagsRibbons

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Ben – Yamaha Pacifica in cream with a white pick guard. I remember thinking that the all white looked cool when I was 13 & my dad bought me an electric guitar for Christmas.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Ben – Custom G&L Comanche in sparkle red flake (gotta have a little sparkle). I use GHS Boomer strings, 10-52 set. I just picked up a Vox AC30 TB - Korg reissue off of Craigslist that is my main amp right now. It has a really clean & punchy tone that is nice & consistent. Pedals include: RAT distortion pedal (88 whiteface reissue), Boss DD-20 delay pedal, Boss Digital Reverb, Digitech Whammy Pedal, Tube Screamer reissue, MXR Phase 90, Boss Chromatic Tuner. Dunlop .73 are the picks I have always used, they seem to do the trick.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Ben – I would say my guitar is the most important. I just love the feel of my guitar in my hands & it makes me feel comfortable. Although, if the sound is the priority, I would have to say my effects pedals are critical. I don’t have enough experience or knowledge of different guitar models & amp models; however, pedals seem critical to creating the right sounds & shapes. They are not as emotionally as important as my guitar, but they are probably the most important for my sound.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Ben – VOX AC30. It’s the one I used to record a lot of the riffs on our first album. My producer & resident guitar guru really encouraged me to get an AC30 because I was just rocking a Fender Blues Junior for the first several years of playing guitar. The AC30 has a great balanced tone that can do a lot & can fit many sounds. Stephan Hawkes is the producer on our record & he is incredibly talented & knowledgeable about guitars. I totally trust him & he knows our sound & our songs. So, whatever he recommends I am gonna pay attention to.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Ben – My friend Rob taught me a lot about guitars & he inspired me to get a G&L Comanche for my first electric guitar that I bought for using in the band. I played on my old Yamaha Pacifica for the first couple years & when it was time to graduate to a better guitar, Rob inspired me to get a Comanche. If it matters, I would dedicate the guitar & my sound to him & all his support & love that he showed the band. I decided to go with the sparkle red because it felt sexy & I thought it felt right for the stage.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Ben – I saw Prince play Coachella a couple years ago & he had his purple Prince sign custom guitar that just looked amazing. It would be awesome to have a shape shifter guitar that could transform instantly into a Tele, Strat, or Les Paul. Everything in one. Plus those auto tuners look really sweet, maybe a little much but they looked cool on YouTube.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Ben – I would create a pedal & call it the “Badass Love Pedal”. Anytime when you are going nuts & the emotions are feeling super high on stage & it feels like you can’t get anymore out of your guitar, all you do is click on the Badass Love Pedal & you could get a little more volume, a little more distortion, a little more electronic synth, a little more space, & a little more delay all in one. Instantly just take your sound one notch higher ha-ha!

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Ben – I own my G&L Comanche & my Yamaha Pacifica. I am still a guitar newby. Keeping it simple with one old & one new. Although, I do see a lot of guitars that I admire & would love to have.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Ben – In the case. I want to get some of those cool wall mounts too, but haven’t gotten around to it.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don’t?

Ben – A place to store paper, music books, & notes. The ability to fold up & get smaller once you take your guitar out, hard cases that is.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Ben – Tone is important, a neck that feels good, & it's gotta look sexy & badass.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Ben – As much as the market demands they should cost. There are cheap guitars for those that don't want to spend too much & there are expensive guitars for those who want to spend a lot on guitars. I am somewhere in the middle.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Ben – I personally don't know enough about guitars yet to make any personal modifications.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Ben – I research a ton. If I am going to commit to a guitar, it is something that I think over a tremendous amount before purchasing. I make sure to test out the guitar & get it or a similar model into my hands before I buy anything. I just want it to be perfect.

Because I am not yet a guitarist who needs multiple guitars or knows enough to need multiple guitars, I want to make sure the one I do choose is perfect for me in my career right now.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Ben – I don't change things too much. I don't have enough time to tweak with my set up that often because we are doing so much as a band right now & I feel like I never have enough time to experiment with my guitar. So, I end up finding what feels right & trying to stick with that set up.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Ben – I am always looking for the one perfect guitar tone. The only problem is each song necessitates its own perfect tone so I end up changing my tone a lot dependent on the song.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Ben – I always have thought that a Marshall half stack would be so fun to have, but right now it just seems a little excessive for what we are doing as a band & where I am at as a guitar player. Someday.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Ben – Built in directions for how to restring a guitar.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Ben – Best guitar purchase was probably getting the RAT distortion pedal. It has been hands down the most successful immediate purchase that I have ever made for my guitar rig. Getting a music stand was probably another very clutch thing to pick up & have around. The most frustrating purchase was getting my Vox AC30 amp up & running. I ended up needing to put a new speaker & tubes into it & have the studio guitar tech, Doug, work with it quite a bit.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Ben – I don't know enough about any brands of guitars or guitar products yet to make a definitive judgment on this. The more I learn about guitars & guitar products, the more I get stoked on all sorts of brands & companies.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Ben – Typically whatever scale or arpeggio I have been working on lately.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Ben – I started playing the guitar when I was 12 but then stopped playing when I was 15 & really got heavily involved in sports & playing football in high school & college. Ten years later, I picked it up for what felt like the first time & started relearning the guitar because we wanted to be more of a rock band. I have been obsessed with playing the guitar ever since. I also feel extra motivation & pressure to work hard to become a better guitar player because I am getting such a late start.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Ben – I am still getting better everyday. I have hopefully not even come close to being my best as a guitar player. I feel like there will always be so much to learn. I will probably always be taking guitar lessons.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Ben – I could play other instruments. I would love to play the drums, the bass guitar, or the piano. However, the guitar is what our band didn't have but needed & that is why I picked it up. I have become attached to it as my own meaningful instrument ever since.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Ben – Honestly, I think the piano should be the first instrument one picks up. It is such a clear tool for understanding music theory & giving someone a musical foundation. But I do sometimes wish that I would have learned music on a guitar & started earlier now that I am trying to learn to play guitar in my 20s.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Ben – I don't ever think of it as an adversary. Sometimes I prefer to write music on a piano more than a guitar, but that's about it.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Ben – The people that I have taken lessons from have been my predominant influence. Because I am trying to spend so much effort being a solid guitar player for my band, I don't spend a whole lot of time trying to study other guitarists. I admire guitarists like Jack White, Mathew Bellamy, but I am not sure if that is because of their guitar playing or just being a huge fan of their music.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Ben – I kinda think that it's cool. I have never gotten around to naming my guitar, but for those who are amazing guitar players who name their guitars, I admire that.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Ben – I have never done any damage to a guitar that is worthy of note. Knock on wood.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Ben – Right now I have been working with my guitar teacher, Jonathan Barker, on learning different arpeggios, modes, chord structures, & pulling it all together to solo with intent. Not the most glamorous of things, but it is something that is helping my work with the band & being more knowledgeable during the composing process.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Ben – I probably end up playing guitar for six hours a week, but would like to be playing 15 hours a week.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Ben – Dunlop .73. I tried some thinner ones & they seemed to weak & I tried some thicker ones & they seemed a little too rigid. That brand was what a friend told me to stick with & I just haven't gotten around to trying anything else yet. I still feel like a newby.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Ben – 12s on the low strings with some thinner 10s on the higher strings. My producer on our first record, Stephan Hawkes, encouraged me to try them

& I liked them. I trust my friends who have more experience & know more than I do.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Ben – Once every 6-8 weeks.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Ben – Not very often. I guess I am not that hardcore in my guitar career yet.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Ben – I feel like they are about equal at this point. Both hands have been getting better now that I have been playing consistently for three years. I don't think of it affecting my style too much. I can't shred really fast yet but I just try & make due with what fits the songs & then incorporate style.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Ben – I will put on my own strings & tweak with it a little bit; however, when I need to do a full set up, I take it to the studio guitar tech. Our rehearsal

space is in the same building as the recording studio & guitar tech's business so it is really convenient.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Ben – Normal tuning. I haven't learned how to use anything else yet. I have heard Drop D is fun & easy to rock out with, but that's the only other one that I have heard about.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Ben – I like sheet music if I can make the time for it. Whatever I have close by to scribble ideas works. iPhone recorders are probably the king of it all right now.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Ben – I keep changing my strap length. A couple months ago I tried wearing it lower & it felt cool, especially because I am a bigger guy I sometimes thought it looked better to not have the guitar so high on my torso. Lately, I have been rocking it a little higher though, a little more comfortable & a different look.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Ben – Sometimes when we play shows my fingers will freak out on the first couple songs as they are getting into a rhythm. I wish I could just come in cool as steel from the very minute the show starts & have my hands be relaxed but explosive.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Ben – Piano helps to bring things all together.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Ben – I still struggle with playing really fast shred guitar. I don't think it fits in our band's music & sometimes it seems absurd to me, but it is still a skill that I would like to be able to have. Gotta get better at my pull offs.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Ben – I still have yet to play this Bach Sonata No. 1 in G Minor all the way through. I have gotten all

the parts, but never taken the time to work it all the way through.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Ben – I am not sure if I have ever learned any tricks on the guitar.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Ben – I have never tried using any guitar gadget other than a pick & some pedals. I want to try playing with a slide though, that has seemed cool to me for a very long time & I have never really gotten around to it.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Ben – Getting better at more open chords higher up on the neck. Getting back into classical guitar would be fun too. I learned playing classical when I was a kid.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Ben – I have always taken lessons. I thrive in a setting like that where there is structure & someone

to run ideas & questions by. I love the accountability; otherwise I can get distracted & end up not being productive. I have learned a lot of music theory & technique through lessons.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Ben – I would teach them to take lessons, ha-ha-ha. I might be able to teach them something about performing because that is a skill that I have spent a lot of time with. I was in theater programs all throughout high school & college & the way I present myself on stage is very important to me. Performing with my guitar is something that I really get excited about & think about a lot. I like to be intentional, but natural when I am on stage.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Ben – Just listen to a lot of different styles of music & go to a lot concerts. That's where I get my style from, seeing other musicians that inspire me & trying to incorporate some of the things that they do into my own style & routine.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Ben – Never used it & don't really know what it's for.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Ben – Not really much at all. It stays set pretty much in the “perfect” spot all the time. I get paranoid to tweak with that one too much. Maybe I need to start tweaking with it some more.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Ben – Both are two critical pieces to the puzzle. Although leads get a lot of the attention, anyone who uses their guitar effectively in a tasteful manner with their band is winning in my book. I like to do both. I think a good rhythm guitarist is definitely underrated in the world of music.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Ben – Maybe in a live setting because I can focus on admiring that one person, but I won't listen to a band with a great guitarist if the band's music is not interesting or enjoyable.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Ben – One of Prince’s guitars would be rad. He is hands down the greatest individual performer I have ever seen live in concert & he slays the guitar like a sexy beast.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Ben – Tom Morello & Matt Bellamy again seem to be two guys who are just always doing something interesting with the guitar.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Ben – I think some of my best guitar work can be found on our new album in songs like: “How the West was Lost”, “the Minds”, & “Liar”.

QRD – Anything else?

Ben – I feel new to the guitar & have only been playing seriously for the last three years, but I am fascinated by it as an instrument & want to continue to pour as much of my musical work into it as possible.

Greg & Kyrsten Magnuson of Magnuson
July 2011

Name: Greg Magnuson & Kyrsten Magnuson

Bands: Magnuson

Websites: www.magnusonband.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Greg – A custom made tiger maple body Fender neck style I bought from a friend for \$70. I still have it but its tuned crazy.

Kyrsten – A late 60s Tiesco EP-8T hollow-body my mother passed down to me. I still have it tucked carefully away. The pickups need some work, but it's in otherwise perfect condition.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Greg/Kyrsten – We play a Brian Moore i81.13 through two amps. The magnetic pickups through a Boss stereo delay & a Digitech whammy pedal into a Randall RG50RT amp. We use the Randall distortion & for the bass tones, we run the midi out to a Roland GR-20 guitar synth, through a Sans Amp distortion, & into an Eden bass amp. Occasionally, we run the piezo pickup through an

acoustic DI or separate amp for additional options & sparkle.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Greg/Kyrsten – The guitar. It pretty much solved our need for a bass player. But all the components we have, we need.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Greg/Kyrsten – Randall RG50RT combo amp. The tones are great & it's plenty loud for its size. As a two piece, we have to keep gear to a minimum. We love our Mesa Boogie Dual Rectifier combo, but its overkill. For bass, it's an Eden wedge amp. It's small, but it's loud & meets all our requirements.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Greg/Kyrsten – Brian Moore i81.13. It is lightweight, super playable, & has three outputs that we use to fatten our tone.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Greg/Kyrsten – It would be a bit lighter than the

Brian Moore & would have a flatter neck. Maybe it would have split outputs for the top three & bottom three strings through the magnetic pick ups, but the rest would be just like the BM. Maybe add some lasers somewhere...why not?

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Greg/Kyrsten – The Acoustic Compressor-Delay-Reverb-Distortion-Octave... pedal. We're having trouble finding one of those.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Greg/Kyrsten – About 7 electrics, 4 acoustics, 4 basses.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Greg/Kyrsten – Frequently used guitars are in our home studio. The rest are in storage.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Greg/Kyrsten – Casters.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Greg/Kyrsten – Playability, construction, tone, bonding factor. Does it make you rock out?

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Greg/Kyrsten – Depends. 500 to 1000 is probably sufficient for what most people need to play live. Any more & you're likely to get it stolen.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Greg/Kyrsten – Sometimes but we try to buy guitars that are ready to use. Wiring is not our forte.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Greg/Kyrsten – We thoroughly research something before we buy it. We looked at loop pedals for about a year before going with the Jam Man stereo.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Greg/Kyrsten – We've used a lot of different set ups; but this one is working pretty well, so we'll likely stick with it... at least until we get roadies to help move it all.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Greg/Kyrsten – We stick with a cutting, bridge pick up tone with the amp set with 3 main settings: clean, dirty, & metal fuzz. We've got too much going on with vocals & switching to mess with a bunch of different tones.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Greg/Kyrsten – One day, we'd like to get a Parker Fly with the midi pick up. We will be upgrading to the new Boss synth pedal soon as well. & when we get roadies, we'll be using 2 stacks of Eden 4x10s on the bottom & Mesa 4x12s on the top. Schwing.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Greg/Kyrsten – Playability a.k.a. action that doesn't suck. After that, tuners that stay in tune. Then a jack that doesn't cut out.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Greg/Kyrsten – Worst: a used Fender that I paid too much for. The Mako Flying V with the Floyd Rose I never used was also a bad deal. Best: The Brian Moore was a game changer, it finally allowed us to do what we were envisioning, without having to modify anything.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Greg/Kyrsten – We typically don't like Gibson or Fender as a rule because we think they're over priced for what you get. Same with Marshalls. We prefer Ibanez necks but overall, the Brian Moore is probably the greatest guitar we've ever owned. For amps, we like the Randalls & of course the Mesa Dual Rectifier. For the low end, we prefer Eden. For effects, Boss gets our vote every time. Same with Roland, their synths are the best. We have a love hate relationship with our Digitech Whammy Pedal. It's kind of like the Millennium Falcon. It will save your tonal life... when it works. When it doesn't, it can wreck your plans something fierce.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Greg/Kyrsten – Chromatic scales up & down the

neck. Then some meedlies way up high on the tiny strings.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Greg – I started when I was about 15 but didn't really get a handle on it until much later. Bass was a stepping stone.

Kyrsten – I started at 12 with boredom, the Tiesco I found in the closet, & a Beatles songbook.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Greg – Probably about 5 years ago. The Makkabees project I worked on really forced me to step up my game. I try to learn something new every day though.

Kyrsten – I would say around 7 years ago, I really started to fall in love with metal & different picking techniques. I hope to keep “leveling up” though, there's always more to learn.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Greg – Well, I love bass but I kind burned myself

out on it. Guitar is the most direct instrument for me to use to make the sounds I want.

Kyrsten – I had the opportunity when I was little to play around with the instruments that were used in the cover band my mother played keyboards in. Guitar was always the first one I crawled to... & still do.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Greg – I think it's a good instrument to start on because it's easy to play songs you know. You can get excited about it very easily. Piano is good too, since it's easy to see how the scales are configured, but piano lessons are definitely much more tedious.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Greg/Kyrsten – It can be both. Ally when you're able to play what you want. Adversary when you can't play a riff or you can't come up with new musical ideas.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Greg – I've always liked Kirk Hammet, Johnny

Marr, Steve Vai, Tom Morrello, but more recently, Matthew Bellamy & Omar Rodriguez-Lopez.

Kyrsten – John Lennon, Sami Sirviö from Kent, Mikael Åkerfeldt from Opeth, Steven Wilson, Matt Bellamy, & Andres Segovia.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming their guitar)?

Greg – Kind of. I've just never had a desire to do that.

Kyrsten – I named my Jackson Flying V “Captain Jack Sparrow”, it just worked too well. I've tried to name the rest, but I can't ever remember them.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Greg – I threw my Strat down at the end of a show once, but it just kind of chipped it. It felt pretty good for some reason.

Kyrsten – There's just no way I could damage a guitar, it would be like kicking a puppy.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Greg/Kyrsten – Chromatic scales, fingerpicking

techniques, work with the grimoire series books on chords & scales, & sweeps.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Greg/Kyrsten – Maybe 2-3, but we wish it was more. We try to keep a guitar out at all times so we can just pick it up whenever we feel like it.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Greg/Kyrsten – We both prefer the Dunlop Tortex 1.14mm. Greg likes the standard point, Kyrsten likes the sharp point.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Kyrsten – I prefer Ernie Ball light tops, heavy bottoms 8s.

Greg – I prefer the same, but in 9s.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Greg/Kyrsten – Once a week when we're playing a lot.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Greg/Kyrsten – Lately, every week for some reason, but usually not for a month or so.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Greg – I'll say fretting as I'm still refining my strumming hand. Scales carry over pretty well from bass.

Kyrsten – I'm the opposite. I was really into playing classical guitar & bluegrass banjo for a while, so my picking hand definitely feels more proficient.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Kyrsten – Ourselves. We know what we want it to be like & Greg used to build guitars.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Greg/Kyrsten – Mainly standard or Drop D. There's just not enough time during our sets to constantly have to re-tune or switch out guitars.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or

some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Greg/Kyrsten – We both write out chords for main parts & supplement with tab for more technical parts.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Greg/Kyrsten – We both play about mid chest so it's approximately the same height standing or sitting.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Kyrsten – Greg rocks out too hard sometimes & unplugs his chord. I need to warm up more before I play a show, time always goes by too fast & I hit the stage cold far too often.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Greg/Kyrsten – Bass, then piano, then drums. Banjo if you're feelin' crazy.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Greg – I really want to be better at finger picking &

sweeps. But I'd settle for a bigger knowledge of chords.

Kyrsten – Definitely sweeps & arpeggios, I'm getting there though!

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Greg/Kyrsten – Sweeps!!!!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Greg/Kyrsten – Pinched harmonics & mixed pick/finger style playing.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Greg – I am discovering the benefits of the capo, though Kyrsten doesn't approve.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Greg/Kyrsten – Leo Kottke style finger picking.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Greg – I did for about a year. Then I took bass lessons & then went the self-taught route. I learned my teacher didn't appreciate the Sex Pistols... & that it takes work to get good.

Kyrsten – I took a semester of jazz guitar in high school & a semester of classical guitar in college. Learned barre chords & finger picking techniques respectively.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Greg/Kyrsten – The importance of knowing basic music notation & notes on the fret board as well as that you need to listen to your other band members.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Greg/Kyrsten – Be pretty darn ADD.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Kyrsten – Not really a fan. They aren't needed for what we do.

Greg – I could never figure out how to sound like Steve Vai on the PIL generic album so... I moved on.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Greg/Kyrsten – At the beginning of the set to make sure it's all the way forward.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Greg/Kyrsten – Rhythm players are usually super solid pickers & have a great sense of... rhythm, but sometimes have a hard time thinking outside of the box. Lead players tend to think the most important part of the song is their solo. But, if they're good, they can be right & blow your mind.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Greg/Kyrsten – Pretty much no. We like songs to be good in addition to having good musicianship.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Greg – Vernon Reid has a pretty amazing signature

Parker Fly. But last I checked, they're about 6k so probably won't be getting one very soon.

Kyrsten – I'd like to have one of Matt Bellamy's Manson guitars... I'll take any of them, I'm not picky.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Greg – I've been listening to a lot of Explosions in the Sky & I dig what they're doing. I'm also a fan of Meshuggah. Those guys are always on the cutting edge.

Kyrsten – I'd say Muse & Kent have pretty innovative guitar techniques. Muse because of the integration of the synth & Kaoss pad & Kent because of their use of effects to enhance the mood of the song, instead of "I'm going to use it just to use it."

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Greg/Kyrsten – Kyrsten does her best riffs in "Real Control," "Strange Lights," & "Dying to See." Greg's best work is on "Blame," "Fear & Deception," & "Here & Now."

QRD – Anything else?

Greg/Kyrsten – Thanks for caring about what we had to say. Bottom line, figure out what you want to sound like, & keep at it until you get there, even if it seems unconventional. & check out our new album *Crash of Cassini* for more guitar awesomeness!!!

Brandon Helms of From Oceans to Autumn
March 2011

Name: Brandon Helms

Bands: Mountains Among Us, From Oceans to Autumn

Websites: silbermedia.com/fromoceanstoautumn

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Brandon – A cheap Jackson no-name model. It was Dodge Viper Blue (not very attractive).

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Brandon – It goes guitar - Boss Super Octave - Boss EQ - Boss RV-1 - Boss DD-3 - Boss DD-6 - Boss Digital Dimension - Marshall DSL-100 JCM2000 - Marshall 1960A. Effects change constantly, I use many more, this is just my typical set-up.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Brandon – I would say a combination of guitar & amp, the guitar for the pickups & the amp for tone, clarity, & drive.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Brandon – I use a Marshall DSL-100 (JCM2000). It has incredible response, just enough overdrive without completely distorting.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Brandon – My main guitar is a Gibson 1960 Les Paul Classic, the pickups are a 496R neck pickup & a 500T bridge pickup.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Brandon – A Les Paul 1957 custom all black with P90s. Not sure why, but it looks badass!

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Brandon – A delay, reverb, chorus, analog sound with digital clarity super overdrive pedal?!? WTF!!

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Brandon – I currently own 3 guitars (Gibson Les Paul Classic, Gibson Les Paul Custom, Gibson Les Paul Standard).

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Brandon – 2 of my guitars hang on the wall, 1 is in a hardcase in my closet.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Brandon – A coffee maker? My Gibson hardcases work just fine.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Brandon – Set neck, solid, somewhat heavy body, pickups mainly.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Brandon – Wow, really depends I guess. Although I usually play Gibsons, I do feel they are grossly overpriced.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Brandon – I usually customize them somehow, either pickups or strings.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Brandon – I think I over-research my guitar purchases, big time.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Brandon – I did for a few years, but I finally feel I have the perfect balance for our sound.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Brandon – I would prefer “locking in a tone” once that tone is located. It can be quite a chore finding the right tone to suit you, it took me 3+ years to lock one in I was happy with.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Brandon – Vintage Les Pauls & boutique effects that cost more than my car!

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Brandon – Good question, but I am not sure. Maybe robot tuners. I use to hate tuning my first guitar.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Brandon – Best would be my Les Paul Custom, worst would be an Epiphone Prophecy Les Paul Custom.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Brandon – I like Boss pedals, because you cannot destroy them, Marshall amps because of their tone.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Brandon – Varies from time to time, usually some kind of noodling.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Brandon – Off & on before I was 10, seriously in high school.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Brandon – I really feel the older I get, the better. Maybe I feel it's because I am more patient than before.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Brandon – Because of the limitless expression & creativity.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Brandon – Good question, not sure.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Brandon – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Brandon – Stevie Ray Vaughan hands down.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Brandon – I guess natural for some, I have never really thought about it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Brandon – I broke an acoustic in half by stepping on it by accident when I was young.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Brandon – I like to experiment with different sounds & tools to stay fresh.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Brandon – Not sure, but not as much as I would like to.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Brandon – I mainly use Dunlop .60 mm.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Brandon – I use very heavy Ernie Ball Super Slinkys on my main guitar. They are pretty heavy.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Brandon – With normal use about once a month, in the studio about once a day!

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Brandon – Not very often, most likely while recording because I like to experiment.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Brandon – Both I guess, I think your strumming style dictates your sound most.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Brandon – I set it up myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Brandon – I either use Drop D or Drop Bb. We play mostly aggressive so the drop tunings sound heavier.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Brandon – Ha-ha, I like to “create” my own tablature, even though most think it looks like a mess I can understand it just fine.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Brandon – Around waist high.

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Brandon – Sometimes my brain moves faster than my fingers.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s guitar playing?

Brandon – Drums. I think it helps your timing.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Brandon – More blues music, I love it but have not figured it all out yet.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Brandon – Not sure.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Brandon – Hmmm, not sure either.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Brandon – I like the Ebow, but rarely use it anymore.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Brandon – Not sure of an exact one, but many I'm sure.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Brandon – Never had lessons, looking back I think I would have learned much faster if I had.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Brandon – Play how you like, not how the “right” way is.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Brandon – Wow, be as sloppy as possible!

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Brandon – Never use them, so no opinion there.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Brandon – Never, all knobs are set at 100 except soft strumming I pull back the volume on the neck slightly, but not always.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Brandon – In my band I am the only guitar player, so I play both. But in general I think lead is a more creative style of playing.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Brandon – No, I still feel drums are the most important, a song with bad drumming destroys an otherwise good song.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Brandon – Stevie Ray Vaughan's 1959 Fender Strat.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Brandon – Joe Bonamassa, I think he is the best blues or rock guitarist alive today.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Brandon – I think our recent EP *The Flood/The Fall*.

QRD – Anything else?

Brandon – Thanks for your interest in my insanity!

Matt Guess of The White Cascade

March 2011

Name: Matt Guess

Band: White Cascade

Websites: myspace.com/thewhitecascade,
thewhitecascade.bandcamp.com,
diyshoegazer.tumblr.com (my gear blog)

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Matt – Ibanez 4 string bass from high school. Used it in my first band where I played bass with no effects. Now it sits in my parent's house unused.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Matt – Oh lord here we go. I use a modified Mexican Fender Fat Strat (HSS, 2002) with a Roland GK-3 guitar synth pickup, that goes into a Roland GR-55 Guitar Synth floor unit, & then out into my pedal board, which contains (in the following order) a reissue MXR Dynacomp, Pro Co RAT II (non LM308 chip), Boss MT-2 Metal Zone, EHX Big Muff Pi, Boss BF-2 Flanger, Fender Blender, Boss HF-2 Hi-Band Flanger (1986), Boss DD-3 Digital Delay (1994), Boss PH-3 Phaser (1986), EHX Freeze, Boss RC-20XL Loopstation,

Boss TR-2 Tremolo, Boss TU-2 Tuner, & finally into a rack consisting of a Lexicon MX400 Reverb & finally a BBE 482i Sonic Maximizer before being sent to my amp, a Roland JC-77.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Matt – The effects chain, the order of effects, & the effects settings themselves, I usually keep my amp settings the same, but I constantly change the effects pedals, pickup position, & the guitar synth patches & wet/dry mix. I prefer to write songs in terms of tones & I’m constantly changing settings in order to challenge myself with new sounds.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Matt – Roland JC-77 with stock icepick speakers. It is a crystal clear full-range amp with a lot of high end that most guitar amps just don’t have which allows me to play things other than guitar through it, such as loops, drum beats, synth, samples, & even vocals. The stereo chorus gives it true dimension & a genuine 80s vibe. I always use the chorus with a very slow rate & 50% depth. Robert Smith, Neil Halstead, & Andy Summers all used Jazz Choruses.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Matt – Fender Fat Strat, MIM 2002. Replaced the pickups with a Screamin’ Demon humbucker & two blues-like vintage single coils. It is tuned to a custom tuning that my friends call “Guess tuning” which is useful for open drones. It also has a GK-3 Guitar Synth module mounted on it & I use this extensively for mixing synth textures with my standard guitar tones. I have a few extra unused GK modules that I hope to use on my future guitars, hopefully a JM/JAG next.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Matt – Jazzmaster, Sonic Blue/Surf Green with a tortoiseshell pickguard & internal Roland GK electronics. Badass.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Matt – Digital Delay with built in limiter so it could self-oscillate without getting extremely loud. Maybe with a built-in phaser on the output stage like on my current pedal board.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Matt – Two, The fat Strat & a Seagull Cedar folk acoustic.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Matt – The electric in a soft padded gig bag, & the acoustic in a hard padded case.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Matt – Art on the outside.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Matt – It has to look awesome first & foremost, & second it has to have a fretboard that I instantly agree with. As far as sound, I always end up replacing the stock pickups anyways. Balance is a big thing too. I find SGs & LPs to be very unnatural to hold. I like Fenders in general.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Matt – \$500.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Matt – Always, always upgrade.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Matt – Usually I research a ton online & on YouTube & then just end up buying things. Most of my curiosity pieces that don't work out still teach me a lot about sound & that is worth something.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Matt – Yes, although the changes are now more minute settings tweaking & effects ordering & more about fine-tuning what I already have. On the other hand sometimes you just have to throw a new pedal on the board & start over.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Matt – In general I do not like the idea of writing tons of songs with the same tone. That is boring to me. I strive to find new tones constantly because that is where my inspiration lies.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Matt – Jazzmasters, 70-80s Boss/EHX Pedals (SG-1 Slow Gear, SP-1 Spectrum, DC-2 Dimension C), Very harsh-sounding vintage fuzz/wah pedals like what J&MC used, & '80s rack Reverbs like RMX, PCM70/80. I'd like to buy or build my own theremin one day. Lastly studio compressors of any variety interest me, although I don't have the motivation to try a lot of pedal compressors. Often things that I have never heard of end up being my favorite gear.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Matt – Playability, light strings & nice action, & an input jack that isn't loose.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Matt – Best = 3 way tie between the JC-77, GR-30 Guitar Synthesizer, & Alesis Microverb IV. Worst = this terrible DBX 1066 compressor & those Danelectro pedals that go for under \$20 new. The Art TubeMP was pretty mediocre.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Matt – I love Fender guitars, older Boss pedals, & new & old Electro-Harmonix pedals, Lexicon Reverbs, & last but not least pretty much everything with Roland on it. Also the RAT 2 is the most versatile distortion I have ever used, big props.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Matt – Retune it to “Guess tuning”

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Matt – 17.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Matt – 22.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Matt – I play the effects more so than the guitars. It

is about listening & observing what the knobs do to manipulate sound.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Matt – No, we need more drummers, less guitarists.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Matt – Wave generator.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Matt – Kevin Shields, Robin Guthrie, Neil Halstead, Robert Smith, & The Strokes.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Matt – I don't feel that connection with my guitar. I'm much more attached to my pedals & I adorn them in my own special way.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Matt – I accidentally dropped my electric (on the

concrete floor at the Cave no less) when the neck strap slipped out & it put a big hole in the bottom & cracked the outer finish. From then on I duct taped the strap to the guitar. I also half-smashed an acoustic guitar once so that I could be sworn in to the rock star community.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Matt – I don't really practice as far as just repeating exercises or even my own songs. I just improvise new tones constantly until I find something that I know I like & then I explore it freely while my computer is recording everything.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Matt – Would like to do it every day. Now I usually practice once a week if I'm lucky.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Matt – Medium with a nice tortoiseshell color.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Matt – I've tried to move up to a heavier gauge for more sustain & better tone.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Matt – Once a month.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Matt – Can't remember the last time.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Matt – Neither, mine both suck terribly.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Matt – I like to teach myself. If I mess something up that just opens up more possibilities for unique experimentation.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Matt – Guess tuning because it allows me to play a melody while keeping a constant drone going.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Matt – I don't write down ideas. I record them. I can't read sheet music anymore. I use a computer DAW for good sound, or when I don't have much time a voice recorder or my digital camera in video capture mode.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Matt – No clue.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Matt – Missing a stomp.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Matt – Theremin.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Matt – Lap steel or slide guitar.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Matt – Speed picking. Sweeping.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Matt – Extremely slow pick slides with ringmod->delay->reverb.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Matt – I use the capo a lot, & Guitar Synth of course.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Matt – Feedback with tube amps.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Matt – No, & I thank God every day that I was never taught the pentatonic scale.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Matt – I would show them one of each type of

effect & then playback a popular song that used that effect. I would also show them how to use delay without dialing it into the distant background like a pussy.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Matt – Haul around a ridiculous amount of gear, buy & learn to use a guitar synth, retune the guitars to Guess tuning, spend several weeks on end twisting knobs & figuring out the proper combination of pedals & the proper pedal order, pay close attention to reverb/compression, always keep up the drone, oh & worship the ground that the early '90s british shoegazers walked on of course.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Matt – Great idea. I wouldn't want to be without one.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Matt – Never. I never really liked the range of it.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Matt – Do both at the same time (& sing) is my philosophy.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Matt – No, that would be equivalent to enjoying Joe Satriani.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Matt – Any Jazzmaster touched by Thurston Moore or Kevin Shields would be grand.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Matt – I do not know, I'm still stuck in the '80s. Tough question.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Matt – “Sunblind” from *White Cascade EP*

QRD – Anything else?

Matt – Thank you for your questions!

Rachel Staggs of Experimental Aircraft

July 2011

Name: Rachel Staggs

Bands: All in the Golden Afternoon, Experimental Aircraft, Rachel Goldstar, Eau Claire, The Static Silence

Websites: rachelgoldstar.com,
soundcloud.com/rachelgoldstar,
onesheet.com/rachelgoldstar

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Rachel – Acoustic Yamaha FG-401. I still have it & have written many many songs with it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Rachel – I have a Fender Jaguar that has been my main guitar for more than a decade & for the past year I've been incorporating my 1966 Hofner 12-string. I use the same pedal line-up with both. I go into a Boss TU-2 Chromatic Tuner, Sovtek Big Muff Pi, Boss PS-3 Pitch Shifter Delay, Ibanez Phase Tone PT-909, & Electro-Harmonix POG. My amplifier since 1996 has been a late 1960s Fender Super Reverb.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Rachel – That's tough. I'd have to go equally with guitar & amplifier. If I can get a great sound, there is no need for effects. Great sound, for me, starts with the guitar/amp combo.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Rachel – It's a late 60s Fender Super Reverb 4-10. It's a tube amp with a great warm sound, amazing reverb, & I can make it howl.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Rachel – I've always played a Fender Jaguar because the shape is comfortable & I like the tremolo bar action. In 2010 I acquired a 1966 German-made 12-string Hofner hollow body that I'm quite taken with, so these two may have to duke it out. I love the fullness of the 12-string & how it chimes. They both have great tone & brilliant feedback capabilities.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Rachel – A reliable sampler. I was psyched to get a brand new Line-6 Delay Modeler, it has a 14 second loop sampler, but it stopped working after only a couple of years of light use. I'd also appreciate an analog delay that can be synced up to a drum machine. Maybe these already exist? I haven't been pedal shopping in ages.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Rachel – 7.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Rachel – I just wish I could find one that my Hofner 12-string would fit in. It's either too wide or too long so I haven't been able to gig with that guitar yet.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Rachel – I look for unique & interesting design, vintage if possible. Over the past decade I've become enamored with vintage guitars from Europe. I test out how comfortable they feel in my arms & on my back. After years of playing a heavy Jaguar, I now look for lighter guitars that will still

supply great tone & feedback, preferably with a tremolo bar or Bigsby.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Rachel – I added Seymour Duncan “Hot Jag” pickups to my Jaguar because the sound was a bit thin. I purchased it from a friend based on its make, model, & beauty. It needed a bit of oomph to get the sound I wanted though. The Hofner needed a full neck reset, unfortunately. For the most part, I keep guitars in their original state. I have a vintage Silvertone Silhouette that I haven’t touched. It has a beautiful wooden bridge.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Rachel – It depends on what I’m feeling at the moment. I purchased my Hofner 12-string while in a deep well of grief. I’d been searching for a Hofner locally, but couldn’t find one. I didn’t get a chance to play it first since I bought it through an online auction. Needless to say, it needed a neck reset because the action was so high, I could barely play above the 3rd fret. I do thorough research & figure out what I want, but when it comes time to purchase, I don’t always get a chance to test things out, but often take the plunge anyway.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Rachel – Not drastically, no. There is a constant underlying evolution, but it moves quite slow.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Rachel – I've always been after one tone, but I'd like to start exploring other territory.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Rachel – I'd love some Z.Vex pedals, an analog delay, & a vintage Hofner Verithin with Bigsby.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Rachel – After being classically trained on clarinet & learning to read music, I picked up a guitar & taught myself, almost 100%, by ear. I can't really think of something on the guitar, in particular, that would have helped me.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Rachel – I'm partial to Fender tube amps, especially mine, a vintage Super Reverb. It is warm & has great mid tones. The reverb is indeed, super. I am fond of Fender guitars, especially the Jaguar because it suits my small hands. I feel the same way about my Fender Musicmaster bass.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Rachel – A song I'm working on or have recently written.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Rachel – 21.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Rachel – I haven't yet.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Rachel – Absolutely my ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Rachel – When I first started playing I was listening to a lot of Stereolab, Velvet Underground, Bardo Pond, & Medicine. I can't really put my finger on particular guitarists who influenced me. It was more the collective sound of bands that I was drawn to

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Rachel – I have never named a musical instrument in my life. It's not really for me, but I don't judge anyone else for doing it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Rachel – During a show at Emo's in Austin, Texas my guitar literally fell off of me. We had just finished a song, I reached up to adjust the microphone, & boom, it hit the stage. I thought for sure the neck had snapped, but it was fine, just missing a chunk of wood from the body. The guitar strap has been duct taped to my guitar ever since.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Rachel – I'd like to be playing at least an hour every day, but I'm lucky if I play an hour every week right now. Life can get in the way.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Rachel – Fender medium red. It's the perfect thickness. I never have a problem finding my picks after gigs or in shared rehearsal spaces.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Rachel – 11. For more mid & low frequencies.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Rachel – Not often enough.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Rachel – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Rachel – I would have to say my strumming hand. I have a great sense of rhythm. If I'm listening to music while I walk, I can't help but walk to the beat. It helps with songwriting, since I'm usually trying to come up with vocal melodies & lyrics too.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Rachel – I take it to a guitar tech. I'd love to learn how to set guitars up myself though.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Rachel – I can read sheet music, & if I take the time, I can read tablature too, but with guitar I have created my own system to keep track of ideas. I've also recently started using the Soundcloud app on my phone while songwriting to record guitar lines & vocal melodies as I'm working on them.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Rachel – Writing songs, not recording them or making notes, & then forgetting them.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Rachel – Finger picking.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Rachel – I'll keep that to myself for now, since I'd like to eventually do it. Let's just say it involves several guitars, several amps, quite a few pedals, & only myself.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Rachel – I taught myself how to make sounds that resemble a jet engine with a guitar slide.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Rachel – I am fond of the slide. I also like the Ebow.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Rachel – I took a couple of lessons after I first purchased my acoustic guitar. I learned how to play

“House of the Rising Sun” by The Animals. After that I brought in recordings of songs I wanted to learn & that’s how I learned some basic chords. My teacher wanted me to learn theory, but I was saturated in it from playing the clarinet for nine years, so I quit lessons & continued to teach myself by ear.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Rachel – No.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Rachel – Jamie Hince of The Kills. He gets some of the most original & unique sounds out of his guitars.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Rachel – Experimental Aircraft’s album *Third Transmission*.

QRD – Anything else?

Rachel – You can listen to my most recent

recordings, where I play a variety of instruments,
here: allinthegoldenafternoon.bandcamp.com.

Jun Minowa of Gargle & Yawning
March 2011

Name: Jun Minowa

Bands: Yawning / Gargle

Websites: yawningweb.info, gargle.or.tv,
[facebook.com/pages/Yawning](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Yawning), flutteryrecords.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jun – My first guitar was a Telecaster. I got it from a friend of mine for 5,000JPY (about 60USD). Though its condition was not so good, it was enough to begin with. I still have it in my room.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jun – Guitar -> effects (Boss BD-2 -> Danelectro Fab Tone -> Volume Pedal -> Boss DD-7 -> Line6 Echo Park -> Boss RC-20XL -> Boss RV-5) -> amplifier.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jun – Effects probably. It's difficult to play any shows without them in both Yawning & Gargle.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jun – We usually use venue’s or rehearsal studio’s amps. So it’s up to the venue or studio, but if they have Marshall JCM-900, I choose it because I think it makes a natural sound. Recently I’m thinking of switching to a Fender Twin Reverb since I like its clean tone.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jun – Fender Japanese Jazzmaster. I liked its clean tone. I started using it because some of my favorite guitarists used Jazzmasters. Then I realized it made a slightly different sound from what the US model made. I couldn’t afford it at that time anyway.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jun – It would be just like the classical Stratocaster or Jazzmaster. There are still some guitars I would like to try.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jun – Sometimes I imagine how it would be if the

looper & the delay pedal had other useful features for tempo setting. I hope to find better pedals.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jun – I've got 3 electric guitars & 1 acoustic guitar.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jun – My main guitar is leaning against the wall & the rest are stored in guitar cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jun – Lighter, thinner, stronger one. & with removable wheels is better.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jun – Pickups, fretboard, colors, etc. But the first thing is to see if I can afford it or not.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jun – It's hard to imagine, but a \$2,000 a guitar is expensive, I think.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jun – As for my Jazzmaster, I replaced its bridge with another type of one.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jun – At first I usually ask some friends & I do a search on the Internet, then I try at a musical instrument store.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jun – Not so often recently. I used to change pedals often.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jun – Basically I am after one particular guitar tone.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jun – I'd like to try a vintage '62 Jazzmaster.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jun – I just suggest a simple, light, & easy to use one.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jun – Once I purchased a guitar on impulse & sold it a few months later. That was my worst purchase. I can't even remember its model, but it was a red guitar.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jun – I don't have any particularly favorite brands at the moment.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jun – Warming up. Then I play some of my own songs.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jun – I think it was 16 or 17.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jun – I'm not a good guitarist yet. I still need to improve.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jun – Because it is one of the best ways for me to express various feelings directly.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jun – People should choose an instrument that attracts them.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jun – It's my ally all the time.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jun – Taka & Yoda of Mono, Kevin Shields, Kurt

Cobain, Munaf & Mark of Explosions in the Sky, Thurston Moore.... There are a lot more.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jun – It's understandable, but I've never done it before.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jun – I broke 3 guitar necks over the years.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jun – When my fingers couldn't move like I used to a few years ago due to my illness, I just tried to play one note in guitar picking as fast as I could. It was my rehab.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jun – Sometimes 30 minutes, sometimes 3 hours.... I need to practice piano as well so my time for guitar is getting shortened spontaneously. I wish I could play longer.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jun – I usually use Dunlop Tortex .60mm picks because of its usability & cost performance.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jun – 10-46 strings. They fit me.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jun – Before every show or recording.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jun – I don't break strings very often.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jun – I can't pick up one hand. I never thought of it.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jun – I usually try to set-up my guitar by myself, but when it has a serious problem I bring it to a guitar tech.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jun – I use only normal tuning. At Gargle's shows we play a whole set almost without a break so it works.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jun – If I have any ideas while I play guitar, I usually record them. When I play with string players, I write scores for them.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jun – I think I'm hanging it at normal level.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jun – I can't help but shake my body while I'm playing. I wish I could stop.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jun – Drums, even though neither Gargle or Yawning has a drummer.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jun – Classic guitar.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jun – When I find a perfect guitar sound in arrangements, it will be a completed goal.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jun – Well, I don't remember, but I don't use a lot of tricks.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jun – I use an Ebow on some songs. I really like it. I'm also interested in a real bow.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jun – I'd like to improve my finger picking more.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jun – I've never taken any guitar lessons.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jun – I don't know much about how a guitar lesson goes, but I would say sooner or later people would find their own styles, so have fun & keep playing.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jun – I don't think there is anyone who wants to emulate my style.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jun – They're good, I think.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jun – I am just thinking about it. The tone knob of my guitar makes noise recently!

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jun – I don't see a big difference between them. I just listen to music as music totally.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jun – No, if a band is not good as music, it doesn't make sense.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jun – I've never wanted to own any famous musician's guitar.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jun – As far as I can recall at the moment, Tom Morello is still currently one of the most innovative guitarists.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jun – At shows.

QRD – Anything else?

Jun – Thank you so much for reading! Gargle's planning a short tour in France & Spain in autumn besides making albums of Yawning & Gargle. When we can make it happen, for those who are in the areas nearby, we're really looking forward to seeing you.

Michael Cosma of Anixas
October 2011

Name: Michael A. Cosma
Bands: Anixas, XoloStar Warrior, Black Acid
Development, Aspect (Aspect of a Turtle)
Websites: mudballrecords.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Michael – It was a sunburst Les Paul copy from Sears. Sold or traded it long ago.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Michael – Peavey Electric, ZoomG1NXext, Squire Champ 15.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Michael – Guitar & effects.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Michael – The Squire Champ 15 - just has a nice sound to it.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Michael – Peavey Raptor Plus EXP - the feel & sound of this guitar in my hands is just perfection.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Michael – I have played many guitars over the years & own several, but as I stated this Peavey for me personally is perfect. Not only does it play & sound good it has a nice blue finish & you can see the wood grain through it so it looks beautiful as well. This is my signature guitar, there is nothing I would change or want different.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Michael – Once again, I have used many effects in my time on earth. I played through this ART effects rack one time at a friends house that just blew me away. I have had several effect pedals (singles) & multi-effects boards mostly Digitech on the multi. However, I had always wondered what these Zoom effects sounded like so one day I broke down & ordered the ZoomG1Next multi-effect pedal & wow was I blown away when I plugged into this thing.

For my guitar effects nothing sounds better & I would not change one thing on it. It is simple to use & sounds incredible.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Michael – 8.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Michael – I just have to like the look & feel of it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Michael – Prices vary, but it is what you like & what is comfortable for you to pay. I have had guitars from \$25 to \$1000, but my personal favorites have all been in the hundreds.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Michael – I have no idea how to adjust a truss rod or set a bridge properly, but I learned a different little trick many years ago. I usually take the neck off & put one or two very thin pieces of cardboard under the neck & then screw the neck back on. This greatly improves the string action. I have also

changed out pickguards for custom ones & one time covered an entire guitar body with stickers.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Michael – Not much, I tend to be more spontaneous.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Michael – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Michael – I play with the pickup selector a lot.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Michael – Fender Mustang.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Michael – The string action. Many cheap first

guitars have terrible action & this can discourage the player.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Michael – Best is the Peavey & Fender Lead II - worst was some old Teardrop shaped thing, too uncomfortable to hold sitting or standing.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Michael – I normally just start randomly riffing around some blues scale type positions.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Michael – 12.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Michael – I feel I keep improving & am never as good as I would like to be.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Michael – I started with drums, dabbled on piano, but then the guitar just seemed to fit better - reason unknown.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Michael – I think people know what they want to play & they should get that - it does not have to be a guitar.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Michael – The guitar is definitely an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Michael – Steve Vai, Michael Angelo Batio, Yngwie Malmsteen, Jimi Hendrix, Ace Frehley, & Gary Moore.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Michael – Silly to me, I don't name them. If you call their names do they answer?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Michael – Fell over in a chair & put a nice crack in the body of a Washburn. It's black though so it doesn't show too bad.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Michael – Have some various instruction DVDs that I use sometimes. I enjoy the Metal Method series.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Michael – At the moment not too many - usually just if I am doing a recording session. I don't really practice much.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Michael – I like the larger thick ones. I have these ones with an Angel Statue printed on them & they say Clayton, these are my favorites. I like to pick fast & these work great.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Michael – I know the highest one is a 9 & I think the low E is 42 - I don't change strings too often.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Michael – Not much.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Michael – It is rare. When I played out live in metal bands it was more often, I think I played harder due to the excitement.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Michael – There are things I would like to do better with both of them, but everything seems to work fine for what I create.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Michael – The setup is done by me - I have never used a tech & they have always worked just fine.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Michael – Mostly dropped D or standard - like the Drop D for metal sound.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Michael – Tablature for sure as I am not able to read music.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Michael – On my belly.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Michael – School me, I don't know.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Michael – Some say piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Michael – I would love to be able to play that crazy

Yngwie stuff or be able to do the crazy fast stuff that Michael Angelo Batio does, but I totally respect their playing & the effort they have put in to be able to do that & know full well that I do not put in the kind of practice time to be able to do as they do.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Michael – Fast fluid arpeggios.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Michael – Some high speed tapping.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Michael – I have a capo, Ebow, & slide but rarely use any of them.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Michael – Arpeggios & just better scale/run combinations.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Michael – Yes, started with classical but that was quick & she switched me to a rock teacher knowing I was bored with her, from that rock teacher I then went to a different one that was a guitar player in a local band. After that I started getting Metal Method & various other self-teaching tools, CDs, tapes, book tape combos, etc. I learned different things from each of them. I attribute most of the best instruction I got to Bill Erskine, who was the guitar player in a band. He showed me the most & helped me to be able to learn songs by ear. He taught me until I could do that myself.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Michael – I have taught several people how to play & I like to teach them easy fun stuff that sounds wicked so that right away they can start having fun & sound good. I also show them that you don't have to be perfect, just close enough so that it sounds right. I also teach them how to make up songs & riffs.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Michael – Pick fast & bend good.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Michael – Can take or leave them - don't really use them much.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Michael – Never.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Michael – I don't want to offend anyone, but I don't have much use for a rhythm guitarist. If you have gone that far, then learn to play lead as well. I grew up listening to the TWIN guitars of bands like Judas Priest. I guess the rhythm thing works for bands like AC/DC - I don't know - it would still be cool if Angus & Malcolm were trading off solos.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Michael – This happens a lot. Actually I think a lot of the Yngwie stuff is crap as far as the vocals & the songs, but then you have killer guitar. I guess that's why you have to be a guitar player to appreciate some of this stuff because you can overlook some of that & still enjoy it.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Michael – I like some of those guitars that Steve Vai plays with the seven strings & they just look so cool too - also any of the Yngwie guitars with the scalloped neck would be awesome - I played one once that had a partially scalloped neck & it was insane. The action was such that you just barely touched it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Michael – Hands down Steve Vai is the master. He has the musicality, the ability, the strangeness, & the innovation all in one package.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Michael – There is quite a bit of guitar work on the Aspect CDs that can be listened to or downloaded at this link: last.fm/music/Aspect+of+a+Turtle/+albums & more can be found at mudballrecords.com.

QRD – Anything else?

Michael – Wow, I think you covered it all.

Cheryl Hall of Irata
October 2011

Name: Cheryl Hall

Bands: Irata

Websites: www.iratalive.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Cheryl – My first guitar was a Japanese made Fender Stratocaster. After a while I didn't care for it; the neck was thick & I felt like I should be playing country music on it. I think I sold it to a friend for \$150.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Cheryl – Right now, Gibson Les Paul to Boss Volume Pedal to Boss Delay, to Boss Flange to Digitech Reverb to Mesa Boogie Dual Stack.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Cheryl – Hmm...at the moment I would have to say effects. A lot of the sounds that I get are really for “ambience” (not in the shoegazey manner) & the effects really help with that.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Cheryl – To play gigs the Mesa Boogie Dual Rectifier. I've always wanted a Boogie; the Marshall sound was real popular when I was young, but I always thought it sounded too flat & a little canned. The Boogie has a little bit more flexibility in the sound, plus it's LOUD. 😊

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Cheryl – For gigs I have a wine red, double cut-away Gibson Les Paul. It looks awesome & has a nice warm sound.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Cheryl – It would have the body of a Gibson Explorer with a natural finish, black hardware... damn, I actually used to have a list of all this stuff. Suffice it to say, it would look & sound AWESOME!!!

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Cheryl – I definitely want a pedal that's easier to

tweak on stage. I prefer the individual pedals to the multi-effects processors, but some of the pedals I use have different settings for different songs & I would prefer to have a sound on stage that's as authentic as possible.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Cheryl – Ummm, I think three. Gibson Les Paul, Ibanez.... I don't know, it's a Strat style. I get a lot of grief for it, but it sounds good & plays really well. I also own a LaPatrie classical guitar that I've had since high school. I pull it out a few times a year; I'll always have a soft spot for classical guitar.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Cheryl – In their cases. I keep the Gibson at our practice spot. The other two just stay in the bedroom at home.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Cheryl – A humidifier/temp control.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Cheryl – Well, I wasn't going to put this first, but

looks are always important. In fact, if I don't like the way a guitar looks I usually won't even pick it up to try it. After that is playability. I like a fast, thin neck. Then I make sure it seems well made, as far as I can tell.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Cheryl – Wow, I don't have a clue. I mean, I'd like for them to be cheap, but still....

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Cheryl – I have traditionally stuck with what I've got. After recording this last album though, I'm going to do something I've never done & get new pickups for my Les Paul. In the future I may be more inclined to upgrade my equipment.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Cheryl – Good question. I start off *wanting* to do a lot of thorough research, but my attention span is so short that it really only happens over the course of several sessions. I probably do a poor job compared to my peers.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Cheryl – Mmmm, not really. Once I get something I like, I kind of stick with it.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Cheryl – Well, I mess with my tone about once a month. Sometimes I start to hear things differently, or I get bored or inspired. I admit that I really just like to play & in the past tone has been more of an afterthought for me.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Cheryl – Mainly just a Gibson Explorer. Though I certainly wouldn't mind a couple of the ESP signature models they did for Kirk Hammett & James Hetfield... one of my guilty little secrets.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Cheryl – Hmmmm, I'll have to think about this one a little longer...

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Cheryl – I'm really in love with my Digiverb pedal right now. It gets a really broad scope of reverb & is pretty manageable. Don't think I have a worst...

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Cheryl – I've mainly used a lot of Boss effects in the past. They tend to have a broader spectrum to play with than any other pedals I've tried. I like Ibanez guitars because they're pretty consistent with the quality for price, i.e., you pretty much know what you're going to get. I also like the playability; thin necks, etc. I'm also really in love with Gibson. They are nice, solid instruments with a great tone.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Cheryl – I always play slow finger exercises & chord progressions to get warmed up. I think after people reach a certain level of proficiency they think they don't need that sort of thing anymore, but always practicing basics immensely improves your performance in other areas.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Cheryl – 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Cheryl – Wow, I don't know. I hope I'm not as good as I'm ever going to get!!!!

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Cheryl – It's the only one I've ever been able to sit down with for a long period of time, despite a very short attention span.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Cheryl – Absolutely not. People should at the very least learn piano so they have a working knowledge of *music* before they decide to become a guitarist.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Cheryl – Definitely ally. I wouldn't be able to write on anything else.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Cheryl – When I started playing I listened to a lot of Metallica. The people I was playing with at the time were into Dream Theatre or Led Zeppelin & Jimi Hendrix, so learning to play all that stuff pushed me towards the style that I play now.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Cheryl – I don't know, I think it must be a guy thing.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Cheryl – I was drinking one night, walking around the house with my guitar on & somehow I bashed one of the pickups into something. It actually sank down into the body of the guitar. I was pretty upset about it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Cheryl – Like I mentioned earlier, scales & chord progressions. I also like to ask random people what song they would learn on guitar if they could. I have a list & whenever I get some free time (so not very often!!!) I'll tackle a song or two.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Cheryl – Hard to say, because it's so sporadic. I would definitely like to play more though!!

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Cheryl – Umm, they're these orange picks with a star cut out of the middle - the logo's worn off of it so I couldn't tell you what brand. I don't drop them as much.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Cheryl – I use 10s on a standard tuning & 11s with Irate... because we tune down to D.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Cheryl – Whenever it's necessary!

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Cheryl – Pretty rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Cheryl – My strumming hand is more proficient; my fretting hand has more of a mind of its own. This means I'm a pretty solid rhythm player, with room to improve on the solo end.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech?

Cheryl – Guitar tech. Best to let the pros do it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Cheryl – Standard, tuned down to D, & Drop C. Irata uses the second two.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Cheryl – I write either tablature or chord charts with rhythm notation when writing my ideas down. They're pretty quick & easy to reference.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Cheryl – Across my stomach.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Cheryl – I'm noticing more & more as a try to write that I keep going back to those metal roots. I want to break that habit mainly because I feel like it's already been done so well by the pros that I want to move on to something else.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Cheryl – Definitely piano, if nothing else.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Cheryl – I started learning banjo a while ago & that is a very cool instrument. I have carpal tunnel syndrome, so I'm really not able to practice those quick motions for a period of time suitable to be proficient at it.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Cheryl – I haven't played a stadium yet!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Cheryl – Wow, I couldn't tell you. Maybe sweep picking?

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Cheryl – I actually like whammy bars. Don't have one, but I like using them.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Cheryl – Tapping.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Cheryl – Yes, I took lessons from many different people. I learned a lot of music theory & actually just guitar history when I was learning on electric. When I studied classical I learned a lot about form & traditional techniques.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Cheryl – How to read music. 😊

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Cheryl – I don't know, but I can't imagine it would take much!

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Cheryl – I think they're neat, but I had two guitars with the Floyd Rose on them & that was just a huge pain. Then again, I was basically still a beginner at the time. I think if I had one now I would be able to manage it more effectively.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Cheryl – Next to never.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Cheryl – Well, lead guitars do solos & melodies on

top of the music, while rhythm guitarists help drive the music.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Cheryl – Yeah, for a quick listen, but they wouldn't be a band that I would like. I would probably search for other work that the guitarist has done. I usually have to at least like a couple things about a band before I can accept something that I normally wouldn't care for.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Cheryl – Any of James Hetfield or Kirk Hammett's guitars. Why not? They were my heroes when I started & will always have a soft spot in my heart.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Cheryl – I don't know. I don't have a lot of serious guitar players in my circle, but non-guitar players seem to think Bucket Head is pretty awesome.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Cheryl – When I'm practicing by myself at home!

QRD – Anything else?

Cheryl – Thanks, have a great day!

Mason Jones of Numinous Eye

June 2012

Name: Mason Jones

Bands: Numinous Eye, Tone Volt, solo, We've
Come For What's Ours, ex-SubArachnoid Space

Websites: chanel.com/mason, www.tonevolt.com,
numinouseye.bandcamp.com,
soundcloud.com/masonoise

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Mason – My very first guitar would have been an acoustic when I was a kid, & I have no idea. My first “real” guitar is one that I still have & play to this day, a gorgeous Ibanez from the late 70s that I bought from a friend in college.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Mason – I actually don’t have a typical set-up, as I’m always changing it. Plus it depends on who I’m playing with & what we’re up to. But if I imagine a most-common setup, it’d be:

guitar -> Z-Vex Fuzz Factory -> Subdecay Blackstar distortion ->Electrix Filter Queen -> Eventide Pitch Factor -> Eventide Time Factor -> volume pedal -> amp

I sometimes use a Moogerfooger low-pass filter, sometimes a Pigtronix Mothership, & often a variety of other fuzz pedals.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Mason – It's probably the effects, but it depends on what I'm playing. I'm accustomed to borrowing guitars & amps when I tour in Japan, so I've gotten pretty flexible with gear. There are certain effects that I've come to love for psychedelic or noise work.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Mason – I trade off between two. I most often use my old 2x12" Music Man combo because it's smaller & more portable, but for live shows I prefer my also old Ampeg VT-22 head, with a 2x12" Mesa cabinet. I'm a tube amp person exclusively.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Mason – Mostly I prefer my 70s Ibanez, which is a very heavy humbucker guitar, good sustain & a great feel. For some psych-rock playing I use a newer American Standard Stratocaster, because I get good use of the whammy bar.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Mason – Honestly it'd probably be the Moog guitar, for its dronability, but otherwise it'd be my old Ibanez. Dark woodstain, gold hardware, & ivory inlay down the neck; it's a beautiful guitar that I was very lucky to acquire way back when.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Mason – It would probably be some ridiculous combination of fuzz, delay, & filtering, with tap-tempo & a foot pedal to filter.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Mason – I only own four. My Ibanez, my Strat, an electric-acoustic, & a cheapo beat-up Ibanez covered with stickers & used only for noise work.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Mason – Hanging on the wall in my studio downstairs.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Mason – A space-bending property so they're only the size of a backpack, with tons of padding.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Mason – I care most about the feel, then the sound, because you can change pickups if you need to, but the neck is the neck. It has to be comfortable to play, a certain width, thickness, & wood feel for me.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Mason – It should cost little enough that I can afford it, but they usually don't.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Mason – I generally stick with what I've got. I made the mistake when I was young of mucking with my Ibanez, & it wasn't smart so I had it put back to mostly stock.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Mason – Probably not as much as I should, but I

look around, wait if it's new to see what people think. But I love weird custom pedals, limited handmade noise things or so-called boutique fuzz pedals & whatnot, & it's usually hard to find out a lot about them in advance so I end up taking the chance, mail-ordering, & see what I get.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Mason – I keep the guitars & amps, & change the pedals all the time. It helps keep me from getting in a rut. I find new sound combinations & it can inspire interesting things. I'll put a pedal away for a bit & then come back to it & discover new things.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Mason – I'm sort of after a particular tone, but even after all these years I can't say that I've found the one I have in my head. I keep getting closer, though.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Mason – I'd love to be able to afford a Moog guitar for experimental/noise work, but a Paul Reed Smith would be my next purchase if I had the cash. Or a

1970 Les Paul. I'm not sure there's a particular amp that I'd dream of getting. Pedals, there are always intriguing ones out there, but next up is finding the perfect wah pedal, I think.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Mason – I don't think there are features that are necessary. It's more making sure it's got the right feel. I think people often try playing guitar & don't stick with it because they got a guitar that doesn't feel or sound right to them, so they get discouraged. It should be as easy & comfortable for them to play as possible. That goes double for kids. People tend to buy cheap-ass guitars for kids, & then the kids don't want to play because it's hard to play & sounds bad.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Mason – Probably the Fuzz Factory pedal is the best purchase I've made, though the Eventide Time Factor is a close contender. Hands down the best delay pedal ever. The worst purchase was the Line 6 Distortion Modeler. Seemed like a great idea, several fuzz pedals I use all in one pedal. Unfortunately it just sounds bad.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Mason – The Eventide stomp boxes are expensive, but totally worth it. They're spectacular. I'll also give Boss the nod because they've been offering solid, affordable pedals for a very long time. I like Fender amps quite a bit, even though I don't have one.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Mason – No specific song; I don't play recognizable songs, really. On an electric, I just play some blues leads to get a feel for the guitar. On an acoustic, usually some classical fingerpicking.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Mason – I guess I first started when I was about 13, playing acoustic guitar for a couple of years, then I quit & picked up an electric in college & have played ever since.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Mason – Probably when I was about 33 or 34, a

couple of years into touring & playing constantly with SubArachnoid Space. But in some ways, of course, I'm always at my best because I keep getting better. If I thought I was getting worse, I'd have to stop!

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Mason – I'm just most comfortable with guitar. I also play bass, drums, & keyboards, along with a few other odd instruments; but I've been playing guitar for the longest & have concentrated on it the most. There's something about the way the hands coordinate & work together on guitar that fits my brain, I think.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Mason – Actually, I don't. I think piano is probably better because it's possible to play with one hand, then move to two & watch them both. With guitar, the two hands are doing very different things & I feel like it's harder to get started.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Mason – Definitely my ally. I don't fight with it very much.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Mason – There are really three, & they're a pretty odd trio: Jimi Hendrix, Adrian Belew, & Daniel Ash (Bauhaus). The link between them all is that they stretched the possibilities of the guitar beyond what most people expect.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Mason – I find it pretty silly, really.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Mason – During a noise show here in San Francisco opening for C.C.C.C., I played a duo set with Elden M of Allegory Chapel Ltd. I played guitar & partway into the set the jack on my guitar started fritzing out. It was really frustrating, so I decided to make it part of the performance & started pulling on it, yanking the cord in & out & ultimately tearing the jack off & ripping the wiring out, til I tossed the guitar down on the stage. It was a good show.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Mason – Nothing. I play when I play, whether it's with others or by myself, but I don't sit around & do scales or work on anything in particular.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Mason – It varies. Some weeks I'll play 8 hours across a few nights or weekend days, then some weeks I won't play at all. I'd like to play far more than I do, though. Life is busy.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Mason – I use medium-weight Dunlop .60mm Tortex picks, because they have the right thickness & edge, & they have a texture that means I don't drop them. I pretty much never drop picks, but I used to when I used slicker ones.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Mason – I like the Ernie Ball Regular Slinky strings. I used to go with the .9 high-E because I like the bendability, but the sound is too thin, I think. I like the feel of the Ernie Ball strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Mason – Not very often unless I'm doing a bunch of recording. Under normal circumstances I'll go for longer than I should before I change.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Mason – I pretty much never break strings, for some reason. If I do, though, it's either the high-E or the D string.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Mason – I think they've developed to be about even, over the years. I play both blues-rock-derived music & more experimental stuff, as well as classical-style acoustic, so I've developed the fingerpicking with my right hand along with the leads with my left.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Mason – I'll have someone else do it. I've never spent the time to get really good at it, so I'll let an expert handle it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Mason – Standard tuning only, mainly because I'm lazy & I just want to keep it straightforward.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Mason – For whatever reason I don't write down my ideas. I'll just fiddle with an idea & play it until I'll remember it. If I forget it, then it wasn't worth keeping anyway I guess. I also do quick & rough recordings as I'm working on things.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Mason – I don't really know. Nothing particularly unusual, I guess.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Mason – Falling into a rut. I improvise pretty much 100% of the time & it's always too easy to fall back on habits & unconsciously grab onto some pattern or riff that I've played before. It's surprisingly difficult to break habits.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Mason – Probably bass, because it forces you to simplify & find the real meat of an idea. Physically it's also good for strengthening your hands.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Mason – Flamenco, definitely. Really good flamenco playing is pretty marvelous.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Mason – Learning music theory as it applies to the guitar.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Mason – Good question, but I'm not really sure.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Mason – I guess it would have to be an Ebow, though I don't use it as much as I used to. For noise & drone work it's a pretty amazing gadget.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Mason – Good rhythm guitar playing. I’m really a lead player & while I’m very rhythmic, I’m not a good rhythm guitar player.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Mason – When I was a kid I did, yes. I learned a lot of really important basics, from folk guitar & regular chords to some classical guitar & just a tiny bit of theory. When I picked up an electric guitar in college, having those basics from learning on an acoustic was extremely valuable. I also got started on fingerpicking in my guitar classes, which has been surprisingly helpful.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Mason – How to enjoy atonality, to experiment, & don’t automatically assume that anything not on a chord chart is bad.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Mason – Listen to a combination of psychedelia, noise, avant-garde, & industrial music I suppose.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Mason – I don’t have much of an opinion on the technical aspects of which is best & why. The tremolo on my Strat never goes out of tune, so I call that good enough. I really love having a tremolo; combining that with an Ebow is actually a really nice way to start emulating a synth, if you put it through enough effects.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Mason – Very, very rarely. Generally only if I’m playing through a different amp & I can’t quite get to where I like things using the amp’s EQ alone.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Mason – In general with the sorts of music I’ve played, there hasn’t been any real difference. It’s not standard “rock” music so players will move back & forth, even within songs. At times there might be multiple rhythm or lead lines happening simultaneously. So I don’t personally think about it as lead versus rhythm, but more about what sort of

sounds the song needs & what's the best way to achieve them. But at the same time, there's an expertise to being a solid rhythm player that I don't think is one of my strongest skills.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Mason – Not at all, no. I can appreciate the guitar work & enjoy it for itself, but that's it. In particular if a song's rhythm section isn't working well, it's hard for me to get into it.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Mason – I can't really think of one. I'm just not that obsessed with hardware.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Mason – Innovative.... Probably Yamamoto Seiichi, who used to play with the Boredoms & Omoide Hatoba & is now doing solo work as well as playing with various bands including Rovo. He's a good technical player, but more importantly he has a knack for playing cool sounds in the "right" way, if you know what I mean. He just fits into what's going on & supplies something that fits.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Mason – Various releases from my old band SubArachnoid Space have work that I'm pretty pleased with, but it'll always be my latest stuff that makes me happiest, so checking Numinous Eye on Bandcamp is where I'd point people: numinouseye.bandcamp.com is the place. There's a new album being mastered now which is more song-oriented & has some playing I'm very happy with.

QRD – Anything else?

Mason – That should do it -- thanks for the questions!

Chris Wade of Orlock & The Wades

June 2012

Name: Chris Wade

Bands: Orlock, hose.got.cable, Groove., The Wades

Websites: chrswd.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Chris – My first guitar was when I was very young, white plastic... I'm sure I broke it. I eventually got a wooden acoustic guitar. My first electric guitar was a Harmony from Sears. It was a terrific copy of a Gibson. "The Paul" which was a stripped down Les Paul, really. It eventually fell apart.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Chris – Right now I am not using an electric set up for anything, but over the years I have used Marshall or Sunn heads with 4X12 cabs (2 for a while in Orlock). I have not used many effects other than simple distortion such as a DS-1, however I played with a phaser pedal on tour once. Guitars have come & gone, but the best have been SGs of varying quality or any nice double-cutaway with humbuckers.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Chris – My guitar has no name or serial number anywhere on it. It is an acoustic guitar of mediocre quality. It buzzes, but it booms.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Chris – A signature electric would be a double cutaway version of the aforementioned “The Paul” with various subtle differences & modifications - binding on the neck, neck-thru body construction, large black pick guard, single humbucker, kill-switch & volume knob, no tone knob. Wouldn’t that be nice?

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Chris – I suppose it would be a distortion pedal. It would have as few knobs as possible, maybe even just one.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don’t?

Chris – Free guitars included with purchase.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Chris – Value.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Chris – They are like anything else; you can spend as much money on one as you want & they are of varying quality. I've never gotten too attached to any that I've had. I suppose if I had a lot of money I could see spending \$1000 on a guitar. But I've played nice \$300 guitars & I've definitely had my share of \$100 guitars & that is just rolling the dice.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Chris – I usually don't ever string the little E string... usually remove that tuning key, even. Sometimes I rip out the neck position humbucker; that little chamber there is nice for sound.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Chris – I really just come across stuff.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Chris – I have always preferred raw sounding, distorted guitar & lo-fi acoustic.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Chris – I've always wanted an Orange amp to play with & my dream guitar is the Ibanez Iceman.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Chris – I think most guitars have too many settings... as you would guess guitars like Mustangs & Jazzmasters look like nightmares to me. I think the best thing that any guitar could use if it didn't already have it was a neck thru body construction or at least a set neck. & tuning keys always suck on cheaper guitars.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Chris – The best was an SG at Guitar Center for \$650 that had a bent tuning key that I spotted. So I

got it for \$400. The worst was a Mexican Fender Telecaster that was literally falling apart by the end of my first show with it.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Chris – I love Gibson & Marshall but I've not been picky over the years. In spite of having that Harmony when I was a kid that fell apart, I had a Harmony in the early 90's that was indestructible & eventually was modified several times over. What it comes down to is that the equipment that you have is what you have. It's what you do with it that counts.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Chris – Some half-assed blues lick probably.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Chris – 5, but you wouldn't know it.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Chris – 24.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Chris – It doesn't. I am better at & enjoy bass guitar tons more, but guitar is what I have the most live & recording experience with.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Chris – I don't think it matters.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Chris – I see it as a weapon.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Chris – Ace Frehley (KISS), Ian MacKaye (Fugazi), Steve Jones (Sex Pistols), Walter Schreifels (Quicksand), Gut Rochelle (Groove., The Needles).

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Chris – Yeah, kinda silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Chris – Smashing a few of them on purpose.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Chris – I try to make sense of the music in my head constantly, if that counts.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Chris – Less than 10, 40+.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Chris – Medium Fender usually works the best.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Chris – Medium, nothing special.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Chris – Depends on the application. Not very often.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Chris – All the time on electric guitars.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Chris – My strumming hand, because even though I suck at guitar I have great rhythm.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Chris – I have had guitars set up, but most of the time I just do it myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Chris – Right now I am playing in open G a lot because it's super easy & fun. I have played in standard & Drop D for most of the punk/metal stuff.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Chris – No.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Chris – As low as I can usually.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Chris – Sucking.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Chris – Bass guitar, absolutely.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Chris – Leads/solos I guess.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Chris – Slide guitar.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Chris – Some finger-picking stuff.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Chris – Slide.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Chris – Again, slide & solos/leads.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Chris – For 2 weeks when I was a kid. Nothing that I can remember.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Chris – Stylistic stuff... punk finesse.
Noise/feedback/neck bending & stuff like that.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Chris – I guess what I'm best at is extreme dynamics, from noisy/chaotic to quiet riffing & stuff.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Chris – Meh.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Chris – Never. Rip that thing out.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Chris – Rhythm guitar players are bassists playing guitars, lead guitar players are guitarists.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Chris – Usually, no.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Chris – Angus Young because I like SGs.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Chris – Kurt Ballou from Converge is without a doubt the most creative & innovative guitarist out there. His tunings are secret, his riffs are sick, & he has mastered his sound both live & in the studio as Converge's engineer/producer.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Chris – Search for hose.got.cable on YouTube. Go to my ReverbNation page & listen to Orlock.

QRD – Anything else?

Chris – Nope. Thanks.

Corbie Hill of Alpha Cop

June 2012

Name: Corbie Hill

Bands: Alpha Cop, Where the Buffalo Roamed, peripherals

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wherethebuffaloroamed.bandcamp.com,
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twitter.com/afraidofthebear

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Corbie – It's a Fender DG-5 acoustic that I got for my 14th birthday I think, & it's sitting in a case about seven feet away from me. It's been dropped & thrown & all kinds of dumb shit over the years, but probably the most foolish thing I did to that guitar was cover it with stickers. It had a two dollar bill taped to it for years -- don't ask me why I thought that looked cool. Then, last year, I decided the guitar looked totally undignified. I mean, it really didn't match how seriously I take music & how utterly serious the music I play is. So I took off all the stickers. I even ripped off the pickguard. I didn't use any kind of adhesive remover or finish-saver, either. I wanted it to look hard-lived, because that's accurate. Now I identify with that guitar

again. I keep it in my living room with my other acoustics.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Corbie – Jesus. It's pretty absurd -- I have to look at a picture of my board to recall everything in the right order. Boss EQ, Boss BD-2 (2-switch Keeley mod), Boss DS-1, E-H Micro Pog. The dry out from the Micro Pog goes to a Boss Gigadelay, which then goes to my Fender Hot Rod Deville 410. The wet out goes to a GFS tuner (which is an amazing pedal, huge display) & then to a Baddy One Shoe Punch & Grind double fuzz, MXR Phase 90, Danelectro Cool Cat Trem, Rocktron Short Timer Delay, Crybaby Wah, & then finally to a Fender Stage 100 solid state head which powers a cannibalized Princeton 112 cab & a piece-of-shit Radio Shack PA speaker. None of the cabs are matched with the head at all, it's a total Frankenstein rig & it shouldn't work but I love how it sounds.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Corbie – Yep.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Corbie – Since I've started playing through a solid state & a tube simultaneously, they've become the halves of my sound. I can't play through just one anymore & I can't even pick which amp is my primary -- especially since each amp gets a different signal from the pedalboard.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Corbie – Like the previous answer, I can't pick one guitar & call it my primary. I have three primary electrics right now, & each has distinct strengths & uses. The guitar I'm playing at any given time is largely dependent on the mood I'm in, & whether or not it has fresh strings.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Corbie – It would probably be an ash body Tele with a hopelessly overwound bridge humbucker & a P-90 in the neck (probably the Seymour Duncan Phat Cat, which is my favorite pickup of all time). Either that, or I would just put two P-rails in it – I can't decide, but the P-rails is an amazing pickup. I have one in the bridge of my Washburn & it's an amazing pickup: the perfect balance of versatility & tone.

I digress. Let's say an ash-bodied Tele with matte black finish, white binding & matching headstock. Let's have the Fender logo be kind of understated, kind of a gray-silver against the black or something. Rosewood, 22 frets with dot markers. Seymour Duncan Phat Cat in the neck, & the bridge would probably be some overwound PAF-style humbucker, splittable. Let's throw a piezo in the bridge, just for shits, which is going to mean we'll need concentric knobs. It would need a Strat switch tip & a Les Paul jack plate rather than that idiotic, useless cup most Tele jacks go in.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Corbie – I would love to have a triple cascading stereo delay made up of three individual delay circuits, each with independent regen, repeat, & mix controls. The name would pretty much have to be some obscure Star Trek reference. I'm a lifelong fan.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Corbie – Eight or nine, I think. Three acoustics, one bass, & my three main electrics make seven. Then I have an old OLP MM1 that's pretty much unplayable at this point. The pickups in it are really nice, so I need to just scrap it & put them in something I would actually play. I have this

ridiculous Harmony Flying V that I got in a Craigslist trade & someone did this Jackson Pollock splatter paint job to it. It's at a friend's house. I don't know what I plan to do with it, to be honest. Maybe I'll use it in a noise set. Then I have some bodies & stuff lying around, but nothing that's especially playable.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Corbie – My Jasmine Acoustic/electric & my Fender DG-5 are in cases in my living room, & my 1940s Kay archtop is on a wall hanger near them. Everything else is in a hard case in my music room, which is a separate building out here at Camp Werewolf.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Corbie – Shoulder straps. My Washburn's case is a hardshell with soft covering & shoulder straps & it's the best thing ever. I'm forever carrying loads & loads of gear, & anything to free my hands makes that easier. If I could replace all my cases with that exact case, I would.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Corbie – Nothing in particular. I tend to leave myself pretty open to what should present itself. I very rarely can afford to shop for guitars, so typically what happens is some awesome guitar jumps out at me while I'm just minding my business. So I either sell something or trade something out on Craigslist so I can get it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Corbie – \$300 or less. Paying more than that for an instrument is bullshit.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Corbie – I typically upgrade them. I'm a big proponent of Seymour Duncan pickups. Recently, though, I got a Squier Jagmaster in a Craigslist deal with the explicit aim of putting the pickups in my trashed OLP (a Pearly Gates bridge & a Phat Cat neck) in it. The stock pickups in this guitar – which is something like \$250 brand new or whatever – are the most fantastic, self-overdriving humbuckers I have ever encountered. It would have been criminal to change the pickups in that guitar, so I left it stock. But usually I upgrade.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Corbie – I really don't do much research at all. The best way I've ever found to learn whether a piece of gear works with my style or not is by putting it in my setup & playing it at practice. You can't do that at a store or by reading descriptions or reviews or – got, my least favorite – by watching some industry hack demo classic rock riffs on some YouTube video. Gear may be mass-manufactured, but it's experienced personally.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Corbie – Not anymore. The most I ever do is switch out a pedal or two, but it's been probably three years since there have been any drastic changes in my setup.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Corbie – I'm after variety, hence the dozen pedals, three main guitars, & two amps.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Corbie – Hmm. I'm pretty satisfied with what I have. I'm not lying, I would love to have \$6,000 boutique amps & custom shop guitars & stuff, but that would only make me be afraid to properly abuse my gear. My guitars are a lot like me: they're not top of the line by any stretch & they're not going to win any awards; but, in their proper context, they fit in just fine.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Corbie – Jesus, I really don't know. Guitars are such personal things, even from the get-go. I don't think I have an answer.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Corbie – I'd be talking for hours if I gave you full answers for either. Let's just say the Jagmaster I got last year consistently blows my mind. Everything in my current signal chain is essential, & I could go into absurd detail as to why each pedal or amp is the best thing ever. That said, I never want to see another Floyd Rose-style tremolo as long as I live. Also, the E-H Nano Dr. Q is a piece of shit.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Corbie – My tastes are pretty standard. I like Fender amps & I don't like Marshall & I like Boss & E-H pedals & blah blah blah blah. See? It's pretty boring. I do, however, have a thing for good Squiers like my Pro-tone Fat Tele or my Jagmaster. I'm not particularly brand loyal, but I do get consistently excited about cheap (as in, very cheap) guitars that sound & play amazing. I can't afford anything else, so that works out.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Corbie – Whatever crosses my mind. I don't have any specific exercises or whatever. Usually I just strum a standard chord to check intonation, tune if I gotta, & then play whatever.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Corbie – I was 13 or 14. I'm 30 now.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Corbie – It's a constant process. I can't think of any discrete milestones, but I do know that I improve the most when I'm challenged by my collaborators. I've been in a bunch of bands, & each set of collaborators has taught me something new about myself which comes out in whatever evolution my playing goes through while I'm doing music with them.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Corbie – Because the electric guitar – particularly in the amps & pedals era we live in – toes the line between chaos & finesse. Then again, I think I should have played drums instead. I think there's more dignity to it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Corbie – Probably not, but I'm glad enough people are even peripherally interested in playing music for this to be the valid question it is.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Corbie – I know this sounds cheeseball, but it's an

extension of me. If it wasn't, I wouldn't be able to call what I do "music." I wouldn't even say it's an ally, because that implies that the guitar & I could potentially have different agendas (i.e. that as allies, our agendas are the same, but that we came to them separately). I think or feel something & say it through the guitar. It's no different from talking or listening or thinking or walking or cooking or anything else you learn to do through your life.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Corbie – When I was a teen it was the guys in Pearl Jam. I was pretty obsessed with them in high school & their music is the reason I got started playing. I won't even go through all the other equally uncool to admit ever liking bands I took influence from along the way; but I will say Neil Young, Isaac Brock, the post-rock movement, &, my current idol, Dylan Carlson, have all inspired my playing. I can't say what it is about each guitarist I've looked up to that I took with me, but I can say each of those styles speaks to me (or has spoken to me at some point). There's definitely a common thread of bluesiness, a quality I absolutely adore even though I find blues-rock & even the blues itself one-dimensional & fairly boring.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Corbie – It's whatever. It makes sense to some people & not to others. I don't do it, but only because I fall in the latter category. It's personal, so it's okay either way.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Corbie – I smashed a guitar once when I lived in Greenville. I was at the Spazzatorium, playing a July 3rd show, but it was after midnight when we played. My goal for a few weeks in advance was to celebrate the 4th by smashing a guitar, so I bought this \$50 Strat copy at a pawnshop for that express purpose. I probably just threw that money away, effectively, but it was a rewarding experience. There were maybe 15 or 20 people there.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Corbie – I don't see how else I would practice.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Corbie – Maybe three hours? I only really play at band practice or shows. I would like to play more, but I'm also a writer & a bunch of other things so I feel like I play enough guitar relative to my other pursuits in life. When I was a teenager I played that many hours every day. I can't imagine doing that now, though I'm glad I did so in high school. I don't think I would be as comfortable with my instrument if I hadn't.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Corbie – Dunlop 1mm (the black one). It's easy to grip & its thickness matches my playing style. I'm really heavy handed & I'm a hybrid rhythm/melody player so I tend toward a pretty thick pick, but I need it to flex a bit too.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Corbie – I use Ernie Ball Skinny Top/Heavy Bottoms. I get good clarity from the high strings but really solid punch from the low. I'll be really sad if they stop making this gauge.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Corbie – Heh. Infrequently. Too infrequently. Not until they get corroded & shitty sometimes.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Corbie – Infrequently as well.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that affect your style?

Corbie – My fretting hand, by miles. I never learned fingerstyle, so I tend to just hammer along like a caveman with my right.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Corbie – Neither. I mean, I've had my guitars set up a few times, but usually I just wing it. Perfect intonation is cool & all, but I've only experienced it a few times in my own guitars.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Corbie – Typically just standard, though when I do solo freeform guitar I invent different relative tunings for each set. I used to write & play in open tunings, but it's been several years since I've done anything more non-standard than DADGBD (though I do love that tuning).

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Corbie – I only write down my lyrics. If I'm trying to preserve a tricky riff, I record it.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Corbie – Pretty low. I was a teen in the 90s & I'm not ashamed of that, which shows in how I sling my axe.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Corbie – Not so much a bad habit, but I do think it would behoove me to learn how to set up my guitar. Intonation is important & I need to stop winging it.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Corbie – Any other instrument, I'd say. Knowing the properties of other instruments helps you know the guitar in its full context. I think the drums are important, since the guitar's a percussive instrument & many players aren't aware of that.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Corbie – Probably fingerstyle.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Corbie – I can't do fingertapping. I don't really have a use for it, but it would still be cool to be able to do.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Corbie – Not a trick, per se, but a different kind of thinking. I'm in a band with two guitarists now. For years, I've been the only guitarist in bands I've been in. So it's been really cool getting used to writing guitar parts together.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Corbie – I really like the slide or anything that can be used as one – like screwdrivers, etc.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Corbie – Can't think of one.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Corbie – I took a few lessons from a classical guitarist when I was 13 I think, but I can't say I learned anything, so I stopped going. It wasn't at all oriented toward rock guitar & it made the instrument seem much more complicated than it really is. So I experimented for a while, but I was over-thinking it. Eventually someone told me what a power chord was & then it crystallized, so I taught myself from there.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Corbie – I do know I wouldn't waste any time learning Zep licks or whatever. But I don't even know what guitar teachers do, so I probably have an inaccurate picture of what that's like.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Corbie – Be reckless & more than a little willing to potentially damage their gear in the pursuit of the

right sound. They'd also have to crank their amp quite a bit.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Corbie – No Floyd Rose! Regular fulcrum tremolo is okay, but I tend to prefer hardtails.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Corbie – I usually just leave it wide open. I like snap.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Corbie – Most of the guitarists I'm into are hybrids of the two, so I see these as more ends of a continuum than as discrete categories.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Corbie – No way. A good band is a collective effort. The last thing I want to hear is one person wanking off while everyone else chugs along in service to whatever they're doing.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Corbie – Can't think of one.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Corbie – Dunno.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Corbie – Hm. In Alpha Cop, I'm really happy with my playing on "[Beast Easter](#)." All our songs are collaborative, which is great because it leaves me all kinds of space to write within the framework as it comes together. I'm also quite happy with "[Wolf Wings](#)," a Where the Buffalo Roamed track, because it's really simple & circular but the basic riff leaves me all kinds of room for expression. As for songs I've written on my own, it's way up there for me. When it comes to my experimental work, I cut an album-length freeform session called [Terrified: Meditations on an Empty Universe](#) that I still haven't topped. I'm scared of playing solo experimental work, because it's not only experimental, but I never use the same invented tuning twice. So the likelihood is just as strong that I'll be able to do something like *Terrified*, which is one of my proudest recordings, as it is that I'll be

uninspired & play some lackluster set that never crystallizes.

QRD – Anything else?

Corbie – I just want to get to where I feel confident enough to play freeform noise guitar sets as peripherals, my solo identity. Aside from that, all is well in the valley.

Davy Curci of The Real Deal

June 2012

Name: David Curci

Bands: The Real Deal, The Acoustic Outlaws,
Gaining Merit (work in progress)

Websites: www.therealdealhatesyou.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Davy – A Slammer V guitar with a silver burst paint. Still have it in my basement.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Davy – Gibson Es-137 Classic, Dimebag Wah pedal, Turbo Distortion Boss pedal, Boss EQ pedal, Visual Sound Chorus/Delay pedal, Boss Super Shifter pedal, Boss phaser pedal, Xotic pre amp pedal, Boss Noise Suppressor pedal, BME contour rack EQ, MX200 rack reverb/compressor, Korg DTR-2000, Technical Pro DB meter, Furman Power Factory Pro, all going to a Crate BV-100 (usually use a Blackheart BH-100 head but it's out of commission).

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Davy – Guitar definitely. I adjust the neck myself & the pickups cause I know what I want & get it.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Davy – The Blackheart Hothead 100 watt amp. I like it cause its beefy & clear sounding. The class A option (50 watts) is the best sounding amp I played through that wasn’t boutique.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Davy – Gibson ES-137 Classic. I love it because it’s a hollow body & makes it so much easier to play live. The clean sound I can get out of it is great also. The balance of the guitar is really good also. The only problem with it is it’s a pain in the ass to repair the pickup selector

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Davy – Probably close to a Gibson LP Custom, with a blue burst like paint job & gold hardware (that doesn’t fade).

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Davy – It would be a pre-amp pedal, with a compressor, a reverb, & a noise reduction all in one. These are all essentials for a good guitar tone in my opinion. There would be individual switches for each effect & the lighting scheme would be from green to blue, also it would be made out of heavy duty metal. No shit plastic.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Davy – 5 guitars.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Davy – In their cases & in my basement.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Davy – Built in guitar stands & to be more durable.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Davy – Easy playability.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Davy – Usually around 1K.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Davy – Planning on upgrading the nut & bridge when I get enough cash.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Davy – I usually just buy it & if I don't like it I don't use it anymore.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Davy – Every year I would change it a minimum of 3 times. Usually for the better, more effects or better quality effects to replace the older ones.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Davy – I have recently found the one I'm looking for after passing my Lexicon unit through the effect loop of my amp.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Davy – Gibson LP Custom Alpine White, the new blue Gibson LP studio, the Dean Dimebag Cowboys from Hell guitar. For amps I would have to say the Bogner Uberschall & there is a boutique amp that I can't remember the name of, so oh well. For pedals I would have to say EHX Talking Machine, EHX Wiggler, EHX Freeze pedal, an Ibanez Tubescreamer, BOSS loop station, & the Damage Control Liquid Blues pedal.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Davy – Good tuning keys.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Davy – Best is the Xotic pre-amp pedal. Worst is my wireless system (cannot disclose the name of the company).

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Davy – Boss, Crate, Furman, Gibson, & Korg are all dependable brands that I never had a problem with.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Davy – Probably an E major chord & then whatever I feel like.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Davy – 12 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Davy – Probably 17, then I found the awesomeness of drinking beer & stopped practicing scales & what not.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Davy – It just seems right when I pick one up.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Davy – I think piano should be everyone's first instrument. Sadly it wasn't for me.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Davy – Most of the time an ally. Sometimes it will get in the way of working with vocal melodies, which then comes to sacrificing vocal melody or guitar riffs.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Davy – Dimebag Darrell, Aaron Barrett, Roger Manganelli.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Davy – Don't really have an opinion on that subject. People can do what they want.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Davy – I was drunk at this small club in Winnipeg, Manitoba & was standing next to the road cases housing the power amps for the speakers. I did a

guitar spin flipping it over my shoulder backwards & the top of the neck hit the case & it chipped a piece of the headstock.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Davy – Play some random scales I can still remember & learning songs that I thought I wouldn't be able to play.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Davy – Probably around 5-7 hours when I don't have a scheduled practice with my band. I should practice at least 2 hours a day though.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Davy – Dunlop Tortex .88 mm sharp picks. I love the sharp pick, it makes accuracy so much easier when playing single notes. I also use that gauge because it's thick enough to be able to pick fast & not too soft to feel like nothing is in my hand.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Davy – 10-52 Skinny top heavy bottom Ernie Ball. Coated strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Davy – Once every couple of weeks if I'm playing often.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Davy – Once in a couple of months.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Davy – My fretting hand, I didn't spend enough time practicing my rhythm. Which in turn makes me able to play awkward rhythms since I'm not really stuck to one thing.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Davy – Set it up myself. I do it because it's not hard & when you get the hang of it, it doesn't take long.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Davy – Standard tuning, just because I always used it.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Davy – I just record my ideas on my phone.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Davy – Hell if I know.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Davy – Beer.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Davy – I would assume any other string instrument. Piano would be more for the technical aspects (reading & writing).

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Davy – Sweep picking. I'm not patient enough to get it right.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Davy – Too many to list.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Davy – Don't remember it's been too long. I'm trying to practice my finger picking though.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Davy – String cutter & string winder.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Davy – Finger picking. Would help with my acoustic abilities.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Davy – Yes I did. I learned a lot, about the techniques & what not. But there are some things you just can't teach.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar

lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Davy – The different parts of the guitar, so they know the instrument they are playing.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Davy – I use a lot of flare when playing live, especially with my rhythm hand.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Davy – Annoying to fix, therefore I just put stoppers so it doesn't move.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Davy – Rarely, I play with the volume switches & the pickup switches to generate different tones.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Davy – Mostly the quality of playing, but stage presence has a lot to do with it too.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Davy – Hell no. That's why it's called a band; you gotta all be good at your craft or your just mediocre.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Davy – Dimebag's. He's my biggest influence.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Davy – Can't say, I haven't been listening to much music because I'm trying to make sure my composing isn't inspired by anyone.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Davy – On The Real Deal's album *FUN*. The secret song has the most technical playing that I've recorded.

QRD – Anything else?

Davy – Just hoping one day people will start respecting music again. A lot of people take it for granted & don't realize how much goes into it. That is all.

Matt Northrup

June 2012

Name: Matt Northrup

Websites: gnrthrp.tumblr.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Matt – It was an old Danelectro. One of the ones with sweet lipstick pickups.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Matt – It's guitar into a bunch of effects into a bass rig & a guitar amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Matt – I have an RC-2 that means a lot to me.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Matt – Peavey Classic 50. Sick tweed covering, bro.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Matt – Fender Cyclone. Sick pickup switching action, bro.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Matt – Just take the J. Mascis signature & put my name on it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Matt – It would be a Digitech Bass Synth Wah with an expression pedal out.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Matt – Just the one.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Matt – I have one of those cases like in *Wayne's World*.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Matt – Humbuckers.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Matt – Humbuckers.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Matt – About six humbuckers & a nickel.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Matt – I put a new humbucker in my guitar, but I only use the neck pickup. I should have stuck with what I had.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Matt – If it's got a blue led I'm all over it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Matt – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Matt – Don't touch my EQ, bro.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Matt – That J. Mascis guitar is sick.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Matt – Floyd Rose.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Matt – Every time I go into Guitar Center I leave with another Yngwie instructional DVD.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Matt – “CARRY ON MY WAYWARD SON”!

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Matt – 11.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Matt – 11.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Matt – This is a really thorough interview.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Matt – Tuba was actually my first instrument (this is the truth). I would suggest starting with that.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Matt – It is important.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Matt – Satriani. I surf with the alien.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Matt – Totally natural. Matt Jr. is like a son to me.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Matt – Never done anything to physically damage a guitar. Emotions are a whole different ballgame.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Matt – Mental exercises.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Matt – 8-10hrs a week, but I would like to be playing for 8-9hrs a week.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Matt – Ruffles potato chips. No trans-fat.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Matt – 14s. I have the fattest tone, bro.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Matt – Every day.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Matt – Once a year.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Matt – Ha! Trick question, huh?

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Matt – I prefer to let my guitar's neck slowly bend until it produces sounds that are completely unique.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Matt – Standard tuning. If it's good enough for Satch it's good enough for me.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Matt – iPad.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Matt – Waist level. I'm a casual dude.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Matt – I exaggerate the twist in my body when driving. I'm slicing & hooking like crazy!

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Matt – Texas instrument.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Matt – Slap bass.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Matt – I only have one humbucker in my guitar. I wish I had at least two.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Matt – When I was 11 my dad taught me how to make cat noises with my guitar. Meow!

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Matt – Humidifier.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Matt – I thought I already said slap bass.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Matt – Yngwie instructional DVD. Already covered this one too.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Matt – Parallel parking, 3-point turns, how to correctly shotgun a beer.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Matt – More humbuckers.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Matt – More like trem-oh-no!

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Matt – Once a week.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Matt – One has no respect for my feelings.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Matt – Yes (I'm a big Dave Matthews fan).

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Matt – J. Mascis, purple sparkle guitar.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Matt – Two words: Joe Satriani.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Matt – The bass section of your local Guitar Center.

QRD – Anything else?

Matt – No, this was quite thorough!

Xavier Dubois of Ultraphallus & Y.E.R.M.O.
June 2012

Name: Xavier Dubois

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proyectoermo.blogspot.com,
soundcloud.com/xavier-dubois

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened
to it?

Xavier – An Epiphone Explorer; like James
Hetfield. After a couple of days I returned it to the
shop, as I was afraid it would be a bit too much
metal. Then I took a bad Les Paul copy.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to
effects to amplifier?

Xavier – Well, you already wrote it: guitar, a few
pedals, an amp. It changes with every band/project.
I just always keep my volume pedal, my Z.Vex
Fuzz Factory & My Holy Grail close to me. When I
play with the guitar on my knee like a tabletop
guitar I really like my EBS Compressor. Very
important, too: some non-musical objects like nails,
some hex keys, a thin rope, a candlestick, etc.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Xavier – The guitar. But when it comes to doing noisier stuff, the objects I plug between strings are really important. Each one has its own sound particularities.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Xavier – A Laney 50w tubes head & one or two Marshall cabs. Why? I don’t know. I just found it years ago second hand & thought it would be a good amp. It is!

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Xavier – Ultraphallus & Yermo: Gibson SG. Solo: Gibson SG & Larrivée acoustic. Love both of them!

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Xavier – Not that much. The SG, a Gibson Corvus too. The Larrivée. A Strat copy made in the 80s by Ibanez. An african guitar made with a gasoline can.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Xavier – Do you want my Visa Card secret code, too?

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Xavier – The price isn't always a good sign. It depends totally on what you want to do! My Larrivée was a serious purchase, but at the same time I really enjoy to play on my cheap Ibanez Stratocaster copy & this last one was 150 dollars on Ebay.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Xavier – I have absolutely no interest in customized guitars.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Xavier – As long as it's necessary! I drove hundreds of kilometers to find some good acoustic guitars to test before getting the Larrivée.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Xavier – No!

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Xavier – Both! Really.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Xavier – The electric Martin EM-18. But “lust” is a bit exaggerated. I really don’t pay that much attention to gear or old guitars & stuff.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Xavier – I always enjoyed the ones I bought.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Xavier – I’m a bit sick of the looping process. Everyone is doing the same thing: adding layers on layers. At the beginning it felt like something that opened tons of new possibilities, but I finally have that impression that loop pedals limit players. It’s pretty obvious in drone-based music. It has become such a lazy way to create something.... But it’s just my opinion. I also dislike most effects like phaser,

flanger.... My favorite pedal “effect” is the volume pedal.

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Xavier – Usually a D chord. Don’t know why!

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Xavier – 14 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Xavier – Those last years as I started to play in very different context/bands. Since I’ve been giving solo shows I improved a lot of things, too. Acoustic playing helps a lot to improve yourself, too.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people’s first instrument as often as it is?

Xavier – No. That would be silly! Any instrument is good.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Xavier – It's a TOOL. To achieve something.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Xavier – So many...! Marc Ribot, Keith Rowe, Jack Rose, Billy Gibbons, Michael Chapman, Fred Frith, Creston Spiers....

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Xavier – It's just their choice. There's no natural attitude in it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Xavier – Using metal & steel objects made a lot of scratches. But it's not the big deal!

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Xavier – A lot of stretching.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Xavier – I would say around 10. I'd like to do that twice a week. But the quality of practicing has nothing to do with "how many hours." I think.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Xavier – Pretty light: 10/46 on electric - 12/53 on acoustic. I'd prefer to use a bigger gauge, but I can't as I really need suppleness, thanks to the shit tendonitis.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Xavier – It depends of how many shows I have in a row! I'd say two times per month.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Xavier – As I use a lot of repetitive patterns & melodies & have been working mostly on chicken-picking/hybrid technique these last few years, I would say my strumming/picking right hand.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Xavier – Stringed-instrument maker, especially for the acoustic.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Xavier – Standard, Drop D, Open C & Open G. I like all of them & each one helps me to discover new things. It also prevents me from getting bored & keeps the playing exciting.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Xavier – When it comes to write my ideas I use a small notebook. Not very standard!

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Xavier – Well, like normal people: that means I don't have it at my knee level like punk bands but neither right below my mouth like nerdy poppy players. When I play solo I always sit.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Xavier – Oh! There are so many! Too many to mention it.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Xavier – I really think that any other instruments can teach you something whatever you play.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Xavier – I'm happy with what I do. If I want to play some new stuff I'll work on it until I can use it in my own music.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Xavier – Playing sweeping shit like Steve Vai. But I was 17!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Xavier – I try to avoid tricks like pestilence. Really. Leave tricks for the circus!

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Xavier – Every object I use, mainly between strings.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Xavier – That “notes are only 5 % of the job”(Marc Ribot). He said that in his documentary *The Lost String*.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Xavier – NO!!!! People who do that are DUMB! I NEVER listen to something just for the guitar.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Xavier – Nothing comes to my mind.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Xavier – Derek Bailey, even if he's dead. That won't change.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Xavier – On my next solo record, I guess! I'll record it this summer in July. Can't wait.

QRD – Anything else?

Xavier – Isn't it enough?

Tony Sagger of DrugsDragons

June 2012

Name: Tony Sagger

Bands: DrugsDragons, currently. previous, Sagger, Night Terrors, Tony Sagger one bad man, Night Terrorists

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Tony – Harmony electric from Sears & I think I gave it to someone as I do with most of my toys....

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Tony – Epiphone Les Paul Junior, analog 2 second delay, Fender tube 1x12, Crate 1x10 (the old wood box one).

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Tony – Amp, guitar, effects - if playing live. Guitar for any other times.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Tony – The Fender 1x12. Those newer Fender tube

amps really hold up & have a great distortion & natural sound.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Tony – An Epiphone Les Paul Junior with one P-90 pickup. I just like its sound & simplicity.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Tony – Probably keep it simple with 1 pickup & a classic body type.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Tony – I have really been getting into analog delay pedals since I started DrugDragons, so probably something like that; but if you keep the awesome sound & still do things like having multiple loops or settings going at the same time.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Tony – It varies, but as of now, 5.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Tony – Wherever & however I feel like.... I do try to take a little better care of them nowadays.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Tony – Time machines.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Tony – Price, style, sound.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Tony – 100 bucks.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Tony – Stick with what I get usually, until I mess it up & then customize it randomly.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Tony – Somewhat. Not too much really, I just go with the impulse/feeling.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Tony – Only really when starting a new band or breaking something.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Tony – I pretty much lock in for whatever band I am in, but I love experimenting at home.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Tony – Other than what I have already, a double cut away Les Paul Junior.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Tony – Set up to have a close action on the fret board. It really helps to not have to put in as much effort to make chords when learning.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Tony – Best -- My current guitar & amp, as mentioned above.

Worst -- I've had probably 200 guitars in my life. So, most of them were just cheap pieces of shit that break easy, or look cool & sound like crap.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Tony – I mentioned most above, except for effects. I like Digitech for the delay, & Boss stage tuners are essential. Gibson guitars are beautiful, but too expensive....

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Tony – Whatever I'm feeling. Mostly just noodling, but possibly a new song I'm working on.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Tony – 17, more habitually.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Tony – Not really sure I have yet, if I did, I don't really think it would be as interesting to me.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Tony – Mostly because I have put the most work into it & it was my first musical love.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Tony – I think people in general just identify with guitar first more than anything else. As long as it opens you up to playing music, it doesn't really matter.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Tony – Most definitely my ally. It can articulate what is in my head better than words & in most cases, any other instruments.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Tony – So many really, but if I have to narrow it

down, I would say Johnny Thunders, Timmy Vulgar, & Ryan Killawatt.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Tony – I don't really care. I know many who have, many who haven't. Currently I don't, but do have puffy pig stickers on a bunch of mine.....

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Tony – I've smashed at least 5 guitars at shows in the last 10 years, but at the last DrugsDragons show, I did at least 50 bucks damage, hitting it on the floor & surfing on it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Tony – I just think about music constantly. Whether it be humming a song to myself or thinking about ways I can elaborate on things I am currently working on.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Tony – Probably 10 & I would like to at least 40.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Tony – Jim Dunlop. Just feels good in my fingers.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Tony – Custom Ernie Balls, 11s thru 48s. Good bass & lead playing strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Tony – Once a month, ideally, but see below...

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Tony – Somewhat often, rarely at shows anymore.... That's why I randomly replace strings somewhat often, some just aren't as lucky!

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Tony – It should probably always be your fretting hand. As I've always said if you had to lose one hand, it should probably be your strumming hand, because you can always just get a dummy hand with a pick glued in.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Tony – I have, not too much anymore. I have an awesome set of dudes at a guitar shop in Milwaukee that always do me right. Rockhaus in Milwaukee, WI.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Tony – Mostly standard, but as mentioned above, I like to mess around at home with whatever.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Tony – My own system of notes & scribbles.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Tony – Over my belly generally, sometimes over my head.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Tony – Not playing enough.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Tony – Drums, definitely. It helps to have some sense of what your playing with & writing songs.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Tony – Finger picking.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Tony – Goals....

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Tony – Tricks....

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Tony – String winder! Also, string cutter.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Tony – Huh?

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Tony – Nope....

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Tony – Not sure, I teach what I know that can help someone.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Tony – Be retarded & fucked up in the head....

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Tony – I've used them before, they're overrated.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Tony – Tone knob?

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Tony – Someone who can't balance the note & chord parts of a song.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Tony – Yeah, definitely.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Tony – Johnny Thunders Gibson Les Paul Junior double cut away in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Tony – Timmy Vulgar, has continued to reinvent the instrument as we know it.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Tony – DrugsDragons, *The Milogranight EP*, on Dusty Medical Records, or *Sagger, the Goodbye Boozy 7"*.

QRD – Anything else?

Tony – Nope. Thanks!

Rich Bennett of Monocle

June 2012

Name: Rich Bennett

Bands: Monocle, Rebecca Pronsky, Mansions and Junipers

Websites: richbennettmusic.com,
richbennettmusic.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Rich – The first guitar I played on was a hand me down Kiso-Suzuki I got from my mom. She had taken a few lessons in here time, but it never stuck. I still have the guitar &, up until a few months ago, I used it regularly as my “teaching” guitar.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Rich – I use almost exclusively a Gibson 335 (60s dot reissue) into a tuner, Boss Chorus Ensemble, Boss DM-2 Delay, Boss DD-6 Digital Delay, out into a 1980 Fender Princeton which has been modified to a Blackface.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Rich – None of the above. My hands are the most important part of what I do. All the other stuff accentuates what I'm trying to already do with my hands.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Rich – 1980 Fender Princeton, because I absolutely cannot stand anything else. I hate unwanted clipping & grit on my amplifier & I need to have the cleanest possible sound that is available while still maintaining character.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Rich – My Gibson 335. I've bought so many guitars over the years, but it seems as though the 335 can do anything I need it to do. Of course, it will never be as perfect for the epic rock tune as a Les Paul, or as perfect for the twangy spaghetti western as a Telecaster, but it gets damn near close on all of those & goes to all those places in between.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Rich – I would probably keep the same idea as the

335 build, but add a Bigsby tremolo, & a mute on to it. Maybe also somehow have just a tad bit less “acoustic” in it, so it is not AS prone to feedback. But I wouldn’t fill in all that much, maybe 15%.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Rich – It would probably be the combination of three pedals/effects I use most. A pedal on which you could mix a short delay (analog preferable), a long or backwards delay, & a spring reverb.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Rich – Two - my Gibson 335 & a used Lignatone acoustic.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Rich – Usually either in their cases, or in stands in my music room.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don’t?

Rich – More room for pedals/wires. I think they could expand on the little pocket they have on the hardshell cases.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Rich – Playability & intonation. I don't want to spend time breaking in or constantly tuning a guitar.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Rich – I think up to about \$2-3,000 seems fair. Although I recently met a luthier in Oregon who charges 5K for a guitar & barely makes his costs back. Makes you realize how much work & material goes into a really quality instrument.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Rich – The only customization I do is normal set ups & intonation.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Rich – I like to research a bunch about a piece of equipment, just to get a sense of what to try out when I go out looking for something new. But, if something sounds like shit to you, it sounds like shit. No amount of research can tell you that.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Rich – Not really. I think I try as best as I can to keep things as similar as they've been; any changes I make are to make the sound larger, or more engaging. I'd like to start playing in stereo, but that's not always the easiest thing to do.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Rich – Probably more of the former. I love to play around with different sounds & ideas, but I seem to always lean towards the same sounds - long, clean, wistful, articulate, spacey.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Rich – I'm really loving the Eventide H3000 after using it on a recording session. I'd also love to get a vintage 60s Jazzmaster. & probably a really amazing nylon string guitar.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Rich – I'm also a guitar teacher, so I see this a lot. I think the most important feature is ease of playing. I always suggest the Yamaha CGS series for young beginners. If someone starts off playing on a really difficult guitar, I don't think that it makes them stronger, as some people seem to think. In a lot of cases, it turns people off to playing.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Rich – As with many things in life, all the bad purchases I've made have informed the right direction to go, so I can't say there's one that's entirely bad. But probably my first amp - one of those crap Crate amps with 30 built in effects on it. As for best purchases, I think I really lucked out on the Princeton I bought. I never knew that it was blackface-modified until 3 years after I'd been playing it, but I always knew it had a particularly unique sound for a Princeton.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Rich – Likes: Analog delays/Fender Reverb/Gibson guitars. Dislikes: Parker Fly.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Rich – Whatever song I'm most enamored with at the time. Or chord.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Rich – 12.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Rich – I think I was most technically proficient at around 19/20. I think I'm a lot better now, but there are some things I just can't play now that I could then. But I'm definitely better all around, that's for sure.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Rich – It doesn't. I probably should've been a bassist or a keyboardist as far as my tendencies go. But I played & practiced guitar forever, so here I am.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people’s first instrument as often as it is?

Rich – Depends on the age. If you have a real passion & are around 10 or older, then yes. If your parents are just looking to expose you to music & you have no interest, start with piano. SO much easier to start out on.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Rich – That changes on the day of the week.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Rich – So many to list. But the real highlights are Ben Monder, Bill Frisell, & Robin Guthrie. The first two are so ridiculous at doing all the things I prize in good guitar playing. They are insanely articulate, but are still able to invoke a sort of mysterious, open-ended kind of sound. Robin really blew my mind in all the textures he creates & I still think he’s THE touchstone of “shoegaze” guitar.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Rich – Not at all. If you've got the desire to do so, do it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Rich – I once tried to smash a guitar that was a piece of shit, just to see how it felt. & let me tell you - that's hard work, that is! It took me like half an hour to do any real damage. In the end I set it on fire & it still endured.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Rich – I don't practice much any more, but I used to practice FOREVER. I would say the top things I would practice were arpeggios, chords, inversions, & technical exercises. & I used to play them SUPER SLOW. That's the secret to being a good guitar player, just in case you were wondering.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Rich – From teaching & practicing & recording, probably 5 hours a day? From just strumming, maybe just 30 minutes or so a day?

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Rich – Fender Heavy, because it suits me best & because they're the easiest to find. Playing a specialty pick sucks. You always have to keep track of them!

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Rich – D'addario 10s, again because they're the most common. Although I've just recently tried some DWs. I think unless you have a very specific reason to alter from the main course of what's used, you should stick with the basics.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Rich – Once every two/three weeks?

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Rich – Barely ever. I just don't bend that much.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Rich – That's a good one! I can't say I think one is further behind the other. I might say that my left

hand is better though; I can really get every note of every chord out at any time.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Rich – Yes, & I've just started. I do it because I'm obsessed with being in tune. I'd say 85% of guitar players play out of tune. It's abysmal.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Rich – Standard. Although I'll try something new to just break out of it. My hands are good enough to stretch about in standard tuning, so no real need to go crazy & change the tuning. Plus, altering the tuning changes the intonation, changes what tension strings you should use, etc. It's just a mess. Now, if I had a guitar for each separate tuning....

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Rich – All. Sometimes tab can do what notation would take ages to do, or vice versa.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Rich – The same height as when you're sitting. I'm a total nerd when it comes to strap height.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Rich – My constant alternate picking. I literally could not sweep pick if I was forced to. Not that I want to Yngwie it up, but sometimes it'd be nice to.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Rich – Piano. Everyone should play piano. Taught me all the theory I couldn't learn from guitar.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Rich – Shredding. Even though my shred phase has come & gone, I never really got good at it.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Rich – To transcribe Ben Monder's song "Dust" off of his album *Dust*.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Rich – That threading a twistie tie through your strings makes an awesome mute (thanks to Jeri Jones of Blame Sally for that one)

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Rich – A screwdriver. To keep the intonation set.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Rich – Double handed tapping, ala Michael Hedges or Kaki King.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Rich – I took tons of guitar lessons, & learned tons from them. I wouldn't say it's a path for everyone, but I owe a hell of a lot to my guitar teachers. Much more than I owe to false idols I've never met!

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Rich – I make my living as a teacher & I try to teach things that most guitar teachers don't. My

most important points are these: there are absolutely no short cuts, & you need to practice things slowly until you master them; & that you should rely on your own ear & intuition to guide your musical choices. If you think your solos/sounds suck, then go with it! Change the settings on your amp, move your fingers, learn a lick, whatever. You don't have to land on the right answer straight away, but you do need to make an effort.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Rich – Focus on legato left hand movement.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Rich – Ummmmm.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Rich – A lot - depending on the room. Eddie Van Halen says tone knobs are only for bass & I get what he says. But sometimes a room is too bright/dark & a little tone adjustment can mean the world.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Rich – I wasn't even aware people made that distinction any more. I'd guess I'd say people who consider themselves rhythm players are usually more musical than lead players.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Rich – No. As I grow older, I grow more & more bored with the guitar & what people do with it. I'm way more impressed by how a bass player phrases with the drummer & where they release their notes than how slick a guitar lick is. Although, I think Pat Metheny could make me ignore a bad band.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Rich – Joao Gilberto. There's probably some magic in there.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Rich – Unfortunately, I can't say I've been all that impressed with any one guitar player recently. The landscape has shifted from the focus being on guitar athletics & I love that as a musician; but as a guitarist, I haven't been hearing many people who

have really wowed me. I quite like the guitarist from the Innocence Mission, Don Peris. And I've also recently played on the same bill with some great guitar players, like Rich Hinman & Sophia Johnson of The Toy Hearts. John Ceparano of Soundpool has a really amazing soundscape as well & a harmonic palette quite similar to mine, so I really love hearing him play.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Rich – I'm finally making good on my years of guitar work & producing a solo guitar album. But until that's released, I'm really proud of the track "Good Life" on Rebecca Pronsky's *Viewfinder*. It's hard for me to pick out one thing in particular that I like. Even though I gave up the jazz path a long time ago, I guess I still see my playing/solos in that way; always shifting, always different, always influenced & changed by all the elements surrounding it. I wish I could remember my best live solo. & I wish I had taped it.

QRD – Anything else?

Rich – Thanks for including me in this! I have a lot of opinions about playing guitar & it was fun to get them all out!

Jonas Munk of Causa Sui & Sun River
June 2012

Name: Jonas Munk

Bands: Causa Sui, Sun River, Jonas Munk, Manual,
Chicago Odense Ensemble & other collaborations.

Websites: www.causasui.com,

facebook.com/pages/Jonas-Munk/189165807772795

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jonas – A Stratocaster copy of a brand I can't remember. I got it when I was 12 & sold it again when I was 16.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jonas – Depends on which band I'm playing with & what kind of stuff I'm recording if it's a recording situation. Some things that I usually have with me are a Vox wah, Rotovibe, Fulltone 69, & a T-Rex Dr. Swamp overdrive.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jonas – Again, depends on the situation & what project I'm playing with. We recently played our

debut show with Sun River & for that sound an amp with a good clean tone is essential. When playing with Causa Sui abroad we usually borrow amps & in those situations I'm very dependent on my pedals providing what I need.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jonas – For live situations at the moment & a lot of recording sessions I use a Fender Super Sonic 60 head with different cabinets. I find that amp incredibly versatile – it can do classic Fender clean sounds similar to a Bassman or even the silky tone of a Vibrolux, but it also has a wonderful tube overdrive section that can be fine-tuned with two gain-stages & EQ, which I find very useful. It has a super fat tone & it cleans up when I roll the volume back on the guitar which I rely on most of the time. For recording I use different amps, I even have a Marshall transistor amp from the 1990s that works very well with a lot of effects & is very easy to work with when recording. I'm not a “tube fascist” in any way. I use everything that works in a given situation & very often transistor amps will do a good job as well. I also love my Fender Blues Junior for recording, it's a little hard to control when cranked in a live situation, but in the studio I can get massive tones from it at low volumes, which is a nice feature. For fuzz sounds it sounds amazingly raw & has a good range of overtones, so

if I'm in a situation where I need something to really cut through the mix the Blues Junior is usually my weapon of choice.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jonas – I guess the guitar I've used the most throughout the years is my modded MIJ Jazzmaster. I replaced the original bridge with a Gibson model & put Seymour Duncan pickups in it that are a bit louder & fatter than the classic Jazzmaster pickups. I love that guitar. I'm fairly big so I like to play a guitar that's also quite big, & I like the shape of the Jazzmaster – both aesthetically & functionally. The tremolo is also very nice. However, I play different guitars all the time. For Causa Sui stuff I like to use a humbucker equipped 72 Thinline Telecaster re-issue that I bought in New York some years ago, which is great for fat, detuned sounds. For Sun River concerts I use a modded Mex Telecaster with a vintage Telecaster bridge & original vintage pickups which gives an incredibly rich, clear tone & great sustain.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jonas – It should be fairly similar to my modded Jazzmaster, but I would love to try a hollowbody

version of that -- kinda similar to some of the new hollowbody versions Fender Japan have been making recently, but with warmer sounding pickups & a Gibson-style bridge. I never liked the classic Jazzmaster bridge.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jonas – I'm a big fan of filter-modulation pedals & that kinda thing. There aren't that many existing filter pedals out there. I think something like the Moog "Murf" pedal is super interesting cause it's based on several bandpass-filters, instead of just one modulated lowpass filter. I have also been making music with synthesizers for the last 15 years, so I guess I'm attracted to the idea of several parameters being modulated by the same source or vice versa. I like effects that can be CV-modulated so it gives you the possibility of combining things. I guess the short answer would be some kind of filter-pedal with more than one filter (BP + LP for example) + amplitude control & more than one modulation source as well as – kinda like a simple pre-wired modular synth setup where each parameter can be modulated by more than one source. That's one reason I like guitar software such as NI's Guitar Rig so much: it let's you modulate everything in new ways.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jonas – Three acoustic, five electric ones, one bass guitar.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jonas – Yeah, I usually customize, even if just tiny adjustments.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jonas – In the studio I patch different stuff together all the time.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jonas – I usually change around quite a bit. Especially with Causa Sui where all the songs are very long & we usually go through a wide range of styles & sounds in the same song.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jonas – I love Fender amps & there's a bunch of

classic models I would love to have in the studio. For overdrive sounds I also love Orange amps & sometime I would like to own at least one of them. I would also love to have a vintage Fender Electric XII sometime. At the moment I have my eye on Wampler pedals – they have a thick, classy tone but they are quite pricey too.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jonas – 11 I think.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jonas – When I was in my early twenties I played guitar a lot. I always had a guitar in my hand all the time - if friends were over or I was just watching TV or something. That really gives you some basic skills & occasionally very good ideas pop out when you just mess around without a purpose.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jonas – I like the incredible range of possibilities available with the instrument. Keyboard instruments & synthesizers are also very interesting to me but even at the most basic level there's something very

fascinating about the harmonic complexity of the sound of a guitar string. Even the way you pick & press a string alters the sound in an important way. That's why I think using a lot of effects on guitars is usually more interesting than using lots of effects on keyboard instruments -- the guitar is such a harmonically rich instrument.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jonas – Too many to mention here. But I can list a few that have had a long lasting & very notable effect on my way of playing: Billy Corgan on early Smashing Pumpkins albums (*Siamese Dream* especially), Josh Homme from Kyuss, Nick McCabe on the first Verve album, Lee Underwood (who played on all the classic Tim Buckley albums), Robin Guthrie from Cocteau Twins, The Edge (who was the biggest influence on me in my childhood & who's still very present in my playing), Lutz Ulbrich & Stefan Diez from the German group Agitation Free, Jim O'Rourke, Daniel Fichelscher (who played in Popol Vuh in the mid seventies), & of course Jimi Hendrix -- especially his more improvisational live recordings.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jonas – Very different. I like to have a wide range of picks at hand at all times.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jonas – I use 10s normally. 11s when I tune way down.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jonas – Very often! I like to play shows with strings that are almost new & I also prefer recording with fresh strings.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jonas – Very rarely these days.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Alternate tunings is a great way to come up with new ideas & chords you wouldn't normally think of. I've played guitar for almost twenty years so it's easy to get stuck in the same chords & patterns – tuning your guitar differently is a way of breaking those habits & come up with something that feels fresh. I like different kinds of Open D & Open C tunings. I also wrote a song in a tuning where each string is a fourth step from the previous (“all fourths

tuning”) -- we ended up calling the song “Fourths” & it’s on the Sun River album.

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jonas – All my habits are annoying by now. It takes real effort to break them & come up with something new & interesting.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Jonas – I’ve always wanted to be a good acoustic finger picker in the style of Nick Drake or Mark Kozelek.

QRD – What’s a guitar goal you’ve never accomplished?

Jonas – Still haven’t become a good acoustic finger picker & will probably never be.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jonas – Yes, I did take lessons for a number of years when I was very young. It taught me some basic theory that I still use today – scales & all that. For a while I was really opposed to the idea of

learning theory – I guess that was a very romantic attitude towards ideas & what constitutes artistic “genius”. Now I wish I’d studied theory some more, cause it would have given me a bigger toolbox of ideas & opened new doors for me. But it’s always a fine balance between theory & creativity & after all I’m glad I spent so many years being fully “creative” instead of fully theoretical.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jonas – How to be creative with chords & sound. How to open up to new ideas in general & force oneself to break habits.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jonas – Solos with open strings, arpeggiated chords, & I guess a certain sense of melody.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Jonas – It can be a pain in the ass but I generally like some of the classic Fender systems – especially the Mustang tremolo, which is wonderful to play & stays in tune more often than not. I had a Washburn guitar once with a Floyd Rose system on it. It gave

me nightmares. It was awful in a live-situation & I can't believe that I put up with it for so many years. But I guess that's what people used for shredding back then. But I will never, ever use one of those again.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jonas – I use it more & more. I like to have the top rolled back a little bit & only open all the way up for solos.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jonas – No.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jonas – I don't think there really is any truly innovative guitar players around anymore & I'm not sure there needs to be. In my view Kevin Shields was the last true innovator of the instrument. But if I should mention a couple of current really good guitar players with unique, personal styles it would be Reine Fiske (Dungeon, The Amazing) & Stefan Koglek (Colour Haze). They are really underrated musicians who have done new & interesting things with classic guitar styles.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jonas – I'd say the Sun River album & Causa Sui's series of *Summer Sessions* albums.

Matthew Eyles of Dutch Order

June 2012

Name: Matthew Eyles

Bands: Dutch Order

Website: www.dutchorder.co.uk

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Matthew – My first guitar was a Fender Strat, the very basic, beginner's electric guitar from Costco. It's kinda funny as my parents thought I would quit it & get bored & frustrated with learning guitar. Instead it grew on me. For now it resides in my parents attic after a botched paint job from a cousin. He managed to take it apart but not piece it together.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Matthew – My typical set up is: Guitar: BC Rich Platinum Bich - Amp/effects: Line 6 Spider II 210.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Matthew – My most important part of the rig would have to be the guitar. It is what I focus on when I

play. It is THE instrument. They're all important, but I concentrate a lot on what I'm playing to ensure it sounds perfect, that little nuances feed through. The amp & effects just help push those feelings & sounds along.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Matthew – My main amplifier is the Line 6 Spider II. Hell, it's my only amplifier, but for me, if it's not broke don't fix it. It's a bit battered & old but it works & using it always gives me a simple satisfaction. Despite its age, people seem quite unaware of The Line 6 Spiders & are always impressed by the fact it lights up. For me it's just practical - multiple tones & effects & it's loud. I can play my Stones on there, my Queen, my Extreme, my Slipknot, my KoRn, etc. For Dutch Order, we started out as an indie band & the fact I use only one tone that can sound as aggressive as punk to as eerie & as sharp as a banshee shriek, for me that is why I love the amp & the equipment I use. I'm not a strong believer in that songs need to be drowned by effects. I grew up listening to Queen & for me Brian May sounds like Brian May because the tone rarely changed, his guitar had a signature sound. You could not repeat it! That kind of stuck with me. Also every kid at school was bragging about Marshall stacks, etc. & as I loved Slipknot at the time I looked into their choice. Their choice was the

Line 6 & the fact it had multiple effects meant it saved me having to buy umpteen accessories to play. I had an amp with those sounds locked away. It's a damn music box.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Matthew – My main guitar is just a cheap Platinum BC Rich Bich. It was on sale & I wanted a nice around guitar. What sold it to me was a review in Total Guitar that said it basically did that. You can be a mean SOB on it & you could play blues & it'll sound like blues. I have a lot of musical tastes to cater for so after purchasing this & hearing how well it adapted with the Line 6, I was happy. The guitar is strong & has some nice meaty humbuckers on it, it's simple but it works. I love that guitar. For me the amp is the “colour” of the sound, the guitar is so damn adaptable I would have to say its the “canvas” that allows me to paint my music on.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Matthew – If I had a signature guitar, it wouldn't be a signature guitar. It's cool & if I got to a stage where BC Rich were to approach me & say, “We want to make you a signature guitar,” I think my answer would be, “I play your BC Rich Bich. Go

figure.” I remember in school, when I first played I was intimidated by all those who would geek over their guitars, would part with tons of money for parts & butcher their guitars till they were happy with it. I remember thinking, “You parted with, let’s say, £200-£500 for a guitar you should be happy with it.” Yet, if X states “You need Y because it’s the best for Z,” you purchase that & damage a perfectly good guitar on an opinion or a sales pitch. I always found it was easier to change a setting & you can always get something close if not exact to a sound anyway. So what if it doesn’t hold a note for as long as another or this or that, why would you take something & rather than test it, butcher it? Jimi Hendricks did it. He turned a right-handed guitar into a lefty & that created a sound that suited him. It required little butchery, but he didn’t change much, bar the hand that played it. I guess I’m a skeptic; but again, if it’s not broke, don’t fix it. My signature guitar would be the one I bought, because even though it’s a cheap version, it’s good enough to gather a following of people at gigs. You can have an amazing guitar, but if you’re a crap guitar player, having the best wood, the best pickups, will not cover your ass. Any guitar can show emotion; it’s not about the price tag or what you put into it. It’s what you get out of it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Matthew – If I had a signature pedal I would probably mount it & never use it.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Matthew – Electric: 2 - Fender Strat (not in use) & the BC Rich Platinum Bich.

Acoustic: 2 Standard cheap acoustic from where I fail to remember & a Washburn Electro Acoustic.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Matthew – My Washburn lives with me at my flat where I can practice & come up with ideas for the band or other little ditties. My BC Rich lives under my brother's bed at the moment, as my flat cannot accommodate it. My first acoustic is still living with the bands Singer, Kesby, although I think he gave up on that pursuit. My Fender is in bits in a bag in the attic.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Matthew – I think my answer to this question would be to ask if you had ever seen *Desperado*? I think I would like all three guitar cases used there.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Matthew – I think the biggest feature for me is versatility. Would it allow me to play jazz one minute then metal the next? That's about it really. I don't care about Floyd Rose Tremos because they annoyed the balls off of me! Whammy bars are cool, but not essential for me. I'm not going to dive bomb any time soon. For me everything is back to basics. The Kinks, Beatles, etc. it was all simple music. I still kind of live & breathe that dusty era to the point we sound fresh nowadays. There's a big focus on using effects & I'm not at all phased by it. I'd rather find my own sounds through basic means.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Matthew – For me a good guitar can cost as little as £200 if not slightly under that. I started with a Fender Strat & that's the top end of the basics, but I know people who have bought Encore instruments that have been decent enough. Price isn't everything; it's what you want & what you get from the guitar. That feeling is priceless. Blur bassist Alex James bought his first bass dirt cheap, but it worked for him.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Matthew – I stick with what I get. If you want the most expensive things then buy an expensive guitar, but it really makes no difference that I can tell from having played with bands live.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Matthew – I used to do it a lot although I'm happy with what I have so I don't bother researching for anything else. I do like reading reviews, in magazines & online. It gives you an idea of what to expect, but most importantly it's best to play the instrument first. Get a feel for it & know it is what you want. If there's anything you dislike about it or it doesn't fill that gap, then leave it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Matthew – Nope. Sound guys love us because our rig is simple. We can set up in about 15-20 minutes. That's the beauty of using one tone. One tone that is versatile!

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone &

locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Matthew – One tone! I lock on one tone, which is rare nowadays. I always felt that guitarists have this need to not show what they can do but what their equipment can do. For me this is just theatrical bull. Music is all about emotion & getting a mood or feeling across. Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* uses one piano & builds & falls to achieve a piece that everyone knows. You don't need an orchestra unless it really calls for it.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Matthew – At the moment I'd like the latest Spider Amp as they are now in their 4th series, but old Spidey II needs to die off first & he won't without a fight! Other than that I keep thinking of purchasing an iRig so I can record through my iPad. I love using GarageBand to get ideas down.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Matthew – The basics are what's important. I would say, it's like a Swiss Army knife. You get your first which may just be a bare blade. You think, "Wow,

cool!” You play with it, carving bits of wood or names into trees then you discover you need a saw to help cut through branches, so you upgrade it to one with a few more tools. I see it like that. Start with the basics. Once you realise you’re limitations, then start adding the accessories.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Matthew – My worst was a second hand Ibanez, which I haven’t labeled as owning because I bought it. It was pretty awesome, but the Floyd Rose would just bug me to the point I gave up using it altogether. My best would be the BC Rich Bich. I still have the receipt of it in its case. It’s 6 years old & I still love it!

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Matthew – I only have a preference to Line 6 amps for their versatility & durability & guitar wise, I wouldn’t say a brand sticks out; again it’s more of what I can do with the guitar. My least favourite amp brand though is Marshall. Probably a controversial move as EVERYONE loves Marshall because THEY ARE THE BEST AMP IN THE WORLD, but for me a good amp is one that can play loud & allow you to play what you want with

ease. I'm not parting with £500 for an amp that does nothing for my sound, but sit there all clean & I have to spend another £500 on effects to get a full arrangement of sounds I need. That's why Line 6 are fine by me, they kill two birds & kill the middleman.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Matthew – Mainly the blues scale. I don't know why, but I love that scale. Sometimes though you just have to thrash out.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Matthew – I know I was young, just started high school so maybe about 14/15.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Matthew – By the end of high school I think, I was self-schooled in guitar, I couldn't afford a tutor & books were cheaper. I started with chords & then bought some tab books. Nirvana was the first easy step, but I was happy once I could play "Duality" by Slipknot & "Bark At The Moon" by Ozzy.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Matthew – I enjoy playing other instruments, but for me guitar is almost universal. I would say second to the piano. On the piano you can play almost any song & get everyone singing & the guitar is like the second to that. If you take an acoustic to a beach with friends & strum a few chords you could be have them all singing. I remember once I just sat on a sofa at an ex's house & just finger picked some chords & she told me how relaxing hearing it was. It's a mood enhancer. You can calm someone, you can make someone reminisce, or feel anger & pain. It just penetrates you.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be peoples first instrument as often as it is?

Matthew – My first instrument was recorder in lower school which I gave up because we would repeat the same simple songs as no one would practice & I would get bored. I remember telling my sister off once because she learnt the simple stuff & out of boredom I figured out by ear how to play the Blackadder theme. I would say any instrument is enough. I enjoyed hearing flutes & clarinets at school. Everyone in my high school was more

absorbed by the orchestra's drummer as he could pull off more complex rhythms than any of the other sections. Guitar is not the beginning nor end of music. There is always an instrument for you.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Matthew – I see it as both. My guitar is my ally when writing songs, he will find me a catchy riff & he will tell me where to go from there. He is my adversary when I try & repeat it live. I literally beat the poor bastard about at times through a mix of euphoria & stress at a little mistake that no one heard but me. It's a love/hate relationship but I enjoy it.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Matthew – I grew up listening to Bruce Springsteen, Dire Straits, Queen, & Extreme. The latter two I believe had more of an effect on me. Brian May's seeping emotion & layered guitar are mesmerising. Extreme's Nuno Bettencourt is a close hero for being a complete ass & reminding me that there is always someone better. Sound wise I would say KoRn influenced me a lot. They were my teenage craze band, a lot of what I play now I can hear through them. Weird bends, octave chords, etc. I

would also have to regard Interpol as well, as a band they taught to me how music can just be pure emotion.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Matthew – As long as you appreciate it, I don't care what you do as long as it's what you think is right for what you want out of your guitar.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Matthew – I'm not one to trash a perfectly good guitar. I love it too much.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Matthew – Guitar Hero. Guitar Hero taught me how to use my pinky when playing & it is a good exercise. I would say play any song on hard/expert & you will notice the difference.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Matthew – In my band we jam for about 2 hours a week on Sundays. Between that I play when the

mood strikes me & I can play for a few minutes to a few hours. Depends of there are any chores that need doing, etc.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Matthew – I use a big, thick pick. It's probably a bass plectrum. I like having that control over the sound & again is probably a subconscious influence from Brian May using a coin. He stated something that I feel when playing, where, flimsy thin picks to me just seem to have no control & they seem soft & rattle & just feel uncomfortable. For me having that control & knowing that every pick is down to me, the fact that it is solid so I can adjust a rise & fall by how hard or how soft I pick it; there is nothing like it. It's just having that control!

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Matthew – I use standard gauge D'Addario strings. They've always lasted a good while & I just love their sound. Everything just sounds so bright!

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Matthew – I'm lazy & also short on cash, so I try to change them regularly but it's always once they start losing the ability to stay in tune after a song & look very rusty. I don't put that much care into my

guitars, but they last. I guess I see my guitar as a reflection of myself & my upbringing of being able to take a beating.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Matthew – Not very often. About once or twice they've broke from over use, other than that I've managed to get them sorted in time.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Matthew – I would have to admit it's hard to choose. My strumming hand I adore for its control. I can build & diminish sounds & whack out some nice rhythm patterns, meanwhile my fretting hand is having to cope with (at times) trying to hold a chord & build another layer over it. One of our songs, "Fool the Fool", surprised our producer who listened to my recording & was puzzled how he had two guitars on one track, it was just through using octaves & open notes together that it sounds like that, but those are the sounds I like & want. It just makes the song feel fuller despite the handicap of a lack of another guitarist. I feel both my hands work together. I couldn't choose one over another.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Matthew – I always set myself up. I can get very OCD about people touching my guitar & amp. I just know how it runs & no disrespect to the sound guys & girls (most are just as OCD about their microphones & equipment), but I think it's just a "thing" I have. It's nothing personal, but it's territorial. You end up caring about an instrument; it almost feels like jealousy when you see it being cradled by someone other than yourself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Matthew – Standard tuning although I like to go Drop D every now & again & hope to experiment with Drop D turnings in our songs at a later date.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Matthew – I learned from tab, as it was just easier to see for me. That & chord sheets. Funnily enough none of Dutch Order's songs are written out in tab form. They're stored in my mind. The only paper in our jam sessions are lyrics.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Matthew – It's quite high. Again a control thing. My guitar hangs I front of my navel; it's not Beatles high, but high enough so that my hand & arms are comfortable.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Matthew – Swearing. You'll see me utter an expletive on stage when I make a mistake. I'm hoping to conquer this by not making a mistake. It may take some time...

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Matthew – Bass helps. The fret board is longer so it helps you stretch & it's simpler if it's a 4 string. It helps work out some catchy riffs. The best instrument to learn basic guitar though is a Classical Guitar. Thick necks & nylon strings. It is a pain, but it really does help you shape those chords & become a better guitarist.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you cant?

Matthew – Classical. All those weird chords & complex pieces. Would love to be able to just play it.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Matthew – To be tutored in guitar. Could never afford it.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Matthew – How bending or pulling the fretboard can create a slight whammy bar effect. It looks kinda cool in an odd destructive way too!

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Matthew – Capo. I love using it to help me find new areas on the guitar to play. We use it in one of our songs so far with Dutch Order.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Matthew – Tapping. I have it figured, but not as well as I'd like. Only just to prat about with, I don't think I would have a use for it in our music.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Matthew – Not from a professional, but from a mate. It was more about simple things, understanding tab & playing simple riffs.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Matthew – To not be afraid to experiment. To understand that if you find a limitation, to try & exploit it.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Matthew – Keep it simple stupid. My guitar & amp are cheap but versatile. Put the practice in & don't be afraid to do something others may not like. Some of Dutch Order's songs I don't like. Each band member likes & dislikes songs. There will always be someone who likes something you may not. If you helped create it & it felt right at the time, the music is right, it may not be to your taste but in the same way it is still a part written by you & created by you & is a part of you. Live with it.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Matthew – I would only use them for fun. But I hate how they mess with turnings & the Floyd Rose mechanism, although a God Send is an arse too!

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Matthew – Pretty much never.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Matthew – I would say that the rhythm guitarist is a glorified bassist (this is coming from a rhythm guitarist by the way), a lead guitarist is dead without one though. One thing we noticed in practice, the reason I keep solos to a minimum, is the fact that once a powerful, wall crunching rhythm has stopped playing & a solo starts, the music just dies. It may be a grand solo, but the music then misses that powerhouse behind it. The lead is only as good as the rhythm guitarist backing them up.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Matthew – No. I've heard bands with great drummers, great bassists, great vocalists & the rest

just not being up to scratch. It sticks out like a sore thumb & it is a shame because you come away disliking the band because you only have one positive thing to say, “The X was good, but the rest of them were awful!” A band isn’t just about guitar, we were fortunate enough to get on & when people spoke to us they stated how we, “WE ALL PLAYED TOGETHER.” A BAND is a GROUP of PEOPLE. There is no “I” in “team” & none in “band”.

QRD – What famous musicians guitar would you like to own & why?

Matthew – Nuno Bettencourt’s N7. He is just amazing & I would worship that guitar! I would make an altar for it & everything!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Matthew – In terms of, who influenced me most lately, it would be Daniel Kessler & Paul Banks from Interpol. Their weird rhythms & weaving guitar harmonies are magical & surreal. I don’t really listen to the radio much because there is not much to listen to. I would say the best guitar work comes from the 70s, such as Queen.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Matthew – There are snippets on our website: www.dutchorder.co.uk Or you can search for us on YouTube - Just type in Dutch Order & we have a good few gig videos set up there.

QRD – Anything else?

Matthew – I would like to take the time to say thank you to those who are supporting Dutch Order & have made it what it is, not forgetting those who play alongside me on stage, Kesby, Terry, & Steve. Love you guys! & much love to the fans! Also thanks to my family for their support through personal trials & their support with the band & care & for purchasing my first instruments. Also much love to my partner Aneta, for her work with the band & for taking the time out of her life to support my & the other guys dreams.

Francesco “fuzz” Brasini

June 2012

Name: Francesco “fuzz” Brasini

Bands: the same

Websites: soundcloud.com/francescobrasini,
francescofuzzbrasini.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Francesco – My first guitar was a copy of a 1970s Gibson SG made in Japan, bought from a classmate for 20 € or so. Only the first part of the neck was functioning (just until the 5th fret). In that period, approximately 1984, I started playing in a psychobilly/garage trio, so it was perfect even if part of it wasn't functioning. Then I received a Tone Bender Vox Fuzz as a birthday present, & everything started....

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Francesco – My set-up solo consists of four amplifiers that, added to each other, create the frequency range that I need: a 1969 Marshall JTM 50 “small head” (head & 4x12” Greenback Celestion cab.), a Kustom amp (1970 c.a.) 4x10” JBL speakers, a Fender Bassman 100

“silverface”(1973 c.a.) 4 x12” Oxford speakers, & an Ampeg B15 Portaflex (1965 c.a.). Stompboxes: 2880 E.H. Looper Recorder, Eventide Pitch Factor, E.H 16 sec Digital Delay, E.H. Frequency Analyzer, E.H POG, E.H. Memory Man Deluxe, Roland Re 301 Space Echo, E.H Graphic Fuzz, E.H Electric Mistress, E.H. Pulsar Tremolo, J.G. Electro Fuzz, J.G. Electro Boost, MXR 10 Band EQ, Vox Wah-wah (from 1960), double Ebow.

In duo with Luciano Maggiore I use: direct line to the P.A., Digitech Whammy, Boss DD2 Digital Delay, Boss Metal Zone, T.C. Electronic Phaser, Dunlop Wah-wah, Boss re-201 Space Echo, early Boss Chorus Ensemble (sounds good, nice pedal!), & Ebow.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Francesco – Ideas & hands!

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Francesco – My favourite amp is the Marshall JTM because it has beautiful attacks, you get soft sounds & then it is truly essential in regulations.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Francesco – My guitars are hand-built so the features are also very personal since the pickups are wound by hand. However, if I had to summarize, I would say that the sound is a mix between Gretsch Duo Jet, Fender Telecaster, & Burns guitars.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Francesco – I design my guitars, so they look like & have the features that I need. 😊

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Francesco – I also built some stompboxes & the features are: full sound, high signal, & stout structure.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Francesco – I built 5 guitars & 2 basses, then I have a Vox Mark XII, a Roland GR 707 guitar synth & soon a Gretsch 6120.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Francesco – At home.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Francesco – I built my cases in collaboration with a factory; hard & aesthetically similar to the guitars.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Francesco – There are so many features... Let's say that, when you play it, it says if you have to buy it!

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Francesco – From \$1 to \$ 1,000,000.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Francesco – My guitars are already customized... the others have got their own "personality" & I don't need to modify them.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Francesco – I usually check videos on the internet

to understand the features because I rarely find what I am looking for in shops.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Francesco – It depends on the situation; but yes, quite often.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Francesco – I usually look for my tone even if I change my instruments.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Francesco – I would say that I already have what I need, but sometimes I buy other pedals.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Francesco – This really depends on what the person is looking for. Perhaps the neck is the most fundamental element to be taken in consideration.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Francesco – The best purchase was probably the Marshall JMP amp.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Francesco – Maybe Gretsch guitars, Divided by 13 amps & Electro-Harmonix pedals are some of the best brands I have tried.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Francesco – E Major Flat!

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Francesco – I was 17.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Francesco – Around 20.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Francesco – I also play bass & keyboards, so I wouldn't say a guitar fits me more than other instruments.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Francesco – I don't think so. It is so subjective... now there are tons of possibilities to play with instruments or objects.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Francesco – Of course an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Francesco – Link Wray, Bryan Gregory from Cramps, & many garage punk guitarists from the 1960s.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Francesco – Someone develops an “affectionate” relationship with his instrument. It is not my case, but I don’t think it’s stupid. It really depends on the guitarist’s personality.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Francesco – Broken headstock during a tour: the guitar fell from the stand, a classic accident.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Francesco – ?

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Francesco – It really depends, I play the instrument when I come up with some ideas.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Francesco – Ceramic. It’s the best for me, bright & acid sound.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Francesco – 011-50 metal steel, best sustain & bright sound.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Francesco – Rarely.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Francesco – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Francesco – Strumming hand is much better for the things I do.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Francesco – I set it up myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Francesco – C 256hz, increase in sound harmonics.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or

some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Francesco – I don't use a conventional notation system. When I have some ideas I draw lines on the staff with some references to be used on octaves & pauses to represent the sound.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Francesco – Very low at the beginning, now I play seated.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Francesco – None.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Francesco – Bass, of course, & for my taste, Farfisa organ!!!

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Francesco – Hawaiian.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Francesco – I don't know.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Francesco – Using four amplifiers with different frequencies.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Francesco – Ebow & slide.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Francesco – None.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Francesco – I learned by listening to vinyl records & cassettes.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Francesco – The first thing I would do is explaining how to use an amplifier & how to adjust the sound.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Francesco – I do not know. At first, I myself tried to emulate the sound of the guitar players that interested me, then I found my way.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Francesco – The tremolo systems I've always liked: amplifier, effect pedal, the lever Bigsby.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Francesco – I always play with the open signal, I never use the tone control on the guitar.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Francesco – Lead guitarists like to be the protagonists of the scene. 😊

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Francesco – I do not think that way; the sound of the band is composed by all the elements.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Francesco – I don't know.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Francesco – Taku Sugimoto, his minimalist approach is amazing. I think his idea of music is based on time & pauses, & the guitar is only a means to express it.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Francesco – On my websites.

Shawn Lawson Freeman of The Weak Knees

Name: Shawn Lawson Freeman

Bands: Beneath Wind and Waves, The Weak Knees
(playing drums)

Websites: www.beneathwindandwaves.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Shawn – Left-Handed Hohner HW 440 Acoustic Electric. I still have it & it's my main acoustic guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Shawn – I'm either playing the Hohner acoustic or Ibanez Artcore AF85L through a Boss Chromatic Tuner – Line 6 Crunchtone distortion pedal – Ibanez DE7 Delay/Echo pedal – DOD FX 96 Analog Delay/Echo pedal to an Orange Crush 15 Amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Shawn – Well... I guess I'd have to say the guitar, because if I didn't have that, then there really isn't much need for the other things.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Shawn – I have a Line 6 Flextone Amp. But a friend left the little Orange Crush 15 at the house & I love the sound of it, plus it’s much easier to carry.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Shawn – It’s been the Hohner acoustic, just because that’s what I initially have been learning & writing everything on & it’s comfortable. But, I’ve been playing the Ibanez Artcore electric more frequently & actually used it in the studio for the first time on a new song called “The Silent Observer.”

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Shawn – Don’t have the desire for a signature guitar (or pedal).

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Shawn – 4. A Hohner & an Ibanez acoustic. & an Ibanez Artcore & a Fender Telecaster.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Shawn – At my house & either in the cases or out depending on what I'm playing.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Shawn – I'm happy with all my cases, unless you can put a time machine in them?

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Shawn – Usually feel & can I afford it?

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Shawn – I have no idea. Or? Whatever someone is willing to pay?

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Shawn – I had the bridge pinned on the Artcore so that changing strings would be easier.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Shawn – Well, being that I'm left handed my choices are pretty limited, especially when it comes to actually testing/hearing the instrument. So, that kind of just leaves me reading reviews &/or crossing my fingers that it's the right feel & sound I want.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Shawn – Not really. Keep it simple!

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Shawn – See above.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Shawn – I try not to lust after anything in life!

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Shawn – A built-in tuner would be handy & instructions on how to change strings.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Shawn – I love my Hohner acoustic & the Artcore! I actually got a really nice Martin acoustic as a gift, but ended up selling it because it just didn't sound as good as the Hohner. & the Ibanez acoustic I rarely use & is mainly just a back up.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Shawn – I think there are a ton of great companies out there making great products & it's all just personal preference.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Shawn – Usually whatever I'm currently working on or I just sort of mess around & see if anything cool happens.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Shawn – I got the acoustic about nine years ago, but it just kind of collected dust & I didn't really start

playing it until about five years ago, so that would be at age 37. Yep...I'm old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Shawn – I'm not even close to being the best at anything.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Shawn – I'm actually much more comfortable with the drums than I'll probably ever be with the guitar.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Shawn – I think you should play whatever instrument you're drawn to & moves you.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Shawn – I would say ally, otherwise it would be really difficult to try & write songs.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Shawn – I learn a lot from anyone I play with regardless of his or her ability or level of playing. My friend Jim Walker is very encouraging & supportive & owns the studio where I record at & collaborates extensively on my songs & is a big influence & can play any style or genre. There's a lot of love at Studio Five-One-Five here in Portland & I believe you need that from others, whatever it is that you're doing in life. It keeps you motivated & excited!

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Shawn – If people want to name things, whatever that may be it's no concern of mine.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Shawn – Oh... I was walking with my acoustic & accidentally hit the side of it against a metal doorjamb & took a nice chunk out of the edge. Adds character I guess.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Shawn – I just started taking lessons a month ago,

so I try to practice what my teacher & I have been going over.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Shawn – 10 hours a week is probably average, which I'm happy with. But, sometimes I play more or sometimes less depending on my schedule.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Shawn – I like the Dunlop .60MM. Rigid but still a bit flexible.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Shawn – I use Martin FX mediums on my acoustics & Ernie Ball Super Slinky medium/heavy on my electrics.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Shawn – Often on my acoustic because I seem to break them & every few months on my electric, unless I break them as well.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Shawn – I'm not sure that I have a style, nor do I feel very proficient at either.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Shawn – I have no idea how to do a set up, so I take it to someone.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Shawn – Standard; or tuned down a half or whole step; & lately I've been using Drop D & sometimes tuning that down also, which is a lot of fun.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Shawn – I don't really know chords, but I hand write all the lyric ideas & guitar changes in my own weird way on notebook paper so that I'll have some sort of recollection of what I'm doing.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Shawn – Wherever it's comfortable. Not sure if that's high or low?

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Shawn – Getting overly excited & breaking strings. Just playing too hard in general.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Shawn – I would think that playing any other instrument would be helpful in one way or another.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Shawn – I don't think it's necessarily any type, but I wish I had better technique.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Shawn – To understand how the guitar actually works?

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Shawn – No tricks up this sleeve....

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Shawn – I used a capo a lot when I first started playing, but have been using it less now. & I think the Ebow adds an interesting effect.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Shawn – Any of them?

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Shawn – I just started & have had a few lessons & what I've learned is that, "Oh my, I have a lot to learn."

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Shawn – Learn what you can from others, but more importantly remember to always be yourself. & a lot of times simplicity is much more effective than over playing.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Shawn – I know very little, so if there is a need to emulate, then I would suggest it be someone else.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Shawn – I don't use it, but it's a cool sound.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Shawn – Depends if I'm playing acoustic or electric & whom I'm playing with.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Shawn – This is sort of a loaded question & one I think I'll opt out on answering.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Shawn – Sorry, but no.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Shawn – I'd pick Blake Schwarzenbach from the band Jawbreaker because I'm a big fan & he's left-handed as well, so I'd at least be able to play the thing as opposed to just staring at it or hanging it on the wall.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Shawn – There are too many talented folks out there doing cool things to name.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Shawn – Check back in about ten years or so.

QRD – Anything else?

Shawn – Thanks for having me!

Jacques LaMore of The Projection

June 2012

Name: Jacques LaMore

Bands: The Projection

Websites: theprojectionband.com,

facebook.com/theprojection

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jacques – My first guitar was a Lotus Strat. I was 10 or 11? I'm not sure what happened to it. I think I just gave it away. It was a cheap guitar. Nothing special.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jacques – My standard Mexican made Fender Telecaster (with a Seymour Duncan Hot Rails Pickup), a Boss stomp box tuner, & either an Orange, Marshall, or Mesa amplifier.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jacques – I would say my Fender Telecaster is the most important part. I prefer a good tube amp over

anything; but, if someone gave me nothing but a solid-state amp, I could still make it sound decent.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jacques – Right now, I'm playing through an Orange Dual Terror head through a 1x12 cabinet with a Celestion Vintage 30 in it. My main amplifier is hands down always a tube amp. You cannot get decent, true, warm tones through a solid state. Solid state is way too compressed, thin, & tinny.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jacques – My main guitar is a standard Mexican made Fender Telecaster. The feature that makes it my main axe is the Seymour Duncan Hot Rails pickup I have installed. Seymour Duncan is by far my favorite humbucker & without having the Hot Rails in there, this guitar would be very limited. This pickup gives you the versatility to play more than one genre if need be. The second feature I like about my Tele is that it stays in tune! I love the sound of a Gibson, but finding one & setting one up to stay in tune is a bitch!

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jacques – Damn, this is a tough question. My favorite body types are Teles, Les Pauls, & hollowbodies. I have a huge heart for them all. I wouldn't mind having a killer looking Les Paul with a beefy sound, but also has clarity & stays in tune. I'm always very fond of Dave Grohl's (Foo Fighters) semi-hollow body that he usually plays with.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jacques – I'm currently not much of a pedal person. I don't use a lot of effects or have the money to invest in good pedals.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jacques – I currently own four. Three electrics & one acoustic.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jacques – I store them in our practice space in my basement.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jacques – More storage & that the support straps to keep the guitar case open wouldn't break so easily.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jacques – Sharp look, awesome thick beefy tone, & tunes well.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jacques – That's something you can't really put on price on. It's more or less what you have done to modify the guitar to make it your own.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jacques – There have been very few guitars I've owned that I haven't wanted to do something with it. Usually, it's changing the pickups, tuning machines, or bridge.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jacques – Lately, I've learned from a good friend of mine that it's extremely important to do lots of

research on an item before you buy. Not just research, but also testing it out a few times & checking out all its features. This is very important. Especially if you're dropping lots of money.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jacques – I like to upgrade when it's needed. I've had several different rigs in the past 6 or 7 years. I haven't changed my rig that many times in the past few years.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jacques – I'm usually after one particular tone. I don't change my tone around that much. I'm always in the same area with the same idea in mind.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jacques – Gibson Les Paul Studio, Fender Blacktop Telecaster HH, Ibanez Artcore Hollowbody, Taylor Grand Auditorium Acoustic-electric, Orange Rockerverb, Sennheiser XS Wireless Instrument system.

QRD – What do you think are some important

features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jacques – Tuning!

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jacques – Best purchase I ever made was my Fender Telecaster. Worst purchase was probably a Line 6 Spider II 2x12 combo amp.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jacques – I pretty much dis-like any solid-state amps like I said before. My favorite amps are: Marshall, Orange, Mesa Boogie, Vox, Fender, & Peavey.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jacques – Usually “My Worst Enemy” by LIT.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jacques – I started playing bass at 10/11 & guitar at 13/14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jacques – I would say now.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jacques – I think it fits me because I'm very tight with my strumming & rhythm playing.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jacques – No. I think it should be piano or another classical instrument. Or even classical guitar.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jacques – Both.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jacques – Billy Joe Armstrong of Green Day, John Feldmann of Goldfinger, & Aaron Barrett of Reel Big Fish, & Ryan Key of Yellowcard are my main influences when it comes to playing. For sound

though, I like more of the guitar tones of Goldfinger, MxPx, Yellowcard, or Sum 41. Those are just a few. I could go on!

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jacques – Ha-ha, I do find it a little silly sometimes, but it is very natural. I don't have names for my guitars. It's just not my thing. I do love it when people have cool names for their instruments though.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jacques – When I was in 8th grade, I had a nice Martin acoustic. I was finishing up going out for Halloween & I had my guitar strapped on me while I was fixing my hair. The guitar slipped from my shoulder & crashed on the hardwood floor. It broke the bottom corner of the guitar as well as a dent in the back. I was pissed! I still own that guitar. I don't use it for shows though. The hole I made is taped up with medical tape. It's my ghetto looking guitar.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jacques – I try my best to exercise & eat somewhat

healthy. It does help when you want to bounce up & down at shows & not lose your breath.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jacques – I would say 2 to 5 hours a week. I would like to play 7 to 10 hours a week.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jacques – I like to use medium to heavy weight picks. It gives me the best attack. Right now, I use custom made picks with The Projection's name on them.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jacques – I use the 10 gauge strings. I used to use 9 gauge, but I would break strings quicker that way because I strum hard. I went up to 10 because I wanted something a little thicker so they wouldn't break, but I didn't want to have extremely thick strings to pluck on either.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jacques – It depends on how often we are playing shows or practicing. I'd say every few weeks.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jacques – I don't break strings too often. Just once in a great while. I like to change the strings before they break.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jacques – Both are very important in the style I play but I think the strumming hand is the most proficient. The way I attack the notes is very important in our songs because most times, the snare drum follows my attacks exactly. If they don't match up, it sounds sloppy.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jacques – I don't have the time or the patience to set up my guitar properly. I always take it to a professional.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jacques – Currently I use the E standard tuning & Drop D. I occasionally use a capo.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jacques – I use tabs every once & awhile. Most of what I do is done by ear.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jacques – My guitar is low compared to most people. Watch any pop-punk bands from the 90s & early 2000s & you'll know exactly where I set my guitar height.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jacques – I wish I could play a guitar with a thicker neck. I struggle with that. Especially on a Les Paul.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jacques – Piano & drums.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jacques – Any sort of lead guitar, country, finger picking....

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jacques – Learning how to play lead guitar or doing solos.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jacques – Just a little bit of delay on your amp or through a pedal can add some sustain to your guitar.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jacques – Pick holder on a mic stand.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jacques – Being able to shred a little.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jacques – I've never taken guitar lessons. I've only

learned from teaching myself or other guitar players.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jacques – Different strumming/picking techniques. I'm not sure what guitar teachers teach, but that would be what I would do.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jacques – Listen & watch a lot of 90's/early 00s pop punk.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jacques – They are cool, but can be a pain. I would only suggest having one if you use it a lot on stage.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jacques – I never adjust the tone knob on my guitar. On my amp however, I tweak it a little bit depending on where we are playing.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jacques – I think it's usually obvious. The rhythm guitar player is more of a songwriter who focuses on melody than a lead guitarist who tries to compliment that melody with leads or solos. One is foundation & one is the sugar 'n' spice. Not that ALL lead guitarist are like this because I know some who are very good songwriters as well.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jacques – Yes, sometimes I can, but not always. I can always admire the best musicians in the band if the band as a whole is not good together.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jacques – Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters & John Feldmann of Goldfinger are the two I can think of at the moment. Grohl just has a full tone while being sharp enough to be clear. Feldmann has a beefy wall of tone & punch that I have always loved & can't seem to completely match it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jacques – I'm a big fan of my friend Kevin Wright

from The Righteous Hillbillies. He may not be well known to everyone in the universe, but his never ending thirst for that perfect tone & creativity like a mad man makes him very innovative.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jacques – I'd say my best guitar work could be heard on The Projection's latest album *While You Were Out*.

QRD – Anything else?

Jacques – Tube amps are ALWAYS better than solid-state amp no matter what. Having a tuner on stage with you is very important! I think that's it for now.....

Curran Faris of Greenhouse & Warsaw
June 2012

Name: Curran Faris

Bands: Greenhouse, Warsaw

Websites: greenhousedrone.bandcamp.com,
facebook.com/pages/Warsaw/227340043970250,
facebook.com/humboltdrone

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Curran – My mom's classical guitar. It's sitting upstairs in my office.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Curran – Fender Telecaster Thinline - Ernie Ball volume pedal - Boss tuner - Fulltone OCD - Ibanez Tube Screamer - Boss pitch shifter - Electro-Harmonix Freeze - Diamond Tremolo - Line 6 DL4 - Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail - Verellen Loucks - Sunn 4x12

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Curran – Tough call, but I'm gonna go with my Loucks.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Curran – Verellen Loucks. It's simple, yet extremely touchy & versatile. & it's pretty loud too. It yields a big range of tones. I discover something new almost every time I play it.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Curran – My main guitar for years was a Godin LG. I've been using my Tele for a few years now. I like the humbuckers in it. Gives it a bit more heft.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Curran – Five.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Curran – Mostly in their cases. One stays on a stand for easy access. Another is in a corner being neglected.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Curran – I'm a total caveman. I stick with what I get, besides from the obvious tune-ups to suit the

gauge/tunings I use. If I need something technical done, I take it to Darcy Bunio here in Winnipeg. He's a wizard.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Curran – Pretty thoroughly. I watch as many online videos as I can if I can't physically try something first.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Curran – Not really. Don't have the funds to.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Curran – I've been pretty locked in for a while. I tend to stay away from super high treble. I like smooth, diamond-clear clean tones & loud, but distinct distortion.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Curran – Sunn Model T. Gimme.

QRD – What have been the best guitar related purchases you've made?

Curran – Sunn 4x12 used for \$400. Vox AC-30.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Curran – Verellen Amps. Fulltone overdrives.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Curran – Chromatic warm-ups.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Curran – 10?

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Curran – Early to mid-twenties, right when I started teaching.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Curran – I'm not sure that it does. I can go from feeling perfectly "fitted" with guitar to feeling totally outclassed by it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Curran – After years of teaching, I still think I can't say one way or the other. I can tell you I wish I had learned piano first.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Curran – Both, but mainly an adversary.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Curran – Off the top of my head: Jonny Greenwood, Steve Brodsky/Adam McGrath, Andrew Elstner, King Buzzo, Jake Snyder/Dave Knudson, Andy Summers... I dunno. Honestly at this point I'm more influenced & inspired by my friends & bandmates.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Curran – Silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Curran – Dented the finish on my Godin when the volume pot flew off & landed on the body. It was so flukey.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Curran – Not nearly enough. Anything more at this point would be great.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Curran – I use these Traynor picks that are basically like the Jazz III, but the texture is smoother.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Curran – D'Addario. Jazz gauge. They're just so dang heavy.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Curran – When they start sounding bad/feeling gross.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Curran – Not often.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Curran – Strumming. I've never been into intense fretboard acrobatics.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Curran – If it's a significant repair or something I will most certainly screw up, Darcy Bunio is where my guitars go.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Curran – Standard, 1/2 step down, Drop D, & this Drop C tuning with a few twists of my own.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Curran – Nowadays, I just record anything I need to remember.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Curran – Laziness.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Curran – Jazz. Death metal. I have no idea. Probably almost anything.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Curran – I used to be one, so maybe I can't answer this one.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Curran – Delay. Jangly chords.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Curran – Only when I accidentally turn it off & start playing a song & notice half way through that my guitar sounds terrible.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Curran – Probably not.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Curran – My most technical/hectic work was done in my stint with Hide Your Daughters, though that has yet to be recorded since the band is on permanent hiatus. My newest band Warsaw should hopefully record something sometime. Greenhouse is my solo ambient stuff. It's guitar work, but it's not obviously guitar - or work.

Sean Fewell of The Broken Sparrows

June 2012

Name: Sean Fewell

Bands: The Broken Sparrows

Websites: reverbNation.com/thebrokensparrows

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Sean – An old Harmony H59 Rocket. About as heavy as a tank & never stayed in tune long enough to finish a song. Sold it when I was 16 I think. Regret selling it every single day.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Sean – Well, my signal path is guitar, Boss TU-2, Dunlop Wah, Modtone Compression, MXR Micro Amp Boost, Sovtek Russian Muff, 1981 USA Big Muff, EHX Pog 2, Boss GE-7, Ernie Ball VP Jr, Boss TR-2, MXR Carbon Copy, Boss NS-2, amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Sean – I often ask myself this very question. I would have to say the Muff pedals. Seems like every Big Muff I have ever played sounds different

from the last one. When I found my two vintage muffs, my search was over.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Sean – My main amps are a Kustom Quad Jr. Half Stack & a Univox 12” Stage Amp. I run them at the same time. The Kustom amp was appealing to me for a few reasons, when you play in a band with a drummer who hits as hard as Bonham & Moon you need at least 4 12”s to keep up. The Univox amp was a pawn shop treasure & it sounds like a germanium amp when cranked. It also blends very well with the Kustom.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Sean – My main guitar is a PRS SE Singlecut. I can’t express how good the tone is on these guitars. Very light. Almost feels like a toy. Great gigging ax. I also play a Hofner Galaxy that gets its share of action.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Sean – It would probably look vintage, have switches for the pickups. & all of my guitars MUST have a whammy.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Sean – A fuzz pedal with a germanium transistor inside that would give the fuzz a battery dying sound/feel to it. (EHX makes a similar pedal, but it is kinda sketchy.)

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Sean – Around 8-9. I keep some of them at my Pop's house (also a player).

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Sean – My main guitars stay out on stands in our rehearsal space. The others are in cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Sean – Humidifiers.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Sean – If it stays in tune, the intonation is close, & the neck feels good; I usually buy them.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Sean – A thousand dollars is fair, if the wood & parts are top shelf. I will never, & have never, spent more on a guitar.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Sean – I usually upgrade the tuners & pickups.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Sean – Sometimes months, sometimes if it sounds good in the store, I take it home.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Sean – Not really. Once I found the sound I wanted, I thought it was best to stop & not jinx it

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Sean – I always searched for a tone that I heard in my head. It took years to find it. When I found it, I

made sure to make notes of everything so I never lose it. I often have nightmares about people screwing with my rig, forcing me to do it over again.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Sean – I want a 70s Gibson SG, a vintage Fender Mustang, & an old Ampeg V-22 amp.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Sean – Good tuners, a properly set up neck. Soft frets.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Sean – Best purchase was my PRS Singlecut. Worst purchase? Anything made by Digitech.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Sean – Like: Fender, Gibson, PRS, Dillion, Epiphone, Takamine, Ampeg, Kustom, Boss, Dunlop, Ernie Ball. Dislike: Digitech, Marshall

Solid State amps, Jackson Guitars or anything else with a Floyd Rose on it.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Sean – An E chord. Such a nice full chord.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Sean – I was 9 years young. I saw a clip of some group called The Beatles & that was it. How many bands can really reach across generations like that? Crazy.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Sean – I made the jump probably around 16/17. Blues music hit me hard around then, forcing me to learn slide, scales, & Robert Johnson & Zeppelin records really messed me up for life. No going back.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Sean – The guitar has the ability to make everyone sound different while playing it. It allows you to

have your own unique sound. It was always around me as a kid. I come from a family of pickers. I was doomed from day one.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Sean – No. I understand why it is, but there are always way too many guitar players & no drummers, or bass players. I always see ads on Craigslist with bands looking for bass players & drummers.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Sean – It has always been my ally. I would be lost without it.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Sean – In no order: Jimi Hendrix, Frank Zappa, John Lennon, Jimmy Page, Jack White, Jeff Beck, Buddy Holly, Josh Homme, David Gilmour, Buddy Guy, Robert Johnson, George Harrison, Graham Coxon, Pete Townshend, Lou Reed, Duane Allman, Derek Trucks, Dan Auerbach, Robin Trower, Robert Fripp, Frank Black, my Dad.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Sean – Anyone who thinks it is silly, usually can't play a lick. I love my girls.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Sean – Broke it. Smashed it in my back yard showing off for girls when I was 12 or 13. Another regret of mine.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Sean – Singing & playing, effect order during songs, pick up selection on different songs.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Sean – 30 hours a week. I would like to have a full-time job that would require more playing time, but we shall see....

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Sean – Clayton .63s I love the size & flex. & Dunlop .73 Tortexes. Great grip & last a long time.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Sean – 10s & 11s. Each guitar handles differently. I kinda like fatter strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Sean – Every 3-4 weeks. Every time. No excuses.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Sean – Not often. Once or twice a year. Stretching is the secret.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, you're strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Sean – My strumming hand has always been my strength. I do find as I get older & wiser, the fretting hand is catching up. LOL.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Sean – I only had one tech my whole life & I took the time to learn from him. I do all my own set-ups.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Sean – Standard E, Open A, Open G, C tuning. Each tuning has a different sound & feel. Lots of slide guitar & blues with the open stuff.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Sean – I learned to read music when I was first starting, but I usually just use a piece of paper & a recording device.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Sean – Around, well, the crotch. I have long, lanky arms.

QRD – What's a bad habit in you're playing you wish you could break?

Sean – The cramping hand is always a battle with some songs. I could do without that.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Sean – Bass guitar or violin.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Sean – I wish I could do more classical finger picking on nylon strings. Love that stuff.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Sean – Making enough money playing guitar to not have a regular job.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Sean – Making people believe I am good. 😊

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Sean – My heavy weight brass slide.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Sean – Become better at slide.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Sean – I did. I learned how to play Christmas jingles.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Sean – How to play.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Sean – Buy a Big Muff & learn some power chords.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Sean – Nothing against them, just don't like them.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Sean – Often. You can do a lot with that little knob. Really color your sound.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Sean – One is in charge of keeping the full sound of the rhythm, while a lead guitarist colors the space in between.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Sean – I don't think so. On the other hand, a good guitar player can make some players PLAY better.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Sean – I would have to go with John Lennon's Rickenbacker. If a guitar could talk.....

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Sean – I really think Jack White & Josh Homme are the guys for me right now. Both amazing live players who really have a unique sound.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Sean – www.reverbnation.com/thebrokensparrows

QRD – Anything else?

Sean – I really enjoyed these great & well thought out questions. Good luck & Cheers!!

Ryan Scally of Orange Blossom Flyover
June 2012

Name: Ryan Scally

Bands: Orange Blossom Flyover

Websites: soundcloud.com/orangeblossomflyover,
facebook.com/orangeblossomflyover,
orangeblossomflyover.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Ryan – My first guitar is alive & well. A black Squire Stratocaster that I got in 8th grade for my 13th birthday.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Ryan – Guitar into a giant multi-purpose Digitech pedal into one of my Valvestates.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Ryan – Well, without a guitar the other two are deemed useless. It's all about the guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Ryan – My main amp would be an 80 watt Marshall Valvestate, but while playing & practicing I mostly use a 15 watt Valvestate or a 15 watt Crate. A friend has the Crate right now; it's a toss-up anyways. They both have great tones & reverb for small amps.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Ryan – I recently bought an AVRI Jazzmaster. It's smooth as hell, plays exactly how I'd imagined. White with the tortoise shell. Looks amazing, which has its significance, but primarily sounds awesome.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Ryan – I wouldn't be able to speak to features, but maybe something cool looking with a maple neck.... All of my guitars have rosewood necks, which are great, but there's something underrated about the maple neck that I find appealing. Dark blue, maple neck, black pickguard. Or something.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Ryan – A mellotron pedal? Does that exist yet? A

pedal to make a guitar sound like a mellotron. Whistle, flute, & strings. Pre-recorded orchestras.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Ryan – As of now, 7. Three electrics, three acoustics (one of which is “Spanish”/nylon stringed), & a bass. Or maybe 8 guitars. I gave one to my sister to hang on her wall as a decoration.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Ryan – Just out & about around the house. No method in proper storage in terms of preventing weathering.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Ryan – When I’ve bought guitars I’ve either looked specifically for a Strat or for a Jazzmaster. So it was the features that were already derivable from those guitars. However, for my “next guitar”, I will probably just look for something that surprises me. & it will hopefully be not that expensive.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Ryan – A good guitar should ideally cost between

\$500-800. There are so many now way above \$800, which doesn't seem fair.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Ryan – Have not upgraded anything yet. I might put a different bridge on my Jazzmaster.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Ryan – A lot of research on the internet & hopefully at least one decent trial with it in person.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Ryan – Hardly ever.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Ryan – Ideally every song would have a different tone. It seems the fairest way to treat the songs (as individuals). Tones should technically even change within the song often, even if just at a verse chorus verse level. Sometimes I might want a verse to have a clean trebly tone with a lot of reverb & the pre-chorus to be a slight distortion dry chorus-drenched

tone that's bassy, & the chorus to be mid-range clean with a slow flanger setting with high reverb, & then the same thing but with swampy distortion played over it. It's about adding the right shades. Never one color. Painting with a guitar.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Ryan – The Kimberly Kay or Kingston Teisco guitars seem interesting. I'd like to find a cheap Ibanez Talman on Craigslist. I think it's their version of a surf guitar, which looks cool.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Ryan – Half the time I just start playing the current song that I've been writing & working on, which is probably why I grabbed the guitar. The other half would just be spontaneous chords to see if they go together, or of course different lead/solo style techniques too to warm up/get the feel going. It will never get old when you start playing accidental chords & you realize it sounds better than the song that you were trying to work on.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Ryan – Thirteen.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Ryan – I'm 24 now. Hopefully many years from now when I'm still trying to get better, while then imagining many years more of getting better from that point too.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Ryan – It just happens to be the dominant instrument of most of the music I listen to. It's actually kind of funny when you think of it.... It's the music that I love that I could listen to forever that makes me want to be a part of it & write my own music... You'd think if I loved it so much I'd just be satisfied with listening to their music!

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Ryan – Yes & no. It's a very easy instrument to get started with. Especially with different forms of simplistic guitar in all kinds of popular music. So you can therefore learn their easier songs quicker, which then makes you feel good & accomplished,

“I can do this”, & then, like anything, you hopefully evolve into a more sophisticated version of how you started. If you come from a family with parents who listen to Brahms or Mahler or Bach or Beethoven then you’re most likely going to start with a piano or a violin. Which are amazing instruments.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Ryan – Supreme Allied Commander.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Ryan – It’s a long list, but I’ll do it by saying the guitarist & including specific songs that have greatly influenced my guitar & songwriting approach, as well as tones: Billy Corgan – “Vanity” / “Let Me Give the World to You” / “Cupid de Locke” / “Speed Kills” / “All Things Change” / “Pretty Pretty Star” / “Perfect.” & George Harrison – “And Your Bird Can Sing” / “She Said She Said” / “Let it Down” / “Give Me Love.” & Paul McCartney – “Hear of the Country” / “Michelle” / “Two of Us” / “Fixing a Hole” / “Man We Was Lonely.” & John Lennon – “I’m Only Sleeping” / “Girl” / “Ticket to Ride” / “If I Fell” / “Dig a Pony” / “Across the Universe.” & Kevin Shields – “Moon Song” / “Off Your Face” / “I Can See It (But I

Can't Feel It)" / "I Only Said" / "Sugar." & Kurt Heasley – "Returns Every Morning" / "The Hermit Crab" / "The Night Sun Over San Juan" / "Will My Lord Be Gardening" / "The Spirits Merchant." & Josh Homme – "God Is in the Radio" / "Hangin' Tree" / "Interlude with Ludes."

Anyways. Annie Clark & Dave Longstreth are both great. Jeffy Tweedy & Nels Cline too. & most of the famous jazz guitarists because they're all masterminds, Al Di Meola, Pat Metheny, George Benson, etc. Also maybe most importantly my friends Matt Billington, Alex Dandurant, & Gracie Jackson. They're all great guitarists who I've played with a lot over the years & I've certainly learned a lot from them.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Ryan – Playing is key but listening to the guitarists you really respect is right up there in importance too.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Ryan – On average maybe 2 hours a day & then I'll spend all the other hours worrying about not playing, worrying about not writing.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Ryan – I've been using one of those Star Picks for a while now, a red one that I can't remember how I have it. A pick shouldn't be too heavy, assuming it's bad for the strings.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Ryan – No idea. Whatever gauge that works well with trying alternate tunings & doesn't mind to be always moving lower & back to higher, etc., is what I should use.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Ryan – Only if I break one.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Ryan – Rarely. But it's always a gloomy day when I do.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Ryan – I've always thought my strumming hand was more dominant, in that I could comfortably strum any type or rhythm, or even to just mimic percussion while muting the strings. I feel just as

good about my fretting hand though now. It's an interesting dynamic though for sure. Same with two piano hands playing in different tempos at the same time, hard to picture the actuality of what you're doing, so I try not to.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Ryan – Some standard E & E-flat. I like 2 steps down. I like the G-string up a half step. Which also works well with the high-E down a half step. I like the G-string down a half step, which also works well with drop-D. Open-G is fun. Or is it open-D? I have a song in DGDF#BD, one in C#A(b*)C#C#A(b)C, & B(b)B(b)B(b)FCD. & most recently B(b)FBG#B(b)F#. Playing in different tunings can feel like playing a whole different instrument. But you're obviously still familiar with it. It allows a different type of creativity that can be refreshing. * (b) = flat

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Ryan – I've never written down a guitar idea. I can remember mostly everything very well. If I don't think I can remember something, then I'll try & quickly record a demo of it. On the other hand, I try to write down lyric ideas as fast as I can so that I

won't forget. If I feel I might forget a melody idea then I'll find the guitar & play the notes of the melody so I'll have the memory of the initial sung notes as well as the visual on the guitar.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Ryan – Medium.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Ryan – Possibly being lazy at times with lead/soloing patterns & not branching out to different styles I suppose.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Ryan – Tough question. Maybe the harp.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Ryan – Jazz fusion.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Ryan – There was a point 6 or 7 years ago I really wanted to be able to sweep-pick. Just to do it. I never listened to the type of music where they did that, but I knew how difficult it was. I can do it “a little bit”, but never got that great at it. The great jazz guitarists like Al Di Meola can play those sweep-picked notes just as fast with normal fast picking though, which I find more impressive.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Ryan – Whatever latest new tuning I stumbled into.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Ryan – A capo can be great, but I rather test out chords on even lower frets than higher ones! The anti-capo. I like Ebows too, although I’ve never owned one.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Ryan – Self taught. Learned from the musicians I’ve listened to. Like Quentin Tarantino said, “I didn’t go to film school, I went to films.” & early on, the occasional live video to see what their hands were doing definitely helped. I wanted to be exact.

If they were playing an A note or chord, I wanted to be sure if it was an open-A string or the low E string on the fifth fret. I wanted to know. Obviously now you can tell those sort of things by knowing tones.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Ryan – I would teach them that pure creativity is far more valuable than anything standard & “by the book”. But at the same time, like sports, the fundamentals should always be there.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Ryan – I like the note before the note. I want everything to sound pretty. Even the ugly chords. They just need to be properly put in the right place.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Ryan – Love 'em.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Ryan – I never adjust the tone knob, but I adjust the pickup switch all the time.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Ryan – In relation to the song that's being played, the rhythm player is obviously guiding the song along the right path. It's the setting & the plot. The lead guitarist should hopefully add a dropped-in nuance & texture that kind of correlates to the mood of the song. The right drop-in at the right time should enhance the listener's attitude of whatever he or she is feeling at that moment of the song. That moment should be like knowing the point of view of the character. So I guess the lead can be like the theme, but also the dialogue. And a huge guitar solo would therefore be the climax.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Ryan – I guess so. I ignore Robert Plant.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Ryan – Hard to say, or even pick one. If George Harrison used a specific guitar for every solo from 66-69, then I would want that. I'm sure Kevin Shields has a thousand Jazzmasters. Billy Corgan's Reverend guitar from his *Future Embrace* album is

interesting to me. Unbelievably creative guitar work on that album.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Ryan – I would definitely give the nod to Dave Longstreth of Dirty Projectors. Extremely innovative to me & very melodically unorthodox. All of his albums, especially his first one, *The Graceful-Fallen Mango*. His body of work is amazing. His composition of “Two Doves” on *Bitte Orca* is beautiful, & his guitar on “I Will Truck” from *The Getty Address* is maniacal. It’s like an inverted Hendrix-esque progression.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Ryan – I have 3 main websites that I listed above where mostly everything can be downloaded. I’ve had 2 tapes released so far with I Had An Accident Records, possibly a 7” vinyl split on Hand Rolled Gold, & a split tape called *In the Sawdust Lobby* on a Norwegian label called Koppklyys with my friend who makes great music under the name Heirloom. So my best guitar work, um, I’m not too sure. Maybe a song called “Twelve Month Jury Zodiac”, but it could also be either “Someone Like You”, or “Between” or an eventual song called “Telewisher.”

Many new songs to come though! Thank you very much for the interview. Take care.

Shawn Steven of The Hague

June 2012

Name: Shawn Steven

Bands: The Hague

Websites: www.facebook.com/thehague

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Shawn – It was a short scale nylon guitar my dad bought for me when I was about six years old & neither my dad or I have any idea what happened to it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Shawn – I run a custom built Old Town Music telecaster with Loller pickups through a Boss tuner, TC Electronic Nova Delay, Electro-Harmonix LPB-1 line boost, Holy Grail reverb, Voodoo Labs SparkleDrive, through a 65 Reissue Twin Reverb.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Shawn – Everything has its place at the end of the day but I guess the most emotional attached I am to any of my equipment would be my guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Shawn – The '65 Reissue Twin Reverb is great for me because it is extremely simple & runs at just enough wattage that I can drive the tubes just slightly enough with my line boost to get kind of warmer overdriven tones, not to mention the Fender spring reverb tank.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Shawn – My main guitar is a custom Tele that I bought from a great music shop in Portland by the name of Old Town Music. It has a bird's eye maple neck, rosewood fretboard, maple body, Lollers version of the high output Fender Texas Specials.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Shawn – It would probably be a Fender Toronado shape with two lipstick pickups with a humbucker in the bridge position.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Shawn – 3.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Shawn – At home in hardcases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Shawn – An amp inside!

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Shawn – High quality electronics & good cuts of wood with no name on the headstock.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Shawn – If it feels good to play I believe it's justifiable to pay somewhere between \$200 & \$2,000.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Shawn – I usually switch out wiring, pickups, tuning pegs, that sort of thing.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Shawn – I'm usually sold on the first five minutes with guitars, I buy guitar pedals with almost no knowledge, & amps take months.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Shawn – Not so much.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Shawn – In the studio I like to experiment, but live it's comforting to have a solid idea of what I'm going to sound like at least most of the time.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Shawn – Vintage Gibson ES-335 in Walnut.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Shawn – I believe it should have an awkward

feeling neck & bad action, builds character ya know?

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Shawn – My Old Town guitar is the nicest thing I've ever owned, I should have never bought that Mexi-tele that I had to sell in Denver for gasoline....

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Shawn – I like Fender body shapes a lot. I've never owned a Jackson.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Shawn – The 2nd change in Bill Evans "Autumn Leaves."

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Shawn – 6-7? Didn't take it seriously until 12-13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Shawn – Still working on that one. Ha-ha.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Shawn – It was always around since a lot of my family played music, so I just naturally gravitated towards it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Shawn – Not so much, my vote would be piano or drums.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Shawn – Both depending on the night.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Shawn – Lindsey Buckingham, pop punk in general, Yes, hardcore music in 2004.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Shawn – It occurs naturally for me, but I can never figure out her name....

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Shawn – Scales, jazz songs, drunkenly playing southern rock riffs. Ha-ha.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Shawn – About 15 hours a week. I wish I could play as much as I work though.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Shawn – Jim Dunlop vinyl .86.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Shawn – D'Addario 11s.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Shawn – Once a month.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Shawn – Knock on wood, very very rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Shawn – My fretting hand because I do a lot of tapping & hammer-ons.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Shawn – I like standard for the challenge, DADGAD for the drone notes, Drop D for up-tempo rock songs, Tennessee tuning for studio overdubs.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Shawn – Tablature & my un-educated psychobabble my bandmates have to endure during rehearsal/songwriting.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Shawn – Having my thumb in front of the fretboard instead of behind.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Shawn – Fundamentally I would say piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Shawn – Melodic Swedish metal style!

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Shawn – Consistent arpeggio.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Shawn – Bending strings & using the volume knob to impersonate a pedal steel.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Shawn – I capo a lot to hit different parts of my vocal range.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Shawn – THE BLUES.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Shawn – Never.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Shawn – Learn what you want to learn first, then focus on fundamentals.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Shawn – Quick switching between picking & using a pick while tapping.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Shawn – If you know how to use them they can be very cool.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Shawn – Every other song a few times.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Shawn – A good lead player can keep rhythm on his own & a rhythm player can compensate for the absence of leads.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Shawn – No. Guitar is just one piece of the puzzle.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Shawn – Elliott Smith's Telecaster because it possesses secret musical powers.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Shawn – The guitarist from Tera Melos. He shreds guitar while tap dancing on 50 pedals & singing.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Shawn – The song we wrote called “Birthday Suite.”

QRD – Anything else?

Shawn – Rock on brah! Thanks for the read.

Sophia Johnson of the Toy Hearts

June 2012

Name: Sophia Johnson

Bands: The Toy Hearts

Websites: www.thetoyhearts.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Sophia – A Hohner half-size nylon string classical that my dad got for me when I was 7. I think it got passed on to my cousin Albie when I'd outgrown it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Sophia – I keep things pretty simple when I play electric guitar, I just go straight from the guitar into a Peterson Stomp strobe tuner, then Durham Electronics Sex Drive pedal which gives a clean boost for when I switch from rhythm to lead.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Sophia – For me it's definitely my guitar, which is a 1958 Gibson ES125 – the other stuff is really just “gear” to me – I think you need to be happy with

the guitar you are playing before you worry about the amp & effects.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Sophia – I just acquired a vintage Gibson Skylark amp from the late 50s, which I am very excited about. I'm currently having it reconditioned & made road worthy, I love the sound of those small vintage amps that you can turn up to get natural valve distortion. I don't need a big amp as we try & keep our on stage sound not too loud. In the meantime, while the Skylark is being fixed up I am using my dad's spare amp which is a Peavey Delta Blues which I'm actually really enjoying using.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Sophia – I actually use 3 guitars on stage. I play a Martin D28CW for the bluegrass stuff, it is based on the guitar Tony Rice now owns which belonged to Clarence White, it has an extra big sound hole & forward shifted bracing so it has a really good bass end & is great for flat picking. Then I use a Gitane D500 for swing stuff in the acoustic set, it's basically a copy of the Grande Bouche Maccaferri guitars Django & his band used. I had John le Voi who builds gypsy jazz guitars, make me a new bridge & set my Gitane up – & although this is by

far the cheapest of my guitars, I think it has a really great tone. Finally I use my vintage Gibson ES125 for our “electric” set. Although it is my newest guitar, it is actually from 1958 & has just one P90 pick up on the neck – I absolutely love the sound.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Sophia – This is a really hard question because I use my 3 guitars for different purposes. I’d love to get a big archtop made, a D28 style flat top, & a gypsy jazz guitar as well!

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Sophia – Because I love the sound of my P90 through a vintage amp, I only really use one pedal just for a boost for lead work – that’s all I need live, so I guess that’s all my signature pedal would need to be!

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Sophia – I currently have six.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Sophia – I try & get them out of their cases & on

stands in my music room. I like to have them out as it encourages me to play them all!

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Sophia – I have no problem at all with Carlton Cases – I think they are fantastic. Although heavy, they offer heavy-duty protection & they are so well made they offer great peace of mind when traveling. So far mine have been incredibly hard wearing.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Sophia – It really depends on what style you play & what sound you want to get – I often find cheap guitars have a pretty thin bass end, but then I'm looking for bass end because I'm a flatpicker.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Sophia – Again I really think it depends on what you're looking for & how "good" of a guitar you want. I do think that you can get a lot better made guitars cheaper than you used to – I believe there is actually a pretty good selection at entry level.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Sophia – I have upgraded & some of my guitars in small ways, new bridges, saddles, nuts & tuning pegs & have had re-frets & the frets dressed. I also have a quite unorthodox sticker of Elvis on the headstock of my Martin!

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Sophia – I don't think I ever done that much research on anything & I guess I can be quite impulsive. I do get advice from other musicians though.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Sophia – Not really.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Sophia – On stage I don't really use my tone control on the guitar or amp, I just set it to a tone & volume I like in the soundcheck & don't mess with it during the set.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Sophia – I'd like a Collings Winfield model, the Gibson Super 400 is a pretty special guitar, I also like Gretsches. I have heard very good things about Little Walter Amps – I'd really like one of those.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Sophia – Cheap acoustic guitars tend to lack bass end & cheap classical guitars can sometimes have a really high action, I think both of these should be avoided!

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Sophia – I ordered my Martin from the states without even playing it, which was a pretty risky thing to do. Then, on the day it arrived I was driving home & was involved in an accident, my car got written off. I was convinced the whole thing was jinxed, but it actually turned out fine. I love the guitar & wouldn't change it. I probably wouldn't buy another guitar that way though!

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Sophia – I love the classic brands like Martin, Gibson, Fender, Gretsch, & Guild as I'm into vintage guitars & amps. I really like Texas Company Collings guitars, I got a tour of their factory in Austin & it was fascinating. I'm generally not a big fan of Taylors or Takemines I'm afraid, not enough bass end for me!

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Sophia – Out of habit on an acoustic guitar, usually a little flat pick run followed by a G run & G chord -- bluegrass style! On an electric I recently seem to be playing the chord sequence to “When the Bloom is on the Sage” in Eb.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Sophia – I was about 7 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Sophia – I'm still working on that!

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Sophia – I don't really know – especially as it is so unusual to have female lead guitarists. My dad is a guitarist, & plays banjo, dobro, & steel, so the house was always full of guitar type instruments.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Sophia – Why not? A basic understanding of the piano keyboard is also useful.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Sophia – Definitely my ally!

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Sophia – Tony Rice, Clarence White, Django Reinhardt, Whit Smith.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Sophia – One of my guitars, my Martin has some

how ended up being named “Clarence” because it’s the Clarence White model. Otherwise I don’t really give them names. I do love them in a way I don’t think I love any other physical object though.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Sophia – Unbelievably I snapped the head of my classical guitar by sitting on it, I had been changing the sheets on my bed & somehow I put my quilt on top of my guitar & forgot & sat on it – proof I shouldn’t even attempt housework. Also, I let my Martin get way too dry after a tour of Germany & some very cold recording sessions in Nashville. A fairly large crack opened up in the front – since then I have been much more careful about humidifying my guitar.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Sophia – I always like to learn new flatpicking tunes & I have quite a few books I use to do that with as well as the music in Flatpick Guitar magazine. Recently I have been using Whit Smith’s DVD. I like instructional DVDs & find them really useful.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Sophia – It really depends on my gigging schedule, so I'd find it hard to give a number of hours, but I always wish I could do more practice.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Sophia – Bluechip TD60 for bluegrass TD50 on electric -- you need a good solid pick for flatpicking & Bluechips are brilliant they hardly ever wear down unlike tortoise shell. Then I use a 3.5mm Wegen pick for Django style playing -- it's a very chunky pick & I like the tone & the authenticity of the sound it gives.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Sophia – I have 13s on the Martin because I like to be able to “dig in” & because the heavy strings suit bluegrass music. I use 12s on the Gibson because I am used to pretty heavy strings. Finally, I have 11s on the Gitane, that seems to be the heaviest gauge that Sararez Argentines manufacture.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Sophia – As often as I can afford to -- I really notice

them going off on the Martin first, I don't seem to get more than few gigs from them -- plus I love having brand new strings!

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Sophia – I seem to go through phases & I am in a non string-breaking phase at the moment. A while ago I seemed to be breaking more, but I think I was being a bit heavy handed & have actively tried to be less so. I really don't get on with coated strings & I always seem break them.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Sophia – I started on classical guitar, so I am pretty comfortable using my fingers, but quite early on I had to learn to use a pick to play bluegrass. I always use a pick on stage now I think I have a pretty good strumming hand. As far as left hand technique is concerned, I am always trying to improve my knowledge of the fret-board, scale patterns, & chord shapes. I guess I think that is where the real magic happens.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Sophia – I get my guitars set up by techs – I'm not brave enough to start messing with them myself!

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Sophia – I only ever use standard tuning or Drop D on one number in the set. It's already a challenge to master the fret-board in standard tuning without making things more complicated!

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Sophia – I usually tab out my own ideas. I also use standard notation, but I am not as good at writing out rhythms in standard notation.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Sophia – I like having my guitar up fairly high, so it is right over my heart, I have my straps pretty short. I think it is as a result of my classical guitar lessons when I was younger.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Sophia – I tense my shoulders & raise them slightly, especially when I take a solo – but I do that when I am not playing the guitar as well, so I guess its more of a life habit I need to change!

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Sophia – I think playing other instruments can improve your general musical ability, I'm not really sure any other instrument could specifically improve someone's guitar playing though.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Sophia – Flamenco guitar – I realised pretty quickly after taking a few lessons that I would need to dedicate myself solely & completely to it if I wanted to master it & I wasn't prepared to give up bluegrass & jazz.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Sophia – I want to be able to be in the moment completely while I'm improvising, to be able to translate my ideas instantly into my fingers, I think I'll always be working on that.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Sophia – I’m not sure if they count as “tricks” as such, I just learned some great B.B. King & Charlie Christian licks!

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Sophia – My folding Cooperstand! It’s a revolution, it fits inside the head of my guitar case, so no more guitar stands left at gigs! I also use a McKinney/Elliott push button capo, which is definitely the best capo I have found.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Sophia – Flamenco Alzapur thumb triplets & proper Rasgueado & Flamenco guitar strumming.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Sophia – I had lessons from 3 classical guitar teachers in Birmingham - Leo turner, Francis Griffin, Bryan Lester. My dad has also taught me a lot.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Sophia – I really don't know? I don't know that much about other people's teaching methods. I have done a lot of group teaching with junior school kids; at one point, groups of up to 30 children - that was challenging.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Sophia – Listen to a lot of bluegrass, western swing, & gypsy jazz I guess!

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Sophia – I can play a classical guitar real tremolo study like Receurdos de Alhambra! I do have a telecaster with a Bigsby, but I haven't really used it on stage much. I'm not sure what you mean by tremolo systems!

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Sophia – Generally once when I pick up my guitar, then I leave it – I don't really touch it on stage.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Sophia – The obvious difference is that a rhythm guitarist will play the chords & functions as a more supportive role, where as the lead guitarist will be more at the forefront of the sound, plays the melody & takes solos. I do think that really good rhythm guitar & knowledge of chords is an underrated skill. I'm very much enjoying learning jazz chord sequences at the moment.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Sophia – No, I can't really. I am a songwriter & I listen for songs & arrangements first. It would make me question the judgment of a good guitarist working with a not so good band. I did see a band recently where I liked all of them except the guitarist, but then that made me wonder what the rest of the band were thinking having him in, when to me he appeared to be quite wrong for the group.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Sophia – It has got to be “The Bone” which belongs to Tony Rice, formerly owned by Clarence White.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Sophia – Jim Campilongo, I really like his work with The Little Willies. I think he has quite a distinctive style & that he brings a fresh & modern approach to older material without straying too far from the original.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Sophia – The Toy Hearts' albums *Femme Fatale* & *Whiskey*.

QRD – Anything else?

Sophia – Phew, no I'm exhausted! The Toy Hearts new album *Whiskey* is out on June 24th on Woodville Music.

Mick Barr of Orthrelm, Krallice, & Ocrilim
June 2012

Name: Mick Barr

Bands: Orthrelm, Krallice, Ocrilim, I Don't Hear
Nothin But the Blues, MNDLSBLSTNG,
Barr/Shea/Dahl, Mossenek, Oldest

Websites: ocrilim.blogspot.com,
ocrilim.bandcamp.com, mickbarr.info

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Mick – My first guitar was a no-name black electric guitar that my parents bought off a kid in the neighborhood. I don't remember what exactly happened to it, but I'm pretty sure I destroyed it in some way.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Mick – For Orthrelm, improv, & solo shows my Gibson SG into a Metalzone pedal into whatever amp or PA system happens to be around. For Krallice my Gibson SG into a Peavey 5150.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Mick – Guitar. Sound will always be secondary.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Mick – The only amp I own is the Peavey 5150, which I use exclusively for Krallice. Reason being it sounds decent while playing chords with distortion.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Mick – Gibson SG Standard, probably from 1993. Nothing special feature wise, just the guitar I’ve played the most & feel the most comfortable with. The frets are nice & worn down, the action is nice & high. I’ve spent more time with it than anything else in the world.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Mick – I’ve always wanted a on E-string guitar with a whammy bar. Like a Vietnamese dan bau.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Mick – 2 of the same guitar. Gibson SG standard, one from 1993, one from 2008. The 2008 one hasn’t

yet earned my respect, & is just a backup for travel & for different tunings.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Mick – At home. Both are in use regularly.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Mick – I wish hardcases had straps for carrying.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Mick – Ability to reach the higher frets with ease. & how loud it is when unamplified.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Mick – Just stuck with what I got from the beginning. Once you get used to the limitations of an instrument, it can help guide you.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Mick – I don't usually buy things.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Mick – Almost never.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Mick – I don't understand how to make a good tone. I prefer to let my bandmate & expert producer Colin Marston find the suitable tone for me.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Mick – I would love to own a Persian tar.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Mick – Working tuning pegs.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Mick – My second Gibson SG in 2008. I'm still getting used to it, but I kind of wish I got something else.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Mick – The G string.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Mick – 13 years.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Mick – Still working on it....

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Mick – It's the instrument I learned how to write music on. I also appreciate its portability, versatility, & range.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Mick – Are we talking western culture? Music inclination should remain natural. So if getting a guitar first is the natural process, then by all means. I'm glad I didn't start out playing clarinet. Though I

would think that most people's first instrument is a drum of some sort. Or just banging on the table.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Mick – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Mick – Mike from 1.6 band, Tony Joy from Universal Order of Armageddon, Piggy from Voivod, the Hoffman brothers from Deicide, Terrance Hobbs from Suffocation.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Mick – Totally acceptable form of behavior. I don't have a name for my guitar, but Colin calls it "Old Yellar".

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Mick – I threw it on a half-pipe skate ramp & slid it up over the coping & right over the edge. It caught a nice bit of air. The knobs got pushed in. It never worked again.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Mick – Stretches & playing.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Mick – Jim Dunlop .88 gauge grey. The right amount of flexibility. & I need that grip it has. Most picks are smooth & slip after 10 minutes of straight tremolo picking.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Mick – 12-52. Because they don't break as much as 11-50.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Mick – Only when I break a string will I change it. Or sometimes before a recording.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Mick – Once every few months.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Mick – I try to never set it up. I don't like changing anything on my guitar. Besides, being properly intonated is for the weak.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Mick – Standard mostly. Just started working with CGDAEE & digging it.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Mick – Tablature & recordings.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Mick – Maybe about a foot from my chin... not completely sure. High-ish, but not ridiculous.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Mick – Flamenco.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Mick – Playing for 24 hours straight. Or playing guitar underwater.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Mick – I had lessons when I was 13-14. I learned how to play a lot of Danzig songs. & how to do pick squeals.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Mick – I would teach them to avoid learning music theory.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Mick – One should never try to emulate another's style.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Mick – Whammy bars are fun as hell. But I'm glad I don't have to deal with those systems. Seem like a pain.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Mick – Enough to not want to have it removed.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Mick – Lead guitarists have more of an ego.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Mick – Sure, might not be my favorite band. But if the guitar player has an original style, I'm usually intrigued. But that goes for original musicians on any instrument.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Mick – One of Cliff Burton's Rickenbackers. Because I need a bass & Cliff is the reason I started playing music.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Mick – Diego Araujo from Infested Blood, Horror Illogium from Portal, Hasjarl from Deathspell

Omega, Vindsval from Blut Aus Nord, & Remish.
RIP Steeve Hurdle, one of the best ever!

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Mick – In their own imagination.

QRD – Anything else?

Mick – Guitar culture generally disgusts me. Avoid learning too much. In the words of my friend Brian Degraw, play guitar like you are banging two rocks together.

Joshua Heinrich of fornever
June 2012

Name: Joshua Heinrich

Bands: fornever, Black Wedding, premature burial,
Orangabelle 5, Colder than Yesterday, Entreat,
SDL, She Cries Alone

Websites: autumnalrelease.com,
autumnalrelease.com/fornever,
autumnalrelease.com/blackwedding,
autumnalrelease.com/prematureburial

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Joshua – A blue Hondo Strat. I still have it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Joshua – These days, it's typically my Fender Strat through an RP355 amp modeling effects unit & then output direct through USB or output to mixer/computer. In the past, it's ranged from guitar (again, my Fender Strat being a go-to) through an array of separate pedals (many of them DOD/Digitech) & Fender amps to using other amp modeling processors like the RP100 & outputting direct.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Joshua – Probably equal parts guitar & effects. The guitar is obviously where the actual musical creation happens, but the tone & sound is largely created & colored by effects.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Joshua – Probably my Fender Deluxe 112 Plus gets the most use & was my main amp for years - decent sound/volume - but most of the time these days, I go direct with amp modeling.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Joshua – My black Fender Strat. I love the tone, & I sort of fell in love with it back when I saw the Edge playing it live. It was sort of the guitar I always wanted & has remained my main guitar since.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Joshua – Probably black or purple with some sort of artistic full-body/neck design (subtle enough color-

wise that it's not distracting or bothersome while trying to play). Or maybe some type of sepia design similar to the artwork for the new album I'm working on. As for features, I'd probably stick to basics. 3 pickup positions & tone/volume control. If I did go further than that, I might add midi-out for guitar synth capabilities & maybe a knob for some type of modulation/envelope filter knob to color the tone & thickness of the signal in real time (effecting both the audio output from the pickups as well as acting as a mod wheel for the midi pickup).

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Joshua – It would probably be easy to use/program, have a versatile variety of adjustable effects & an easy to setup chain, amp modeling, USB out, & a variety of useable reverb/delay/chorus-effect lead/rhythm patches, ambient/shoegazer patches, & wah & distorted lead patches as opposed to the gimmicky/cheesy ones that typically come by default.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Joshua – 4 guitars, 1 bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Joshua – Honestly, I have a block of all sorts of instruments taking up one corner of my room (with another corner having a few keyboards & electronic drum pads set up). The guitars are in the first corner leaning against each other (& against amps & a bookcase) in a variety of hard/soft cases & even the original shipping boxes in 2 cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Joshua – I'm not that picky. Pretty happy with my hard cases & soft cases. If it was still the 90s, I might say cassette holders based on the number of homemade demo tapes still rattling around the bottom of the hard case my first guitar is in. Overall, though, I think the padding, pockets, & compartments are all pretty adequate.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Joshua – Playability, tone, ease & quality of setup, weight/balance/feel, visuals (whether that's design or simply guitar/fretboard color).

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Joshua – I’m probably not the one to ask since I actually have a bit of a “it’s not the equipment, but what you can do with it” streak & a tendency to MacGyver things together, but I’d say that there are cheaper guitars that are as good as guitars that cost \$1000 or \$2000 if you like the tone & use them to your advantage. I mean, I’ve seen an Epiphone Les Paul that plays/sounds as good as an actual Gibson (not all of them do, though... cheaper typically meaning less standardized quality control & all). I think “good” is subjective.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Joshua – I’m not much of a tech-head, so I’m not really one to change out pickups or anything. For the most part, I stick with stock options.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Joshua – I can get a bit obsessive about reading reviews & checking out info before shelling out the money on equipment, especially considering the price of a lot of audio equipment & instruments. I usually burn myself out before deciding on a purchase... he-he.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Joshua – Not really. I like to have a standard go-to setup that I'm comfortable with & usually upgrade every so often (keeping up with the benefits of modern tech & all), but not too frequently.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Joshua – I have a variety of tones for different styles, but I usually fiddle around & come up with patches that I want or that fit the sound I'm going for (everything from delay/chorus-accented lead patches to wah lead patches to washed out orchestral strings-esque ambient patches), save them, & pretty much lock into that set of patches for an album. I like being able to dial in what I want & record with losing my motivation/inspiration while fiddling around with knobs & setup for 15 minutes first.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Joshua – I'd like a Les Paul. Maybe a few more effects pedals, but I'm fairly happy with my setup at the moment & have been spending more on

mic/preamp equipment & have been looking into new synths more lately.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Joshua – I think most first guitars usually have the basic features I'd recommend. It's more of an issue of quality & playability with some of the cheaper student guitars that might make them less desirable.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Joshua – The best might be my Digitech RP series pedals, especially the RP355 with its USB recording setup & great effect & amp modeling. Those pedals really opened up the sounds available to me. The worst might be my DOD grunge pedal. Really didn't find much use for that in my setup with its barely controllable over-the-top volume & shredding distortion.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Joshua – I'm a fan of Fender given my long-time affinity for Strats as well as some of their other guitars & basses & amps. For effects, I've really

been a Digitech fan for a while, from some of my early standalone pedals like a great 80s delay/looping pedal that was the heart of my effects setup in the mid-late 90s to the RP series adding in amp modeling & a nice array of multi-effects (& now, with the RP355, USB recording with zero latency monitoring).

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Joshua – Usually a minor blues scale or a few chords.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Joshua – Maybe around 16.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Joshua – I’m not really sure. I know I was still expanding my horizons & evolving my sound & improving my skills on my earlier albums. I mean, I’m still evolving my sound.... But there’s some point I hit where things sort of plateaued... where I just became comfortable with what I was doing & could just pick up a guitar & do my thing... & be at the same level even if I hadn’t played in a month.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Joshua – I'm not really sure it does. I'm a multi-instrumentalist, & I might put guitar & synth at an equal level. In fact, the new fornever album is largely electronic & almost completely void of guitar. However, I am recognized for my playing & writing style on guitar & the various sounds I've come up with & my guitar work is a signature element of a lot of the work I've done.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Joshua – Honestly, I don't think it matters one way or the other. I, myself, started out playing some piano by ear when I was young, & it wasn't until high school that I took up the guitar & began lessons. I play a variety of instruments & incorporate them into my music, & I sometimes write on guitar, sometimes on keyboard. Sometimes on other things. I think people should just follow their inspiration.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Joshua – I'd say ally. Maybe an extension of me &

a tool for creation. As a multi-instrumentalist, I think I see most of my instruments that way rather than something I'm fighting. In fact, sometimes the limitations of a particular instrument or piece of equipment can lead to unique sounds & results you might not have thought of otherwise.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Joshua – Probably The Edge, Robert Smith & Porl Thompson of The Cure, Bernard Sumner, PJ Harvey, maybe Reg Smithies (of The Chameleons), & Robin Guthrie (of Cocteau Twins).

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Joshua – Pretty silly. But, then again, who's to argue with B.B. King?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Joshua – I'm usually careful with my guitars aside from a few dings in the head/neck from occasionally bumping into something while wearing it or moving around a tight space during recording... or the occasional loose connection.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Joshua – Not much. Rock Band? Ha-ha. I actually kind of suck at Rock Band guitar, though. I can play real guitar, but ask me to hold down two buttons at the same time & I fall apart. I'm much better at Rock Band drums, pro keys, & vocals... but, obviously, those are closer to (or the same as) playing the actual instruments.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Joshua – It really varies on what I'm doing & working on. Sometimes I'll be playing for hours daily, other times I'll go for a month or more without playing at all. I mean, like I said, I'm working on an electronic album at the moment & only one track has guitar. So I've been spending a ton of time in the studio writing & recording, but any guitar playing I've been doing has just been bits here & there outside of that. Having played guitar for half my life, it's not one of those things where I feel I have to get in so many hours a week. I usually play when I'm writing, recording, or performing something on guitar.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Joshua – Usually a Gibson medium. Seems to be the most comfortable for me. Not too flexible, but not hard enough to fly out of my fingers due to resistance.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Joshua – Usually 9s or 10s... best playability to tone ratio, I suppose.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Joshua – Honestly, hardly ever. I haven't changed my strings in a while. New strings always sound to bright to me. & drive me nuts with how quickly they go out of tune.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Joshua – It's sort of bizarre, but I haven't broken a string in literally years, even using worn strings & doing a lot of bends. I used to break more when I was starting out, but these days, the problem's pretty much non-existent, whether it's the strings I'm using or just my playing style.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Joshua – My fretting hand, but I think that's actually been a positive influence on my style, leading me to further lean towards a rhythm/lead combo style with an emphasis on two-string melodies & rhythmic phrases & fretting hand embellishments like hammer-ons & pull-offs.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Joshua – I guess I've done all three, but I tend to leave it once set up & not touch it as long as I'm not having any issues with string buzzing or things of that nature. I'm more of a "pick up & play" kind of guy. I'm also not much of a guitar tech, myself, & admittedly don't always know what I'm doing...so I tend towards the "if it's not broken, don't fix it" side of the spectrum.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Joshua – Pretty much standard & Drop D if I need to go lower. I guess I'm just most comfortable with standard tuning & don't really have much of a need for alternate tunings. Some of my effects patches, however, involve pitch shifting for tone reasons... especially some of the patches I used on last year's ((*echo*)) album.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Joshua – I usually use tablature for jotting it down. I did take lessons & some music theory in college, but I'm still not that proficient when it comes to sheet music & it's a lot faster to jot down tablature in combination with a reference/demo recording for tempo/timing. I actually used to write down all of my songs using tablature. These days, though, I sometimes write in the studio as I record & don't jot it down in written form at all. I'll come up with a part, record it, then move on. Really makes it a pain when I actually have to play things & go back to the multi-tracks to learn the parts, but that's just how I roll... ha-ha.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Joshua – Usually a bit high... more Robert Smithesque. I'm definitely not one of those "bend over & play at your knees" types, especially being tall. I'm actually most comfortable hand/wrist position-wise playing sitting down in the studio, so I usually prefer my guitar up a bit higher than some other guitarists when standing.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Joshua – Maybe improper strumming techniques. But, hey, it's my style, & it is what it is.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Joshua – It's a hard call. Obviously, other string instruments like violin might help with finger dexterity, etc. For me, though, I'd say guitar & synth go hand in hand, especially when it comes to writing.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Joshua – It might be cool to be able to do the whole fast shredding thing, but I've never really had much of a need for that from a songwriting/functional standpoint, so I don't necessarily miss it. I've always been a bit more of a slower & more rhythmic/melodic player.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Joshua – I'm not sure, really. I may have set goals

for myself when I was taking lessons or whatever, but I'm not sure I ever really set many specific goals for my playing outside of that other than being able to write & play my songs.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Joshua – I honestly have no idea. I've been playing so long that the last guitar trick I learned would probably be more of a recording/effects trick than an actual playing trick.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Joshua – I don't use too many gadgets... usually just stick to a pick... so I'd probably say my slide is my favorite, & the most used, of my gadgets.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Joshua – Maybe fingerpicking. I mean, I'm proficient enough to use it for arpeggios or simple plucked chords, but I've never really mastered the more complex techniques & layering some other guitarists use.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Joshua – I took about a year of guitar lessons & then, later, some music theory in college (I have a BA in computer science with an external concentration in music). It really cemented some of the basics & techniques & let me build on them & I do use a few scales a lot when soloing. However, I've always shied away from too much technicality in music, preferring to go by feel & melody rather than things like what chord is “technically” supposed to follow the previous one or consciously sticking to a set of notes. Writing & playing has always been more of an innate, emotional thing than a cerebral thing for me. I found myself taking & practicing the techniques from my lessons as sort of a foundation, but I began writing my own stuff within a month of starting lessons & also found myself inclined to do my own thing & follow my own style & natural tendencies.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Joshua – Maybe that playing what you feel & drawing from emotion is as important as the fundamentals & theory if not more so. There have been plenty of guitarists that weren't technically good players... some who could barely play at all... but their style & emotion & songwriting tapped into

something deeper that transcended technicality. I suppose I've always been of the opinion that 3 notes used creatively or with emotion can portray more than a huge, technically complex piece.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Joshua – Hmm... probably throw some reverb, delay, & chorus into the mix & go for a lot of rhythmic-yet-melodic 2-string interplay.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Joshua – They come in handy for some things & I used them more in the past. These days, I hardly ever even screw in my tremolo arm & just stick to bends.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Joshua – Hardly ever. Usually find settings I like & stick to them. Unless the knobs get bumped or fiddled with.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Joshua – There's not always a distinction, actually. I mean, a lot of my guitar is sort of lead melodic guitar but also provides the main rhythmic

backbone for a song (in the same vein as... say... Reg Smithies from The Chameleons or The Edge from U2... or even Johnny Marr's work with The Smiths). Some bands have a more prominent distinction... one guitarist simply playing chords & providing a framework, the other playing lead melodies or solos & coloring that framework.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Joshua – Sometimes I can be drawn in by one aspect of a band's sound. More often, though, it's about the actual songs & writing & overall sound. A crappy song with someone pulling off amazing guitar solos overtop of everything is still a crappy song. However, a good song with downplayed, reserved guitar work is still a good song. For that matter, a good song can sometimes shine through despite so-so performances or lo-fi production.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Joshua – This is going to sound a bit weird, but I actually like new factory guitars over used, played guitars... ha-ha. I've never been one for vintage equipment. Although, if we're talking signature models, maybe Porl Thompson's signature Schecter just for the design.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Joshua – That's a tough question. I mean, I wouldn't really say any one guitar player is the most innovative. A lot of guitar players have their own styles that are innovative & interesting in their own ways, whether it be some sort of out-there processed noise or subtle dynamics or melodic phrases. It's maybe a bit of a cop out to not really answer the question, but I listen to a lot of different styles & genres & trying to pick which guitarist is the most innovative is sort of like choosing between apples & oranges a lot of the time.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Joshua – Probably some of the fornever albums from the last 4 years... probably *((echo))*, *smile*, & *if you don't like the world, change it*. Maybe a few of the more guitar-oriented tracks on the Black Wedding album from last year, too.

Jim Walker of Tim and Jim & JVA
June 2012

Name: Jim Walker

Bands: Tim & Jim, JVA

Websites: www.jvamusic.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jim – 12 years old. Epiphone Les Paul. I often wonder what happened to that guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jim – Norman acoustic guitar (just a beater). I don't want to take a really good guitar out on a gig. I have a 1965 Hofner acoustic at home for recording. The Norman's just something I can pound on. I have a BOSS pedal board that contains; BOSS Tuner, BOSS reverb, BOSS delay, BOSS octave divider, BOSS tremolo. That gets plugged right into our Peavey PA head.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jim – Guitar. The Norman has a lot of bottom end. The other guy I play with is Tim Ellis. He plays

much more of the top end & color notes. I just brace myself to the guitar & hold down the rhythm, steady as I can.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jim – I rarely play electric live, but in the studio I use a Fender Deluxe reverb I bought in 1982.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jim – See above. In the studio I have a Fender Telecaster from 1982 (bought it with the amp!). It’s always had an intonation problem that no one seems to be able to fix. So I also have a Stratocaster for other things.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jim – I don’t think about things like that. 😊

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jim – 5.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jim – In a safe, dry place.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jim – I think they work great.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jim – Bottom end that's not woofy, just warm & feels good. I rarely play above the 5th fret, so my concentration is on the low notes. I should have been a bass player, but the guitar feels better to me.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jim – They should be cheap enough so every kid in the world can afford one. Everybody should be able to make some music.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jim – I have certain pickups I like for acoustic guitars. Every one of my guitars eventually needs a fret job because I beat them unmerciful.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jim – Every guitar I own has been an impulse buy. I'm also the guy that buys Chapstick & Sharpies while standing in line at the market.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jim – Rarely. If it ain't broke....

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jim – I lock in to the sound with my front teeth & never let it go.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jim – A sunburst Les Paul like Jimmy Page had in *The Song Remains the Same*. A sea-foam green Fender Mustang like Elvis Costello's.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jim – Fingers, as often as possible.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jim – I bought an acoustic/electric bass for recording purposes that felt & sounded great at the store. I brought it home & found that the whole thing had terrible intonation. I put it in a dry, safe place & have never looked at it again. Just ate shit on that one.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jim – I'm not very brand loyal. If it feels & sounds good, there you go.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jim – G Major chord.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jim – 11 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jim – About 25. Been downhill ever since.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jim – I'm a songwriter first & foremost, way more so than a guitar player. The acoustic guitar fits my mood.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jim – I'm not sure how to answer that.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jim – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jim – David Gilmour, Mike Campbell, Jeff Baxter, Elliot Randall, Steve Howe.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jim – Whatever floats your boat, man.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jim – In my old electric band, my bass player & I used to do something we'd introduce as FRICTION. I'd turn on my distortion & the bass player & I would rub the necks of our guitars together, sawing away, making an ungodly racket. We thought it was funny. The audience thought it sucked.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jim – I play so many gigs I don't have time to practice. If I'm going to spend my time doing anything, it's memorizing lyrics.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jim – About 16-20 hours a week. I think that's enough.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jim – A Clayton 1.26mm. Because it's the thickest & largest pick I can find. Like I said, I pound on the guitar.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jim – Acoustic – D'Addario Jazz Medium. Electric -- Ernie Ball Super Slinkys.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jim – Before every gig.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jim – Once every couple of months.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jim – Strumming hand. I'm a rhythm guy.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jim – To a tech. I don't know anything about the guitar other than how to play it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jim – Standard tuning, because if I used other

tunings, I'd have to tune more, & I hate tuning. It's a good way to watch your life seep away.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jim – Used to be I carried a little mini cassette player back in the day. Now I use the voice memo app on my iPhone. Sounds great.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jim – Tit height.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jim – Playing a G Major chord every time I pickup a guitar.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jim – Piano. It's a whole different muscle set to use.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jim – Old jazz; Charlie Christian, Joe Pass, Barney Kessell. It's just not in me, but I love to listen.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jim – Playing above the 5th fret.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jim – That a pick rake sounds better when you rake UP the neck, but looks cooler when you rake DOWN the neck.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jim – Ebow, definitely.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jim – Ragtime blues like Rev. Gary Davis.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jim – I took one year of classical guitar, & one year of jazz guitar. I learned all the fundamentals of

music. I forget what they are now, but I'm sure it was very educational.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jim – How to play a song. That's what people want to learn. The fundamentals will come eventually, but to be able to play a song is so damn empowering when you start off. Being able to do that makes you want to learn more.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jim – Lock the guitar in place with your forearm & pick the low strings like a machine gun.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jim – Sure I'll take one.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jim – Endlessly.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jim – Girls, versus less girls.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jim – No. If it sucks there's no ignoring it.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jim – Frank Zappa's SG. Because Frank is my hero.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jim – Buckethead. Because he's a great guitar player, but he also has a bucket on his head. He's taken it to a new place, see?

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jim – I have 17 CDs out. You can hear samples of everything at my website; www.jvamusic.com

QRD – Anything else?

Jim – Always bring a book, there's always a line.

Jacob Peck of Symbolikas

June 2012

Name: Jacob Peck

Bands: Symbolikas, Andrew Weathers Ensemble,
Cosmic Mystery Band of Unknown

Websites: symbolikas.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jacob – My first guitar was a gift from my father for... I think it was Christmas. I was probably ten. I still play it... it's a Fender electric/acoustic. I really play the crap out of it. I have other guitars for more delicate playing. I buried it once & let the earth play it. There're photos of that somewhere on the web. The guitar continues to live & love.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jacob – Generally have a guitar with many random goodies, such as drum sticks, mallets, alligator clips, cloths, fuzzy paint brush things, pens, paper, chains, sticks... sticks are important... pedals... well, I don't use them too often, but when I do, I use a Boss Loop pedal & that awesome green delay one... the Line 6... & I have a Fender Vibrolux tube amp....

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jacob – I am the most important part of my rig... ha-ha-ha....

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jacob – My main amp is a Fender Vibrolux tube amp.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jacob – Ooo... different guitars for different days, moods, moments, & so on. Fender Strat used most often... then my Fender electric/acoustic, which I usually tune funky & bang on wildly... then my dandy dandy Taylor, which I play oh so very sweetly... & then...my Raemundo nylon string... it's been chilling in its case for quite some time....

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jacob – A guitar I envision would have drum skins built into the body... as well as plants growing out of the sound hole....

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jacob – My signature pedal is my foot tapping.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jacob – I believe I own 5 guitars....

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jacob – I put my guitars in places that they go... & keep them safe from extreme temperatures & direct light.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jacob – The purity of tone... the reality of its tone....

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jacob – A good guitar will cost what it is worth to the one purchasing it....

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jacob – I got noiseless pickups installed... that's about it....

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jacob – Not too thoroughly.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jacob – Nope.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jacob – It should feel good to hold....

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jacob – The guitarist needs the feature of being able to do dandy things with her or his fingers, palms, wrists, tendons, shoulders, & toes.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jacob – Tube amps. I enjoy their sound....

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jacob – A very mysterious something.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jacob – Probably 10.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jacob – I'm not there yet... doubt I ever will be... I am always learning.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jacob – Because I'm a rock-n-roll superstar.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jacob – I believe it would be beneficial for young ones to choose their first instrument. If they were exposed to the wild world of music in a more open way, we may have more trombonists & flute players on this planet.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jacob – My guitar is a magical means of meeting the Mystery.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jacob – Some big influences have been Tommy Emmanuel, Fred Frith, Lenny Breau, John Stowell, Trey Anastasio, Jimi Hendrix, Jerry Garcia, Keb Mo, & all those guitarists playing on the radio.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jacob – Ain't nothing what we call it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jacob – Setting goals... working on the same facet of the same thing for many weeks until whatever it is I am working on is fully integrated... practice is study.... The best way to practice is to work on the same idea or song or concept or exercise again & again & again & repeat & repeat slowly, softly,

consciously, courageously until the material is in your bones body blood & brain....

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jacob – I don't believe in hours. I play as I will & as it may.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jacob – I use picks made of polished agate because earth tones are groovy, plastic is moody, & the soft supple edges of a curved, polished stone sound softer, more supple, & more whole.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jacob – In the past few months I've been playing in a tuning of fifths... that is... C G C G CC.... It's great for raga singing & epic dronal explorations.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jacob – Piano, drums, flute, sticks & stones.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jacob – I like clipping alligator clips to the strings directly over the active pickup(s).

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jacob – Yes, I have taken guitar lessons. I learned some teachers are great & others aren't. The best teachers teach me how to teach myself while showing me some remarkable things along the way.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jacob – If you have a string & pluck it, it makes a sound.... If you divide the string in half & pluck it... it makes another sound that is the same sound.... Oh yeah, & there isn't a single instrument in the world that is totally in tune....

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jacob – They'd have to be who they are.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jacob – No.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jacob – I'm on the YouTube... & symbolikas.com

QRD – Anything else?

Jacob – Listen closer.

Francesco Candura of Boomerangs

January 2013

Name: Francesco Candura

Bands: Jennifer Gentle, Stop The Wheel, Rivulets,
Boomerangs

Websites: boomerangs.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Francesco – It was a classical guitar. I gave it to my young cousin & felt really good to make it live again.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Francesco – I like flat EQ. That's my secret. It has to sound good that way.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Francesco – Hands.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Francesco – I love Mark Bass. They're Italian.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Francesco – A quite modified Epiphone EL-00 named Jenny. I can't get tired of looking at it & it's been 5 years. It's the only object, let alone instrument, I feel that way about.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Francesco – It'd be just like Jenny, really. Except with a really good built-in amp system.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Francesco – I guess it'd be a huge fuzz with a lot of bass with a built-in DI.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Francesco – Not many, less than 10, for sure.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Francesco – All over the place.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Francesco – The ability to be used by people who ride on buses. You wouldn't believe how difficult it is.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Francesco – It has to fall into my lap & we have to fall in love instantly.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Francesco – I guess the 1000+ euro is a good margin.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Francesco – I ALWAYS fiddle with them, or better said, I let experts modify them the way I want.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Francesco – Not much. I'm impulsive.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Francesco – Yes, see above.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Francesco – I like having one big sound that's recognizable.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Francesco – They change all the time, but it's mostly good distortion. Those don't exist, it's a myth.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Francesco – Oh God, let the neck & fretboard not hurt your hands.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Francesco – I've gotten better! No bad purchases. I got an excellent dobro (Epiphone biscuit).

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Francesco – I don't like anything trebly or stringy.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Francesco – Ummm... no favorites.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Francesco – 9.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Francesco – 16 I guess, then it got worse & worse.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Francesco – I went up to my dad & claimed I was made to play guitar.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people,s first instrument as often as it is?

Francesco – Well no, we're missing on some amazing equipment. Oboe!

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Francesco – She's totally on my side.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Francesco – At one point I was really fond of what John Fahey was doing, but then it was obvious I was never going to play that well.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Francesco – You mean like I do?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Francesco – Well I gave it to my friend for like 4 minutes. Don't do that, folks, they'll break the neck.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Francesco – Um that's it.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Francesco – Some days I barely glance at it. Others they can't take us apart.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Francesco – I like .80 Dunlop.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Francesco – NEVER go below 12 on an acoustic, please. Also, always get flat wounds on electrical guitars & bass.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Francesco – Whenever they break!

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Francesco – I'm getting better at that with age!

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Francesco – Well I'm left-handed, but I play right-handed; so I never have problems on the fretboard.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Francesco – I know this amazing & grumpy guitar tech who has the coolest solutions to my problems. He knows & loves wood. That's a huge plus.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Francesco – I love open D. That's even more natural to me than standard.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Francesco – Does memory count? Or tape recorder?

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Francesco – Below my chest.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Francesco – Being sloppy.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone, s guitar playing?

Francesco – Bass! My God. Get some rhythm.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Francesco – I wish I could do the gypsy kings rhumba thing for fun. Only for fun, though.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Francesco – Playing a show with an acoustic jumbo without looking like a dwarf.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Francesco – Making people think I have technique.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Francesco – Couldn't live without capo. I write a lot based on where that thing is.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Francesco – The proper ragtime fingerpicking sounds marvelous. I can only play that at about 40 bpm.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Francesco – Never did.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Francesco – To ALWAYS stay on time.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Francesco – Not having a clue of what you do, not having a pick & wanting to sound like you do. Hurting the skin below your nails a lot & strengthening it.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Francesco – Dunno. I like tremolo, but couldn't use it to save my life.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Francesco – I'd like it not to exist. Open all the way.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Francesco – There shouldn't be one.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Francesco – For about 40 seconds.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Francesco – I'm sure some old Gibsons that Les Paul played were pretty sweet.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Francesco – Wallis Bird is amazing. Mostly because

she plays a right handed acoustic upside down. Her upstrokes sound different.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Francesco – I think I was caring a lot about guitar on Stop The Wheel's *Morning* album.

QRD – Anything else?

Francesco – Get on the stage already.

Justin O'Connor of Church of Graviton
January 2013

Name: Justin O'Connor

Bands: Church of Gravitron

Websites: www.doomtownrecords.com,
www.unread-records.com, www.modern-radio.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Justin – My first girlfriend gave me a Yamaha. Last time I saw it, it was in someone's basement around 2002. The strings were rusted. The first guitar I played regularly was a an old Gibson (Melody Maker maybe?) I borrowed from a friend's dad. I played on other people's equipment for the better part of the next 18 years.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Justin – That sounds about right.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Justin – Probably the power strip.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Justin – ‘64 (I think) Fender Band Master. I bought it because there wasn’t anyone I could borrow amps from anymore.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Justin – A 60s Danelectro Hawk that was given to my wife. I have tiny & stiff fingers, so the short scale neck is very comfortable. Why do older guitars sound so much better? I don’t know.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Justin – It would be the bottom half of a Reubenesque woman wearing fishnet stockings. She would wrap her legs around my head when I am sad. It would also have a universal remote holder & ice water dispenser.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Justin – I have one. It’s called The Unholy Name. My friend & bandmate Mario Alderfer (www.martoneaudio.com) built it for me. It’s thin & crunchy sounding like a Rat, but he added a switch

that adds a deep low end without mixing the two. It's so fucked. I love it.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Justin – 5?

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Justin – In the streets to keep them mean.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Justin – A designated driver.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Justin – I'd rather not buy another guitar.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Justin – \$150.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Justin – I've wanted Wyoming's BH&R branded on guitar for a long time. I'll never get around to it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Justin – I rely solely on luck.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Justin – Never.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Justin – I'm tone deaf.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Justin – I gave up on that a few years ago.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Justin – A little voice that tells them to give up.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Justin – 16.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Justin – 17.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Justin – It doesn't really suit me at all. It just happened to be available when I needed an outlet.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Justin – I imagine nature will eventually find a way to cull the abnormal amount of guitar players in the world.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Justin – Slave.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Justin – In chronological order of influence: Greg Ginn, Bernard Sumner, Kevin Shields, & the real game changers for me were Rafeal Toral & Vote Robot (did they play guitar?).

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Justin – Why would I name my slave?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Justin – I punched a hole through an acoustic guitar.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Justin – I daydream a lot.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Justin – I play guitar 9 or 10 times a year. 11 if I play a show.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Justin – Grey Tortex.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Justin – The package was green.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Justin – When they break.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Justin – Once every couple of years.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Justin – Neither. I play like a crippled caveman.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Justin – I don't like talking to musicians.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Justin – I have a few written down in the basement. I use alternate tunings for the same reason I play loud & use effect pedals. To over compensate for my lack of skill.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Justin – I've drawn shapes to represent songs that later don't make any sense.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Justin – I prefer girth.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Justin – Break their fingers & set the bones incorrectly. Scrape the tendons with glass. Get a concussion. Go to public school.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Justin – Lead guitar players have stronger arms, but their children tend to have learning disabilities.

Rhythm guitar players should probably get tested as well.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Justin – Innovation is for car commercials.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Justin – They should have been at that show I played in Chicago. I tore that shit up.

QRD – Anything else?

Justin – My only regret is not taking advantage of an opportunity that was presented to me years ago. It may not have led anywhere, but it would have been a level of exposure I had never seen before. I'm not upset about where life has taken me, just that I feel like I fucked it off on purpose out of fear. That sucks.

C Joynes
January 2013

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QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

C – The first guitar was a boxwood acoustic I found under my parents' bed. I think they'd bought it when they'd lived on St Lucia in the late sixties, but I never saw them play it. I dug it out when I was 15 & strung it up with some nylon strings & plunked along with records in my bedroom. It took me a couple of years to learn how to tune it properly. It moved on to my brother, who put some steel strings on it & it bowed out like a banana. I think it got thrown out eventually. The first electric was a Columbus Les Paul copy that I bought off a guy with flu when I was 16 or 17. We turned up to look at it & he was in his dressing gown with a fever, so my mum went in for the kill & bargained him down to £40. It was a good solid guitar, really played well. With hindsight, if I'd been sensible I'd've hung on to it & hot-rodged it with some monster pickups & a fat old Bigsby. But it ended up with a

snapped headstock after it fell over when being leaned against my 10-watt practice amp during an “I Am The Velvet Underground” session. After that, I took it down to a bar in town & swapped it with the owner for a skronky Arbiter made-in-Japan hybrid that hung on the wall above the bar. Still got that one.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

C – Mostly I play acoustic, so the live set-up’s usually: 1 mic for guitar, 1 chair for arse, 1 other chair for bits & bobs. The electric version goes: chairs, plus guitar-lead-amp. Anything else is just a distraction from the wood & the wire. It also means a whole other trip to the car. I jam econo.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

C – Guitar, right hand, left hand. The rest of it should pretty much look after itself.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

C – A Vox Valvetronix VT30. Amp-heads are going to laugh their arses off, but it’s my main amplifier because it’s loud enough already; because it’s got all the effects I want without having to buy

more stuff that needs plugging in; because I got it off some dude on Ebay for a song; & because it's not the 10-watt practice with the blown speaker & the scratchy knobs.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

C – I've got three or four acoustic guitars & move from playing mostly one or another about every six months or so, depending on where I am & what's going on with my hands & ears & head.

My main electric is a 1959 Harmony Stratotone H45, because it feels & plays like an acoustic: a solid round neck, strings high off the body, & a single gnarly old P90 that helps each string ring out clear as a bell. The single pickup H45 was the first electric where I could use fingerpicks without going head-to-head with the scratchplate, that oh-so-slinky action & the all-in-the-fucking-way pickups that are standard features on most electrics. Plus it was a cash bargain.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

C – A 1959 Harmony Stratotone H45, ideally with a straight neck, &/or some solid old small-bodied acoustic. But by & large there's something a bit lifeless about yer actual signature guitar: if it's been

custom-made to fit in your hand & play just so, then where's the battle? Where's the struggle?

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

C – There's the pedals on my bike, which're pretty handy for getting to gigs. If I'm going further afield, there's the pedals in my wife's car.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

C – Erm, one classical, two six-string acoustics, one twelve-string acoustic, one dobro, & two electrics. That's probably a few more than I actually need, but I will get around to doing something with that twelve-string sometime.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

C – In the spare room, mostly lined up in their cases with a couple hanging on the wall.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

C – Backpack-style carry straps. A sandwich compartment would be good, as would an LP-size pocket.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

C – Well, first off, is it an ugly guitar? I mean, there's good ugly & bad ugly, but how a guitar looks is always the first thing that makes me notice it hanging up there on the wall or sitting in the window. Then, once it's in your hands, is the neck straight & are there any cracks in the wood anywhere? When you start playing, there's basic playability, especially with fingerpicking -- the action, the space between strings, the width of the fingerboard & the width of the neck. That rules out a lot of guitars pretty quickly. After that, is the intonation ok? Does it stay in tune? Finally, there's the actual sound of the thing, & that really difficult to measure if you're just there in the shop or wherever. I can only really get to figure out if I like a guitar sound after playing it for a good long while. Acoustics have all got really variable tones, especially old ones, & if you're used to one thing it's difficult to figure out if you like something different. With electrics, there's also that thing about, well, does it sound this way 'cause I'm going through a swanky amp? Anxiety, it's nothing but anxiety.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

C – That’s a tricky one. My favourite guitarists of all time, the ones I go back to time & time again, are the country-blues guitarists from the 30s & 40s & the West African guitarists from the 60s & 70s & they were playing on junk gear from mail-order catalogues. So it’s really about what you can do with what you have rather than what’s gone into your guitar. But that’s in no way meant as a diss to the skills & the craftsmanship of the folks who build instruments. I guess when it comes down to it, any guitarist should ask themselves in all honesty “Is the extra money I’m going to pay for this thing genuinely going to add an equivalent value to my playing & my sound?” & if the answer’s yes & you can afford it, then go for it. I know I’ve got a preference for old & cheap gear, so generally I try to pay as little as possible. But aside from that, once things start getting above about four hundred quid, I just can’t hear the difference, particularly with electric guitars. It’s like dogs & bats can hear things that humans can’t. I’m missing some critical frequency that links one into the world of high-quality guitars.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

C – Stick with what you get, unless something’s

utterly fucked. Upgrade & customize your playing instead. Jesus, I sound like a “keep-music-real” nazi.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

C – By & large I try & spend as little as possible on gear & when you’re looking at that junk shop score you can’t really hang around to test stuff out. But on those rare occasions I’m looking for something specific, I definitely want to try it out first, as long & loudly as possible.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

C – About once every 10 or 12 years. I’m reckless that way.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

C – I pretty much work with the limitations of what I’ve got & try to make the best of that. Folks can waste a lot of time chasing that illusive guitar sound, the one that will make everything perfect & ideal. In which case, they will probably spend most of their playing life dissatisfied. To my mind, it’s the things that annoy you about a guitar & its sound which force you to accommodate them into your

playing & give it some character. There's a little more wiggling-room with electrics, what with the knobs & so on, but even then I stick to two or three basic sounds: tremolo, delay, reverb, maybe a little grittier or cleaner depending. I want to concentrate on the wood & wire instead: knob-twiddling is a potentially endless process.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

C – I once played a top-end small-bodied Yamaha something-or-other in a shop in Singapore & that was pretty nice. I also played a 1940s Martin in a little shop in Paris that Nick Jonah Davies dragged me to one time. I would've been happy with either of those. For electrics, I've got to admit I'm a bit kinky about old Burns guitars, Fender Jaguars, Gibson SGs, but they don't really suit my playing style so I wouldn't really know what to do with them. I really don't know much about amps & pedals & such like, but it'd be nice to have a old valve amp with built-in tremolo, spring reverb, a line-out, & a couple of tone controls. Can you get tape echo units built-in on valve amps? In which case, one of those as well please. Pedal-wise, I like the idea of echo-effects looping around on bits of magnetic tape. I also read about this echo-effect unit from the 50s that worked by having a metal box

with wires sloshing around in some kind of toxic chemical solution. That sounds pretty cool.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

C – A tiny little notepad for writing down chords & drawing little chord shapes, stuck to the upper side, would be very useful. But really, a guitar which stays in tune & has half-decent action makes so much difference when you're starting out.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

C – I don't think I've ever bought something that I've really regretted. They've all kind of served their purpose pretty admirably. It's the things I've missed out on that cause the real regret (the 1962 Burns Sonic for a tenner; the Brit valve amp with built-in tremolo that got lost somewhere...).

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

C – Pretty much any phaser type effect always seems to sound awful, regardless of context. "Flange": what a terrible name for an effect. When I was at school that was a rude word.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

C – Usually it's the tune I'm just trying to write or have just finished. Or if I'm just practicing I often start with a traditional tune, most likely something English.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

C – Around 15, I think.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

C – I was pretty nimble at a certain style of playing when I was around 23 or 24, but then it fell by the wayside. Then I started with the open tuning & the fingerpicking about 10 years ago. I used to get really transported by it around the time I'd been playing that way for a couple of years, but hopefully you build the range of tools for expression the longer you go on. Every 6 months or so something'll get into my head that really makes me want to work at it harder.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

C – One seems to be able to do many many different musical things with it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

C – No, because there are easier instruments to learn quickly. But yes, because it's often the instrument that children actually want to play (when compared with, say, the violin, the tuba, the piano...).

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

C – It's a constant process of negotiation. Sometimes you can take it on, sometimes you just got to roll with it. And occasionally it's the pair of you in unity against the world.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

C – Off the top of my head: Sir Richard Bishop; Ali Farka Toure; wotsisname, that Fahey guy; Martin Carthy; Marc Ribot; Skip James; Derek Bailey; Mississippi Fred McDowell; R. Keenan Lawler; Violeta Parra. But really, the most important ones aren't the guitarists, are they?

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

C – Well, they do look a bit like your old fella.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

C – As I said, it was cracking the headstock on that Les Paul copy by leaning it carelessly against an amp. Weirdly, it didn't bother me at all when it happened: it just seemed like a perfectly suitable outcome. Normally I'd be really angry about something like that.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

C – I spend quite a lot of time away from the guitar thinking about tunes & how they are structured, picturing in my head the shapes & the position on the fretboard. Maybe that counts as practice. I get stiff hands sometimes, so might warm up & exercise them to keep them nimble.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

C – Depending on what's going on, probably play 5

or 6 hours a week – maybe more if I’m really into writing a new tune. The idea of having the freedom to play for 4 hours a day every day is a nice one, but I suspect it might start to seem like a bit of a chore fairly quickly. I find if you have things keeping you away from playing, then it keeps you eager to get back to it.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

C – I use Pro-Pick F-tone picks on my fingers & I’ve just started using these orange thumb picks that Nick Jonah Davies introduced me to. They are awesome – the acoustic guitarist’s version of the Orange amp. Totally changed things up a notch.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

C – I use sets of strings that start with 0.13 on the little skinny one & am planning to move it up a gauge the longer I go on. I’ve realised the heavier the gauge, the better they sound, particularly on electrics – light gauges on an electric sound horrible. But it’s also a case of how easy to play they are: if you’re doing all sorts of barring stuff up & down the neck, it can be a real struggle with heavier gauges.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

C – I'm pretty bad about that – probably every five or six months, but usually before I head out on a run of shows. I actually quite like the sound of old strings on an acoustic & I really dislike playing new strings on an electric.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

C – Not very often – certainly a lot less now than when I used a pick. They usually break when I'm re-tuning & I guess they just get worn out at the top. The G-string seems to go the most often & the skinny E-string as well.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

C – Probably my fretting hand, my left hand: as time has gone on, it seems to have got more dexterous & I'm even using my little finger these days which I never thought would happen. My right hand is like the engine for my playing, driving things along, but it gets cramped up sometimes & seizes up. Because of this, over the years the style of playing has gotten more intricate in terms of melody rather than in terms of rhythmic patterns.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

C – I can have a go at doing stuff myself, but I'm not very knowledgeable or confident about that practical side of things. I'm always worried I'm going to completely wreck something. So if stuff needs doing I'd rather send it to a tech.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

C – Open C, Open G, Open D, D modal, G modal are the most common ones. I like modal tunings in particular, because they're quite ambiguous-sounding. Occasionally Standard or Drop D. It'd be good to use more: I keep on meaning to tinker with Hawaiian slack-key tunings, but I can't remember much more than a handful of tunings at any one time.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

C – I don't write anything down: I just kind of memorise stuff by ear for the newer tunes, & rely on muscle-memory for the old ones....

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

C – I sit down to play, so it's just there in my lap.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

C – Using the same old shapes & patterns time & time again as the basis for new tunes is one. Also, playing ahead of the beat too much, not sitting back & letting things swing.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

C – I reckon the mbira or thumb-piano: good for building up rhythmic dexterity, stamina & syncopation. Sounds great as well.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

C – I've tried & tried to get that Malian guitar style down, cos I love it so much, but I just can't do it: there's something undefinable about the tempo & rhythms that I just can't get. Also, it'd be great to be able to play really good cranked-up fade-to-black solos, rather than just a collection of licks. But I

don't think that really happens for guitarists working without the help of others.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

C – I would love to be able to improvise in an inventive & articulate way, moving between melody & free improv. I always wanted to be in a classic garage band like The Sonics. I'd also love to do a heavy amp-worshipping Sabbath-Om-Earth-Sleep riff monolith; the same style I play now but louder, slower, heavier. Maybe one day... If there are any takers out there, just get in touch....

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

C – It's a thing called the backwards-stepover. It's a fret version of what the Four Tops do with their feet when they all spin around on the spot without falling over, & at the moment it features in pretty much all of the new tunes I'm working on.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

C – I do like a nice heavy glass slide. String-winders are quite satisfying. There's this thing you can do with a bit of dowling rod for growing tomato plants. Folks seem to go for that quite a lot.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

C – Playing really hard & fast for a long long time. Or playing really slow without speeding up.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

C – I did not, but I'm sure it would've been useful in sorting out some basics. I've sat in on workshop sessions at festivals a couple of times & always got a few things to think about from that.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

C – There's this thing you can do with a bit of dowling rod for growing tomato plants.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

C – Try & figure out how to play a whole bunch of other things on a guitar.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

C – If you mean that old-fashioned thing that's occasionally built into amps, I think it's hands down the greatest electric guitar effect ever. Nothing else comes close. But if you mean the whammy bar, I'm afraid I know nothing about them. I like the idea of them; I like the sound of them on those surf instrumentals & Ennio Morricone tunes, & those fat old Bigsby's look great, but I've never used one. I think you've got to be good at soloing to use 'em, & I just can't solo for toffee.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

C – Maybe a couple of times in a set: not during tunes, but certainly between them. It partly depends on what sort of mood the amp seems to be in that night. Most of the time the tone knob is on full, but I might trim off a bit of treble occasionally.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

C – I'm sure there's a joke about this somewhere. I don't know. You take off your shoes jump on a rhythm player?

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

C – Nope.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

C – There's a handful of guitars played by others that I'd like to own, but mainly because of the guitar itself rather than the provenance. The first time I can recall hearing a Dobro was when I was about 16 or 17. It was one played by an Australian-Irish guitarist called Gypsy Dave Smith & I heard it on an album by Martin Stephenson & The Daintees called *Gladsome, Humour & Blue*. This guitar was a 1935 Dobro, & it had the most beautiful humming bell-like tone. If you can imagine a 'humming bell', it was like that. It was the instrument that made me want a resonator. I think Dave Smith lives in the Highlands of Scotland now, & plays festivals around there. Marc Ribot has this junky Teisco semi-acoustic with an f-hole body, a long Fender-style headstock & a single pickup. It seems to be held together with wire & duct tape, & actually *looks* like how his guitar *sounds*, if that makes sense, & he manages to get it to switch from a clanking racket to tender sensitivity on the turn of a sixpence. I'd quite like that one please. Finally, Billy Bragg's green sunburst Burns Steer: such a great look, such a great sound. But there was only 40 of them made apparently &, having tried out the

re-issued versions, I know the set-up wouldn't suit my playing (too many pickups; strings too close to the scratchplate).

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

C – I think “innovation” is over-rated as a concept: the obsession with producing a new or unique approach to the guitar or to playing technique is ultimately a cul-de-sac, either of speed & fret gymnastics, or of “dragging-the-guitar-behind-a-Monster-Truck.” Instead, people might be better off thinking about “consolidation” rather than “innovation”: taking the broad range of approaches to & uses of the guitar - conventional, experimental, traditional, avant garde, local, global - & taking elements of each to form them into something expressive & coherent. Having said that, though, Agata from Melt-Banana & his pedal-board has taken the electric guitar pretty much as far as it can go while still being recognisably played as a guitar, rather than as a tabletop noise-making device. & acoustically, Cam Deas’ “Quadtych” has set the bar pretty high for long-form lyrical & experimental guitar composition.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

C – Generally at home, when I'm neither performing in front of others nor recording for posterity. Otherwise there are a couple of albums that still sound okay.

QRD – Anything else?

C – When do I get paid?

Brandon W Pittman of when the word was (((sound)))
January 2013

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QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Brandon – My first guitar was a late sixties harmony acoustic. It can still be found at my family's home....

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Brandon – It all starts with my G&L ASAT BluesBoy (I recently retired my beloved early 90s Fender Tele).... my pedals include a Looper 3 way router (guitar & 2 keyboards in), Boss tuner, Digitech Whammy 1, 80s reissue Ibanez TS9, Prescription Electronics Overdriver, Z.Vex Fuzz Factory, Big Muff, modded Pro Co RAT, Boss EQ,

Line 6 MM4, Digitech Space Station, Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail plus reverb, 3 Line 6 DL4s, & a Digitech Jamman... I also split my signal out between a mid 90s VOX AC30 & a VOX Night Train (with a 4x12 Peavey Cab).

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Brandon – I would have to say from a tone perspective my G&L & VOX amps give me versatility & the tone I have sought for years. I do a great deal of looping with wtw(((s)))... so, I would have to say my DL4s are the key to my (((sound))).

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Brandon – VOX AC30 (or my Night Train... depending on the size of the venue)... they sound amazing & (again) give me the tonal versatility I need between projects.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Brandon – G&L ASAT BluesBoy... I can go from ambient, psychedelia, jazz, blues, country, metal, & beyond. Great sounding guitar all around.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Brandon – Hmm... probably a cross between a Telecaster, Jazzmaster, & a Gibson Thunderbird. I love all of these guitars & would love an instrument that would combine elements of each....

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Brandon – It would definitely be some type of delay/looper... I would love one with programmable delay (that can be used when looping & after the loop) & a loop bank... basically a tweaked Strymon Timeline.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Brandon – Not enough....

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Brandon – Gig bags & hard cases. I store them in my studio.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Brandon – Wheels? LOL ... I don't know....

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Brandon – Definitely a comfortable neck & a “magic” tone that speaks to you. I always feel like the right guitar will let you know when you find it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Brandon – I think value is important.... I hate seeing guitars that cost as much as a small car.... I could see a REALLY great, pro grade guitar selling for a grand. But definitely not more than that....

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Brandon – I am really lo-fi... I don't like to tinker with things... I want an instrument that is ready & sounds proper from the beginning....

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Brandon – I do a fair amount of research... mostly for finding a good price... I think it is important to

sit with an instrument/piece of gear... make sure it fits your needs... & maybe most importantly... inspires one to create.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Brandon – Only if I add a new piece of equipment... & generally it isn't too drastic of a reordering process. I try to keep things as straight forward as possible.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Brandon – For me it all depends on what sound I am trying to capture... I always try to be true to what I am playing. It really just depends on the picture I am trying to paint (musically speaking).

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Brandon – I LOVE old Telecasters, Jazzmasters & Firebirds... & I would really love to get my hands on the new Telemaster. I also would love to have a Matchless Chieftan amp (they sound brilliant). As for pedals... I adore pedals in general. I could list about 50 I would REALLY like to add to the arsenal!

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Brandon – I think it is more important for a first guitar to feel “right” for a new player than any one specific feature. In other words, the instrument should inspire the player as well as be comfortable to learn on....

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Brandon – It would definitely be the Ibanez EX series guitar I bought when I was 14... I went for value over function... that guitar was not made for me....

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Brandon – I really like G&L, VOX, Digitech, Z.Vex, & I am loving what Strymon is doing. Just need to save my pennies before I can invest in their product. As for why, I think they sound inventive & interesting while still being musical. They sound great....

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Brandon – Whatever comes out.... I try not to repeat myself too often....

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Brandon – I started when I was 12, but really became serious about learning/playing around the age of 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Brandon – I think I was definitely faster/more proficient as young man. However, I think over the last few years, I have become more versatile stylistically & have learned that space & tension are wonderful tools.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Brandon – I would say the connection between my guitar & “inner voice”. The fact that it is more like singing than trying to play an instrument. It just feels right.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Brandon – I think piano is a great starter as well. It really helps to see the way scales, chords, & the basic theory structure is set up. Again, I am more of the notion that one should play what they feel & take a natural approach to music.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Brandon – It should always be an ally, in my opinion... but perhaps one that provides a little strife at times....

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Brandon – Cream era Clapton, Jimmy Page, Django, Nels Cline, Jim Campilongo, Ian Moore, Jonny Greenwood, & Ed O'Brien.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Brandon – I generally name mine... so I would hope it doesn't seem silly!

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Brandon – Oh... I hate to admit it... but I snapped the neck on that old Ibanez.... It wasn’t on purpose... just kind of gave it a “thump” on the floor (on the body) & the neck split on a bias. Hate to destroy gear, but that guitar was horrible....

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Brandon – I practice the tunes we are working on for my new project (My Lover the Ghost). Build loops & soundscapes to play over when practicing, or practice a particular style (i.e. jazz, blues, etc.).

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Brandon – Not nearly enough... maybe 3.5 to 4..? I would like to play at least an hour a day... seems like that would be simple enough, eh? As they say... “not enough hours in a day...”

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Brandon – I use Dunlop Tortex .50 & .60mm picks.

I like them because they are neither too hard nor too soft.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Brandon – I generally use TNT Boomer 11s... I need a heavier string with a bit of resistance... I dislike overly slinky (easily bent) strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Brandon – I play pretty aggressively. Depending on how aggressively... I generally get a gig & 1 to 2 practices out of a set.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Brandon – I used to break strings almost every gig when I was younger. Now, I rarely break them... I find it is more a matter of wearing them down until they lose tone & sustain.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Brandon – I think my fretting hand is a bit more proficient... but I don't feel my strumming hand hinders me in any capacity... I feel comfortable enough with both hands to play what I feel.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Brandon – I use standard, Drop D, & I enjoy DADDAD & a variety of open tunings.... I enjoy the variety of tone & texture open tunings can provide.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Brandon – When I compose I generally don't use traditional chords... I piece things together & use a lot of chord fragments. I find these type of variations sound a little more interesting....

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Brandon – I find it most comfortable when the pickups of the guitar are around navel height.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Brandon – I wish I would have practiced string skipping exercises a bit more as a young player.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Brandon – I would imagine playing violin would bring a great deal of technique & style to playing guitar.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Brandon – Maybe a bit of turbo chicken picking. Those country cats are lightning fast... all while playing so clean.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Brandon – Definitely my Ebow... I also use a real bow at times... I enjoy playing slide as well (sometimes using slide & Ebow together).

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Brandon – A few different times as a teenager & I took 2 semesters of lessons in college. I learned a great deal in each phase... not always in a theory setting... but I learned valuable lessons in

approach... for me that is a major key... I believe more in what you say than what you can play.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Brandon – I would definitely teach from more of a “zen” perspective... approach, intent... that type of process.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Brandon – Play what you feel... even when emulating... always play what you feel....

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Brandon – I love what Nels Cline does with tremolo. Absolutely divine. It really depends on how it is used.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Brandon – Not too often. I will dial it down when going for a jazzy tone & pump up the treble if I want to get a more country twang.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Brandon – I suppose just the ability to articulate melody & play out... I have always thought of rhythm players as a player who simply plays chords or basic riffs.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Brandon – No. The music has to compliment... flow as a whole.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Brandon – Oh... that is a tough one. I think I would rather let them keep their babies. I think the relationship between owner & instrument is an almost sacred bond... capable of some sort of magic.... I would rather listen to them play their own.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Brandon – DEFINITELY Mr. Nels Cline... he can do it all & he does it so beautifully... a complete

master of his craft. The way he blends styles, modes, noise, loops, chops, texture... hands down... he is the best alive, in my opinion.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Brandon – I would have to say in when the word was (((sound)))’s live show... but as far as recordings go... “dayblink (resurface)” is a good example of what I do. My approach is more sonic than straight forward. I try to paint pictures as opposed to “rock out”. I actually enjoy when people can’t figure out how/what I am doing.

Killick Hinds of Killick

January 2013

Name: Killick Hinds

Bands: Killick (solo); Pocketful of Claptonite

Websites: www.killick.me

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Killick – When I was 12 I got a red star-shaped Hondo electric with ski-jump action. I didn't have it for long, but it set the stage. I don't recall where it ended up.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Killick – I either plug the guitar straight into the amp or I'll use the classics: EQ, compressor, chorus, delay, looper, distortion/fuzz, & reverb. Depends on the situation.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Killick – Guitar, for sure, since I usually play unamplified at home, though lately I've got a soft spot for effects. & I've heard some dazzling amps in

the past year that make me think that's an underrated aspect of sound generation.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Killick – I have an SWR Strawberry Blonde acoustic amp I got in trade for a way-too-heavy amp. For electric, I use a tiny Mahaffay Little Lanilei head & 2x10 cabinet; very lightweight together... good for my back.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Killick – I have one electric guitar, a 7-string Teuffel Tesla. It has quartertone frets up to the 7th fret, but is otherwise Ulrich Teuffel's standard model. My other instruments are "guitar-like"- a 38-string harp guitar called Big Red & a bowed 18-string called the H'arpeggione.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Killick – Quartertone frets! Something aesthetically unconventional, yet with pleasing proportions.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Killick – Something that adds ethereal (& controllable) harmonic content.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Killick – The three mentioned above, plus an acoustic guitar I don't play any longer.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Killick – In their cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Killick – Featherweight.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Killick – Any time I've had something specific in mind, I end up using it in a way very different from how it was first envisioned.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Killick – I wish money wasn't a factor.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Killick – My three are pretty much as built.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Killick – Obsessively & extensively. I only go for something if it will have utility for years to come.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Killick – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Killick – I work at all the nuances possible with the instruments.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Killick – I love the look of jazz archtops; I don't know if I'd make the best use of one, though.

QRD – What do you think are some important

features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Killick – It's changing these days with the proliferation of surprisingly high-quality/low cost instruments, but in the '80s beginning guitars were (generally) a physical strain to play, which might have turned some intrepid souls off.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Killick – What I have is the best for me. Anything I had in the past was sold to help fund the new, so it's all good.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Killick – Anything designed with care is great & anything less has *some* redeeming qualities- even if that's cheese or texture or chaos.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Killick – I don't have a standard starting point.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Killick – 12.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Killick – Hopefully there's a long way to go, but I was pleased overall by about age 33.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Killick – At this point, it's my history with it, although my guitars are variations on the typical setup. I don't play "regular" guitars often, although it can be fun to pull out some Randy Rhoads riffs.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Killick – Any instrument approached with enthusiasm can be fantastic.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Killick – We walk the road together.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Killick – When I was young I loved Randy Rhoads, Steve Vai, Kirk Hammett, James Hetfield, Cliff Burton, Kerry King, Jeff Hanneman, Eddie Van Halen, Stanley Jordan, & eventually Michael Hedges. My older cousin Heather was the person who got me excited about playing in the first place - she was huge into Randy Rhoads. I don't think my "sound" has much in common with any of the above, though.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Killick – The only instrument of mine with a "name" is Big Red. It's big & red, so maybe that's natural & silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Killick – There's a dent on my Teuffel Tesla from it falling out of the case... cute tiny fingers unlatched the locks without my knowing & I lifted it up without checking the locks. Oops! I couldn't be mad since the culprits were so charming. I also check the locks now before lifting.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Killick – That's pretty much it, simply playing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Killick – At this point, maybe between five & ten, unless I've got a bunch of live dates, where it could end up being much more. Any time in the past I've wanted to play more, my behavior hasn't shifted much, so I just don't worry about it any longer.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Killick – I rarely use picks. There's a nice green Dunlop Tortex I've had for 17 some odd years now! & there's a few more lying about, all found.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Killick – Relatively light for the tunings I use. I like a little warble & wobble in the sound, & gentleness in the feel.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Killick – Rarely. Some of my Teuffel's strings are over 10 years old.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Killick – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Killick – I used to reckon both were equally developed, though lately I'm focused on my right hand plucking motion, & more gestural-than-articulated motions in my left hand. I do symmetrical exercises with the neck straight up & down in front of me some times, which is helpful for cognitive balancing.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Killick – Somewhere in between myself & not at all. I just go along for the ride.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Killick – My instruments are mostly in fifths. I originally started this to break up ingrained patterns from standard tuning, but came to enjoy the wide intervals. I can't do a bunch of "guitaristic" things in this tuning, but I don't mind the tradeoff.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or

some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Killick – It used to be a mix of all three (the “some other notation system” being plain words), though lately I haven’t been writing anything down.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Killick – Higher than rock ‘n’ roll, lower than fusion. I went for years without using a strap at all, but now I use one for better balance. I still play seated, primarily.

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Killick – I have fairly good “proper” technique, so no real complaints.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s guitar playing?

Killick – Any other instrument is helpful in many ways.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Killick – It's not my calling, but I love Madagascar-style fingerpicking.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Killick – I'm happy with how my playing has developed.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Killick – I'm still working on a sort of natural wah-wah sound (without using effects)... it is possible, but remains elusive.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Killick – I love the Ebow & I use a wooden letter opener as a slide. A gyroscope is pretty magical, too.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Killick – I have a bunch of study pieces I created, some of which I've played a thousand times... there's still a ways to go on getting them right. I'm less obsessed with them these days.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Killick – Yes, when I was young & a few as a young adult. I learned enough to know to explore the areas that resonated. & I had great music theory training through my public high school.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Killick – Don't worry about could/should/would, just do what excites you.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Killick – My instruments are unusual. Ultimately, they'd have to have my experiences in life, so it probably won't happen. I don't have any signature licks, so there's nothing to readily emulate.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Killick – They're pretty nifty, but maybe not for me. I am, however, intrigued by the Bigsby style....

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Killick – Not too much... it's only an option on the Teuffel.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Killick – Tiny notes vs. low notes?

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Killick – All cylinders firing is best.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Killick – I have no desire towards this, but it would be fun to strum Willie Nelson's Trigger guitar. So much history & such lovely sound.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Killick – Everyone who plays... constant creation.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Killick – Through www.killick.me there's links to

recordings & videos. I'm particularly pleased with killick.bandcamp.com/album/nikola-tesla-high-school, killick.bandcamp.com/album/ginger-baker-did-everything-eric-clapton-did-but-backwards-and-in-high-heels, killick.bandcamp.com/album/exsanguinette, killick.bandcamp.com/album/the-amplifucker-2, & killick.bandcamp.com/album/bull.

QRD – Anything else?

Killick – Thank you for listening.

Kyle Arthur Miller of Haunter

January 2013

Name: Kyle Arthur Miller

Bands: Haunter, BLACK WOLF, Qualia.

Ex: Stubborn Tiny Lights Vs. Clustering Darkness

Forever OK?, Followed By Ghosts

Websites: haunter0.bandcamp.com,

soundcloud.com/quliapunx,

futurerecordings.bandcamp.com/album/the-infinite-regress

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Kyle – Squier Strat. It's still around here somewhere.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Kyle – Fender Jazzmaster Classic Player, Global LP-70, Boss RV-5, DD-3, TR-1, Line 6 DL-4, Electro-Harmonix Russian Big Muff Pi (black), Danelectro French Toast Octave Distortion, Yamaha 2x12 Combo Amplifier.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Kyle – They all play equal roles.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Kyle – Yamaha 2x12 Combo. It gets pretty loud & has some sick built-in trem.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Kyle – I alternate between a Fender Jazzmaster classic player & an old Indonesian made 70s Global LP-70 guitar with Seymour Duncan humbucker. Usually keep the Jazz in standard tuning & the Global in C# Standard/Drop B.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Kyle – I’ve really wanted to build a Telemaster with P-90 in the neck & slanted single-coil in bridge, floating trem, narrow neck.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Kyle – REVERBSOAKED.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Kyle – 2.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Kyle – In their cases in my house?

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Kyle – Bottle opener? A place for my screwdriver?

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Kyle – Good looks.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Kyle – As much as it does.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Kyle – I haven't upgraded the Jazzmaster yet, but with the Global it was necessary. Still needs some work

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Kyle – Sometimes not at all, sometimes a few minutes.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Kyle – Used to. Haven't for a while.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Kyle – Lately I've stuck with a particular tone.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Kyle – Telemaster, Sunn heads

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Kyle – Intonation.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Kyle – Global guitar for \$20. Shitty Ibanez SG style for \$300 when I was 14.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Kyle – +: SUNNO))) (LOUD). I guess that's it.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Kyle – C chord with low G octave. Heavy.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Kyle – 9?

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Kyle – No idea.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Kyle – Because I can play it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Kyle – Maybe piano. I wish I would've learned piano.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Kyle – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Kyle – Efrim Manuel Menuck gets some killer tone & has great riffs. Eric Chenaux, same reason.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Kyle – Silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Kyle – Chipped paint by dropping (faulty strap).

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Kyle – I just play.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Kyle – Not as much as I'd like. What's a good number?

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Kyle – Heavy so they don't break.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Kyle – 10s mostly. Sometimes with heavier bottoms.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Kyle – On occasion.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Kyle – Also on occasion.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Kyle – Strumming hand. Need to work on my left hand chops.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Kyle – Never set up a guitar.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Kyle – E standard, C# standard with drop B.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Kyle – I usually don't write down ideas.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Kyle – Midrange.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Kyle – Learn some new scales/chords.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Kyle – I learned violin while in middle school through high school. I think that helped.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Kyle – SWEEP.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Kyle – SWEEP.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Kyle – It's been a while....

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Kyle – Screwdriver.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Kyle – SWEEP.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Kyle – A few. I learn better on my own (maybe?).

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Kyle – Be brave.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Kyle – Get a shitty guitar & improv on it.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Kyle – Floating all the way.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Kyle – Never.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Kyle – Social hierarchy.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Kyle – No.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Kyle – None. I can't stand the idea of signature guitars.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Kyle – Efrim Manuel Menuck gets some killer tone & has great riffs. Eric Chenaux, same reason.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Kyle – Stubborn Tiny Lights vs Clustering Darkness Forever OK? - The Infinite Regress.

QRD – Anything else?

Kyle – Nope!

Mark Wol of Alpha Couple & Kram Ran
January 2013

Name: Mark Wol

Bands: Alpha Couple, Kram Ran

Websites: alphacouple.tumblr.com,
kramran.tumblr.com, soundcloud.com/kram-ran/the-myths-of-ariadne-1

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Mark – An acoustic guitar I bought from a friend that I've never known the name of & still use today.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Mark – Squire Strat to loop pedal to Peavey mixer reverb.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Mark – It all begins with the guitar, but the guitar on its own is nothing but tradition.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Mark – I do not use an amplifier.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Mark – Olive green & pink.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Mark – The Peggy pedal, it would make things sound absolutely alone.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Mark – Two.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Mark – I'm moving too much to store anything, each guitar has a soft case.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Mark – I stick with what I get. Rarely do I purchase any musical instrument (or anything) with my own money. Discards, gifts, or the rare purchase.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Mark – Whenever I can... almost.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Mark – I'm always looking for different tones, & rarely find what I thought I was looking for.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Mark – Anything Vincent Gallo has used.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Mark – Strings, instead of buttons.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Mark – I have never been remotely interested in guitar brands, even though it could make a big difference to me.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Mark – 22 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Mark – It's more like, which days.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Mark – It probably doesn't & it wasn't my first instrument, but I play it the most. I am probably most comfortable with guitar because I know how it should sound & I know how to make that sound easier with it than with other instruments. Of course that is not necessarily a good thing, as I don't want to make the sounds that are already expected.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Mark – Too many guitars, too many bros.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Mark – It's an ally that I fight.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Mark – Christian Fennesz, Phil Elverum, & Vincent Gallo.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Mark – Not very much damage, just blood from strumming without picks, as I hate picks.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Mark – Think about playing or stretch my fingers along the neck.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Mark – It completely depends on the week & month.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Mark – My “strumming” hand always leads, which

could effect the style to emphasize timing & placement over notes & chords, although that is completely relative.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Mark – I don't think I've ever written down my music for guitar, or know how to.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Mark – Much more complex finger picking & all that jazz.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Mark – No, although I always wanted to, but never had a guitar until I was 22. At that point I had no interest whatsoever in lessons, & taught myself.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Mark – Lose tempo.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Mark – No, but I sure would like to ignore all those awful bands.

Dan West of Sidewalk Society & LoveyDove January 2013

Name: Dan West, D. Morgan West (on my latest CD I used this name but the majority of time I'm Dan West)

Bands: Sidewalk Society (bassist, vocalist), LoveyDove (bassist, guitarist, vocalist), Aguafantastica (guitarist, vocalist), Dan West (multi-instrumentalist), D. Morgan West (multi-instrumentalist)

Websites: LoveyDove - soundcloud.com/loveydove, Sidewalk Society - sidewalksociety.wordpress.com, Dan West - soundcloud.com/dubsonic-2, danwest.bandcamp.com/

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Dan – Sears, Teisco Del Rey: Eventually was destroyed when I “Pete Townshend” it at a gig at North Hollywood high school. I had a Fender Telecaster & a Rickenbacker 360 12 string by that time & felt I could sacrifice the not so dear old Teisco which, by the 5th fret, had the strings up at least a quarter of an inch above the fingerboard. It was torture to play bar chords on that thing (!); although, it did strengthen my fingers & make it generally much easier to play a well set up, professional model guitar when I finally got one.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Dan – My guitar set up consists usually of a Fender 1960 re-issue Telecaster run through a modified RAT overdrive, a BOSS delay/harmonizer, & a Line6 Leslie simulator pedal, into a silverface 1970s Fender Twin. My bass set up consists of one of 2 matching Jay Turser 1953 Precision bass re-issues into a 1970 Ampeg V4 or V4B head with matching single 15 cabinet.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Dan – All aspects, guitar, pedals, & amplification are important.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Dan – The Fender Twin for guitar & the reason being is it’s sheer clarity & the ability to remain clear when more gain is needed. I do love the Vox AC30 for its gain structure & the fact its mid-range can really growl, but I don’t currently own one. My guitar sound is deeply influenced by the 1960s/1970s pantheon of guitar players so, in both cases, those amps were used most often in the studio with the early Marshall & Sound City amps

for the wide open, large performance spaces. The V4 & V4B for bass are the 100 watt version of the SVT heads which are 300 watts & weigh a ton; so, unless I am playing a large venue, are a bit overkill. The V4s give me plenty of headroom before breakup & I like the clean twang of John Entwistle; especially in Sidewalk Society, which is a very Who/Small Faces influenced band that I currently perform & record with.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Dan – It has been & will always be the Fender Telecaster. In my opinion, it is the most versatile guitar ever designed. My music, in particular, covers many stylistic influences from rock, to jazz, to country & the Tele does it all!

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Dan – It would be a Tele with possibly the addition of a whammy bar & the Curtis Novak 4 position, toggle switch mod. Not very creative I realize, but I’m pretty utilitarian when it comes to a guitar or bass. It’s the sound & feel that concerns me most, although I do have a real problem with guitars in day-glow colours! Give me a blonde, cherry, or tobacco sunburst, & I’m fine.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Dan – I would love a pedal that combines all forms of overdrive, from amp gain type overdrive to broken up fuzz. Basically, just a black rectangular box with 5 or 6 buttons for each type of drive & 3 knobs to control input gain, output gain, & tone for each.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Dan – I own 4 guitars & 3 basses.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Dan – I keep them all in cases standing in a row against one of my studio walls.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Dan – A convenient & non-intrusive place for the strap!

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Dan – Ease of playability i.e. the “set up.” How the

fingerboard feels, the body feels, & most importantly - the sound. No two guitars of the same manufacturer or model ever sound exactly the same; so when I go to purchase a guitar, I will play many of the theoretically “same” guitars to find the one that has, as close as possible, all of these elements in one package.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Dan – No more than seven or eight hundred dollars. The vintage guitar market has gotten absolutely ridiculous in the last 15-20 years with guitars in the tens of thousands of dollars. The only people who own those now are doctors & lawyers who may not even play more than a couple of open chords & these are instruments that should be played by real players. Not all great players make such great money in this business so the \$30,000 1966 Telecaster or Stratocaster is out of the question unless extreme luck or Ebay savvy is involved.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Dan – I don’t mod too much. Generally I’ll replace parts if they go bad; but if it sounds good when I get it, why mess with it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Dan – Well, the answer to that question is thank God there is an internet. The only problem though is that ultimately, the only way to really rate an instrument for yourself is to actually touch, feel, & play it. Also, there are so many forums & opinions on the web; it's easy to be overwhelmed by a lot of BS. This is why I only have a few electrics. I figure I've got what I need so why take up creative time getting too obsessed over owning everything. That being said, there are a few more guitars I'd like to own before I leave the planet, but I usually wait until someone I know is selling something of interest or Craigslist & then follow up with technical & pricing research on the web. I would stay away from buying a guitar on Ebay unless it is really rare or a quirky instrument.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Dan – No. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. The only time I would go against this would be in the case of needing a bigger amp for more volume or swapping out a speaker for a different sound. Guitars I tend to leave alone as much as possible.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone &

locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Dan – I will experiment occasionally if I'm looking for a specific sound for a recording, but generally I stick to the sounds I know work for the styles of music I compose & play.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Dan – The uber expensive, highly coveted Fender VI bass & both a 1968 & 1972 Telecaster Thinline which are both, currently, way out of my price range.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Dan – A good set up. Easy playability & solid intonation. A lot of the beginner series guitars from Squire (Fender budget line) look cool, but are pieces of crap from the perspective of being easy to play & sounding halfway decent.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Dan – Best purchase: my current Fender Tele; worst

purchase: a Washburn with the Buzz Feiten tuning system. I could never get that guitar in tune!

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Dan – I love Fender & although I respect Gibson & love the sounds of those guitars, the neck & overall scaling doesn't appeal to me. Gibsons always feel body heavy (Les Paul) or neck heavy (SG). There are a bunch of boutique pedal manufactures that are doing great work. One site is Build Your Own Clone (buildyourownclone.com) which have an array of classic pedals that sound killer. They send you the parts & then you do the basic assembly. The stuff I don't like is too numerous to get into here!

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Dan – A few blues licks in A & then a series of triads up & down the neck to get a feel of what's going on with the particular instrument I'm playing.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Dan – 7 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Dan – Early 20s.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Dan – Well, I love playing piano as well; but a guitar, especially in rock music, is the universal voice - plus I can take it anywhere!

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Dan – No. I think piano should be the first instrument, then guitar. However, so many great guitar players never really spent any time on the piano, that that's ultimately just my opinion. The reason I say that though, is because I believe that the fundamentals of music are so much easier to understand on the piano than a guitar in the early stages of learning music & basic music theory. Learning the basics of music theory on a guitar is the equivalent of trying to learn the basics of math on a Rubik's cube. The guitar by the very nature of its layout as an instrument, is a puzzle; the piano is much more straightforward & laid out right in front of you in an intuitive way.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Dan – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Dan – Guitarists: Pete Townshend, Lenny Breau, Ted Greene, Syd Barrett, Jimi Hendrix, Edward Van Halen, Wes Montgomery.

Bassists: John Entwistle, Paul McCartney, James Jamerson, Scott LaFaro.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Dan – I don't condemn naming your guitar, but I don't do it. I do though, refer to them in the female gender.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Dan – The aforementioned Teisco was reduced to scrap wood & the shop teacher at the high school threatened to make me pay for a new stage in the school auditorium. I got so carried away I took chunks of wood out of that stage! The kids loved it

though & it was a great release of pent up adolescent frustration for me.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Dan – I run basic scales & chord shapes with a metronome, but most of the time all technique comes from just playing gigs & recording.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Dan – If I could, I'd play 24 hours a day, but usually anywhere from 2-3 hours a day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Dan – Standard Fender heavy. I feel I have the most control when I can play more lightly & let the pick do more of the work. This approach equals far less fatigue for my hand & wrist.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Dan – Standard “slinky” gauge; 10 on the high E, 46 for the low E. I was also using the “light top/heavy bottom” arrangement for a while which still has the slinky gauges for the top 3 strings &

heavier than slinky gauges for the bottom 3 strings. The low E is 52 gauge if I remember correctly.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Dan – Once maybe twice a year. If I'm on a tour though, I will change them more often.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Dan – Rarely. My technique has settled in to where I don't break strings that much.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Dan – My fretting hand is far more proficient. I've had to do a lot of work to control my strumming/picking hand. I tend to go overboard with the strumming/picking & have had to work to calm that aspect of my playing down.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Dan – I always set up my guitars. Sometimes I'll do tweaks on my own, but I prefer to give it to an experienced technician to deal with the truss rod & the finer aspects of set up.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Dan – I've used a lot of different tunings. In the 90's, I experimented greatly with open tunings & drop tunings, but sometime 10 years ago I came back to standard with only the occasional Drop D tuning for certain songs.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Dan – For chords I prefer the block diagram. For single notes, a combination of standard notation & tablature. Most of the time, I just record my ideas. My ears are pretty adept at being able to decipher what I've played in past recordings; so when the time comes to re-create a guitar part from a recording for live performance, I don't have too much of a struggle. A really complicated idea, I will write down in one form or another, but I keep it simple most of the time.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Dan – I don't know the exact measurement, but I like to wear the guitar so that the center of the back of the body is right over the belt buckle area of my

waist. The backs of my guitars unfortunately show proof of this!

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Dan – Rushing the tempo. My good friend who is a producer/engineer once said to me, “You have more time than you think.”

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s guitar playing?

Dan – Piano.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Dan – Shred.

QRD – What’s a guitar goal you’ve never accomplished?

Dan – Soloing over up-tempo jazz standards. I can do slow & mid-tempos, but not the fast ones.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Dan – Sweep arpeggios.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Dan – Slide, Ebow.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Dan – Bluegrass.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Dan – I’ve taken many lessons & have learned much from all of them; especially my studies with Ted Greene (studied 8 years with Ted!), who taught me how to play the guitar more like a piano or like an orchestrator in terms of really understanding the fingerboard & approaches to creative reharmonization of a melody. But overall, Ted taught me how to be a musician.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Dan – How to “feel” the time or basic rhythm of a song or style.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Dan – Listen to the musicians that I listen to.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Dan – They are all a pain in the ass in varying ways, but the Floyd Rose has always been solid. I have to admit, I'm not a big expert on that side of the guitar spectrum.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Dan – Hardly ever. I do more of that kind of adjustment on the amp side.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Dan – Rhythm guitar players generally have a better vocabulary of chords. Lead players are better with single notes, but aren't as creative with chords & harmonies. My favorite guitarists can do both equally well.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Dan – No. All parties have to deliver.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Dan – I would love one of Ted Greene's Telecasters. He had them all the way back to the early 50s models, shortly after they became the modern day Telecaster & no longer the Broadcaster.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Dan – Lionel Loueke. He is bringing all kinds of new sounds & approaches to jazz guitar & guitar in general based on his west African heritage.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Dan – On my songs which are up on Soundcloud, Bandcamp, YouTube, et.al.

QRD – Anything else?

Dan – Thank you Brian, for the opportunity to share my thoughts on guitar & guitar playing!

Olaf Rupp
January 2013

Name: Olaf Rupp

Bands: Olaf Rupp

Websites: www.audiosemantics.de

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Olaf – A Framus acoustic steel string I found in the attic when I was 12.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Olaf – Guitar > Kemper Profiler > RCF TT08

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Olaf – Guitar & amp.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Olaf – Kemper Profiler. Being able to control the volume with a foot pedal without losing the sweet spot of the saturation is crucial for improvised music.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Olaf – My new Warmoth Strat with a wider fingerboard (almost like a classical) & a 2Tec bridge.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Olaf – My new Warmoth Strat with a wider fingerboard (almost like a classical) & a 2Tec bridge.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Olaf – 6.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Olaf – In their cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Olaf – Wish my Hiscox case had a waterproof rim profile.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Olaf – Tone.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Olaf – That's the fine thing with Stratocasters, that you can change things so easily.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Olaf – A lot.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Olaf – Every time I play.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Olaf – I look for the same tone on all equipment.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Olaf – Do you have a Ramirez Auditorio for me?

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Olaf – Acoustic (classical) should have a good string action & good & fresh strings for beginners. Electric guitar beginners should have a good tube amp (Fender Champ or so) or a modeling amp so that they can set the amp to the sweet spot where the whole resonance is totally different.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Olaf – Best: Kemper Profiler. Worst: TS-808.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Olaf – I like Fender amps because they have a well-defined sweet spot to turn from clean to crunch.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Olaf – Open strings to tune it.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Olaf – 12.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Olaf – 12.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Olaf – It is polyphonic & yet it is portable. & you can form the tone much more than on a piano.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Olaf – Why not?

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Olaf – It is my vessel.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Olaf – Evan Parker & Paul Lovens.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Olaf – Never.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Olaf – Rasgueados, tremolos & very, very, very slow attack exercises for tone development. Also very slow yoga exercises for the left hand over the fretboard.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Olaf – 21. 35.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Olaf – Fingernails both on acoustic & electric.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Olaf – Acoustic: Hanabach High Tension > good resonance into the wood. Electric: 0.12 > good tone, more fundamentals.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Olaf – Before every gig.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Olaf – Never, I change them before they break.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Olaf – Both are equally important. The left hand is very often neglected, that's a big mistake!

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Olaf – I fix it myself when I can. I like that & that way I can do it as I want it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Olaf – Only E-A-D-G-B-E. I am too stupid to learn other tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Olaf – I am an improviser, so I hardly ever write. If I do, then it's sheet music.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Olaf – No strap.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Olaf – Any other instrument can widen your horizon. Preferably wind or bowed instruments because their long tones help to think in long tones on the guitar too.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Olaf – Guitar.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Olaf – Picados.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Olaf – No.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Olaf – I like to hear them on others, but for me they don't work.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Olaf – Hardly ever.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Olaf – No.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Olaf – Solo, live.

Lorne Hind of Tamin Thunder
January 2013

Name: Lorne Hind

Bands: Lorne Hind 360, Tamin Thunder

Websites: LorneHind360.com,
myspace.com/LorneHind

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Lorne – My parents bought me an acoustic guitar when I took my guitar lessons. I don't know what happen to it once I received my first electric guitar. Wish I had it. 1973/74 model. Would have been a classic!

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Lorne – Guitar plugs into the effect pedal board. From the pedal board into the amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Lorne – Good question. All three. First would be a guitar you can feel very comfortable playing. Then an amp that sounds great to your ears. Lastly the

effects that sound well with your playing style & music.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Lorne – I have been using a Carvin “Steve Vai” model. The first one. Very versatile. Mostly plug into the clean channel. Accepts a lot of pedals very well. The dirty side is good too. Lots of headroom!

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Lorne – Fender Strat American Deluxe HSS. It’s a Fender Strat! LOL Versatile!

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Lorne – It would be a Fender Strat style body & neck with a volume & one tone. Some how have the one tone split into two tones. Two single coils with a humbucker.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Lorne – A distortion pedal that would vary different distortions & overdrive tones. Wampler is a good example.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Lorne – 3.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Lorne – My guitars are on a long guitar stand. They are stored in my studio room.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Lorne – A humidifier system

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Lorne – Feel of the neck, the balance of the guitar standing up & sitting down, strumming & picking the guitar to hear its tonality plugged & unplugged.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Lorne – Now a days the way the economy is, it should be cheaper.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Lorne – I just upgrade the pickups if needed.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Lorne – Very thoroughly.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Lorne – Not often. If I had endorsements like crazy I would! LOL.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Lorne – I pretty much like what I have now. But I still listen to other players' tones & go “Man that sounds SWEET!” LOL.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Lorne – Guitars - Fender Strats, Music man, Gibson, Paul Reed Smith, Xotic, Vigier, Yahama.

Amps - Carvin, Fender Twin, Bogner, Marshall, Egnator.

Pedals - Wamplers, Boss, MXR, so many more.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Lorne – A pic of themselves. LOL.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Lorne – Best - Fender Strat.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Lorne – For effects/pedals - Wampler pedals are great! Brian is the maker of these pedals. He really did his homework on capturing the sound of vintage/present amps onto his pedals. His pedals sound good through many amps.

Amps - Carvin, Fender Twin for great versatility!
Marshall amps – well, you know POWER IN YOUR FACE! LOL.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Lorne – I wrote a song. Don't remember the name it, but I was strumming along with it.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Lorne – 8.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Lorne – I think I'm not where I should be. People listen to me & think otherwise. But I'm always practicing to get even better.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Lorne – The instrument challenges me. Plus it looks sexy on me! LOL.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Lorne – No. Everybody will gravitate to an instrument when they see, feel & hear it. It's just natural.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Lorne – Yes.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Lorne – Joe Satriani, Andy Timmons, Neal Schon, Wes Montgomery, Jimi Hendrix, Eddie Van Halen, guitarists from the 70s rock, funk, reggae, soul, country.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Lorne – I think is natural. Some people love their guitar so much that it has to have name.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Lorne – Scales, picking exercises, rhythms.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Lorne – 7 to 10 hours a week. Maybe more. I wish I could practice 5 hours a day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Lorne – Large rounded V-pick. It is thicker than normal picks. The way I hold it works great for me.

Great for speed picking. Glides over the strings. It forces you not to use so much energy.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Lorne – 9 gauge. Always been using 9s as far as I can remember. Lighter on my fingers. I play in standard tuning. Easier for me to bend strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Lorne – Depends how often I play. I play almost every weekend, plus practicing & recording. I would say once a week.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Lorne – Not very often. Just the top E string once in awhile. Those damn E strings. LOL.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Lorne – I do believe both are close to one another now.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Lorne – I usually send it to a guitar tech. Doing very small things I can handle myself. I did take a course on setting up the guitar. Just haven't got around to buying the tools.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Lorne – Standard tuning. Usually I stay in standard tuning for slide. So use to standard tuning. Eventually I will venture into other tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Lorne – I just write down chords when I'm writing a song.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Lorne – Not high, not low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Lorne – Smiling too much. LOL.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Lorne – Maybe the piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Lorne – Jazz/Fusion.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Lorne – Inventing something for the guitar.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Lorne – Playing with my teeth.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Lorne – Capo.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Lorne – Country bends. Practicing country licks.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Lorne – Reading notations.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Lorne – Lots of rhythm playing of different styles of music. Then lead playing of different styles of music.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Lorne – Slow down the pattern & listen.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Lorne – I love them. Part of my style. The tremolo has come a long way.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Lorne – Often.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Lorne – We as lead players are just flashy! Like a lead singer! LOL.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Lorne – No way! In fact the band is what makes the guitar player's playing so much more attractive.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Lorne – Jimi Hendrix & Joe Satriani. Two very innovative guitarists!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Lorne – Joe Satriani. His playing & music is great! Very versatile player & songwriter!

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work? You can listen to my

Lorne – First CD titled *Full Circle* at Lornehind360.com. My second CD will be added in the spring. You can listen to samples of my second upcoming rock/pop instrumental CD titled *Zuess* on Myspace.com/Lornehind. Also you can

view my latest YouTube videos of me playing different styles of music. Already have 5 songs for my third CD.

QRD – Anything else?

Lorne – Practice, practice, practice! Enjoy it while you are doing it. Go out & perform, it will make your playing & stage presence confidence stronger. Learn as many styles as much as you can. This will challenge & motivate you to play the guitar more & more everyday.

Mark Nelsen of The Electric Shepherd
January 2013

Name: Mark Nelsen (yes, spelled Nelsen, not Nelson)

Bands: The Electric Shepherd

Websites: electricshepherdband.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Mark – I learned how to play guitar on an old beat up classical acoustic guitar that my family kept around the house (mostly for looks). Nobody in my family knows the brand name or year. My first electric guitar was a baby blue Fender Strat.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Mark – Currently: guitar - White Fender Telecaster... pedal board - featuring fuzz/overdrive, analog delay, & wah-wah... amp - Fender Hot-Rod Deluxe Amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Mark – My Big Muff.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Mark – Fender Hot-Rod Deluxe... I favor Fender amps above all else because they contain the perfect blend of brightness & crunchiness. Fender guitars together with their amps sing like no other.... They are blues-rock's best friend. Currently on the hunt for a vintage Twin Reverb....

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Mark – Standard White Fender Telecaster.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Mark – If I had a custom guitar made for myself, I think my signature solid-body would resemble an orange or burgundy Gretsch Corvette crossed with an Airliner JB Hutto Montgomery with three different pickups.... It would be very light. Until then, I would like God to toss me a 60s-circa Rickenbacker 312 from the sky.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Mark – I have yet to own a loop pedal.... A fuzz pedal with a built in Wah/Analog Delay accessory would be pretty sweet.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Mark – 6 total - 2 electrics (1 solid body, 1 hollow body), 3 acoustics, 1 bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Mark – In my basement & in my car.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Mark – Texture, weight, tremolo/whammy bar.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Mark – These days, a brand new standard electric guitar made in Mexico or Asia is usually \$300. \$300 would be fair if American guitars were still made in America like they used to be....

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Mark – I stick with what I get until I'm ready for a new guitar all together & that usually takes a while.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Mark – Not that thoroughly....

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Mark – Not often.... My band has a solid live sound as it is, but I plan to experiment with new effects soon.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Mark – I change the overall tone/rig slightly depending on projects.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Mark – Orange Amp, Martin Acoustic Guitar, Airliner JB Hutto Montgomery (preferably orange colored -- does that exist?), Fender Jaguar (it's around the corner), the best condition vintage Silvertone acoustic you could find.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Mark – An influential, encouraging guitarist once sold me a custom Ibanez Artcore semi-electric that will never leave my collection. It was my primary guitar with The Electric Shepherd up until recently when I purchased my newest Tele, which fits exactly what I need. Wasn't a fan of this Danelectro '59 reissue I bought at a novelty record shop... can't really explain why, but I had to return it. Just didn't feel right. Its sharp looks are deceiving. It's like a greaser haircut in the form of a guitar & it wants to be a Rickenbacker reallllly badly.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Mark – Well, all digital amps sound like crap, like Line 6s & select Marshalls. They sound compressed, bottled, cheap, & dishonest -- & they never seem to get loud enough! The only amps are tube amps as far as I'm concerned.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Mark – The Sunset-District Suite.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Mark – 14 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Mark – I was not comfortable playing lead guitar until I was about 20, around the time I formed The Electric Shepherd. I had focused primarily on songwriting & rhythm guitar before that. There is still a lot to learn.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Mark – Because it screams & it confesses & forgives as often as it sins. It's the most sexual of all instruments....

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Mark – Rebellious types will naturally gravitate towards an electric guitar. If it's not technically their first instrument, emotionally it will be their first instrument. You haven't really lost your musical virginity until you've pick up an electric guitar.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Mark – It is my ally, my sword, my wishing well, my potion.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Mark – Robby Krieger, Jack White, Tony Iommi, Billy Corgan, Jerry Garcia, Jonny Greenwood, King Buzzo, Jason Simon, Pete Townshend, Dr. Know.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Mark – Not at all silly.... My acoustic guitars are all guys & my electric guitars are all ladies. Chivalry is important amongst instruments.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Mark – I've never harmed a guitar. Never saw the point. But from time to time I wonder about the thrill of destroying one.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Mark – Band rehearsals. Writing songs.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Mark – I'm not sure. I don't like to keep track of these things.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Mark – Picks I borrow from friends & never return.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Mark – 10s - 10.5s.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Mark – Once every 4-5 months maybe.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Mark – Actually, I hardly ever break strings (knock on wood).

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Mark – That is a good question....

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Mark – Boy, if I could afford a guitar tech.... But then again, a guitar tech almost makes me nervous. I take good care of my guitars. & there isn't much to set up. I usually only have one guitar per live set; two guitars tops....

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Mark – Standard E, open Amaj, Drop D. I love dirty blues slide guitar open tunings. I want to experiment with more renditions of open tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Mark – Reading chord tabs is as far as I go with sheet music. I learn new chords & new playing methods visually. I am self-taught & learn/play all by ear.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Mark – I am still figuring that out....

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Mark – Sitar? Violin? Stringed instruments in general? If playing piano helps my guitar playing, I never noticed.... Drums was my first instrument & it helped immensely with my discovery of guitar playing. I had no real interest in playing guitar at first... rhythm comes before everything when learning a new instrument.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Mark – Flamenco/Classical. Maybe one day....

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Mark – Jazz & thrash metal sweeps... But I am not a jazz guitarist nor am I a metal guitarist.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Mark – Slide.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Mark – Travis picking. I’m getting there....

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Mark – Never had an official guitar lesson, only the occasional chord exchange.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Mark – I’ll get back to you on that....

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Mark – Using pedal dynamics with picking dynamics. There are lots of sporadic switcharoos within songs....

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Mark – I can’t get enough of tremolos.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Mark – Hardly ever.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Mark – I think establishing oneself as a skilled rhythm guitarist/performer first can find a more unique lead guitarist in the person later on.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Mark – No, absolutely not. There are good bands & then there are good individual musicians. If the band has a virtuoso player, then that's a plus; but a band takes on a singular entity & the band members must realize that. But also, if you are a solo artist/guitarist, then your backing band has to be a more than adequate. Otherwise you have no business having them back you live in the first place -- you might as well perform by yourself. A band must always be good.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Mark – I wouldn't want to own any of my idols' guitars unless one of them donated a guitar to me feeling that I deserved it & had to care for it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Mark – Jack White -- he blends the classic with the new & its all his own. His guitar playing is a complete reflection of his personality & it's more modern than anyone may think & its more than just blues-rock playing. Listen closely.

Jordan Ferreira of Mindwalk Blvd

January 2013

Name: Jordan Ferreira

Bands: Mindwalk Blvd, Vigilant, Elixir on Mute

Websites: mindwalkband.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jordan – First guitar was an Ibanez G10. It's still in my closet. May just use it again one day.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jordan – Setup varies slightly on each guitar, but generally I use 11s with relatively normal action. At the moment I'm switching between my Axe FX 2 & Hughes & Kettner Switchblade. Depending on what I'm using the setup will vary, but in both cases I feel like my guitar sound is smooth & warm without being over saturated or compressed.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jordan – My hands.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jordan – Hughes & Kettner Switchblade. It covers everything I need & I love the way it responds to my playing.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jordan – Main guitar at the moment is a beat up Carvin 7 string. It's the guitar I've played for the longest time. I'm very very used to it.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jordan – It would be a crazy bright color like pink or purple, have a Kaoss Pad/killswitch button, & probably be shaped like a dragon.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jordan – Never been huge on pedals.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jordan – 6.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jordan – In my studio.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jordan – More space to put stuff.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jordan – Sound. Playability & look.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jordan – No more than \$800 honestly.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jordan – All my guitars right now are stock. I kind of like sticking with what I get & making it work for me.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jordan – It completely depends. Sometimes gear gets bought on a whim, sometimes I'm very careful. Depends what it is & what it's for.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jordan – Barely at all. Only changes in my setup I've made in 5 years was adding a wah pedal.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jordan – Both.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jordan – I don't really lust after gear. Gear isn't the point, they're only tools to communicate. Although I like Strats.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jordan – Everyone's interests & goals are very different, I wouldn't presume to suggest what everyone should have on their first instrument.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jordan – Don't really regret purchasing any of my gear.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jordan – Pigtronix, Hughes & Kettner, Suhr, Vigier, Carvin. Because I like moving forward, & these companies are forward thinking.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jordan – Depends on the moment.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jordan – 11 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jordan – Still leveling up.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jordan – Never really thought about that. Probably because it is so expressive.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jordan – I think people should play whatever they want.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jordan – Definitely ally. It's the instrument I'm most comfortable on.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jordan – Allan Holdsworth, Ron Bumblefoot Thal, Guthrie Govan, Shawn Lane.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jordan – Not for me. But people are free to name their guitars if they so wish.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jordan – I've broken strap locks by jumping around. The screw just eventually popped out of the guitar. Made all kinds of gashes & marks on my guitars for the same reason.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jordan – Focus on what I'd like to improve on & working on that.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jordan – Depends entirely on what I'm working on.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jordan – Dunlop Ultex 73 Sharp. They help me achieve the sound I hear in my head.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jordan – 11s. I love the way they respond & feel to play.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jordan – Depends. As often as I feel I need to.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jordan – Surprisingly not that often.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jordan – I think they're about equal actually. Interesting question.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jordan – Neither, I just play it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jordan – So far 90% standard tuning. Although I play 7 & 8 string guitars also.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jordan – Sheet music is fun.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jordan – I always hold it at a place where I can easily reach all the notes on the fretboard & also not worry about it hitting my chin. Seems to be working so far.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jordan – Playing set patterns & motifs.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jordan – Anything will help greatly. Drums especially.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jordan – Anyone can do anything.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jordan – I'm accomplishing everything I need to be.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jordan – I'm not really interested in tricks.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jordan – Gonna have to say Ebow! Brian May is a hero of mine & the idea of building layer upon layer of sound with the Ebow is very appealing.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Jordan – I want to keep mastering everything.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jordan – I took private lessons for about 6 months. More than anything else, I think that kind of just kickstarted my interest in music.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jordan – I don’t deal with generalizations. I would do my best to help them in any way I can.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jordan – Listen to Bumblefoot & Allan Holdsworth.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jordan – Don't know anything about them.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jordan – Constantly.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jordan – I don't. It's all music.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jordan – No, I'm interested in artistry. I'm not really concerned with playing of any instrument for it's own sake.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jordan – I have my own gear. I'm all set.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jordan – May have to go with Guthrie Govan.
Remarkable mind.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jordan – ElixirOnMute’s “The Long Halloween” & Vigilant’s new album.

QRD – Anything else?

Jordan – Check out Vigilant’s debut record. It’s an honor to be part of this band.

Willy B of The Independents

January 2013

Name: Willy B

Bands: The Independents

Websites: www.theindependents.net

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Willy B – My first guitar was a Harmony that my parents got my brother for Christmas when I was in 7th grade. It was out of the Sears catalog. I got a keyboard, but lost interest & took the guitar for my own as my brother didn't really care as much about the guitar. We were so frustrated with that guitar! But we should have blamed the amp it came with. I played the harmony through some good amps later on & it didn't sound that bad! I wish I knew what happened to that guitar. I think someone borrowed it & never gave it back. My first "good" guitar was a Fender Squier Strat, made in Japan (it was the first year they made the Squiers). I loved that guitar! I sold it to a friend of mine who still owns it & he won't sell it back!!

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Willy B – I don't use effects live much. I usually

plug in straight into the amp. I play a Fender Strat, plugged directly into a Marshall JCM 800 guitar rig. The only pedal I use turns our bubble machine on & off. 😊

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Willy B – I think the amp is the most important thing. You can take a relatively crummy guitar & plug it into a good amp & it’s gonna sound a lot better than a great guitar plugged into a crummy amp.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Willy B – I love my Marshall JCM 800. I love the sound of it. It seems to have a lot more depth than other amps I’ve played. I don’t like to play too distorted, just overdrive. It’s perfect for that in my opinion. I used to use a Fender Twin for a clean sound, but it was stolen. I like to roll the volume knob back on the guitar for clean now & it works great! It’s the perfect clean tone, with a little bit of overdrive.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Willy B – I play Strats mainly. I’ve got two. A

Mexican Strat I purchased from a friend of mine & a 1981 cream colored Strat my brother bought for me when all of our stuff was stolen in New York. They are both great solid guitars. I really like the way the volume knob is close to the strings, as it's easy to roll the volume back when playing clean parts or in between clean & dirty.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Willy B – It would be Strat shaped, humbucker in the bridge & a single coil in the neck. No middle pickup. It would have a Strat style tailpiece, with no tremelo though. A non-plastic nut - maybe tusk or bone. Basically a Strat.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Willy B – I would love a pedal with 2 delays. One for doing leads & one for “slapback” or “echoplex” style delay for the rockabilly style stuff. They make those too, I believe.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Willy B – I own six guitars. Two Strats, one Ibanez RG series, one Telecaster, a no-name classical

guitar, & an “Esteban” steel string acoustic. It’s got a silhouette of Esteban’s head painted on the back.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Willy B – When we are on tour, they stay in the cases until I’m ready to use them.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don’t?

Willy B – A larger compartment that will hold more stuff, stronger latches, & better hinges.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Willy B – The main things I look for are how good the pickups are, the action, & how good it stays in tune. I don’t care if a guitar is vintage or whatever. If it doesn’t stay in tune very well & the action is messed up, it’s not fun to play. If you don’t like playing it, what does it matter that its a 57 Strat or whatever? Sell it & buy a guitar that you like to play!

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Willy B – I would say between 300-700 dollars.

Then it's somewhat affordable to everyone. If you go over that price, it seems to me that you're paying for the name. Unless of course it's a boutique hand made guitar, which they have to sell them for that much since they make so few of them.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Willy B – Both my main guitars I have replaced the bridge pickup.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Willy B – I try to buy the best I can get for the price. I do some research, compare prices, look at reviews, etc., but don't I go overboard with it. It will take some people up to a year of shopping around to make a major purchase. Some people will buy the first cheap thing they see. I'm somewhere in between.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Willy B – Not in a while. That gets expensive. I've got my Marshall, with 2 cabs (one on either side of the stage & a Crate Stealth 100 watt tube head that I keep up there as a backup).

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Willy B – I still have yet to find my favorite guitar tone. The band I'm in, The Independents, has a certain sound for our "classic" songs we play at every show. I keep the same tone for those as I've always had. But when I'm playing at home, or trying to come up with ideas, or whatever, I change my sound a lot to find the tone that fits the song I'm playing.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Willy B – I would love to get a Marshall JMP, one of the late 70s ones. The precursor to the JCM 800. In my opinion, that's the best amp. It's not too over the top distortion-wise, but it's got this thick sound that I love! Also I would love a good Tele, for playing country stuff.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Willy B – I think that the cheap guitars nowadays are so much better than the ones I had to play when

I was a kid. A friend of mind just got a Fender from Musicians' Friend that cost him \$200. It played great! You can find a really good first guitar nowadays where the strings aren't 2 inches off the fretboard. That's the main thing, I believe, that it's solid & it stays in tune & had a somewhat decent sound.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Willy B – I've been fairly happy with what I've bought over the years. The case for my Marshall head is probably the wisest decision I've made. That head has been dropped so many times by band members, roadies, drunks at a bar trying to help load out, & it hasn't suffered any ill effects.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Willy B – I love the Line 6 Pod. It's great for practicing at home with headphones, or recording as well. I'm not a big fan of their amps though. At least for playing with The Independents. I had to use one a few times when my Marshall went out on me. The Line 6 amp I used, although it was a fairly loud one, had no depth to it. It was shrill sounding & the built in effects & such just made it sound worse. Not that I don't appreciate the guy who let

me use it & I wouldn't have been playing at all if he didn't offer that Line 6! But amps with all of the modeling & built in effects have no depth to them. Just because it has a lot of effects doesn't mean that it sounds good, especially in a live situation.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Willy B – Lately it's this cheezy rockabilly riff that that I came up with. I dunno why!

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Willy B – I think around 12 or 13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Willy B – There's still a lot of room for improvement! I learn something new every day!

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Willy B – It's an instrument that I always wanted to play. You can basically take it anywhere, not like a piano or a drum set. You don't need accompaniment either if you don't want it. If you're

good enough, you can pull off bass & lead lines at the same time!

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Willy B – I think either that or piano are probably the best first instruments to start out on, as you learn the basics of music with them.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Willy B – I don't know exactly, as it's the only instrument that I've really played a lot. I don't know any better!

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Willy B – Tony Iommi of Black Sabbath, East Bay Ray from the Dead Kennedys, Jerry Reed, Wes Montgomery, & Eddie Van Halen. Also the guitar player from Rush was a big influence when I was first learning.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming their guitar)?

Willy B – I think it's kinda cheezy. But some

friends of mine who name their guitars decided as a joke to name mine as well. “Sticky”, “Woodrow”, & “Prince” are their names now I guess... LOL.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Willy B – The neck broke on one of my old handmade “coffin” shaped guitars. I had to keep it in a gig bag instead of a case on tour, as it was too long to fit into a regular case. We took a sharp turn, everything fell over, & the neck broke in half! I fixed it though, on the road! I got some glue & clamps at a Home Depot. I glued it back together. It played great! I couldn’t believe it!

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Willy B – Sometimes I’ll do scales or arpeggios or something. But usually when I’m at home practicing, I’ll be trying to learn a hard guitar line from some guitarists that I like. It really helps my playing & that’s how I started. That technique seems to work well for me.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Willy B – When I’m home I always have a guitar

lying around & if I'm sitting there, I will pick around on something. If I'm watching TV, I usually have a guitar in hand, playing something, usually to the annoyance to whoever is watching TV with me. I'd say *at least* an hour a day. Sometimes a lot more, sometimes less.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Willy B – I like the Tortex picks, the yellow ones. They aren't too thick or thin & they grip better.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Willy B – Ernie Ball Regular Slinkys! (10-46) They are thick enough to me where they stay in tune better, but you can still bend the strings fairly easily.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Willy B – If we are on tour & playing every night, I'll change them every 4-5 shows. When I'm home, I don't change them as often.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Willy B – I'm not too bad about breaking strings. Usually once or twice a tour that lasts a month where we are playing every night.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Willy B – I feel that my right hand is more proficient at the moment. I've been working on that actually, trying to get my left had to play notes faster & more accurately. I have incorporated a lot of “hybrid picking” with my right hand & it has improved my playing a lot!

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Willy B – I need to get my guitar refretted & set up actually. It's due for it. I can do minor repairs, intonation, etc., but I will get someone to do the major stuff, because if I mess that up, I'm in trouble. Plus I don't have the tools to do major adjustments or repairs.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Willy B – I like standard tuning, & tuned to 440. We play with a lot of different musicians. When I have to show them the songs, I want to make sure they are learning it in the right key & such, since all of The Independents' songs were recorded in standard tuning. We don't tune down to Drop D, or

haven't in the past. Who knows? Maybe we will come up with a song someday that will require lower or alternate tunings!

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Willy B – I like to record my ideas onto a recorder instead of using written notation.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Willy B – I don't know exactly how long the strap is, but waist high I guess. I personally think it looks silly when players play real low, trying to be like Johnny Ramone or something. Maybe its more comfortable for them to play that low, but not for me!

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Willy B – If I'm in a situation where I'm improvising a lead, I'll tend to slip in a pentatonic (blues) scale without putting much thought into it. Later on I think about what I played & I will realize that I should have played a better sounding lick, but by then it's too late! I hate slipping into the

comfortable blues scale & sounding like some cheezy Eric Clapton wanna-be. LOL.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Willy B – I think playing bass would. It's not a stretch for a guitarist to learn the basics, as it's a stringed instrument, but it's so much different in terms of what it does in a band. I filled in on bass for the band The Queers on a tour, & it helped a lot! Playing just bass for a while changed my perspective somewhat.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Willy B – I would love to be able to play more jazz stuff. It's hard, but I think it would help with my lead playing. Not to be some jazz master or anything, but to improve my playing style. I practice jazz a lot at home, learning Wes Montgomery solos & such. Country guitar too. Chicken pickin' guitar is very hard, & I'm always trying to figure out some country lick.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Willy B – Like a guitar lick or something? I've

learned a few finger picking patterns that have helped out my playing lately.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Willy B – I'd love to get better at jazz guitar & more country style playing as well.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Willy B – I took some classical lessons from a friend of mine here in Florence, named Allen Johnson, as well as some jazz lessons here from a guy named Otis, when I was in high school.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Willy B – Guitar tone & amp choices. So many players starting out that want to play distortion have it turned up all the way. I think guitar teachers should focus on tone a little more. Then again, they may have their hands full just showing how to play the notes!

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Willy B – Turn the distortion down a little, especially on The Independents songs. & pay more attention to whether I'm playing a minor chord or a major chord. I've heard some Independents fans play our songs & they can't seem to differentiate between the minor & major chords, especially on the ska riffs.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Willy B – I like them, but they make my guitar go out of tune so bad I don't use them, on stage at least.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Willy B – Never. I've recently discovered you can actually use it as a wah effect, like the steel player on the old Hank Williams records. But I've never done that live, yet!

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Willy B – I think a good rhythm guitarist will keep the song together & a lead guitarist will accentuate the lead vocals. Then during the solo, he will do something that accentuates the song & not do some

crazy lead with a bunch of notes that says, “listen to all this stuff I can do.”

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Willy B – Well, I’d rather hear a band where everyone is good! Sometimes I’ve seen on the road a band where there’s one really good player (not always the guitarist) & the rest of the guys aren’t so good. It really depends on the band.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Willy B – A fiend of mine in Chicago has a killer acoustic guitar from India. I thought it was a Gibson, but upon closer inspection, it was spelled “GiVson”! The lettering is exactly the same. That guitar plays awesome!!! He wont sell it either!! I would love to get a hold of Eddie Van Halen’s original Frankenstein guitar. I’ve heard about how great it is, & I’d like to see for myself.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Willy B – I like Andy McKee a lot. He’s an acoustic player, but I like his style.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Willy B – The Independents album *Eternal Bond*, The Independents *Live From Murder Beach*, The Independents *Do It Again*, The Independents *Back From The Grave*, The Independents *Stalker*.

QRD – Anything else?

Willy B – Thanks for the interview!

Andrè Erbyeah of Three Kings on the Hill

January 2013

Name: Andrè Erbyeah

Bands: Three Kings on the Hill

Websites: 3koth.com,

threekingsonthehill.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Andrè – It was a simple no-name Japanese made Les Paul type with bolt-on neck & all gold finish. I sold it a few years later when I started my first band & got a beat up 62 Fender Strat, white/rosewood.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Andrè – Right now I'm keeping it simple: Guitar - Zoom G5 - amp. But I also have a larger set up: Guitar - tuner - wah - amp & through the FX-loop I'm running whammy - Eventide mod - & time-factor - stereo-power amp. Most clubs don't come with stages big enough, though....

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Andrè – Guitar, it's like an extension of the body & the mind.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Andrè – Blackstar HT-100. All tube, sounding great. A lot of choices in tone.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Andrè – 2002 ESP Horizon. I like the shape of the neck. It's got a bolt-on neck, which doesn't make the sound too dense. It comes with a Floyd Rose. I changed the pickups though for DiMarzios. They are two humbuckers & I changed the switching to get a funkier single coil tone.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Andrè – Strat body (smooth shape), bolt-on neck, 22-24 frets, Floyd-Rose, humbucker bridge, 2 single coils mid & neck.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Andrè – 5 or 6 when I counted last.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Andrè – Durability. I mean I always like things to last forever, no?

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Andrè – Well, I need a crunchy (or even quite heavy) & a semi clean funky rhythm sound. & screaming leads. So I'm always tweaking around, trying this & that. I might go for weeks with something & then trying something else again.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Andrè – Washburn N4 I like, simply because of the neck attachment. It makes it real easy to play the upper range.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Andrè – 15. I got an acoustic though when I was 11. I had no idea how to play & nobody around to show

me. I kept stuffing a mike into the hole & set a tape recorder to record & wrecked everybody's nerves.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Andrè – Still working on it.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound

Andrè – Hendrix, Page, Van Halen, Nile Rodgers, but there are many more I really like.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Andrè – Making place for a humbucker in a single coil guitar using hammer & chisel.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Andrè – Not enough, that's for sure. But I'm going to quit my day-job, get a cleaning woman & a chef, & I'm stylin'.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Andrè – Medium, it should say that on it. The exact

gauges I can't tell. Heavy ones I don't like. It feels like a brick in my fingers. & with thin picks you need a new one after each chorus or so.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Andrè – 9-46. We use standard tuning, so there you go. I like heavy bottoms, because it gives me a tighter low-end.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Andrè – Depends on how much playing there is. If I am just practicing myself, I can go for a week or two if they hold that long. Definitely before each gig.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Andrè – Luckily hardly ever. Only happens when I forgot to change them before a rehearsal after already playing them for a while.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Andrè – Basically they need to go together of course. But I think my strumming is what makes my playing. It's a steady up & down, whether I hit the strings or not. It's almost like playing percussion.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Andrè – I'm happy to know a couple guitar techs, so I stopped fooling around myself.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Andrè – I can read a little. But I prefer tablature so I know where to put my fingers. Tablature alone doesn't really do it. For writing my own stuff I use normal notation. & hope to remember where to put my fingers....

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Andrè – I keep a right angle at my elbow. That way I have the right angle of attack for my wrist & it's also much better for my fretting hand. I don't have to over bend it.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Andrè – Isn't rock & roll all about bad habits?

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Andrè – I've never got the hang of arpeggio & sweep soloing. It's feels completely alien to me.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Andrè – Tuning maybe... what's a trick? A summersault that makes the string bend, let the guitar twist around your neck, stuff like that. Everything else is technique. You know it, use it, or not. But maybe there are tricks. & damn it, I don't know them.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Andrè – Fingerpicking.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Andrè – At 15 I did have a few lessons with a jazz player. That was absolutely not my style, but he explained to me the importance of phrasing, how to properly hold the fretting hand & picking technique. & he introduced me to the Berklee method of modern guitar, which opened several doors.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Andrè – Never, I don't have a use for them.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Andrè – Rhythm you got to be able to play. & first off, a band needs a rhythm player. If you only play lead but you don't know rhythm, what's the point? So you stand around picking your nose instead of the guitar, waiting for the next solo. & if you are the only guitarist in a band you got to be both, like Hendrix, Page, Van Halen, etc.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Andrè – No way!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Andrè – Mattias “IA” Eklundh from Freak Kitchen. That guy is over the hills & way out there. Here I would say, the guy knows “tricks” on guitar. It really is puzzling what he's doing.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Andrè – My band Three Kings on the Hill has just released its first album *Shindo*. Check out “Earthshaking Voice” & “Disconnect”. There you have a variety of stuff I’m doing.

QRD – Anything else?

Andrè – The other 9 songs are good, too. So make sure to check them out!

Shane Handal of Set and Setting

January 2013

Name: Shane Handal

Bands: Set and Setting

Websites: [facebook.com/setandsetting](https://www.facebook.com/setandsetting),
setandsetting.bandcamp.com,
yoursetandsetting.tumblr.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Shane – I got a mini electric guitar when I was super young, but my first guitar that I got when I actually started playing was either a Schecter C1Plus or an Epiphone SG I, can't remember which came first. I sold it later on to buy a real guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Shane – My guitar is a Gibson Les Paul Classic 1960 re-issue from the 90s & I have used that almost my entire life in bands. I recently picked up an American '62 re-issue Fender Jazzmaster too, haven't played it live though yet. As for amps & cabs, I have an Orange Rockerverb 100 MK-2 & Orange 4x12 & 2x12 cabinets. I use a Line-6 M9 stompbox for delay & looping, a Holy Grail Nano for occasional extra reverb, a Boss DD-7 for noise,

Orange channel switch, volume pedal, & Boss tuner.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Shane – They're all pretty crucial in getting the tone that I shoot for, but I guess the piece that would cause the most noticeable change (if I didn't have it) would be the amp. If the replacement was similar to a Rockerverb then it'd probably be the effects that would be most noticeable if missing, because I use semi-custom effects depending on the riff & a bunch of looping. Guitar isn't as super important although it would be awkward with a different one.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Shane – Orange Rockerverb 100 MK-2 because it's loud, has awesome reverb built in, & it rules.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Shane – Les Paul Classic 1960 re-issue. Sounds great, but more importantly it's a guitar I have played a million times & have set up exactly the way I like it. Other guitars just feel weird when I play them.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Shane – It'd probably have some form of a flask on it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Shane – A mind-controlled pedal.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Shane – 2 Electrics, 1 nylon string acoustic, 1 bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Shane – They're either at home or at our practice space.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Shane – Auto-pilot load-in feature

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Shane – Tone, playability, look.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Shane – As much as it's worth.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Shane – The most I have done is adjust the action & intonation, which is more of a necessity than a customization or upgrade.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Shane – Reviews, ask friends/borrow from friends, play one in a store.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Shane – Rarely. I've had 1 main guitar & only 2 heads (both we're Orange) for almost 10 years.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Shane – Lock it in, live in it. Only looking to improve tone & expand, not change the main go to.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Shane – The stuff I have is pretty accurate to what I lust after. If I could afford to get other stuff, it'd probably be an original Les Paul or Orange from the 60s & 70s, not re-issues like what I have. So expensive though.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Shane – A fretboard with action that's actually playable. I've seen beginner guitars where they are so hard to play, it's setting you up for frustration.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Shane – I have my Dad to thank for this so there aren't too many bad purchases. The worst thing I ever bought was a Peavey bass head, but sold it & didn't lose too much money.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Shane – Feeling repetitive with saying this but as you can tell, I'm a Gibson & Orange amp fan.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Shane – Open E through a tuner.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Shane – I was in the 7th or 8th grade before I became committed to learning the instrument legitimately. 12 or 13?

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Shane – I still am learning how to play guitar.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Shane – I can play it better than the other instruments I pretend to play.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Shane – Any instrument is a good first instrument. I feel like piano should be the first instrument learned though.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Shane – I've always thought that playing & writing music is a blessing & a curse, but my guitar has always been my ally. Even if I have wanted to smash it a thousand times.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Shane – I don't know if influence is correct, but Jimmy Page & Tony Iommi inspired me the most to pick up a guitar. They both use either Gibson &/or Orange though too.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Shane – Whatever floats your boat.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Shane – Thankfully nothing more than a few chunks taken out of the body with drops & what not.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Shane – Learn riffs that are above your skill level & play it until it becomes your skill level.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Shane – I usually pick up a guitar & play from a few minutes to a long time every day. I always wish that I played more.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Shane – Dunlop nylons. Not sure the exact width, but it's a medium grey color.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Shane – .11-50 - Mediums. I strum kind of hard sometimes & would break my lighter gauge strings earlier on.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Shane – Every few weeks. You can hear when the strings start to dull out, so whenever that happens, I change them.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Shane – I never usually break new strings anymore (as long as they're medium gauge), so if I'm on top of changing the strings when they are dull, I'm usually okay.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Shane – Probably my strumming hand because I used to play in a fast death/thrash metal band, so there was a lot of practice there. I guess that allows me to freely choose different rhythms without hesitation.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Shane – My Dad sets up my guitar. He knows how to do it, it's free, & he has always done that since I was a kid.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Shane – Drop-D standard. It's heavy.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Shane – Ha, I use the camera on my phone or computer.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Shane – Low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Shane – Everything.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Shane – Any kind of string instrument I assume.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Shane – When I was younger I always wanted to do sweeps, hah. I still can't.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Shane – ^See above.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Shane – Front-flips.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Shane – Ebows are fun.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Shane – SWEEPS.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Shane – I did for a month or two. Mainly chords & stuff that I never use.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Shane – How to not read music.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Shane – Suck.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Shane – It's cool for specific things, but I don't use one.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Shane – Depends on the guitar. With my Les Paul, it's always at 10.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Shane – One can sweep & the other can't. ☹

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Shane – Definitely not. Good guitarists may be the least important part of a band ha-ha.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Shane – Probably John Lennon or Jimmy Page.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Shane – Hard to say, I don't really pay attention to that stuff. There's a bunch of bands that are pushing the limit of sounds & what not though.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Shane – Our new album that's not out yet.

QRD – Anything else?

Shane – Thanks for reading & listen to Set and Setting.

Alan Bishop of Sun City Girls

April 2013

Name: Alan Bishop

Bands: Sun City Girls/JFA/Paris 1942/Alvarius
B./Eddy Detroit/Destruction/Maybe Mental/The
Invisible Hands/Koes Barat

Websites: www.suncitygirls.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Alan – Yamaha FG 335 acoustic - still have it - it stands right behind the chair I type this from.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Alan – Guitar to amplifier, no effects live. Only use effects in studio.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Alan – The guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Alan – Whatever is available. I can get the sound I want from any amplifier.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Alan – I don't have a main guitar. I play whatever is handy. I live all over the world & have guitars in several countries.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Alan – 10 guitars.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Alan – In my house or with friends overseas.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Alan – Booby traps that electrocute Homeland Security employees.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Alan – Yes, I've customized several guitars.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Alan – Depends on what it is. If I've never used it before, I research & test.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Alan – I don't have "a rig" so yes, I change it every time.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Alan – I change tones all the time.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Alan – None. I can make a \$50 acoustic guitar sound like a mandolin, dulcimer, sitar, saz, or oud & a \$50 electric guitar sound like a Strat, Les Paul, or rocket engine.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Alan – It changes every single time.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Alan – 16.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Alan – I'm still getting better, not there yet.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Alan – It doesn't fit me better than other instruments. I play all instruments & I sing.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Alan – Not necessarily. Depends on the culture. Guitars are cheap & marketed well. That is an advantage.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Alan – Definitely an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Alan – Guitarists from the 1960s.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Alan – YES.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Alan – I never damage guitars.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Alan – Nothing else.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Alan – I play 1-2 hours a day for months sometimes, but when NOT playing guitar I can go months never picking one up.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Alan – Heavy plastic or nylon because I play hard.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Alan – Depends on what I'm after or what is laying around. Light or medium gauge strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Alan – I break strings all the time, so quite often.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Alan – All the time. I play very hard.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Alan – My strumming hand is strongest. I'm not into solos - it never interested me. The rhythmic element is what interests me.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Alan – I would never even think of having a guitar tech. I make my own coffee too. It's like asking someone to roll my cigarettes for me. Therefore my guitar is setup all the time. Or perhaps it has never been setup.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Alan – I use more tunings than I am aware of to count. Some are standard & open tunings; but many I experiment with once, play in it, & move on never to return again, unless by accident. There are many more possibilities in sound by utilizing multiple tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Alan – I have my own very personal & evolving system for this. I do not read or write music in the standard way, but my own system is a combination of many methods & it is quite impossible to articulate.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Alan – I've never measured it before. Not really sure. Not as high as that bass player for Spyro Gyra, that's for sure!

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Alan – Not playing guitar for months at a time as I play/do something else, but I always figure I'll be

back like I never left - which is basically true as soon as the calluses are built up again on my fingers.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Alan – Any other stringed instrument.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Alan – “Can't” is not in my vocabulary. If there was something I really wanted to do, I'd learn to do it.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Alan – Playing high C notes with Kenny G in a canoe heading over Victoria Falls.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Alan – Scissors.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Alan – Never.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Alan – To teach themselves. I would not be giving lessons.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Alan – It's impossible to emulate my style.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Alan – Production credits.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Alan – Anyone naming one person as the most innovative would be foolish. The most innovative guitar players are living outside the western world & there are thousands of them.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Alan – Here, as I'm too lazy to think about it

further:

suncitygirls.com/discography/AlvariusB_CD.php

QRD – Anything else?

Alan – No.

Grégory Duby of Jesus is My Son & Zoho
April 2013

Name: Grégory Duby

Bands: Jesus is my son, Zoho (previous band: K-branding, The Invisible Frog)

Websites: www.ffhhh.be

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Grégory – My first guitar was an unbranded Les Paul copy. I sold it some months later & bought an Ibanez 440R. I still have the Ibanez. It is the only guitar on which I've made some changes: removed one pickup, changed the two other ones, blocked one way of the tremolo, & added a fret zero. I still play it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Grégory – It depends on the project.

For Jesus is my son, I try to use as little as possible: SG (tuned in C) directly in a clean sound Fender amp (silver face Twin Reverb, Princeton Reverb,...).

For the other projects, the guitar may change: The SG, the Ibanez 440R, but most of the time it is with an Ibanez 2660 LP copy. About the effects, some

pedals come & go. Some others are more stable like: the BD-2, LS-2, TR-2, DD5 or DD6 from Boss & a ring modulator from Electro-Harmonix. I've also got an Ebow, some nails, some keyrings, & a piezo pickup. The amp is any clean tube amp with enough headroom.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Grégory – For Jesus is my son, it's first the amp, then the guitar.

When I play improvised music, the most important are the Ebow, the ring modulator, & the objects.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Grégory – Too many. Most of them just stay in their case. I have some difficulties selling guitars I used to play. For the moment I've got 6 guitars & 4 amps.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Grégory – I always tune the guitar down, put on heavy strings, & set the action high. Playing in E with a light set of strings, it's just a nightmare for me. That's why I really hate to test instruments in a shop. Anyway, I always try to buy used

instruments. The only upgrade I did is on my 440R. I put a fret zero & that was a great idea. The pickup change was done just to test.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Grégory – I always try to have a clear set “guitar+effects+objects” per project. It’s important to me that my sound is clearly defined & different from one project to another. I prefer to go deeply into one specific tone than losing myself in pedals.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Grégory – I started at 14 years if I remember correctly.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Grégory – I stopped practicing technical exercises 8 years ago. Now, I don’t care about being a good guitarist. I’m more interested in composition. My technique is enough to play what I want.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Grégory – First of all, it's Derek Bailey & Keith Rowe. Then, Atahualpa Yupanqui, Leonard Cohen on his first albums, Ry Cooder on Paris-Texas, Jean-François Pauvros playing with a poet, Nels Cline on Interstellar Space Revisited, Richard Lee Johnson on The legend of Verman McAlister, Keiji Haino....

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Grégory – I'm tired of doing exercises. To improve my playing I learn songs/pieces I like. For the moment, I'm really into classical guitar stuff. I'm learning pieces from Bach & Erik Satie. I'm also reading a book on Arnold Schönberg & there is a book on Olivier Messiaen on my shelf. These books do not improve my playing, but really influence the way I hear music & compose. It's a good source of inspiration.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Grégory – I try to play at least one hour per day. I love to play early in the morning before going to work. To wake up by playing some long songs, it's so wonderful. If I found enough time & energy to play 3 hours per day, it'd be perfect. I also take a

period of time to think about my music: rearrange new songs, thinking about how to make new weird sounds with the instrument, how to achieve some gestures with less efforts.... These reflections are as important as effectively playing the instrument.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Grégory – When the guitar is tuned in Eb, it's an 11-52 gauge string set. The SG tuned in C has a 13-56 set.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Grégory – As little as possible. I really hate to do it. Most of the time it's when it's too late. Even for a concert it's hard for me to find the motivation to do a change. I only make an effort when I have to record & then change the strings one week before.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Grégory – Some years ago, I would have said that my strumming hand was my best hand because I played a lot of fast riffs or just attacked the strings as hard as I could. Now I'm more interested in feeling the strings moving under my left hand & bending the note by only pressing a little bit more

on the string. Maybe that's why I love to have the action high. So, today, the hand that influences my sound the most is my left hand.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Grégory – I use & abuse Ebows in my improvised projects now. Actually, I started to use this gadget some months ago. I love slides too, but I sound too bluesy when I use one. So I do not really play with one live.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Grégory – I love to play without picks. Just with fingers. I'd like to control the velocity of each of my fingers independently. For the moment, I master it with only two fingers.

QRD – Anything else?

Grégory – Let me think.

Nathan Joyner of Some Girls & Hot Nerds
April 2013

Name: Nathan Joyner

Bands: All Leather, Secret Fun Club, Some Girls,
Hot Nerds

Websites: Hotnerdsmusic.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Nathan – My first guitar was an Epiphone bass. I didn't want to play bass anymore, so I sold it for a Yamaha guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Nathan – It varies from band to band depending on the sound I'm going for. My last band I used a 70s Ampeg SVT into a Hughes & Kettner 2x15 & an Ampeg 8x10 with a slew of pedals. Mostly Line 6 modelers. If you double up on them you get a not so typical sound that people familiarize that pedal with. Now I use a Hiwatt Hi-Gain 100 into a Marshall JCM 900 cabinet with a slew of doubled up pedals. Sometimes just straight into the amplifier.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Nathan – The whole enchilada.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Nathan – Hiwatt, because it's the only one I own.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Nathan – A 76 Les Paul Custom 2nd. The features that make it such are that it's the only one I own.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Nathan – It would look like a Les Paul, but with no tone or volume knobs & only one humbucker in the bridge position.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Nathan – I suppose it would be a synth pedal & a pitch shifting pedal with a touch of ring modulation. Then I wouldn't have to buy separate ones or carry a pedal board.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Nathan – One.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Nathan – I store it in the case on its side next to my side of the bed.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Nathan – Affordability.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Nathan – That it plays well & easy. How heavy it is. I once heard a guy say, “As long as it has a BITCHIN’ headstock,” so now when I look at them I laugh at the headstock. I don't shop for guitars that much since I can't really afford the ones that I like or want.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Nathan – Depends on the guitar & the sentiment attached to it. I can't look at a guitar & put a \$ figure on it.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Nathan – Customize it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Nathan – I research pedals thoroughly. I watch YouTube videos, which is usually some wanker setting it up in the most typical fashion. So, if the most typical sound you can get out of it sounds cool then I'll take it. I don't ever play them before buying them. Otherwise I'll get bored with it in the store & then I'll just say forget it. As for amps & guitars, I know what I like & want, so I'll buy something that sounds shitty & take it to Top Gear here in San Diego & they will make it sound like I want it to sound.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Nathan – I usually change it with the band I'm doing at the time. It keeps me learning & not getting stale in my sound.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Nathan – Yeah, I’m after a tone that doesn’t sound like a guitar.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Nathan – Travis Bean, Pigtronix, Moog, JCM 800s, JMPs, Hiwatts, I usually want everything but that’s extremely overboard. I have a pretty extreme personality though.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Nathan – There should be a little man or woman that pops out & says, “Remember that riff when you’re older. It will most likely sound better than the wanking around you’re going to be doing later on in life.”

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Nathan – Worst: BC Rich.
Best: Everything after that.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Nathan – I like most any effect as long as there are two of each thing. I like the way old things sound, so I tend to lean towards older amps & cabinets. They just sound better... to me.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Nathan – “Shave & a Haircut.”

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Nathan – 18ish.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Nathan – 24ish.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Nathan – I don't know. I guess it's the one I've stuck with for the longest.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Nathan – No, I think people should learn to play the drums, kazoo, trumpet, saxophone, keyboard, piano, accordion, anything else before they pickup a guitar. I really hate the way a “guitar” sounds. So many people pick it up & make it sound like a “guitar”.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Nathan – It’s usually on the same page as I am. It usually knows what I’m going for & doesn’t fight back too much. Yeah, we are good buddies.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Nathan – Sal Gallegos & John Rieder.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Nathan – Not at all, it draws a connection to it. Everyone should have a relationship with their instrument. A give & take. Name that thing! Then it’s not a thing anymore. I named mine “Ol’ Dirty” like Ol’ Dirty Bastard because one of the silver tuning pegs broke off & I only had a gold tuning

peg to replace it with, so now it has a gold tooth like Ol' Dirty Bastard.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Nathan – I threw my Les Paul out of a back door one time. It landed in some landscaped rocks & the neck broke. So I took it to Top Gear & they epoxied the neck & made it playable again. It actually stays in tune much better than it used to & it stayed in tune pretty well before that. Now it hardly ever falls out of tune, even slightly.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Nathan – I listen.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Nathan – Not enough. I would like to practice 168 hours a week.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Nathan – I was using a quarter for a while. It gave the guitar this mechanical sound. Now I just use a regular ol' nylon .88 pick.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Nathan – 11-52. I like the way they sound & the girth of the string itself. If they are too small, I feel like I'm playing a toy.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Nathan – The last band I was in I hardly ever changed my strings. I liked the way they sounded when they were dead. It was a very dub sound & I found it helped with the tracking of my pedals. Now I change them after a hand full of shows.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Nathan – I used to break them a lot when I was using a quarter as a pick. Now I don't break them very often.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Nathan – I tend to play percussively using both hands together at the same time. If I had to play favorites, I'd say I'm not proficient with either hand.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Nathan – I send it to one-eyed Dan at Top Gear in San Diego. He does the best work on my stuff. He's funny because he is so intense, but it's hard to not stare at the miner's cap he wears. It has a light on top of it & his right eye doesn't work all that well, at least that's what we think. He built me a bass VI one time. It took him several years even though he told me it would only take him less than a year. It was modeled after a Fender Telecaster with lipstick pickups.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Nathan – Drop D. That's just how I learned. I've been looking for an alternate tuning for some time now, but haven't found one that I am happy with yet.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Nathan – Right now I can only read tablature, but my girlfriend sometimes teaches me to read sheet music. I would love to learn to read sheet music really well.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Nathan – Navel area.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Nathan – I tend to play the same ol' chords or notes that I like, then I realize I'm doing that & I re-work what I'm going to play into something I wouldn't normally play. I wish I just started off trying new techniques & ideas instead of going through the routine of, "you always go to that note or chord right away."

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Nathan – The drums. I never really fully understood the way a guitar worked with other instruments until I fooled around with a drum set in the studio when I was younger. Then I understood that what I was hearing in my head was the combination of the two together. I think if a guitar player can play the drums, learning just the basics, then they'll have a grasp on the whole spectrum of what a guitar can accomplish. I play very

percussively though, so that's just my distorted view on that.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Nathan – I wish I could play like Sonny Sharrock or Grant Green. Jazzy but still demented & not falling into just one type of genre. I would love to incorporate elements of jazz into my technique or play like the guitarists in the Funk Brothers.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Nathan – I still haven't learned those jazz techniques.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Nathan – How to make the strings wobble wobble like techno songs.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Nathan – A slide. Sometimes I wish my fingers were made out of metal or glass, but just my elbow & leg are made of metal now.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Nathan – Jazz techniques.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Nathan – As a birthday present I got signed up for lessons from this guy. He told me I could bring him any songs I wanted to learn & he would teach me. So I brought him “Glass Museum” by Tortoise. He told me I didn’t want to learn that shit & taught me AC/DC songs. So, I learned how to play some AC/DC for one lesson, then never went back.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Nathan – You don’t need to learn to play the blues to shred. You don’t need to practice scales to shred. Just learn what you like. If you want to play the blues & scales, then learn them & play them. Most guitar teachers tell you that you HAVE to learn that stuff. I’d say just feel the music in the moment.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Nathan – Buy a guitar, some pedals, & be a little mentally unstable.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Nathan – They are great, when people don't make them sound like a tremolo system.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Nathan – NEVER! I wish I could remove them without leaving big holes in my guitar.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Nathan – One guitar is wanking off & the other guitar is bored. I hate when people say LEAD guitarist. Lead the way to the toilet so I can vomit.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Nathan – No, I usually listen to the drummers in bands. Very seldom do I pay any attention to the guitar playing. Most of the bands that I like, the

drummers are really good & the guitar playing is unique. I might say, “That guy or gal is a great guitar player, but man does their band blow.” I like bands that sound like a whole machine, not just some self-indulgent showcase of one instrument.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Nathan – Keith Richards. I’d like to throw it off a rooftop & give it back to him.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Nathan – Bobby Bray, I don’t fully understand his approach to the instrument & the sounds he gets out of it are not typical guitar sounds. His newer band called INNERDS is my favorite San Diego band. It’s a two piece, a drummer (Brandon Relf) & Bobby playing guitar. Every time I see it live, they blow my mind & make me want to go home & make my instrument sound like a caterpillar banging a hippo. I love what he does with sound vibrations using a guitar.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Nathan – I don’t believe I’ve created it yet, but you

can check out All Leather, Secret Fun Club, The BBC sessions of Some Girls. I've played guitar on those things.

QRD – Anything else?

Nathan – Look both ways before crossing the street.

Nick Jonah Davies

April 2010

Name: Nick Jonah Davis

Bands: Nick Jonah Davis / Escapologists

Websites: nickjonahdavis.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Nick – It was a Squier Stratocaster. I gave it to my nephew when he started to play at age 10. I think he still has it somewhere.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Nick – Acoustic guitar to microphone to PA. Maybe with a pickup added if necessary.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Nick – The guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Nick – I have an Orange Tiny Terror combo for when I'm playing electric. It sounds good & I could

afford it. It's not the ultimate amp though, still looking around for that.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Nick – My main guitar is a Martin SPD 16K. It's the best guitar I have ever owned by a long shot & things are possible on it that were not possible on previous acoustics, it sings. Plus it's flamed koa back & sides are beautiful. My wife bought it for me, just one example of her general awesomeness. Max Ochs played it at the New York Guitar Festival once & proclaimed it "a magic guitar". I agree.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Nick – It would be an understated guitar, probably built by Roger Bucknall of Fylde guitars, with a relatively wide fretboard, tall frets & a large dynamic range. It would look a lot like 1970s Fylde models. It would sing & wail & break peoples' hearts with its smoky tone. You would not be allowed to touch it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Nick – There is a guy in Nottingham called Martin

Cooper who runs the excellent effect pedal company Coopersonic. He has made a few pedals for me. If I had a signature pedal, it would probably be a slightly more robust production version of the analogue delay he made for me out of a cheapo 1980s pedal. Tempo is controlled by an expression pedal & it has an “infinite repeat” footswitch for cosmic feedbacking dub sounds. It is very fun indeed; more people should come to that party.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Nick – I think six at the moment; I’ve been selling a few off lately.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Nick – I store my guitars at home, in their cases. My children can potentially break any item of value left in range.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don’t?

Nick – I don’t spend a lot of time thinking about guitar cases. I have a good sturdy case for my Martin, which means I don’t worry too much about traveling with it. I wish my Weissenborn’s case was more robust & had a little storage box in it. It would be good if they all had rucksack-type straps for

carrying them on your back - as a solo artist I tend to tour on public transport. I was thinking of getting an old rucksack converted for this purpose actually.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Nick – It should feel & sound right, like it has some potential for great things to happen with it. The design should be focused on the sound & feel, rather than the looks & bling factor. It should be honest. It should be built to last. I really hate guitars with dragons inlaid all over the fretboard, etc. I generally favor second-hand instruments because they are played in & hold their value better if you end up having to sell them later on. You know when you're playing the right guitar.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Nick – A guitar should cost what it is worth. If someone has put in months of toil creating a masterpiece of design & craftsmanship, the price should reflect that. If a bunch of machined parts have been hastily assembled on a production line for £17, the price should reflect that. If you have just spent what amounts to the GDP of a small country on a “collector’s” guitar, there is a strong case that you are an over-moneyed fool first & a

guitarist second, if at all. Meanwhile C Joynes is out there kicking ass & winning accolades on a knackered old Epiphone, just to make me feel awkward about my posh Martin.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Nick – I like things to be in good working order & sound as good as possible so I can get on with playing. This means I need to get my guitar set up, worked on, refretted, etc., etc., etc., quite regularly or things start to annoy me. Guitars are pretty sensitive & things tend to move around, especially over the harsh winters we seem to have in England now. I recently upgraded my Telecaster pickups & bridge with great results.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Nick – It depends what it is & why I am buying it. If it's a crucial bit of gear, I'll put in a lot of time researching & hopefully testing candidates out. I have a few friends who I really value the opinions of on this stuff. If it's a bargain or something I'm swapping with a friend, then less so. Ultimately though, you go on feel. I occasionally make a foolish impulse purchase as a result.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Nick – I have a core rig that is unchanging, but I often buy & swap bits & pieces also. I'm a fingerpick nerd.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Nick – There are a few sounds that I really like & I'm always looking for them.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Nick – Guitars: Fylde guitars are so special. I really wish I could afford one; it would have such an impact on things for me. One day I hope. I would love a 1930s Triolian, but it would have to be the right one. That said, the modern ones are also excellent. Also I would quite like a Kona Stlye 3. Amplifiers: Vintage Bassman combos are appealing, as are the contemporary Dr. Z combos, again very expensive though. Schertler make nice acoustic amps. Pedal wise, just whatever sounds good. I did lust after a Red Witch Moon phaser for a number of years, but I have one now. I think I'm OK for pedals at the moment though, got that sorted out. I

have a real weakness for echo units though, it must be said....

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Nick – Some people start out on such poor quality guitars that it’s not really possible to play them at all. I had friends when I was young who had first guitars that were such pieces of shit, half-dead banana-neck Eko electrics or whatever. Nothing was really going to happen, they weren’t going to be excited by playing the guitar. The guitar should work to some degree so the player can get into the thing.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you’ve made?

Nick – Best - Martin SPD 16K. This guitar changed my life. Worst - You learn from buying bad equipment, nothing is truly lost, but when I was a teenager I bought a “bells & whistles” Boss multi-fx processor which led me up an effects-led blind alley for several years. It was fun though!

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Nick – I don’t like it when big name brands start to

knock out “reissues” which are basically terrible-sounding, poorly executed copies of their own classic big sellers. It’s cashing in their reputation for a fast buck & really puts me off them.

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Nick – I’ll hit all the strings open to find out what tuning I left it in. Then I’ll just improvise for a while usually.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Nick – I was 15.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Nick – 35.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Nick – Because it’s such a fucking wonderful instrument. Now I’ve spent thousands of hours playing guitar, it’s never going to happen with another instrument for me. I do quite hanker after a

hurdy gurdy sometimes though & I have just started out on the fiddle.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Nick – If you mean, should people start out on guitar, then why not? I think people should start playing whatever instrument excites them the most. Guitars are exciting to a lot of people & they should all have a go. After all, it could ruin their lives!

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Nick – My guitar is an inanimate object & I try not to ascribe too many human qualities to it. Life is complicated enough. It is the means by which I make 99% of my music though.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Nick – My friend Will Phipps has shown me more about the instrument than anyone else I've met. He had a mature touch, taste, & feel when he was very young & let me be in his band, which was cool. In terms of big famous players Bert Jansch & John Fahey have been massive to me, also Jimi Hendrix, Peter Green, & Jimmy Page. Lately I've been

listening to a lot of Sonic Youth, Marc Ribot, Keef & the Stones, Jack Rose, Glenn Jones, Bob Hadley, Martin Carthy, Alasdair Roberts, Ali Akbar Khan, Zia Mohiuddin Dagar, C Joynes, The Horse Loom, Asa Osborne of Lungfish, early Memphis country blues - all kinds of players really. There's a guy in Patagonia called Mariano Rodriguez that people should check out, he's a self-determined type of player who I really dig. Also Raul Garcia Zarate from Peru.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Nick – I've never done it. My Martin is known as "The Martin" & my telecaster is "The Telecaster". Maybe it happens more naturally when people have tons of guitars that they need to discuss with a guitar tech, or if something gives a guitar a story - e.g. B.B. King's "Lucille" (although I think he now calls all his guitars Lucille without having to rescue them from burning nightclubs first).

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Nick – In the 90s I had a MIDI pickup installed on my telecaster. It still has the drill holes, which I have decided not to fill in. They serve as a reminder not to be an idiot & use things correctly. I also

broke an acoustic guitar once when I was at a festival. I'm not actually sure what happened exactly, but it was certainly ruined when I woke up. As was I.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Nick – You can practice a lot in your head, see the book *The Inner Game of Music* for details.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Nick – I probably play about 8 hours a week. I would like to do about 3 hours in the morning & 3 in the afternoon daily, but reality seems to be against me on this one.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Nick – I am currently using Dunlop medium plastic fingerpicks, which I steam heat & straighten before filing them to a point. I hold them on with surgical tape due to paranoia - one flew off during a gig that was already going badly for me. Also a Dunlop plastic thumb pick. I seem to change around a lot though. I have loved picks by Fred Kelly (the slick picks) & John Pearse in particular & the Pro-Pik Fingertones are great, especially when you're

starting to fingerpick. For a couple of years I visited a nail bar & had long extensions on three fingers, but they made me look suspect to say the least.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Nick – I use John Pearse 710NM New Medium strings on acoustic, John Pearse Weissenborn strings on my lap steel, & heavy gauge D'Addario electric strings. The John Pearse strings sound the best out of any string I have come across (pipe down all you Elixir fans, I disagree with you!). The New Medium gauge is pretty unique & ideally suited for fingerstyle players. D'Addario's are in my experience the most reliable electric strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Nick – I change acoustic strings about twice a month, depending on how much I am playing (silence Elixir fans, I will not tell you again!).

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Nick – Very rarely. Usually only during a big gig.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that affect your style?

Nick – I don't really separate them out because they have to be working together pretty closely. I probably have to put more physical effort into maintaining accuracy with the right hand & more mental effort into getting the left hand to go to fresh places.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Nick – I go to Cat & Jenna Bradley at Xperience Guitars in Nottingham a few times a year. They can do, it would seem, more or less anything to sort out guitars. They have also done incredible work on a sitar & a fiddle for me. They are fine luthiers & great people too, well done them.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Nick – I use a lot of open tunings. Most popular at the moment are CGCGCD, CGCGCC, CFCFCC, CFCGCE, CCCCCC, DADGAD, DADFAD, BF#BG#AB, DGDGBD, DGDGBbD. They are a simple but devastatingly effective way of opening up the guitar, particularly for solo playing. I don't really spend any time in standard.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or

some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Nick – I occasionally record something into my phone if I think I might lose the idea, but generally I trust in good ideas to stick around in my head or fingers.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Nick – I generally play sitting down without a strap. I have to wear electrics quite high to play them properly, I wish I could hang them round my knees like Peter Hook & look like a rock monster, but I can't get anything done with the guitar all the way down there.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Nick – Maybe I play alone too much, I haven't been collaborating for quite a long time now & I miss it.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Nick – I suppose any part of a guitarist's unique sensibility might stem from their experience of other instruments & there are certainly directly

transferable skills from other stringed instruments. I'm not sure you could say any particular instrument would be most helpful to everyone. Regardless, people seem to be quite easily able to put their own stamp on the guitar, which is odd when you consider how many guitarists there are.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Nick – I wish I could do the Malmsteen type over-the-top “like music only faster” shredding, because I find it absolutely hilarious. The triumph of technique over content. It would be a bit too much work to learn it just as a joke though.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Nick – Jamming with Bert Jansch, now tragically impossible.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Nick – The Roy Buchanan pinch harmonic technique, randomly enough.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Nick – The tuner in my phone is the G-Strings tuner & it's the best one I've ever had. I really like those cheapy string winders too. You can make a pretty good makeshift guitar bench using a towel & a child's swimming armband. In related news, an old washable nappy makes a great guitar polishing cloth.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Nick – Free improv type playing is kind of fascinating. I think you gradually become aware of something that's beyond you & then naturally start to work towards it. Tremolo fingerpicking took me years to even vaguely sort out. Eric Carbonara from Philadelphia is the first guy I met who really had it nailed, listen to his “Infinite Breath of Lady Greensleeves” for an example.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Nick – I took electric guitar lessons for a while when I was 16, with Pete Dixon who now plays in a Who tribute band. He has wild chops & had studied at the Guitar Institute in Los Angeles. This seemed impossibly glamorous when I met him. He taught me what was going on in Hendrix's playing & a lot

of blues, jazz, & rock things. Mainly though, he was inspirational because his playing was so masterful. There's something about sitting 2 feet away from someone really playing the shit out of a guitar that teaches you on an intuitive level. Plus he was a pretty rock-n-roll dude in my otherwise fairly straight-laced existence at the time.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Nick – If I'm teaching, I try to find out what the person wants to achieve & focus things in that direction. I've come across teachers who try to squeeze every pupil into their pre-set way of learning an instrument. It's a massive turn-off.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Nick – Open tune a guitar, deeply misunderstand American Primitive fingerpicking techniques, bastardize them further with some half-baked British folk stylings, rely heavily on the resonance of open strings, & try to play in a way that's aiming to affect people emotionally above all things.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Nick – I think they're great. I never had an amp with one built in, but I do love using a tremolo pedal. It's a classic thing.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Nick – I have been reading about people disconnecting their tone circuits entirely to get a better sound. This interests me.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Nick – The rhythm guitarist is more likely to have a pen.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Nick – Not really, the point of a band is to be playing as a band.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Nick – I would like to own Eric Clapton's "Blackie", so that I could sell it & never need to work again. On a more sentimental level, being able to play a guitar once owned by Bert Jansch would

probably make me extremely happy. His music hits me like a waterfall of single malt.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Nick – There are a lot of great players coming up. William Tyler in Nashville springs to mind -- he's definitely innovative as far as I understand the word; he really brings something new & fresh to a well-established way of playing. Check out "Behold the Spirit" to see what I mean. Other players I rate for this include Alexander Turnquist, Jack Allett, Cam Deas. There's a banjo player called Paul Metzger who is absolutely insane in terms of innovation on that instrument.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Nick – I am indebted to Mr. Josh Rosenthal of the wonderful Tompkins Square Records, who made it possible for me to release a couple of albums where people can hear what I do. I am currently recording a follow-up, which is actually taking forever to get done. Meanwhile stuff happens live that would never go on in a studio, so come along to a show.

QRD – Anything else?

Nick – Ten of my favorite music films people might enjoy:

1. *Dhruvad* by Mani Kaur - about Zia Mohiuddin Dagar & family

2. The short doc about Richard Thompson, Jim O'Rourke et al making the *Grizzly Man* soundtrack (on the DVD extras)

3. The Tom Waits concert flick *Big Time*

4. *Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending* - about the Incredible String Band

5. *Acoustic Routes* - about Bert Jansch

6. *In Search of Blind Joe Death* - about John Fahey

7. *The Last Waltz* - the 1976 farewell concert by The Band

8. *Raga* - about Ravi Shankar

9. *The Devil & Daniel Johnston* - about Daniel Johnston

10. *Bird On A Wire* - about a 1972 Leonard Cohen tour

Claudia Gregory of Feel No Other
April 2013

Name: Claudia Gregory

Bands: Feel No Other, Claudia VS The Queen of
Hearts, Exhaust The Fox

Websites: www.feelnother.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Claudia – My first guitar was some beat up piece of junk I found in someone's closet. It had three strings (just enough to learn the riff from “Blue Monday”) & I actually still have it.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Claudia – Guitar, definitely. I normally don't use any effects, but I'm a fan of big sounds. Not big as in heavy, but as in layers & layers of sound. I love when people can use effects as something like a full on orchestra that sounds like it came from outer space. It's so cool to hear some new crazy sound every time you listen to a song.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Claudia – My main guitar is this inexpensive guitar that I picked up at a pawnshop. I love it because it has this really interesting sound to it. It's really imperfect & raw sounding. I also have a thing for red guitars & the built in tuner is a big plus.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Claudia – See, you shouldn't have questions like this, because I could write an entire novel. I think my signature guitar would be an acoustic electric with a really unique body. It would have some kind of classic renaissance artwork painted on it, but the subject would be like... mermaids or Narnia or something. Something enchanting ha-ha-ha-ha. I'd like opal inlays shaped like the phases of the moon. Shall I continue...?

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Claudia – I really like a lot of reverb, so maybe a mixture of some reverb, chorus, delay. I like a little distortion thrown in. Just a little bit to make it sound raw. Actually, it would be cool if I had a pedal that just created a cathedral around me. Ha-ha. Too much?

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Claudia – Five. Two electric, two acoustic, one acoustic-electric.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Claudia – All over the house so my cat can knock them over.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Claudia – Wheels & an expandable handle like a suitcase.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Claudia – I really just want something that fits who I am. I'm not all about buying super expensive guitars. I think when it comes down to it, you can make any guitar sound good if you put your heart into what you're doing. I guess if I pick it up & it just fits my personality & my message than it's perfect.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Claudia – I think it really depends on the person & what they're looking for.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Claudia – I like customization. I love taking something & completely making it my own.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Claudia – I love to educate myself, especially if I'm investing in something. I try to do a good bit of research before buying new equipment. There's nothing worse than having something stand in the way of what you're trying to create.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Claudia – I like to experiment with different tones/sounds & sometimes it'll work for an idea I want to get out, but I normally fall back into the honesty of just the straight raw tone of my guitar.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Claudia – I really love White Falcon guitars. I think they're all around beautiful.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Claudia – Tuning. Definitely tuning.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Claudia – I think the best guitar related purchase would be my capo. I love capos. The worst... hmmm. I'd say this pickup mic I got off of Ebay that extended maybe a foot. How do you even plug that in!?!?!? You have to lay on the ground to play. I'm not that punk rock.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Claudia – A song I wrote called “Ghost on the Shelf.”

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Claudia – I was about 14 when I picked up a guitar,

but when I really got serious about it I was around 18.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Claudia – I'm still getting there, ha-ha.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Claudia – I think it's easiest for me to write music with a guitar. I pick it up & strum some chords & before I know it I'm scribbling down lyrics. It kind of just falls together easier when you let your hands do the walking.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Claudia – I don't know. I started with piano, which I hear should be the first. I think in a sense piano is a good instrument to start on because you can really learn to match tones & eventually play by ear.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Claudia – Sometimes it can be both, but for the most part I would say ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Claudia – I really love the way John Gourley plays. He puts a lot of soul into his playing. I like Bob Dylan & Conor Oberst's realness when they play. Really honest & straight forward. I guess a lot of blues & old folk music. I think there's some great talent amongst strings within those genres.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Claudia – I haven't named mine, but now I kind of want to, ha-ha. Big red. No, but I don't think it's silly. In all, your guitar is normally who you tell all your darkest secrets to. I think that makes it real in a way.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Claudia – I try to be gentle, so I'd say break a string.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Claudia – I try to study my chords by learning songs

by artists I really love & playing them over & over until I can play through the song without any mistakes.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Claudia – During the winter I tend to play a lot more. Maybe 20 to 30 hours a week. I'd prefer to play music all day if I could.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Claudia – I actually don't use guitar picks. I strum with my fingers.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Claudia – I should probably pay attention to that.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Claudia – When I look at them & fear that they'll break during a performance.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Claudia – I always break the same high E string. That little guy is just so fragile.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Claudia – I think my fretting hand is a little better. I play my guitar upside down (left-handed but not re-strung) & I'm actually more so right handed, so my right hand is a little more proficient. I like that it makes it easy for me to strum in 3/4 timing, because that's my favorite.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Claudia – I set it up myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Claudia – Standard.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Claudia – I prefer chicken scratch. I normally write down my lyrics with the chords or ideas at the top of the page & then I'll record it so I remember what it is I liked.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Claudia – I've never measured, but it's usually just above my hips.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Claudia – I sometimes wish I played with a pick. I've bloodied up my fingers a good amount of times!

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Claudia – Any string instrument. I think the hardest part of playing guitar is building up calluses. It's a painful instrument to learn!

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Claudia – Spanish classical guitar. I love the intricacy of the fingerpicking.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Claudia – I have a lot of trouble with bar chords.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Claudia – I kind of make up my own techniques. I enjoy slapping the strings some times.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Claudia – Capo!

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Claudia – Finger-picking like a blue grass player.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Claudia – I haven't.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Claudia – I think it's easier to memorize chords when you start with learning your favorite songs.

That way you know how it's supposed to sound & you have a desire to really get it right.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Claudia – I guess play upside down, ha-ha.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Claudia – One is a little cockier.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Claudia – No. It just doesn't work that way.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Claudia – Probably Bob Dylan, just because he's legend & his guitar moved so many people.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Claudia – John Gourley of Portugal. The Man. He has a really unique sound. He mixes different

influences & I feel like it makes his playing very distinctive.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Claudia – www.feelnother.com “Even The Blue”.

QRD – Anything else?

Claudia – I don’t even play guitar.... Ha-ha-ha. Just kidding.

Matthew Filler of Mansions & Junipers
April 2013

Name: Matthew Filler

Bands: Mansions & Junipers, ex-Mahogany, ex-Monocle, ex-Friendly Bears, founder at Pralaya Productions

Websites: mansionsandjunipers.bandcamp.com,
pralayaproductions.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Matthew – It was a one of the Kramer electric guitars that metal guys used in the 80's. It was black with Seymour Duncan pickups. My uncle owned Kramer. I think I sold it to a friend when I was 15.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Matthew – Typically, I play a '79 Gibson ES-347 through a VOX AC30. Effects are plenty, but the core of my set-up is an Eventide Space, Line 6 Delay, EH Memory Man, MXR Phase, Boss Tremelo PN2, EH Big Muff. I also like my Fender Super Reverb & my Fender Pro Reverb....

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Matthew – The guitar, of course!

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Matthew – Vox AC30 because it's so dynamic. It responds to my playing in a way that inspires my performance.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Matthew – Gibson ES-347.... It has a coil reversal switch that takes it from being a heavy growler & fits it well within the dynamic spectrum of a larger ensemble, so it's super versatile. It also has those bone-rattling humbuckers & it's a semi-hollow, so the sustain is outstanding.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Matthew – I don't like flashy looking guitars. I like classics.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Matthew – I could really use a deeper, wider chorus that adds slight gain rather than thinning things out.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Matthew – Eight, I think?

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Matthew – Most of them are out on stands in my studio, & they get played all the time.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Matthew – Jet engines.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Matthew – Sound & feel.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Matthew – I own \$400 guitars as well as \$4000 guitars. As long as you get what you want from it, I don't know.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Matthew – I usually stick with what I get, but I'd like to upgrade the tuning knobs on a couple of my guitars. Otherwise, I don't see the point in putting really nice pickups in a super cheap guitar, or anything like that.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Matthew – Thoroughly... I usually know what I'm looking for before I purchase it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Matthew – Surely.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Matthew – I change around a lot, but I have a go to sound.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Matthew – I played out of this big Orange Reverb at a show at Johnny Brenda's in Philly once & it was amazing... I'd like one of those.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Matthew – Frets.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Matthew – This Eventide Space is the best reverb stomp box ever made. Most bad purchases have been Boss pedals with the exception of the Tremelo PN2.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Matthew – I like Electro-Harmonix, Eventide, MXR, & some boutique stuff that I've tried, like Death By Audio. This stuff is often analog, dynamic, & boosts your signal. They also do multiple things that relate to one another intuitively.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Matthew – Whatever's in my head.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Matthew – Thirteen.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Matthew – Hope to always get better.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Matthew – I'm not sure that it does

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Matthew – Piano might be a better starting point. But if guitar keeps you more interested, then rock it.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Matthew – I think I can safely say that instruments in general are a vital ally to making music.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Matthew – When I was a teenager, I was obsessed with Frank Zappa & Bill Frissell. I don't really have favorite guitarists anymore though... just favorite composers & favorite bands.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Matthew – I don't do it, but I'm not against it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Matthew – I stepped on my friend classical once & crushed the body. I felt soooo horrible, but this incredible luthier down in Long Branch, NJ was actually able to fix it & that guitar still lives today. As far as the circumstances & condition under which I stepped on this guitar... well, that's for a darker corner of the internet?

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Matthew – Sometimes I play lefty!

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Matthew – I'm not sure... all the time.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Matthew – Usually a medium Dunlop nylon... because I tend to angle down when I play & a regular plastic pick will shave down & lose its edge.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Matthew – Ten gauge.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Matthew – Once per month.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Matthew – Ummm... too often for somebody that's been playing almost 20 years, but I like to rock.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Matthew – Oh man, they better both be equally proficient.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Matthew – I use a guitar tech, but I'd like to learn more to properly do it myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Matthew – I used to use all sorts of tunings & make up some weird ones, but now I'm usually standard because I play lots more pop/rock influenced music now.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Matthew – Sheet music.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Matthew – Low-ish/waist.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Matthew – Drinking.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Matthew – I think everyone should play a little piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Matthew – Not sure.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Matthew – There's some challenging songs I've meant to learn that I've yet to spearhead.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Matthew – If you stare at it long enough, it turns into a sailboat.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Matthew – Bowing is kinda epic.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Matthew – I wish I was a more versatile fingerpicker.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Matthew – Absolutely. I learned everything.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Matthew – When I was younger, I had a hard time understanding how to apply new scales & modes over different progressions. I just didn't get the application until way later & it always seemed so abstract. I would break my student from the rigidity of that & help them use their own intuition to understand the relationships between the notes in the most fundamental ways.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Matthew – My playing can be a bit unconventional, so I dunno... lots of arpeggios, open notes sustained underneath, picking by the bridge, harmonics, but very melodic & tonal.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Matthew – Smoke 'em if ya got 'em.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Matthew – Very very often.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Matthew – I see no difference. This is weird concept to me from the 80s or something... like Izzy & Slash.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Matthew – No way.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Matthew – Frank Zappa's Gibson SG, because he's my idol in so many ways.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Matthew – Honestly, I have no idea. I used to love Michael Hedges, but he passed away in '98 I think. He was a guy that approached a guitar with a very different idea of what it was fundamentally. I guess I feel this way about Bill Frissell as well. I remember someone calling him the Thelonious Monk of guitar. I can get behind that.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Matthew – My most guitar heavy work in recent years is probably on the first Mansions & Junipers LP, *Mansion Beach*... there's lots of layered, delayed, looped, reversed, processed 12-string work & fun stuff like that. Although, I like the more recent Mansions & Junipers stuff in the past year or two, because it represents the band as a unit & the things that everyone brings to the table.

QRD – Anything else?

Matthew – Thanks for reading!

Julien Ottavi of Massacre, Formanex, & NG4
April 2013

Name: Julien Ottavi

Bands: Solo, Massacre, Formanex, NG4 (Guitar quartet)

Websites: noiser.org, apo33.org/formanex,
extrasystole.bandcamp.com/album/massacre

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Julien – Speedster traveler guitar, still playing with it!

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Julien – I like to play with Kaospad & computer & go through the PA. The guitar is like a sound generator for me.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Julien – Guitar+ebow+pitch+PA+room resonances.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Julien – Mainly PA or amps that I found on the road.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Julien – Speedster - easy to pack & travel with.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Julien – Sign by me, yes. Short as possible for the travel, sound at its best, integrated computer effects in it, that will be perfect!

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Julien – Integrated in the guitar with control by touching & moving axis of the guitar. Brilliant! I need to design one!!!

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Julien – 3 guitars.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Julien – In my studio.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Julien – Special part to transport a bow!!

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Julien – Mainly the size.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Julien – \$500 max.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Julien – Stick with what I get & explore it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Julien – 2/3 months, reading about it, or playing with before hand.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Julien – It depends on the band or the project.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Julien – I could change tone depending on the project & the band.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Julien – Easy to travel guitar, impossible for amps to do with really good stuff & pedals, a classic Kaospad effect for the touching side of it.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Julien – It depends on the type of music you are making.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Julien – So far I didn't start with beginner's guitar, so it is fine for me.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Julien – Beginner's stuff.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Julien – The body & the general timbre of the guitar (pickup).

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Julien – 30 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Julien – Ever & never!

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Julien – Easy to carry, great sound generator all in one (nearly) & good in the hand.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Julien – It depends, it doesn't really matter for me.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Julien – I see it as a sound generator, it is not humanized in that sense. Anything is good for me to make music.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Julien – Keith Rowe, Derek Bailey, KK Null....

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Julien – If they need to do so, why not? If they don't need it, that's fine too.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Julien – Bang it on the wall, scratch on metal scraps.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Julien – Look at other guitarists.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Julien – Sometimes never, sometimes every day, it depends if I have a gig or a recording to do.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Julien – As little as possible

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Julien – Not a lot, less than 1 year.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Julien – I love all those styles, something with bow, sometimes I hardly touch the guitar & use Ebow.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Julien – Myself, it's more accurate.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Julien – Open tunings for some projects & more classic for some others.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Julien – Nope I'd rather not; I play a lot with graphical score or improvised structure.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Julien – Most of the time on the table & for Massacre with a hand banging on the wall or with a bow.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Julien – No habit that I don't like.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Julien – Drums for sure!

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Julien – A-ha-ha-ha! 😊

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Julien – Play 100 guitars at once!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Julien – Oooops. 😊

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Julien – Ebow for sure!

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Julien – None.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Julien – Nope!

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Julien – Learn how to not play the guitar! Learn how to play the sound of it directly & not necessary the notes.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Julien – Not learn guitar. 😊

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Julien – Not really interested in tremolo

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Julien – Before a gig or to play for myself.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Julien – It doesn't matter for me.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Julien – No, impossible.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Julien – I am not a fetishist, any guitar will do depending on the project.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Julien – Me 😊 because I don't care about the guitar & that I love to play it!

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Julien – I just released a guitar solo album on an Italian label:

radicalmatters.com/radical.matters.cd.cdr.catalogue.asp?tp=1&c=95

QRD – Anything else?

Julien – Vive la no-guitar!!!

Chris Brokaw of Codeine & The New Year
April 2013

Name: Chris Brokaw

Bands: Come, Codeine, The New Year, The Martha's Vineyard Ferries, Hidden Tooth, The Catamites, Dirtmusic. Plus solo.

Websites: www.chrisbrokaw.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Chris – A \$35 no-name classical guitar from a pawnshop on 3rd Avenue in New York City. Sold it & bought something better.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Chris – Typically, it's either a Fender Jazzmaster or (lately) a Gretsch 6120, through a Tokai Metaldriver, Tokai TOD-1 Overdrive, Maxon Flanger, EAR Echo/Delay, into either a Traynor TS-50 solid state 1-12" combo amp, or a Musicman HD-150 head & 2x12" Reflex cabinet.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Chris – In order of importance: guitar, effects, amp.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Chris – For years & years it was my silverface early 70s Fender Twin; but it needs a lot of work (new tubes, caps, etc.). I bought the Traynor at a music store in Bloomington, Indiana in 2005 for \$65 & that’s the amp I use the most these days, especially at home. Great tone. Also easy to take around to smaller gigs in town. For louder/larger shows, I am really loving my new Musicman & cabinet, which I bought about 4 months ago. I also have a small tube amp made by Winston Eggleston of Memphis, Tennessee, which has an incredible sound.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Chris – The most used & most versatile guitar I have is my Fender Jazzmaster. It really works well for all applications I need: playing solo shows, playing pop/rock/noise in ensembles, doing filmwork. It has personality, but also a lot of flexibility.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Chris – I would love to design an acoustic guitar with a whammy bar!

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Chris – As a matter of fact, there is a company in Denmark that is working on a Chris Brokaw signature pedal right now! It will include the circuitry of two Tokai TOD-1 overdrives, plus a low-end boost switch for either/both overdrives. My dream pedal would have all that PLUS reverb & flange, but that's a lot to ask for in one pedal.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Chris – Seven electrics, five acoustics, one bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Chris – They're spread out all over the country.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Chris – Hinges & locks that are made out of iron. That are made out of kryptonite. That can withstand airlines!!

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Chris – Personality of tone; a good neck; good balance.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Chris – Whatever it takes. I've never spent more than \$1500 on a guitar & I think it would be hard for me to exceed that. I have a hollowbody Silvertone that I bought a few years ago in Albuquerque for \$175 & the tone on that thing is as good as any of my other guitars.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Chris – I leave them alone. I've never tweaked or customized any of my guitars at all.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Chris – A lot, except in the case of that Silvertone - I just saw it/played it in a store while I was on tour & bought it on the spot. I also bought my EAR delay/echo pedal from a friend without having heard of it at all - I played it for 3 minutes & said, "Sold!"

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Chris – Yes. I have a bunch of pedals & guitars & will try out different combinations depending upon my mood & upon who I'm playing with, what style of music I'll be doing, etc.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Chris – I think there's a particular tone or sound that I end up circling back to, even when I'm trying different stuff out. I think this is just sort of "my sound", or style.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Chris – I'd love a Gretsch White Falcon or any acoustic by Collings. Those are the main two! I'd love an old Ampeg half-stack, or a Hiwatt half-stack. Also a Fender Vibroverb Reissue. For pedals, I really want a Lovetone Ring Stinger. I'd like to have a 7-string, heavy metal style electric guitar. I'd love an acoustic bass guitar.

QRD – What do you think are some important

features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Chris – I think it should be cheap & difficult to play (like mine was). It makes you work hard & appreciate every guitar that comes after.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Chris – That Silvertone was a good buy. I don't know... I'm happy with almost everything I've bought. I'm sad that I sold the black Les Paul I had briefly in the 80s.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Chris – Audible Disease & Endangered Audio Research are both making great stuff right now (& I have endorsement deals with both). I love all the pedals Tokai made back in the day & I seek them out. I love Fender, Ampeg, Traynor, & Music Man amps. I hate Marshalls, I can never get them to do anything good - in my experience, they completely rob guitars of their personality. I'm always looking for a good reverb pedal & I think the Holy Grail pedals are not the answer there.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Chris – I don't know. It's always different.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Chris – 12.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Chris – I'm not there yet!

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Chris – I don't know. & I play drums a lot, too. Piano & violin did not work for me at all....

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Chris – No. I wish there were more drummers, more cool pianists, more people who did interesting things with trumpet, sax, bass clarinet.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Chris – I see it as a tool for creating music.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Chris – Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Johnny Thunders, Keith Levene, Ace Frehley, Greg Ginn, Ted Falconi, Pat Place, Johnny Ramone, Billy Zoom, Jorma Kaukonen, Keith Richards, Mick Taylor, Duane Denison, Rowland S. Howard, Chet Atkins, Townes Van Zandt, James Williamson, Eddie Van Halen, Keith Rowe, Chris Smither, the Buzzcocks *Spiral Scratch* EP, *Still* by Joy Division.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Chris – I don't have an opinion on that.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Chris – I fell asleep playing guitar in bed once, woke up in the middle of the night, leaned the guitar (an Epiphone acoustic) against the wall, walked off to the bathroom, & heard the guitar fall over & hit

the floor. The headstock snapped clean off where it meets the neck (typical Achilles heel area of any Gibson-made guitar).

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Chris – Sometimes I'll play & say, "I'm not leaving this room until I have a song written." Otherwise I just play whenever I like for however long I like. If I have a show or tour coming up I'll practice more diligently & focused more on getting a set together. Some weeks I'll consciously alternate between playing acoustic & electric; flatpicking & fingerpicking; with or without an amp. Sometimes I'll pick out songs, or parts, I want to learn from records. I'll try to learn the bassline of a song, or the violin solo on a song (on the guitar), or try to transcribe what a piano player is doing onto the guitar. Or the vocal line. I used to sit around a lot & learn the theme songs from TV shows; that's still fun to do & amusing for other people to hear.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Chris – I don't know. It really varies. Many days I don't play guitar at all. I really should play every day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Chris – Fender mediums for flatpicking. I like how they feel + play. I prefer the Golden Gate thumbpicks & any plastic fingerpicks.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Chris – I use Ernie Ball 11-52. Maybe 10s on my Jaguar. I just like ‘em. Could definitely use an endorsement on those! I’m very curious to try out the Cobalt. I use Martin Phosphor Bronze Light Gauge on my acoustic.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Chris – If I’m touring, I try to change them about every 5 shows.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Chris – Never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Chris – I think they’re both good. I wish my right was better. My left is pretty good at hammering on

notes/chords & I think that effects how I play songs & how I sing, too.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Chris – I can't really do set-up work. If a guitar needs work I'll bring it somewhere. I have a really good guy in Boston; I need to find a new one in my new home of Seattle.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Chris – I play almost exclusively in E flat. I stumbled upon it while I was playing in my old band Come; we arrived on that quite by accident. I have stuck with it through the years & basically ruined what used to be perfect pitch. It's fun now to play in 440 (which is what most people want to do), too.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Chris – I can't read or write music at all. Sometimes I'll make little notes for myself, but in general I just need to record stuff to remember it at all.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Chris – About average height, I think.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Chris – Not practicing enough.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Chris – Drums.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Chris – Classical. Western swing.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Chris – Western swing.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Chris – ? I don't know.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Chris – Capo & slide. I don’t really consider them “gadgets”, but the capo has become essential for many of the songs I’ve written in the last 8 years. I’ve been playing slide since I was in high school & I really love it.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Chris – I’m not sure.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Chris – I took lessons for about three months when I first started. It got me good enough to play in bands with other people, at which point I stopped with the lessons & started playing with people who were much better than me. Around 1999 I took some lessons from a guitarist in Boston named Milo Jones. I wanted to learn some new chords.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Chris – How to play The Ramones.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Chris – I'm not sure!

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Chris – Like, whammy bars? I think the ones in Fender Jazzmasters & Jaguars are vastly superior to every other kind. I think Bigsbys are pretty to look at, but very limited in what they can do. I often tell people that I think that Floyd Roses are better than Bigsbys, but that's mostly just to piss people off.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Chris – A lot. Especially with the Gretsch.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Chris – People should be able to do both. Or something that is neither.... I was in a band for a long time called Come, with another guitarist named Thalia Zedek & I like to think that we weren't playing lead or rhythm. We played something that was neither. That said, while I enjoy

the similar approach taken by Keith Richards & Ron Wood on “Some Girls” & “Emotional Rescue”, I also really loved the era when Keith Richards played rhythm & Mick Taylor played lead (specifically the live recordings from the 1972 & 73 tours of the US & Europe).

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Chris – No. I mean, I can enjoy it up to a point, but I probably won’t listen to it much.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Chris – Keith Richards has a Dan Armstrong with a 12-pole humbucker. I think they only made one for him! I’d like that pickup. Chris Smither has a really nice Collings, but I could just buy one similar to it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Chris – I think Annette Krebs, Stephen O’Malley, & Oren Ambarchi are all creating new languages for the guitar that are all unique & very exciting. Stephen’s is based upon architecture & has a tangibly visual element that is quite arresting.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Chris – I think some of my best electric guitar work is on a CD called *Tricks of Trapping*, by the band Snares & Kites. Otherwise, I would recommend any of the Come records (our debut *11:11* is being reissued May 21 on Matador/Glitterhouse Records), or any of these solo records of mine: *Gambler's Ecstasy*, *Incredible Love*, *VDSQ Solo Acoustic Volume 3*, or *Canaris*, all of which are for sale at www.chrisbrokaw.com - please purchase there, rather than Amazon, etc, as the money goes directly to me! Thank you!

QRD – Anything else?

Chris – I tour a lot, solo & with bands. Please come out to a show & say hello!

Andrea Vascellari of Lullabier & Firetail
April 2013

Name: Andrea Vascellari

Bands: Lullabier, Firetail

Websites: lullabier.com, firetailmusic.blogspot.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Andrea – An Eko Ranger acoustic. I still own it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Andrea – Epiphone Dot, TC Electronic Flashback delay, Fender Super Champ XD. Sometimes I put a Korg Ax3g multi-effect before the Flashback delay.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Andrea – Without delay I feel like naked, so... effects I suppose.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Andrea – Fender Super Champ XD. It's a tube amp with a wonderful crystal clean tone, it has a 2nd

channel which emulates Tweed Bassman or Blackface tones, and it's light enough to be carried around without breaking my back.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Andrea – Epiphone Dot Ebony, good mix between electric & acoustic sound & long sustain.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Andrea – A black semi-acoustic model by Gibson.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Andrea – A long digital delay, with analog simulation & a reverse mode.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Andrea – One semi-acoustic, one acoustic, one bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Andrea – In their bags or on stands around my apartment.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Andrea – No weight.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Andrea – Ability to stay in tune, long sustain, acoustic-like sound.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Andrea – My guitar costs about 300 € & I'm really happy with that.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Andrea – Previously I had a Squier Strato that I'd customized with a lot of stickers... but my Epiphone is still immaculate.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Andrea – First of all, I count seconds of sustain.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Andrea – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Andrea – During live shows, my tone is locked. When I record I change lots of VSTs.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Andrea – I've lusted a lot after the Epiphone & the TC electronic pedal before buying them.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Andrea – Ability to stay in tune.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Andrea – I'm satisfied with every guitar-related purchase I've made. My bass amp is fairly crap instead.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Andrea – I like Gibson-like stuff.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Andrea – “Waiting for You” by Rivulets.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Andrea – Seriously at about 20.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Andrea – Hope to level up in the next few years!

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Andrea – Really don't know. I started playing bass at 15, but I didn't fall in love with that. Simply when I started playing guitar, I felt comfortable.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Andrea – Piano lessons are probably more useful.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Andrea – Ally, off course!

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Andrea – Alan Sparhawk, Nathan Amundson, Mark Kozelek.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Andrea – It could be natural, even if I don't do that.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Andrea – None.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Andrea – Practice for me is mainly messing around with delay effects.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Andrea – I'd like to play at least one hour a day, but I usually play about four hours a week.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Andrea – Medium, but I don't really use pick a lot.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Andrea – Medium.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Andrea – Very rarely.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Andrea – Almost never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Andrea – Both are really equally important.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Andrea – When I bought my last guitar, a tech had set it up.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Andrea – Standard tuning & little bastardizations of it.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Andrea – I simply write down the name of the chords.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Andrea – Lately I'm sitting down while playing.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Andrea – Be a bad guitarist!

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Andrea – Bass.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Andrea – Soloing.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Andrea – Quick arpeggios using 5 fingers.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Andrea – Drone.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Andrea – Capo - it's indispensable.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Andrea – Feedback.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Andrea – Never.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Andrea – I'm a bad guitarist - couldn't teach anything!

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Andrea – Inaccurate arpeggios.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Andrea – I don't use tremolo - too many problems with tuning.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Andrea – Never - always full up.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Andrea – It's all about creativity I think. I've always admired guitarists soloing.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Andrea – Absolutely not.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Andrea – Wouldn't like to own anyone's.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Andrea – Jeff Martin of Idaho, with his 4 strings custom guitars.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Andrea – On my next albums I hope.

QRD – Anything else?

Andrea – Thanks. Hope the readers will like my stuff.

Jeff Barsky of Insect Factory & Plums

April 2013

Name: Jeff Barsky

Bands: Primarily Insect Factory & Plums, but I freelance around the DC area & play (or played) with BLK Tag, Catocin, Blue Sausage Infant (RIP!), Authorization, etc.

Websites: www.soundcloud.com/insectfactory,
insectfactory.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jeff – My first guitar was a nylon string classical that my parents rented for me (so I'd have an instrument for lessons) for a few years before buying me one. My first electric was a Yamaha with a humbucker & a single coil pickup, a whammy bar, a volume knob, & a tone knob.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jeff – There really isn't any "typical" way I do things - it depends on a lot of variables, like the instrumentation of the project I'm playing with & the room I'm going to be playing in, etc. For solo stuff, I run a series of Headrush delays, but when

I'm playing with other people who are also filling up space, I try to let things breathe differently.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jeff – It's all an extension of the same instrument; & on that token, it's all an extension of my body & it all greatly impacts my ability to respond with sound in a way that is connected.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jeff – My favorite amp is a small Fender 112 solid state amp - one 12 inch speaker. It's simple & has a beautiful & bright tone. It's not extremely loud, so it needs to be mic'd at shows or I can't use it. It doesn't have that huge ROCK sound. Otherwise, I'm really into my Sovtek M50 head & my Fender Bassman combo, but I tend to plug right into the PA just as often these days.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jeff – Fender Tele & recently a Tele made by Bob Logan in Wisconsin. The attractive features are the pure simplicity - 2 knobs, 2 pickups, fixed bridge, great intonation.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jeff – I've played Teles for over 20 years - that's all I need.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jeff – I wouldn't have anything special, I don't think. The things I tend to look for are durability & pedals that are silent when switching on/off.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jeff – A nylon string, 2 electrics (Teles), a Fender jazz bass. Have talked to Logan about building me a baritone. His work is beautiful & solid. (logancustomguitars.com)

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jeff – In cases on a floor in a room.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jeff – Nothing. Maybe personal ninjas?

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jeff – Simplicity.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jeff – Under \$100. You're likely to be freer to take chances with an instrument that isn't a piece of furniture.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jeff – Stick with it, unless you call getting graphite saddles to be an upgrade. I break strings with the banging around I do & graphite has probably saved me hundreds of dollars of low A strings!

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jeff – I rarely buy any type of equipment. I don't think I've bought a new pedal in 5+ years, but am in the mood for a new fuzz/OD pedal. Not sure which route I'll go! I love the Turbo Rat, but those switches are awful.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jeff – With Insect Factory, I've played directly into the P.A. for years. I don't want the signal getting hot & affecting the layers I'm building & I also have grown to love the pure sound without anything getting hot. With Plums, yes - I play into different equipment almost every time.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jeff – I genuinely don't really like thinking about things like guitar tone - I find it boring & not as interesting as volume & dynamics & the room.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jeff – None.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jeff – David Fair's article, "How to Play Guitar" should be plastered right on the back of the guitar.

Same with Beefhart's "10 Commandments" for guitar players.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jeff – I've tried twice to get into Jazzmasters & Jaguars. Beautiful sounding guitars with horrid playability. I couldn't play on them hard without feeling like they were going to break.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jeff – Nothing really. Fender amps have been cool. I tend to find something I like & end my search because I'm impatient.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jeff – I usually fade in notes with the volume knob to make sure the pots are clean.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jeff – Twelve.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jeff – Twelve years old - before I took any lessons & had no idea what the “rules” were for chords, etc. All downhill from there. I wish it was all recorded back when I had a true lack of any knowledge whatsoever & was just discovering the connection between my will to make sound & the actual experimentation coming out of the amp!

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jeff – It’s customizable. You can detune a single string & recontextualize the entire instrument.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people’s first instrument as often as it is?

Jeff – Sure!

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jeff – I don’t know -- both?

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jeff – The earliest pair of Def Leppard guys - Pete Willis & Steve Clark. Then probably Fripp, Sharrock, Keith Richards, Mary Timony, Johnny Ramone, Keith Levene, John Fahey, Sandy Bull, Terrie Ex, Neil Young. That Meat Puppets dude. Chris Brokaw's sheer honesty & versatility. Having said all that, I'm way more into performances (live or on a record) than specific people. Larry Coryell has some badass records, which account for about 1.9% of his output.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jeff – Yes.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jeff – I've never really done any damage.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jeff – I just turn on my 4 track & see what sounds good. Practicing is just as much about practicing my ears as it is my instrument.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jeff – I am most happy with my output when I'm playing frequently & recording, but I also really love not getting to play for a week or two & then picking a guitar up.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jeff – I love the Dunlop black ones with the grip, & the dark grey ones with the grip - they're nylon. I cut them up with a knife & scratch the strings with 'em. They sound great.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jeff – 11s on one Tele, 10s on the other. They just sound best with those particular guitars' setups.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jeff – Every 2 days when I'm on tour playing with rock bands. With Insect Factory, I don't tour for more than a week at a time & the playing is low impact, so rarely.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jeff – When I didn't change strings frequently, every three shows - without fail! I found that 2 was my threshold for not breaking strings. On day three I'd break several! Ha-ha. I'd be scrambling mid-song for the right gauge, etc.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jeff – When I play live & get excited my right hand just kinda flails around rhythmically - guitars can be forgiving that way on a right hand. My left isn't nearly proficient. Oh - I'm not a lefty. (My wife is a lefty, so I'm imaging her kind (goofy foot) might be confused!)

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jeff – I try to set it up myself, but if I don't get it right, I go to my place in Silver Spring.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jeff – Generally standard, but I manipulate that by playing with cut-up capos. I have one that I cut right around the high 'G' string that I'm particularly fond of! I also like tuning down strings slowly as

I'm playing. If I've tuned down several strings in a set, I sometimes end the performance in some weird tunings!

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jeff – A combination - I can read music, although I'm slowly forgetting how to do so in a practical manner - I just record into my phone or 4 track.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jeff – With Plums it's pretty low - I like a lot of strap room to rest the guitar flat on surfaces. With Insect Factory it's usually flat in my lap.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jeff – Tuning too precisely. It rarely matters that much. Plus, surprises can force you into some fresh territory.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jeff – Sax. Anything with pitch bending ability - it

can help you move out of safe diatonic spaces & start listening more to vibrations & air & human breath.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jeff – Not in particular.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jeff – Nothing, really!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jeff – Putting it away when I find I'm just noodling & done for the night.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jeff – I bought these triangles (percussion instruments) at the \$1 store about 7 years ago, & the metal rods used to hit it have been in my guitar case ever since. They make great percussive sounds when you wedge them in the lower strings.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jeff – Sweep arpeggio picking.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jeff – I studied for a year in college (classical guitar) & took lessons privately for a few years prior to college. I learned the rigidity of the “rules” so I could decide for myself what side of breaking those rules I wanted to exist on. But really - recorded music is a lesson, right?

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jeff – I’m not sure that I’m the kind of person who should be giving guitar lessons. (Although I do happen to be a grade school teacher.) I would tell people to listen carefully. & I would teach people how to play the spaces instead of just the notes.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jeff – Be me? Not because I’m doing anything that’s that original, but because everyone who does anything probably does so in a distinct way.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jeff – Annoying, but they can spring up some surprises. You go to hit a note after just doing a divebomb & find that it's out of tune!

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jeff – Constantly! I try to think about every possible variable & mess with it.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jeff – Egos.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jeff – No -- I cannot.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jeff – One of those triple neck guitars that the Cheap Trick dude played - it's ridiculous! Not even sure I'd be able to hold it right.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jeff – I'm not sure about sheer innovation, but I've loved a lot of Loren Connors' recent output - purely on a soulful level.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jeff – I'm real proud of the last Insect Factory LP, *Melodies from a Dead Radio*. Stream/buy at [Bandcamp](#)! New split LP coming this summer ('13)!

QRD – Anything else?

Jeff – Nope - thanks! This was fun.

Chas McKeown of Gray Young

April 2013

Name: Chas McKeown

Bands: Gray Young

Websites: www.facebook.com/GrayYoungMusic

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Chas – It is called Stella. My dad got it for Christmas when he was as kid. Then he gave it to me. Stella still follows me everywhere I live.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Chas – I plug my guitar into a Boss tuner, into an Austin Gold overdrive, followed by a Line 6 Delay, over to another delay (right now it's a carbon copy), straight into a Holy Grail Reverb, & then its off to the amplifier (which has been a Peavey Classic 50 for a long time now).

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Chas – Well I need all three. My effects aren't enhancers. They are a necessity. They are the paint to my brush. But if we are talking about the

different types of each of the objects mentioned, I would say that having a guitar that inspires me is really important. It needs to make me want to create something when I hold it.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Chas – Peavey Classic 50. Because I don't have the money to buy a different one even if I wanted to.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Chas – A Godin. Don't know the model. But it looks like a Strat mixed with a Les Paul kinda. It has been my one & only mainstay electric guitar until last Christmas when I received a Fender Stratocaster from Santa Claus.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Chas – It would have my name signed on it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Chas – It would have my name signed on it.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Chas – 2.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Chas – In their cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Chas – Little squirrel figurines.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Chas – Whether or not it inspires me to want to write music with it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Chas – I don't know. But I have played some really expensive guitars & hated them. & I have played some really cheap guitars & hated them. I think if you are looking for an instrument you should just play it & see how you relate to it. Don't even look at the price. It's irrelevant.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Chas – Just depends on if I feel like anything needs to be done. I recently got better tuners on my Godin because the original ones were too loose.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Chas – I won't ever buy a guitar without playing it. If I play a guitar & then still feel like I need to do research, then it's probably not the one.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Chas – No. But that doesn't mean I won't in the future.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Chas – I've got a sound that I have very much locked in that works for what I do in Gray Young. But maybe one day I will mess with that more.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Chas – Delay.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Chas – For it to stay in tune longer than a few minutes after you start strumming it. If a guitar is constantly going out of tune & you are just learning, you might be apt to give up. I hate tuning to this day.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Chas – I don't have any real allegiance to a brand. If I like it I will go for it. Effects & amps are instruments to me in a way though. They have to inspire me to want to create with them.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Chas – It.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Chas – I think I was in 10th grade.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Chas – Whenever I started playing in Gray Young. A band will make you play things you wouldn't have dreamed of. But it's not a case of leveling up to anything. Playing an instrument is about constantly searching. Gray Young is still making me feel like I have places to go with my guitar.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Chas – No clue. I've always loved that I can take my guitar wherever I go though.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Chas – People should play all instruments! Whenever they want!

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Chas – Haven't ever thought about it. But I will say both.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Chas – The Edge. Then from there... Johnny Greenwood. Don Peris. Billy Corgan. Robert Smith. Kevin Sheilds... & many more. Other guitar players affected me then & later & more will in the future I hope! One thing to say about this is that these guitar players are/were in bands that I loved at the time. I'm into bands as a collective voice. I'm not influenced purely by guitar players. I can hear drums in a band & feel inspired to write on guitar for example....

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Chas – It's naturally silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Chas – I used to throw my guitar around a lot more. I kinda stopped that. For a few reasons. One being I didn't want to break it. It's got scars. The pickup switch broke off. But I'm glad because I was always hitting it by accident & switching my pickups in the middle of songs.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Chas – All I do is just play these days.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Chas – Any work I have done that I can't do is by Guru Guitars in Raleigh, NC. Or by someone that I know in town that is more knowledgeable than me.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Chas – I just play & remember stuff. I have a personal tape recorder too. I wish the band recorded more of the jamming we do, but usually the good stuff sticks.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Chas – Fingerpicking.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Chas – I used to play with a capo more often. Maybe I will do that again. The Ebow is one of my favorite gadgets too though.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Chas – Fingerpicking.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Chas – I taught myself a lot of chords & was writing my own songs before I took lessons. I wanted to take them because I reached a point where I wanted to keep exploring, but I didn't know where to go next. I luckily found a guitar teacher who showed me things but never forced them on me. I got to take some maps & go where I wanted on those maps. I was lucky to have a teacher that fit my personality.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Chas – To just make up their own music.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Chas – That's not something that anyone should concentrate on. I loved certain guitar players because they found their own way. They made me want to find my own way. So I would rather encourage that.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Chas – Whatever gets you through the night.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Chas – Once.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Chas – Well, to be honest, I've never really seen the guitar in that light. I just see it as a world to explore. Not two worlds.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Chas – I guess you could listen to just the guitar & get something out of it. Sure. But I wouldn't be into

a band based purely on the guitar player. The music as a whole needs to move me. Not just one part of it.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Chas – None. They need it to play!!!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Chas – I don't know. But I'm way more into the music as a whole that is coming from a band than what the guitar player is necessarily doing these days. In high school I was a lot more into this idea of an innovative guitar player. I looked at certain players like that for sure. The Edge was at the top of that tree for me. But I wouldn't have been into them if I wasn't into what their band was doing.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Chas – *Bonfire* is our newest record. I would start there if I were me.

Jean D.L. of Soumonces!

April 2013

Name: Jean D.L.

Bands: Soumonces!, Stahlmus Delegation,...

Websites: www.jeandl.net

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jean – My first guitar was an Ibanez GRX40 & I bought with that a Boss DS-1 & all ready I played with the feedback of my amp.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jean – Guitar: My Destroy Squier Jagmaster. Pedal board: Boss Octaver, Turbo Rat, Fuzz, TS9, Red Panda Context, Line6 M09, Digitech Delay. Amp: Kustom Defender.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jean – Red Panda Context.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jean – My Kustom Defender because I like the clean sound.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jean – My Destroy Squier Jagmaster.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jean – I don't know... I don't care.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jean – A very deep reverb like a black hole.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jean – Five.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jean – In my car.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jean – The price.... I don't have the culture of a good guitar.... A cheap guitar is fine for me.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jean – I don't know, depends on your proper demands & what you expect. Between \$0 to \$200 is fine for me, but maybe for another guitarist it's maybe more....

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jean – I stick with what I get until I'm ready for a new guitar all together & that usually takes a while.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jean – Not that thoroughly....

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jean – Not often....

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jean – I change the overall tone.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jean – Jolana Galaxis.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jean – I think for a first guitar you must feel good with the instrument's proper sound... because the first guitar will influence your research in the future.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jean – Best purchase: my dulcimer & my bells. I don't really have any regrets purchasing something, in everything I try to find something little that may function in my work.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jean – I really like my Red Panda Context, TS 9 Ibanez, & MXR blue box.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jean – Nothing. I try to master the feedback & distortion.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jean – 17 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jean – I don't know.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jean – It was the most logic choice & I stuck with it.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jean – It is a normal choice, since its overall presence.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jean – Both, depends on my concerts... I have a peculiar relationship.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jean – Loren Mazzacane Connors, Lee Ranaldo, John Fahey, Keiji Haino....

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jean – I do not anthropomorphize my guitar... but depends on the guitar player, why not?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jean – Damage? I don't care about my guitar every day.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jean – I never practice.... Just plug & play.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jean – Only during my show or on recording session.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jean – Dunlop Tortex standard 88mm.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jean – D'Addario 09-42 XL.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jean – Whenever they break!

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jean – I don't keep count.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jean – It depends, I use both for different sensibilities during my set.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jean – I set up myself.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jean – My guitar is never tuned... I like accidents.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jean – I write my idea with words. I never use tablature.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jean – Low.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jean – Piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jean – Brian May.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Jean – Brian May.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jean – It's a secret.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jean – A brush.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jean – Never took a guitar lesson.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jean – Just feel your mind.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jean – Listen.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jean – Never.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jean – Derek Bailey... for the improv music.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jean – On my [bandcamp](#) page.

Adam Cooper of Alison's Halo & Lochheed
April 2013

Name: Adam Cooper

Bands: Alison's Halo - Lochheed

Websites: alisonshalo.com - lochheed.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Adam – Peavey T-60. Borrowed & never returned.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Adam – Alison's Halo: ES335 or Jazzmaster > Wah > Overdrives > Modulations > Delays > Reverbs > Loopers > Tube Amps

Lochheed: Jazzmaster > Multi-fx Units > Alesis Reverbs > Yamaha Reverbs > Boomerang Loopers > Roland Keyboard Amps / Tech 21 Power Engines

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Adam – Reverb.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Adam – Silvertone Twin Twelve - warm & punchy.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Adam – Jazzmaster -- the neck fits my hand.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Adam – Scenario does not compute.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Adam – It would look & sound just like a tube screamer.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Adam – 6 or 7.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Adam – Cases - wherever there is room.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don’t?

Adam – A pullout bed feature.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Adam – Loud & punchy.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Adam – 500.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Adam – Upgrade most guitars. Pots are all 1MEG.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Adam – A little - mostly buy & play it - sell it if it stinks.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Adam – All the time - little tweaks - mostly for ease of switching (less work).

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone &

locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Adam – Changes every day....

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Adam – Pedals - Klon.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Adam – Worst? DOD American Metal.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Adam – PRS Guitars - too slick looking. Also, any guitar that looks like it can impale you is pretty ridiculous.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Adam – An old Billy Idol bass riff -- don't know why.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Adam – 16.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Adam – 16.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Adam – Guitars are very forgiving.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Adam – Nah, piano.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Adam – A lover.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Adam – William Reid -- JAMC. Lou Reed -- VU.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Adam – Never named a guitar.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Adam – Ruined a Greco 12 string by putting paint stripper on it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Adam – Never practice unless I'm learning a tune.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Adam – 1 hour tops for both questions.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Adam – Anything over 1mm - thinner than that feels flimsy.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Adam – 13s -- sounds better.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Adam – When they break.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Adam – Every couple years

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Adam – Neither is close to proficient.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Adam – A tech.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Adam – Standard -- easy to remember - Eddie Ate Dynamite Good Bye Eddie.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Adam – None.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Adam – Low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Adam – Bad habits are the sum total of my playing style.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Adam – I don't play any other instruments so I'm not sure.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Adam – A Moog guitar -- they look crazy.

QRD – What’s a guitar goal you’ve never accomplished?

Adam – Quitting.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Adam – Hammer on/hammer off at 16.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Adam – Ebow.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Adam – Play like Dave Davies of The Kinks.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Adam – One lesson - he tried to teach me a folk song (“Greensleeves”?).

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar

lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Adam – To walk away, never come back, & just make up something on your own.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Adam – Not think.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Adam – I like those things.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Adam – Never - full on.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Adam – None.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Adam – Bad songs = bad band.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Adam – John Squire's Gretsch.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Adam – Christopher Willits / Scott Cortez / Sight Below / Simon Scott.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Adam – New Lochheed coming soon.

QRD – Anything else?

Adam – Nope.

Chris Summerlin of Kogumaza

April 2013

Name: Chris Summerlin

Bands: now -- Kogumaza, Grey Hairs, Dusty Bible. Then -- Lords, Felix, Wolves Of Greece, Last Of The Real Hardmen, Reynolds, Economy Of Motion, Stage Blood, more I have forgotten. Sometimes - Ex Easter Island Head, Damo Suzuki's Network, Glenn Branca Orchestra.

Websites: www.honeyisfunny.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Chris – It was a 1970s “Made In Japan” copy of a Gibson 335 that I found in my uncle's house & convinced him to swap a portable TV for. I still have it & it still gets used from time to time. My first guitar that I went to a shop & chose was a brand new Gordon Smith, the little Les Paul Junior type thing. I ended up selling that to my friend Marceline when she wanted to learn guitar. She sold it on, so I have no idea where it is now, which is a shame as I could have flogged it to Johnny from Hookworms for a fortune.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Chris – I guess it depends on what band/project I'm doing but generally it's the guitar into some type of volume boost/cut & then into some sort of pedal that gives me something to react to from time to time (i.e. a delay of some sort usually) & then into the amp. Maybe a bit of reverb on the amp if I'm feeling "atmospheric" (not often).

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Chris – Again, it varies based on what band it is, but a lot of what I do is based on the sound being really full, so that's always going to need a decent amplifier. I'd be happier playing a borrowed guitar & pedals through my own amp than vice versa.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Chris – It's an early 1990s Fender Twin. It was the first "proper" amp I bought & I've had it for about 17 or 18 years now. They're not very popular amongst the cork sniffers who like valve amps so they're always fairly cheap. There's some good advice there: people who spend lots on premium gear are always going to say it's amazing as they spent a fortune on it so think outside of that & save yourself some cash (i.e. Peavey made some killer amps in the 80s & they can be bought for pocket

change, or found in a skip usually). The design of the Twin leaves a bit to be desired (the knobs stick out from the front by a half an inch or so, so you always end up shearing them off when you load the amp into a car), but I've stuck with it & I have a combo version & a head version (through an Orange cab). They're really loud, lots of EQ options & you can run everything to both channels so you always have tons of clean headroom. I use the Dual Showman for bass as well as it sounds great for either. I also have a little 15 watt solid state amp I swear by for recording.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Chris – At the moment it's a 70s Univox Hi Flier. I went to Texas in 2007 & stayed with a friend over there & he had one & I just loved it straight away. The necks are really slim, the whole guitar weighs nothing & feels perfect for me (& they look cool & they're pretty cheap). I helped him out of a tricky situation a few years later & to say thanks he bought me one from Nashville Craigslist, which was amazing of him.

Last year I got another one from Brooklyn when my girlfriend was on holiday there. I just saw it online back home in the UK & it was 2 blocks from where she was staying so I took it as an omen. It was a bit of a nail, but I got Xperience Guitars in Nottingham

to totally rebuild it. They did an incredible job & that's the one I use the most at the moment in Grey Hairs & just generally.

For Kogumaza I use a 70s Japanese SG copy. I got it off Ebay in about 2001 from a guy in Birmingham for 110 quid. It had the unbranded John Birch pickup in it when I got it & it's a bit of a mystery. I tried to find out where it came from & John Diggins (who worked with John Birch) said it was a special order for an artist (hence it's unbranded). I'm hoping Tony Iommi or Dave Hill, but I'll never know.

I play bass for my friend Dusty Bible too. At the moment I'm using his violin bass from the 70s. I have a 70s Epiphone but it's being restored at the moment - another "£100 to buy / £200 to restore" classic money-pit purchase from me. Both are short scale as I have the tiny hands of a child.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Chris – I'd be pretty happy with anything that had a bolt-on neck, was nice & resonant but not super heavy, thin & shallow neck profile, decent bridge & high output pickups like P90s. Just one volume & tone. I like the slightly reversed Mosrite shape as well, so I guess what I am saying is: a Univox Hi Flier with all the faults ironed out. A Mosrite, basically.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Chris – Martin Cooper - an amazing gear boffin who runs Coopersonic - built me one for Kogumaza that I suppose is the closest to a “signature” pedal. It’s a type of delay that takes a weird glitch in the particular pedal it’s based on & then controls it with a wah-wah type pedal that’s attached. We call it The Cosmonaut. If it breaks I’m kind of screwed though. That or a Green Russian Big Muff with the tone control taped to zero & Jimi Hendrix painted on it.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Chris – Too many. Including ones that are in states of disrepair, I think I own 12. Most with a value of around 100 quid though.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Chris – I don’t really store them properly anywhere. Some are in hard cases at home or at the practice space or under my bed & some are just lent up in corners or on sofas.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don’t?

Chris – A retractable bungee cord that you could wrap around the case so if the latches fail it doesn't just spring open like a Jack-In-The-Box.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Chris – I would love to have a technical answer, but I admit it's mainly about how cool I think it looks. I admit it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Chris – I have guitars that were free, guitars that were £100 & then guitars worth four figures - they all have something valuable about them to me, so cost doesn't really factor in with what makes something good - for me, anyway.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Chris – I tend towards cheaper guitars, mainly 70s Japanese stuff so I usually swap out the tuning pegs & the bridge for something more reliable. I occasionally change pickups if I really like a guitar, but not its sound & I just had a really cheap weird guitar I own sprayed a lovely turquoise colour. I had

dot markers installed on the edge of the neck on my main Univox as well as I couldn't see what fret I was on & Tipp-Ex kept rubbing off.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Chris – I'm pretty geeky about guitars & I'm always reading up on obscure brands so I definitely know a bit about what I'm after. The flipside of that is they're usually really rare & in far off lands so testing them is impossible. Opening a packing box that's arrived is always a bit of a shot in the dark. That's why it's handy to know some really skilled guitar repairers.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Chris – Not really. A change in rig tends to mean a change in band or a substantial change in sound for that band. I think it was Neil Young who said guitars have songs in them & while that sounds a bit romantic for me, I certainly think that the limitations that certain gear has can be a positive when getting a new band or project together & a guitar or a piece of gear can inspire you to play a new way. So I only tend to swap things round if I'm trying to provoke a change of some sort.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone &

locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Chris – Depends on the band again really. For Grey Hairs it's a really narrow scope for sounds, which is kind of deliberate. Just really loud & distorted & that's pretty much it. Maybe some echo. For Kogumaza there needs to be more opportunity to vary the sounds so I have more devices to do that, but still there is a "sound" there that is constant under it all.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Chris – How long have you got? I have a list of gear stored in my brain that, although I'm not actively seeking it out, I would be scrambling around trying to work out how to afford it if I ever saw any of it for sale. Not all of it is crazy expensive stuff I should add. I'd love an Acoustic Black Widow guitar, or a Ludwig Phase Synthesiser pedal or an Electro-Harmonix Freedom amp, or a Maestro Echoplex & so on & so on. The one guitar I always lusted after though was a Mosrite Brass Rail. Semie Moseley (Mr. Mosrite) built these sporadically in 1976/77 ish. He built 34 of them apparently. They have a brass chassis running through the neck (bigger than a trussrod & visible on the fretboard) & they're a real piece of craftsmanship. I can't see

how Semie ever thought he's turn a profit on them, but he seems like he was the sort of guy to not really give much of a shit about that anyway. I love the story of Semie & I love the look of everything he built, but they're way, way out of my price range usually. Earlier in the year I was amazed to find one for sale in America that I could just about afford & through a lengthy process of negotiation it's currently on a plane heading my way. I hope it lives up to expectations....

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Chris – Good tuners & a bridge that intonates. It's good to know the guitar works well, so if it sounds out of tune it's your own fault. Not that sounding out of tune is necessarily bad.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Chris – Best, financially, were buying Travis Bean guitars pre-Ebay. You could pick them up so cheaply & it was fun to hunt them down. I ended up selling mine for a big profit & it pretty much cleared the debts I had at the time. No regrets. I bought a 70s Telecaster Deluxe as well when they

were still quite cheap & I still have that & it's a beautiful thing.

Worst was a Guyatone Mosrite copy I got off Ebay. I felt ill when I saw it in the flesh when I went to collect it. I was with my friend Ian in this guy's house & Ian just burst into howling laughter in front of the guy. He laughed too as I'd just agreed to give him way, way too much money for it. I didn't laugh. In the photos it looked like a Univox but in the flesh it looked a bit like someone had carved it in CDT class. Straight back on Ebay...

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Chris – In terms of what I like: for guitars it's anything Japanese made in the 70s basically. I love Japanese copies of big brand guitars. Like I said I'm a sucker for Univoxes, Mosrites, & Fender Telecasters too.

For amps: Fender, Hiwatt, JMP/JTM Marshalls, Sound City, Selmer, etc. Basically - loud, simple, bassy. I'd take a solid state bass amp from the 80s over most modern tube amps. If I am recording I go for something really small with reverb & a tone section that's not too trebly & has plenty of mids.

As for pedals, I know folks with hundreds of fuzz & distortion pedals, but I've had a Sovtek Green Big Muff & a Fulltone FD2 forever & I've never found anything to beat them. I have lots of pedals, but I'm

pretty unfussy about them, it seems easy to get so into pedals that you forget to make music sometimes, so as long as they work & are reliable I'm happy.

Dislikes: aside from the obvious stuff like "tone-lawyer" relic guitars that cost thousands of dollars, I've never really got on with Gibson guitars. I had a nice one (an ES135) that I recorded with a lot, but I never really bonded with it or felt right with it. I have friends with Gibsons that I really like so maybe I just haven't found the right one (at the right price).

I am also (unfairly?) prejudiced against amps that have too many settings & knobs. Modern Marshalls, Blackstars, Engls, Mesa Boogies - that sort of thing. Channel switching & a big old 8 button footswitch is usually the tell tale sign. They always sound too thin & cheap & processed, but that could well be the person playing it at fault.

Basically, I'm a sucker for gear that's in some way considered unusual. I'm on a band's side before they start if they have a whole bunch of weird equipment that looks like they used their ears to select. Even when it breaks down/blows up/falls apart.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Chris – For some reason it's "El Diablo" by ZZ

Top. On the bass it's "Jump Into The Fire" by Harry Nilsson.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Chris – 16.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Chris – Mid 20s I think. That's when I was probably most technically able & from then on it's been a process of sort of "unlearning" to get where I want to be. Which is still a ways off.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Chris – Guitar -- electric guitar anyway -- is kind of a blurry instrument. It can be something supportive & defining or it can be loose & characterful like a feature instrument in an orchestra & that's a fun line to straddle, never really going too far off it. You can also make mistakes & be a little looser than with other instruments, as it doesn't stick out so much if you do "fall off". That suits me as I'm pretty imprecise & I like that chance to vary what I am doing from gig to gig or from one part of a song to another depending on how it feels at the time. I

should add I'm not talking about "jamming", just very slight variations to things to push or pull a song along. Plus, it seems like the electric guitar has infinite possibilities somehow. When you get in a rut there's always something to haul you out of it, be it hearing something someone else does, or a new tuning or a new way to think of playing or even going back to something you haven't done for a while. I'm always keen to see the guitar as a tool & not buy into the mythology of guitar playing but there is something kind of magic about it sometimes.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Chris – My first instrument was the drums, but I was never very good so I saw my friends playing guitar & thought it looked an easier option (at least in terms of equipment). Guitar is a good starting point though, but it's also quite frustrating when you're young - the gulf between where you are & what you want to sound like is usually huge. Or it seems it. It's good to remember you don't need to be a virtuoso on guitar to make your own music with it. It's good like that.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Chris – Ally definitely. I’ve not run out of ideas on it yet - good or bad. I still love playing guitar.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Chris – In terms of “famous” guitarists it’s Kurt Cobain for me in terms of first influences. It didn’t even occur to me to play an instrument until I got into Nirvana so it was lucky in a way. A lot of my friends were into metal & then made that sideways jump to Nirvana, but they really were the first band I ever liked at all really - so it was easy to go from them as a starting point & end up at Unwound or Nation Of Ulysses or The Wipers or Flipper etc. Being hit by Nirvana at that age was like someone opening a huge door to the rest of my life, for better or worse. They certainly led me to Sonic Youth & the idea of just approaching the guitar from a tuning & sound perspective, which is something that’s stuck with me.

Then I was lucky enough to be gigging almost straight away so the people who influenced me most were those around me like my friends Nick or Phill & then bands I met. Much as I love Jimi Hendrix & Sonny Sharrock (& they’re definite influences) what shaped me as a player is seeing people like Joe O’Sullivan (Bilge Pump) or Neil & Ralph (Bob Tilton) or Steve Malley (Unit Ama) up close &

often. Seeing how someone who is a peer & is operating at the same level as you do what they do is really amazing. I feel really lucky to have known so many really unique & incredible players.

In terms of how to approach guitar playing & making music in general, John Fahey is always going to be a big influence & it's his later "electric" period that really continues to inspire. There's something of a movement at the moment to re-contextualise him based entirely on his acoustic guitar playing & any analysis of the last period of his life is dismissed in comparison. But his later electric stuff like *City Of Refuge* & *Womblife* are really unique & interesting records. Fahey had dazzling technique on the guitar on his early records & it's easy to be seduced by that & to try & decode how he did it & plenty of people, me included, have tried. But the epiphany (if you like) is that even when you can mimic him exactly (like so many people do at the moment), it's still not him. It's just a technical thing. You can do two things with that epiphany: you can carry on further into technique or you can abandon it & try something else. What's remarkable is that Fahey himself seems to have had this epiphany. He talked about his acoustic records being comfort food, of them being lies he told to avoid his true feelings & that his later music was him confronting those feelings head on. Automatic technique versus something more thoughtful & honest to the self. That's amazing & it bums me out

that his career trajectory is seen as a boom & slump as opposed to a constant upward curve of discovery. It wasn't his fingers, it was his *brain*....

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Chris – I don't know... I guess I think of them as having personalities maybe. I think using expressions of lust & desire towards inanimate objects is a bit weird though.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Chris – The band Wolves Of Greece existed between about 2000 & 2004. I think we did something like 35 gigs & produced under 30 mins of music. Really small returns. But I still have boxes of bits of equipment from that band. I don't think any of us ever smashed a guitar up Pete Townshend style, but a lot of stuff got broken by accident. The paperweight on my desk at home is a headstock off a bass. The one that makes me wince was smashing the body horn (!) off a Les Paul Junior copy by throwing it backwards into my friend Jim & breaking his camera in the process. I smashed a black Telecaster at the 2nd or 3rd gig I ever played too as a result of youthful exuberance.

Turned out well though as I had it fixed & I still have it, much modified & much loved, 17 years later. I'm not sure I could ever just pole-axe a guitar into bits. Seems cruel. Which maybe answers Question 28. Every time I see video of Kurt Cobain turning a Hi Flier into matchsticks I feel a bit sick. Plus - The Who. I mean: *The Who*. Come on.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Chris – I occasionally sit & noodle on the sofa, but not very often. If I play guitar at home it's usually working out some idea that's got in my head at work or thinking, “What would happen if I tuned it to this?” & so on.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Chris – It varies, but I would say on average 3 or 4 evenings a week I'm playing solidly, either guitar or bass. That's just fine for me.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Chris – I still use whatever I found on the floor. I like the grey Jim Dunlop ones, but I recently found 30 of those neat Cactus grip ones on the floor at a gig in a pouch, so I'm working my way through

them. They're not my ideal thickness, but I can work around it. I used to have a pick with Billy Corgan's face on it that my friend Neil stole for me when he roadied for the band Zwan. It was good slowly wearing away his huge bald head from gig to gig.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Chris – I used to use the heaviest I could bare, as I love low end, but last year I slipped over & landed on my hand & damaged my ring finger. Since then I've had less power in that finger & it's changed my playing a bit, so I've switched to a hybrid set of strings where it's a really heavy bottom & a really light top & they seem to work. For Kogumaza the guitars are tuned weird so it's a 52, two 28s & three 13s (I think).

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Chris – Not very often. If I've had a run of a few gigs I'll change them because they'll just be completely corroded, but I have some guitars that have strings on that are years old because of fiscal reasons (& sheer laziness).

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Chris – Hardly ever. I play pretty lightly; it's

usually corrosion from sweat that makes the strings go at the bridge end. I have more of a problem with electrics in guitars crapping out because my sweat runs under the pickguard & corrodes them. Most of my guitars have had their pots & wiring changed out at least once.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Chris – Strumming hand definitely. I'm not very fluid with my left hand at all & it's why I tend to gravitate to open tunings. I'm definitely a rhythm player.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Chris – I do basic stuff myself, but anything involving the truss rod or making permanent changes to a guitar, I'll send for the professionals. I am really, really clumsy.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Chris – I've always used lots of different tunings, it's a good way to take your brain out of normal patterns of playing & also, to be honest, it makes playing things easier as well. I'm not hugely

dexterous so I tend to look to tunings to solve that & get out what I can hear in my head. My first band Reynolds used about 10 tunings; it was a total ball-ache with about 4 guitars & 2 basses at every gig. Wolves & Grey Hairs are both standard (or occasionally Drop D). Felix was a bit like Reynolds in that I'd just tune to the open chord of the song & sometimes capo to make it easier. Lords was all Open D tuning for everything for both guitars. For Kogumaza, both guitars are unison-tuned to 3 octaves of the same note & then we sometimes capo to different points to each other. The idea with that is to make a huge power chord between the 2 guitars, in stereo across a stage. Or a huge mess, depending on how you see & hear it. Myself & Neil (other guitarist) played in Glenn Branca's Orchestra & the tuning for that was a 2 octave version of this. Having a guitar around the house in that tuning showed how infinite the possibilities could be for something that, on the surface, looks like it might be really limiting. It's just one note, you can't do those little runs up a scale easily, but it's that limitation that then opens the door to new possibilities.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Chris – I write stuff down in my own version of tab

if I really need to remember it, but usually I figure if it's a good part it'll stay in the memory.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Chris – Somewhere in the middle. It's hard to have a Univox Hi Flier anywhere other than as low-slung as it will go, Johnny Ramone style, but the cutaway at the top just perfectly frames my beer belly so I tend to hoist it up a tiny bit for dignity reasons.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Chris – I sometimes try & play too full & it's a hangover from being in bands without a bassist I think. I just try & always play the biggest part I can to fill the sound & sometimes, when you step away & hear the whole band... then less is more.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Chris – Drums definitely. Knowing how to slip in behind the beat or go ahead of it is crucial to guitar playing & feel, whatever "feel" is.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Chris – I'd love to have enough dexterity to be able to play what I'm hearing in my head in real time. You see people like Richard Thompson, Nels Cline, Marc Ribot, & especially Hendrix (around the *Band Of Gypsies* era) & the translation between their brain & their fingers is almost instant. The trick with those guys is that what they're hearing is still exciting.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Chris – I don't know. I think I'd like to do a fully improvised electric gig where I don't use a looper & it's not textural or ambient. I did some recordings like that that worked really well, but I've never had the bottle to do it live.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Chris – I don't think I learned it as much as stumbled on it, but there's a neat trick where you basically punch the strings above the pickups to create a tremolo effect. Not good for string & pickup longevity though.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Chris – The capo has become more useful to me over the last few years for sure. I have a capo I cut apart with a knife that only capos 3 of the 6 strings that's pretty handy.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Chris – I'd love to be able to play a pedal steel really well.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Chris – I've never had a proper lesson, but I've always asked people how they do things & asked them to show me if they can. My friends basically taught me to play.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Chris – I think being able to work the left & right hands like a drummer is really important, so I'd teach them how to play Bo Diddley style in open tuning so they get that on/off muting/strumming thing down as a natural thing even before knowing chords, etc. Also, a big revelation for me was that

the same chord can be found in lots of locations on the guitar neck. Sounds stupid, but being able to just play a C chord in 4 or 5 spots on the neck is really useful & it unlocks the fretboard way more than learning scales will ever do.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Chris – If I have a “style”, I suppose it’s a rhythmic thing & dropping in & out around the beat. Making use of drone strings & tunings to fill out the sound is a constant too. Semitones in riffs maybe. I’m pretty predictable....

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Chris – I have a Fender Jaguar & the best thing about it is the trem - I really like a Jag/Jazzmaster trem as they have a springiness that you can really connect with. Bigsby’s too, though they’re less reliable. My Univoxes have tremos; but they’re awful, so I’ve taken them off.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Chris – A fair bit. If I’m recording I usually have the tone right off for certain things & compensate on the amp, as it sounds better to me. I’m not much of a treble fan so I usually try & find a sweet spot.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Chris – I think exclusively either is pretty dull, I gravitate to people who do both somehow. You'd never say Steve Cropper was either, or Hendrix or Greg Ginn or Chris Hamley from Circus Lupus, or John Reis or Greg Sage or Tony McPhee....

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Chris – No - if anything I'm always about the drummer. I can ignore anything, even if only for a bit, if the drummer has a style that's their own & is fun to listen to. I don't know how much attention I pay to actual guitar playing in other bands other than checking out their equipment secretly.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Chris – It'd have to be Kurt Cobain's Mosrite Gospel or one of the Univox Hi Fliers he had. I like the look of the sunburst Phase I Custom he played on Saturday Night Live. Seeing that stuck in my head as a teenager & it's probably why I play one now. I'd be happy to take that one off someone's hands....

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Chris – Asa Osborne of Lungfish & Zomes is someone I know & mentioned before, but he plays guitar like no one else. Total economy, but total understanding of the sound & the physical nature of the electric guitar. His parts are so simple, but how he propels a whole band to sound the way they do is beyond deciphering. It's more than just "this finger goes here; the amp is set to this." Getting into Lungfish a long while ago really changed the way I looked at making music & the goals I set for myself when doing it. Not sure how much guitar Asa is playing these days though....

I've mentioned Joe O'Sullivan & Steve Malley already as well, but they've always been people whose playing I think gets better & better. As they get older, they feel less worried about letting influences in that aren't considered "cool" & it's inspiring.

Other things that spring to mind are Terri & Andy from The Ex, Stef Ketteringham from Shield Yr Eyes, Loren Connors, Mick Turner, Nels Cline, Marc Ribot, The Boredoms, Branca, Ex Easter Island Head... &, of course, Tony Iommi.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Chris – That's not for me to say, I'd be the last person to judge that. In terms of how I feel after finishing a record, I'd say the Kogumaza album is the closest I've come to getting the guitar in my head down on vinyl though. On the occasions I hear that record, I'm always a little bit surprised that it's us playing it.

QRD – Anything else?

Chris – If I think about all the people I know across the world, the majority of them are friends because of my involvement with playing guitar. That's pretty crazy when you consider it.

Chris Vaisvil

May 2013

Name: Chris Vaisvil

Bands: solo

Websites: www.chrisvaisvil.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Chris – A cherry red one pickup Sears Silvertone electric that was brutal to my fingers - I bled. I have no memory of its demise; I would guess it was dismantled for parts.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Chris – I mostly record directly into a USB audio device into Sonar & use guitar rig or other effects. If I am not recording like that, I use a used Bulgera 22 watt tube amp with one or more mics & no other effects.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Chris – I'd have to say the guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Chris – Currently my Bulgera tube amp - because it is a tube amp.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Chris – I don’t have a main guitar since I am a microtonal guitarist & have several guitars, all in different tuning or fretless.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Chris – It would be a 12-string electric with removable fretboards so I could change tunings on the fly.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Chris – I love my MXR Distortion+ because I get distortion without changing the tone of my guitar. I really dislike tone controls on distortion pedals & consider them a limitation because they torpedo my tone changes like changing from neck to bridge pickup.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Chris – I have 12, 15, 17, 19, 22 (DIY refret), 23 (DIY complete), & fretless electrics.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Chris – On guitar stands.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Chris – A compartment for pedals & cables.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Chris – Used & cheap enough that I won't be disappointed if I mess up the refret. I have had success in finding incredible value in used gear at Guitar Center.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Chris – Under \$1000.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Chris – Yes, I refret my guitars.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Chris – Since I buy almost exclusively used gear, it is all about my evaluation at the store.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Chris – Yes, because I don't have a set rig.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Chris – I'd die if I played just one kind of music, so yes, constantly.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Chris – I find the Moog guitar interesting. The adjustable fret classical from a Turkish luthier is awesome, but at 8,000 euros far too expensive.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Chris – A person starting out should have a well set

up, easy to play guitar. Almost every beginner has to fight their instrument & it discourages many from learning.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Chris – My best purchase was a Yamaha \$600 acoustic I bought for \$60 from Guitar Center, because it was damaged in shipping (a crack on the bottom edge). I fixed it with epoxy (I care not for looks) & it is a wonderful guitar. My worst purchase was an Indiana brand mandolin.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Chris – Used Fender Squiers tend to be good value & have standardized parts & are easy to modify.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Chris – Each guitar is different & asks for different music. I improvised what the muse tells me to.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Chris – 11 or 12.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Chris – That happened several times. I'm still growing in different ways. However, my hands are starting to hurt & playing a lot of barre chords for an extended period is now often impossible.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Chris – Actually I am getting better at playing piano -- & it doesn't hurt.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Chris – A first instrument should be one that the person is interested in, which usually means being able to play the music they like. It doesn't have to be a guitar.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Chris – Ally of course.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Chris – Adrian Belew, Robert Fripp, Jimi Hendrix, George Harrison, John Lennon, Jimmy Page.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Chris – Kinda weird, but I don't care.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Chris – I smashed a classical guitar against a piano once. I still regret that.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Chris – Play scales, though mostly I just make up riffs.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Chris – Not enough & too many.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Chris – Orange Dunlop or my fingers (even on electric or 12 string).

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Chris – Regular to maintain hand strength.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Chris – When they start to corrode or have intonation problems.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Chris – Anymore, that is rare.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Chris – I think they are rather equal.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Chris – I set up my own guitars now.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Chris – I try to stick to EADGBE or the equivalent with my microtonal guitars.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Chris – Whatever it takes.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Chris – Midsection.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Chris – Left hand position could be more perpendicular.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Chris – Bass.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Chris – Two-handed tapping.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Chris – Two-handed tapping.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Chris – One-hand harmonic tapping.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Chris – Ebow by far.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Chris – Two-handed tapping.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Chris – I took one rock lesson - I learned how to play "Black Dog." I took two years of classical guitar & had my mind blown.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Chris – The idea that there are no rules, only preferences.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Chris – Listen to my work.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Chris – Awesome. The best thing to happen to feedback.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Chris – I sometimes remove them.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Chris – Dexterity in playing runs.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Chris – No. The most important thing is having a good composition. Classical or popular music, technique does not make for memorable music. That is in the realm of the composition & it can be complex or simple, but if it doesn't speak to the audience it has no artistic worth.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Chris – I want a Taylor electric 12 string. Don't care who owned it.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Chris – Hard to say. Steve Vai is mighty impressive. Donte Rosati too.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Chris – www.chrisvaisvil.com

QRD – Anything else?

Chris – Yes, I wish I could go to Guitar Center & buy microtonal guitars. I hope to see that day arrive, as more people find the unlocked potential in microtonality & make music that simply can't be done in 12 equal.

David M Birchall of Kalbakken

May 2013

Name: David Birchall

Bands: Kalbakken, Levenshulme Bicycle Orchestra, Stuckometer, Chastity Potatoe, Desmadrados los soldados de Ventura, Birchall/Cheetham Duo, Birchall/Brice/Marks Trio, various solo outings under own name, Ramallah Mumtaz Power Duo, Open Eye Duo...

Websites: www.davidmbirchall.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

David – It was a red Encore, a mega cheap Strat copy. I saved up my paper round money. I still have some parts of the electrics kicking around.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

David – Right now guitar, volume pedal, overdrive pedal, amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

David – Electric guitar & amplifier are the

instrument; one doesn't work without the other. Pedals are a sweetener.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

David – A little 50 watt Laney tube combo. Sounds good & can be got on the train/bus with relative ease.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

David – An Ibanez artist semi-hollow body. It's easy to play & sounds amazing. You can get a really nice clipped trebly sound as well as mid warmth from it. Incredible feedback possibilities with the hollow body too & humbuckers too.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

David – Something with infinite sustain & possibility to gliss up notes. I think this might be an Ebow actually rather than a pedal!

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

David – Four that are playable. Two electric; the already mentioned Ibanez & a cheapo Strat copy by Sunn Mustang, I really like having an instrument

around that it doesn't really matter if anything terrible happens to it; potentially very liberating. Two acoustics, a Seagull massive finger picking thing, which sounds totally beautiful but I've come to realize is physically too big for my frame so I'll need a much smaller bodied acoustic next time; this will be replaced at some point; a lot of the work with this acoustic has involved preparations & textural work on the body so a lot of the varnish has perished. That in turn has made the frontplate vibrate in an even more incredible way, but its only a matter of time before its completed fucked; its kind of like when you have a dying battery in something & it sounds wild. Final playable instrument is a Spanish guitar by Alhambra; it's a nice instrument, entry level thing from the 1970s. Lots of carcasses & bits too. Some weird self-built things that probably don't count as guitars more like strings attached to pieces of wood.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

David – In cases, around the house, in corners of practice rooms.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

David – Depends what you will use it for & what sound you want to make. Obviously the more you

pay, the better made an instrument will be. A lot of it is in your hands irrespective of what the instrument you are playing is.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

David – The Ibanez I have fiddled with a bit: a metal nut for increased feedback potential & durability. An extend tailpiece for note bends, behind bridge strikes, & so on.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

David – Read up, YouTube, try one at guitar shop.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

David – Yes depends on the group/situation like to throw in delays, looper, mixer, more speakers, tapes, etc. if the situation demands it.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

David – It changes, recently added overdrive pedal again of years of using amp breakup.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

David – 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

David – My mid-twenties. Concentrated practice.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

David – Partly habit now. I've played it for a long time & feel very comfortable using it as an instrument. I've extended my vocabulary on it to an extent where it feels possible to realize pretty much what I want with it. If I could go back in time & choose to start playing something from a young age, I'd probably find it exciting to learn an instrument with a similar range but without the limitation of frets/equal temperament: cello, trombone for example. For the things I want to do with music, I generally find it a pretty well fitting tool.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

David – I think it's fine. They are the kind of

instrument that lies around people's houses & are accessible. You can learn informally on them; at least I did & I got a lot more out of that than crappy recorder & keyboard lessons at school.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

David – An ally for sure. One to know the furthest limits of without doing any damage to it, but definitely a familiar & useful tool.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

David – Dave Pajo, Derek Bailey, Sonny Sharrock, John Fahey, John Renbourne, Bert Jansch, Segovia, Tony Iommi, Booker White, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Son House, Ian Williams, Bill Frisell, Ali Farke Toure, Jeff Parker, Andy Moor, Terrie Ex, Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Dan Bridgwood-Hill, Fred Frith, Keith Rowe, Neil Davidson, Leke Benson. Some of these are huge influences & some very indirect & subtle.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

David – It's part of me when I'm playing, not something else.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

David – Mainly breaking strings. Never been able to afford anything more dramatic. My crappy Strat copy fell off the stage last night after the gig with Desmadrados, but was unbroken.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

David – Work with rhythm, active listening, drawing sound, reading/writing, written reflection on stuff I've done gigging & practice.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

David – A couple of hours a day. Probably double that.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

David – Usually fingers, but when I do it's a grey Dunlop one, 0.60? Also was given a metal pick, which I really like right now.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

David – Pretty light right now, 0.9 as high E. Before I was using much heavier as they sounded better, but compromised for being able to move around the neck easier.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

David – Before tour/when they look tired & dirty. Some of the work with preparations/objects I do really grinds them down, so sometimes they need changing every week/even daily if I'm working a lot with some stone/metal type preparations.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

David – Less & less, but I still have an incredibly heavily right hand attack, which I'm working on varying. Also some of the behind the bridge work I really enjoy involves a certain amount of excess pressure on the string at the bridge so they can ping often there: but I'm getting better at knowing where the limit for this is.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

David – Good question. I think in terms of traditional playing, probably my left does more

work, in terms of adding to the melody with pull ons/offers, hammering on, & so on. I mean I practice just playing with the left hand as a separate thing; I do lots of work on creating dense areas of notes through finger tapping with my left hand too. I still try to practice working with new chord shapes, patterns, runs; playing music you are not familiar with is really handy in this respect - I've used Bach pieces & Bossa Nova pieces the last few years to do this; not sure I'll ever be able to play that stuff in public, but it's great fun & really pushes you into new places. Right hand I still carry out a lot of careful work on picking, finger independence, & so on. A lot of the work I've tried to develop on guitar involves a certain amount of independence & separation of the roles of what each hand is doing, one hand carrying out a fairly traditional piece of work while the other works counter intuitively. For example, using picking patterns in the right hand while using objects in the left to mute/produce harmonics/distort the strings.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

David – I have a really limited amount of training in building guitars, so I usually do this work myself. It involves pretty simple maths mostly & a few tools.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

David – I stick with standard tuning or occasionally dropped D with electric. Acoustic guitar, the nylon string again, standard. The steel string acoustic ends to get into some nice open tunings, open D, Open G, Dm, C, some great Hawaiian type things; Open D with B in it. Stuff like DD AA DD doubled up. The way that instrument is built & sings really lends itself to a holistic tuning.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

David – I prefer recording & listening back as there's a lot of nuances, it gets insane to capture in writing music down. As a primitivist I find tab easier to use, but can very slowly find my way around sheet music. I've found sound drawing a very useful expressionist tool in terms of capturing large movements of sound, rhythm, ways to translate sounds to guitar.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

David – Incredibly heavy right hand attack.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

David – Piano: the way the notes lay out really opens up your understanding of chords & the way the guitar is special in terms of different voicings.

Voice: training your ear is really important for me as an improviser; if you can hear it & sing it chances are you can play it.

Percussion: a good sense of rhythm goes a long way.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

David – For sure flamenco.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

David – I never leave the house without a slide.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

David – Never took them formally. Learned a lot from watching & playing with other people, playing in bands, holing up in my room with books & records. Actively shaping my own learning.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar

lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

David – Ways to explore the physicality of the instrument & understand that as a key to playing it.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

David – Understand the physical principles of the instrument. Take some risks. Listen carefully. Don't be afraid to drop the guitar & play the balloon occasionally.

Stef Ketteringham of Shield Your Eyes

May 2013

Name: Stef Ketteringham

Bands: Shield Your Eyes

Websites: www.shieldyoureyes.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Stef – A nylon-string classical guitar that my Dad owned but hadn't learnt to play. It's in a poor state now, but I still play on it sometimes & I recorded a song on it in our last recording sessions.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Stef – My Fender Stratocaster into a Dunlop treble boost pedal into hopefully a 70s Fender Twin amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Stef – I would say my guitar. But also, no one ever says the importance of using good cables; a bad lead can ruin the signal reaching the amp.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Stef – These days for tours & recording sessions I hire a Fender Twin amp from a friend down the road. It's a 70s one. I also used it to get some twats off my backdoor step last weekend.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Stef – My Fender Stratocaster. The features that make it such are more that it's what I've been playing since I was 17, so I've gone through so many stages of learning on that guitar & done so many gigs & bands with the same guitar, broken & fixed it many times & I still love holding it & meandering away on it sat down. A significant feature is that I've removed some springs from the back & set it up so the bridge sits proud to the body, so I can lean on the bridge for melodic & feral effect & that's gone from being something I found fascinating at first to now it feels like second or first nature to me. The other things I've done are cut the scratchplate back to only keep enough to cover the wiring hole because I think the sunburst wood looks beautiful, & I put a Lace Sensor pickup in the bridge about ten years ago when the old one unwound itself & the middle pickup is disconnected. I had the neck refretted a couple of years ago, which felt like a nice milestone to reach with my guitar. It is the only guitar that I've bought

new & it's got that thing of being what I saved up for with my first job.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Stef – The exact answer is 6. I've listed them:

Fender Stratocaster, mid 90s American deluxe, left-handed, sunburst. Lovely.

Fender Stratocaster, mid 90s American deluxe, left-handed, black, it's ok.

Fender Stratocaster, mid 90s American deluxe, right-handed, blue, it's in bits.

Arbiter electric double cutaway thing, right-handed, sunburst, it's really nice.

Vintage SG copy, right-handed, red, it's a decent cheap guitar.

That nylon acoustic I said about, right-handed, I don't know its make.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Stef – In my bedroom.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Stef – That's an amazing question. Sadly I can't think of something.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Stef – I'm into buying & owning as few guitars as I can possibly get away with, bearing in mind my main hobby has been playing the guitar. I don't want to spend time trawling through Ebay or guitar shops looking for another bit of tat to put in my room. I only get a guitar if I really have to for some very pressing reason; the main one being if you use lots of different tunings, then you'll probably need a few guitars for playing live. But I would say the two things people don't check enough when buying electric guitars is if it sounds good at very very high volume & if it stays in tune well enough. The good thing about checking these things in shops is that the first involves turning an amp up to 120 decibels for a good while & the other involves twatting the thing about a bit.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Stef – Whatever! For instance I found my Vintage SG in a cash converter for £115 & there's nothing wrong with that thing at all. (That's Vintage as in the brand, not that I found a vintage Gibson SG in a second-hand shop for £115). I bought my Arbiter on Ebay quite recently for £375 & it's a really lovely

motor. I mean, that is a lot of money, but it's probably more of a nice guitar.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Stef – Yeah I've mucked about with my Strats quite a bit to make them suit me more, the others are kind of as I found them. Most upgrades I've done have been prompted by an actual failure of some sort, something that needed replacing because it was breaking.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Stef – I suppose I have, but I'm really into this Fender Twin I was banging on about. I feel very settled on my setup now & it's very simple really. It feels nice to hire a great amp from a friend.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Stef – It would be called the Mutilator. It would just totally mute everything, which would be very useful during band practices, I'd press it in-between songs for when we're talking about other stuff like sport or loneliness.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone &

locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Stef – Just the sound of my mate’s Fender Twin turned up full, with that boost pedal saturating the signal quite a bit more. Then I control all that potential pandemonium on the guitar’s volume knob. To use a comparison that everyone can understand, that’s the equivalent of buying a CR500, pouring in 5 liters of a fuel substance not approved by the ACU & then spending half the lap trickling around at jogging pace whilst you recover from the insanity of what happens when you twist the throttle back over all those bumps.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Stef – None! That fetishist stuff to do with amps & pedals & stuff give me the heeby jeebies to be honest, it always made me feel a little depressed hearing people rattle on about buying this or that bit of branded kit, & pedals in particular, just the sheer amount of consuming you can start doing if you go down the pedal route is frightening. Wait is “heebie jeebies” an old racist term? Sorry if so. What I mean is I stubbornly don’t want to own any bit of gear I haven’t been forced to admit I absolutely need. I’ve always had a sinking feeling when I see guitarist setting up their pedal boards before a gig, I

suppose I've always equated more pedals will mean less care about touch & soul. I'm meaning people pursuing the lead-guitar in a rock band thing, but using pedals to get there - that twat out of Muse would be an example. I'm not meaning people that are truly exploring sound & are not rock music as such. Ah fuck it; there are loads of exceptions to the rule I was trying to make anyway.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Stef – Good intonation & tuning stability, because when you're learning it's easy to be insecure that it's your fault if chords sound out of tune, when it might just be the intonations shagged. Which can usually be solved just by setting it up well, especially if it's an electric guitar. Low action helps beginners a lot I think. Which for people that might be in that situation means it helps if the strings are quite close to the neck. High action is when the strings are set further away from the neck, there're benefits to that too, but when first learning low action is probably better. If there's anyone in London who's learning & would like their guitar looked at a bit & has been put off by that muso stuff that can often occur often in music shops, then I'd be happy to check the setup for free if that can help.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Stef – Seriously, I buy so little guitar tat stuff that I can't think of anything. Stay away from cheap Ebay capos that have too tight a spring mechanism.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Stef – Yeah well I suppose I can't help but assume all the brands are just remarketing the same old tired shit whilst downing production standards as low as possible whilst they do whatever they can to stay afloat during the financial crisis. Surely the combination of escalating prices of materials in particular metals & so many people on tighter budgets for non-essential items than before, the most obvious way for large manufacturing companies to cope is to strip build-quality back to within an inch of the warranty agreement. Companies like Marshall get away with it because there's a load of photos of Jimi Hendrix using Marshall stacks in 1967 & that's their marketing sorted forever, obviously the amps are complete dog shit now compared to what they were back then. A huge amount of people buy amps because of their name, which was usually created in an era when production standards were much higher.

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Stef – Well it might be any set of notes at all, but last night it was Rory Gallagher’s version of Tore Down. Freddie King’s version is shit.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Stef – 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Stef – In that whole list of guitarists you’ve interviewed, I’d love to be the one who doesn’t say “now”. Just whenever I’ve had the bit between my teeth & whatever was coming out was what I wanted at the time, regardless what I’d think if I heard it now. Maybe it’s just something to make you feel better at the time of doing it.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Stef – Why do I think a guitar fits me more so than other instruments? The answer is yes.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Stef – Yeah, why not? It's better than going out & mugging people or becoming a stupid clown. Or watching whatever shit some television company is bolloxing out.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Stef – Rory Gallagher was the first & still the main. Anything he did from Taste until when Wilgar Campbell quit as his drummer is beautiful & for me the absolute cornerstone of my thoughts on guitar music. I love John McLaughlin's ultra-spraying style on the first Mahavishnu record. I love Danny Kirwin's fierce vibrato style of lead playing & I'm sure a lot of what Peter Green is credited for was actually Kirwin; Eric Bell was totally amazing & audacious on the early Thin Lizzy albums, wonderful & strange; & very recently I've got into Bill Orcutt & I'm really excited to have heard something as amazing as that recently. Obviously the list could go on & on & I've only mentioned the out-&-out virtuosos. It's a shame to note, but all of the people I've listed were truly amazing for only a few years, before either a meltdown or just becoming mediocre. I think people do lose their

spark & play themselves out. In Gallagher's case, I think he just got too good at guitar, too fluent, & his stuff after '72 doesn't have that sense of risk that it might fall apart. Maybe lead guitarists sound best when they're at the roof of their abilities, out on a limb, supply lines cut. I like the guitarists who would play it different every time, songs having a loose feel for a different expression each time, Gallagher's a great example of that. Taste for me are the ultimate band. When I was 12 & started raiding my Dad's record collection I was really lucky that he owned the two Taste studio albums, I'd be so melodramatic as to say pretty much my whole life since has been a direct consequence of that.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming their guitars)?

Stef – Yeah I do. I'd be ashamed to treat people the way I do my guitars. Ignoring them for days on end, occasionally picking one up & twatting the shit out of it until it's made the particular sad screaming sound I was hoping for, just so I feel better about myself.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Stef – I carved off the bottom horn from both my

Strats because it's pointless & gets in the way when you're right upstairs in the treble frets.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Stef – Just a lot of absent-minded thinking I suppose.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Stef – 60mm Dunlops.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Stef – 11-49 D'Addarios.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Stef – Every gig.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Stef – Both pretty good or more, but both really prone to muscle memory playing which is something I'm thinking it's time again to play away from at the moment. Would always like the whole thing to feel more & more natural.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Stef – Well I'd love to say all the time, but the reality is it goes that sometimes I just really want to play & sometimes those times fall on at a time when I can. It ended up being quite a lot I suppose. & also a fair bit of noncommittal noodling too, just inconsequential stuff to pass time.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Stef – Most Shield Your Eyes songs are in one of these tunings:

D A D F* A D

E x D* G* A* D*

F* x x A* C* D*

E x x x C* E

x means a missing string. Then capo-ing within those as well.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Stef – Just playing around with something & remembering bits, I don't mind if I don't get it back to exactly how the idea started. The only thing I'd write down are new tunings I've landed on & lyrics.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Stef – Another totally amazing question! & the answer is midway.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Stef – Always need to be wary of muscle memory & not let too much of it creep in to new ideas.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Stef – I've never asked the two outside fingers on my fingerpicking hand to do anything, but actually I'd prefer to think that it obviously didn't come naturally to me so I'll leave it be.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Stef – That thing about putting graphite shavings into the nut when changing strings & it helping the guitar to stay in tune, I wish I knew that when I started playing in bands.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Stef – I'd just like to feel more fluent at getting into a state of total spray. That sound like you've just left it to bounce on the rev-limiter, too stubborn to change up. When less is not more. I've looked the word "less" up & it means the opposite of "more."

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Stef – No, I did the opposite of that, I taught myself to play & kept it a secret from my school friends, because some of them could already play & I didn't want them to know I was trying now too. It felt great having a secret. People have less cool secrets these days, which is because of the internet.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Stef – I would teach them that it's okay to start writing you own ideas & riffs & things & songs right from the start, it can be a more rewarding way of learning for some people & I suppose it's what I did.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Stef – Singing & lyrics.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Stef – Make the bridge on their guitar sit up from the body & muck about with those tunings I wrote down.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Stef – Great! It's a great way of removing yourself from being bound to that whole thinking of there only being 12 notes.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Stef – When you're running a Fender Strat into a Fender Twin, you're gonna want to turn your guitar's tone away from treble or gigs will start looking like that scene in Biggles.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Stef – Lead guitarists, if male, are the ones talking to attractive women after gigs, rhythm guitarists are the ones talking to the barman about stout or simply

crying. Female lead guitarists are for some reason the only rare type of guitarist.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Stef – Yep. Same could be said for drums, even when the other members are all shit, as in really fucking badly shit, shit at their instruments & god-awful at singing their trite & banal lyrics, like totally appallingly shit & over-celebrated & devoid of any merit or worth other than the drumming, Led Zeppelin for example.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Stef – You can never be sure that you've heard someone's influences, but I would say Bill Orcutt.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Stef – At our gigs.

QRD – Anything else?

Stef – Nothing that I should burden you with.

Patrick Ogle of Thanatos

May 2013

Name: Patrick Ogle

Bands: Thanatos

Websites: mapanare.us & patrickogle.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Pat – It was a late 60s SG & I sold it for fuck all nothing & I still have nightmares about it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Pat – I have two effects pedals - an old DOD chorus & an MXR phase. I rarely even use them because I forget to turn them on & off during a show. I like those Ibanez distortion pedals. The one everyone has, they rock. Also wouldn't mind one of those blue boxes from MXR. But I would still forget to turn them on & off at the right times.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Pat – My hands.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Pat – The last time I played live I played through a cabinet one of the guys in the band, Tim Larson, found in an alley. It sounded great. Not sure where it is. Neither of the amps I have even work.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Pat – I have a Gibson The Paul from 1980. I like how it sounds. I also use a Takamine Santa Fe. The pick up in it sucks though. The guitar sounds great not plugged in.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Pat – I never would.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Pat – It would do the three things I need all in one - chorus, distortion, & phase & it would have tubes.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Pat – Four.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Pat – In cases, in my living room... with humidifiers in winter.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Pat – Never thought of it really.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Pat – Sound.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Pat – Depends on a shitload of factors.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Pat – I have had the Gibson since 1984 & the Takamine since the mid 90s. I am not someone who changes a lot. William Tucker, who played with me, had ONE guitar, an early 60s telecaster.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Pat – I almost never buy new gear.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Pat – Not much to change. I primarily play rhythm.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Pat – Not much changing.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Pat – I'd love to have a Fargen amp. I would also love to have any number of older Martin acoustics. There are lots of acoustic guitars I would love to have...hell, an 80s Guild D-55. I mentioned I'd like a blue box, but that isn't a crazy wild dream.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Pat – That the action is good? That the neck is comfortable? That it is playable. A lot of cheap guitars are not playable & they suck. BUT the good

news is that companies like Washburn & Arts & Lutherie make really good starter guitars.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Pat – I bought a jumbo Harmony that sucked & I gave it away. (I also bought a Harmony H-165 that is great.)

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Pat – None I really dislike... different stuff for different styles.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Pat – A blues box.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Pat – Seven or eight?

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Pat – Before I took a hot sauce bottle through my

right hand in 2000... I sometimes do not play for a long time & sometimes I play a lot. SO there is no single time where I was at my best.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Pat – I am not entirely sure it does.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Pat – Not really. Piano probably is a better place to start -- or drums. If you want to learn about how music works? Drums.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Pat – A little of both.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Pat – Honestly I have no idea.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Pat – Don't care either way.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Pat – I stuck a guitar up into a ceiling fan once... no major damage.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Pat – I just play... play scales... etc.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Pat – Depends on the week.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Pat – Don't care.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Pat – Heavy because they sound better.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Pat – Depends.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Pat – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Pat – Used to be strumming, but then the hot sauce bottle got me through the hand. I play mostly rhythm so the right hand is more important to me. I mean, I can form chords.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Pat – I have someone do it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Pat – Standard, but I have used some others... DADGAD... & EEEEEBE on one song.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Pat – I rarely notate anything.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Pat – Depends on the guitar.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Pat – Not sure.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Pat – Probably piano.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Pat – Bluegrass. If you can play that you can play anything.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Pat – Never had any.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Pat – Don't know any tricks!

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Pat – Don't have one (I am really boring).

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Pat – I wish I could finger pick again... never was great, but now... with half the nerves in my right hand severed? A bit rough to do.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Pat – I learned how to read music & how to play from a woman named Mrs. Fitzgibbons who knew Mel Bay & played every single stringed instrument. She was awesome.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Pat – I'd probably teach them by the Alfred method, because I think it works to teach how to read & gets you used to playing.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Pat – Suck?

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Pat – Like a bar? I hate them cause they put the guitar out of tune.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Pat – Never.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Pat – One plays notes & the other chords?

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Pat – No.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Pat – I interviewed Guy Clark & he had a guitar he made. He made three of them. He has one, Lyle Lovett has another, & not sure who has the third one. I'd love to have that.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Pat – There are so so many.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Pat – I am mostly a singer songwriter... I usually have guys who play better than me do the leads.

QRD – Anything else?

Pat – Nope!!!

Xavier Watkins of Fuzzy Lights

May 2013

Name: Xavier Watkins

Bands: Fuzzy Lights, Violet Woods

Websites: fuzzylights.com, violetwoods.tumblr.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Xavier – Hohner Strat copy - it fell off the strap & the neck snapped. I fixed it with glue & gaffer tape & played it like that for years.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Xavier – For years I've played a vintage Fender Jaguar '65 & a modded Jazzmaster reissue, but recently I was looking for a hollow-body & got an Epiphone Casino. On my pedalboard there is usually a fuzz pedal (Z.Vex Fuzz Factory, Octane 3, or Frantone The Sweet), followed by an analog delay (EHX DMM or MXR carbon copy). I've started using an EHX POG to add harmonics to the fuzz tone. This then goes through a Fulltone Supatrem & an EHX Holy Grail reverb before being boosted by a Z.Vex Super Hard On. The SHO really brings out the best of the amp. Amps are Vox AC15 or Fender Twin Reverb 65 reissue. Also got a

couple of WEMs (my wife's amps), which are really nice. For acoustic it's a lovely Martin HD28.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Xavier – Everything is important, but most of the feel comes from the guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Xavier – Vox AC15 (handwired series). I love the way it breaks up - I use the EL86 channel & push it with the SHO. Also, not anywhere as heavy & loud as the Twin Reverb.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Xavier – I'd say there's two currently, the Jaguar for clearer sounds & vibrato work & the Casino for dirtier & grittier sounds. I like a guitar to have a thin neck & low-action.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Xavier – Jazzmaster neck (thin) & body, P90 pickups with Bigsby tremolo. No tone pot or

rhythm switch circuit, linear volume knob. Sunburst nitro finish.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Xavier – I'd love to have some kind of uncontrollable feedback inducing fuzz pedal with random warbles like the Z.VEX Lo-Fi Junky does, sounds like you're pinching tape & letting it go.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Xavier – Around 9.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Xavier – I don't really look at features, more the way it feels & sounds. Even with the same model there are differences.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Xavier – I customize them, got a few of my pickups rewired by Curtis Novak. Turned one of my Jazzmaster pickups into a P90 & rewired the wide-range humbucker from my Telecaster custom to vintage specs. I sand down the necks of my "newer"

guitars, I hate the feel of sticky poly finish. Changed my Jaguar & Jazzmaster bridges to Mastery bridges. Put a Bigsby B5 on my Telecaster, which I later removed because I didn't like the break angle required for the neck.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Xavier – Probably once every 6 months or so, although the basic principle of fuzz/disto > delay > trem > reverb always applies.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Xavier – I've mostly got one tone I lock to, but like to make subtle changes between songs or sometimes in the middle of a song.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Xavier – A vintage Jazzmaster, vintage Hangstrom hollowbody & Deluxe Reverb to replace my Twin, which is decidedly too heavy....

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Xavier – Frets.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Xavier – 14 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Xavier – I think at around 17 I reached a point at which I could play technically challenging parts, but I don't think that means I leveled there. I'd spent the past 3 years obsessively learning how to play the Led Zeppelin back catalogue, but then it was time to find my own style & “de-learn” all the gimmicks.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Xavier – Neil Young.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Xavier – See what happened to my first guitar.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Xavier – Yellow ones. Just the right thickness.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Xavier – Skinny top heavy bottoms! I often play in open tuning so having heavier strings is best.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Xavier – Every 3/4 months.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Xavier – Rarely happens nowadays (fingers crossed!).

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Xavier – I do them all myself. It's easy & you can get them to your own specs every time.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Xavier – DGDGBC, DADGAD, CGDGBD, CACGCE.... I find that if I play in standard tuning, it's easy to fall back into clichés. & I love the sound of multiple strings droning on the same note...

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Xavier – I can't read music, so I use tabs & little fretboard stamps in which I write finger positions for unusual chords.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Xavier – Jazz/Manouche guitar.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Xavier – I love Bigsby's, they just feel so natural to play. I got use to the one on Jaguars/Jazzmasters with time, but they require really careful setup & bridge upgrades to work properly-ish.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Xavier – Never!

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Xavier – When there're two guitars, their sounds have to be complementary & not fight with each

other, that's all - I'm not sure I ever got the lead versus rhythm thing.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Xavier – Can I say Rhys Chatham because of *A Crimson Grail*? First one to spring into my mind, but there's hundreds, thousands...

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Xavier – Probably on the new Fuzzy Lights album, *Rule of Twelfths*.

Bill Berends of Mastermind

May 2013

Name: Bill Berends

Bands: Mastermind, The Berends Brothers Band,
Treasures of the Spirit

Websites: billberends.com, mastermindband.com,
berendsbrosband.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Bill – My very first guitar was a cheap, no name acoustic. The neck broke off when one of my brothers sat on it. My first “real” guitar was a Harmony F-hole archtop acoustic. I picked it out because it wasn’t so cowboy singer-songwriter looking. I sold it to my bass player (Kip Leming, Riot) & he still has it as far as I know. My first electric guitar was a 1968 Gibson SG Standard, which I still have & play to this day. My parents got it for me new in 1968. They thought it would keep me out of trouble, which it probably did!

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Bill – Guitar -> wire -> amp. I have dabbled with effects over the years, such as ring modulators, which can be heard on the Mastermind *Excelsior!*

album, but my basic guitar sound has always been guitar-wire-amp. I rarely ever use pedals to “get a sound”, but only occasionally for special effects. With my band Mastermind I also used a guitar synthesizer, but that plays along side, or along with, the natural guitar sound like a second instrument. On occasion, depending on the gig -- like the Mahavishnu band I play with -- I will use a passive volume pedal. I have a tuner inline these days, but no effects that change the sound. Don't need them, don't care for them much, & they're too much hassle.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Bill – My hands of course! Then the guitar & amp. A good quality wire or wireless is also helpful.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Bill – I've been playing a 100 watt Marshall JCM800 exclusively since I got in 1986. Why? Because it sounds great & has THAT sound I like so much. Depending on the gig, I will play it thru a full stack, half stack, or 2x12 Marshall cabinets. In my world there are two kinds of amps... Marshalls & not-Marshalls. I use Marshalls exclusively because of their distinctive sound, touch, & legacy.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Bill – For 35 years or so I played my 1968 Gibson SG Standard exclusively. It was the only electric guitar I owned! It’s been around the world with me & is the primary guitar I used on all Mastermind albums to date. It’s just a great sounding & playing guitar & easy access to the upper frets is a nice feature as well. The Gibson SG was THE sound of rock in my formative years.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Bill – It would be a Gibson, of course. An SG, no doubt since that is what I am most known for playing. It would be very close to the original ‘61 SG with a slightly different neck, more suited to my hands & playing style. A bit narrower & more rounded than your typical Gibson ‘60’s slim taper necks.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Bill – A box that makes any other amp sound like my Marshall! What I would really like to see though is some advancement in guitar synthesizer

technologies. If they can build a modeling guitar that simulates other guitars, why can't they make a guitar that models a Moog synthesizer?

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Bill – It varies as guitars come & go, but I am down to about three that I play all the time.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Bill – I leave them out generally, so I can pick one up & play anytime I like. Looking at them inspires me. When I store them they are locked away securely in a vault.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Bill – The new Gibson smell? A really good lock. Anti-gravity pads!

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Bill – The Gibson logo, the sound, & playability.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Bill – As much as it takes I suppose. I have come to appreciate that expensive guitars do indeed play & sound much better. That generally tends to be well over \$2,000 & often quite a lot more.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Bill – It depends on the guitar. I am not afraid to customize a guitar & with some lower end Epiphones I've owned over the years, I upgraded them with proper Gibson pickups & electronics. Generally speaking, these days, I just want to buy a stock guitar & have it be what I want it to be. I do tend to put Grover tuners on all my guitars.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Bill – Not so much. I read about something & if it appeals to me, then I go try it out in a store.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Bill – Not at all. I've been using the same basic setup all of my life... a Gibson guitar plugged into a Marshall amp. With the synthesizer rig, I have reduced it in size over time. I haven't used it at all these past couple years.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Bill – I like all the variations of the classic Gibson-Marshall sound. Les Pauls, SGs, 335s, they all sound a bit different & I can easily get the variations in sound I want from them simply by turning the volume & tone knobs on the instrument.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Bill – I don't really lust after gear, but I would love to have some Gibson Custom Shop Historic reissues & more classic Marshall amps. I've also been acquiring some lower wattage amps for recording. Marshalls of course... & one little Fender for variation.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Bill – Decent action & proper intonation are critical.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Bill – I only purchase Gibson guitars basically & they've all been wonderful. I really *love* my new 2012 Les Paul Standard. So much so I want another one. I've bought & traded a few others along the way looking for the ones that suit me the most. The only issue I've had with a guitar purchase was a new 2013 white SG Standard on which the white started turning pink around the edges. I took it back to the store & traded it for the used '61 Reissue SG, which is a superior instrument. Better wood I think. One purchase that pleased me is an inexpensive little Epiphone SG Junior I picked up on a whim. Indonesian made, it's TV Yellow, which I have a weakness for, & was only \$119... for that price it's an amazing little guitar! I keep it laying about the house all the time & pick it up quite often. It kind of feels like a toy compared to the real Gibsons, so not something I would use on stage probably, but you never know. Still in all, it sounds pretty good, especially after I upgraded the pickup.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Bill – In case you haven't figured it out by now, I am a Gibson guitar & Marshall amp fan. This is the sound of rock to my ear & how a guitar should sound. I really do not like the over-compressed nasally midrange sound of a lot of modern players --

especially metal guys & shredders. It sounds fake to me... the sound of a circuit board or worse, digital modeling. I hate Line 6 & digital amp emulators with a passion. They sound like razor blades on my ears & even if they get manage to get close, sound-wise, the touch is nothing like a real guitar through a good amp.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Bill – I dunno... some blues lick probably, around the 3rd or 5th frets.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Bill – I started dabbling with the guitar when I was 10 or 11 years old, but I got very serious about learning to play when I was 13 years old... after I heard Cream. That blew my mind.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Bill – I'm a better player now than I've ever been, I think.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Bill – Because I can play it! LOL... I started off wanting to play piano, but I have a brother who was way ahead of me, so I turned to the guitar. I still play some keyboards & have a great appreciation for keyboard oriented rock music, like Emerson, Lake & Palmer who didn't even have a guitarist. They are/were one of my favorite bands. I also have a passion for cello, such a soulful, expressive instrument.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Bill – No! The world needs more keyboard players!!

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Bill – A little of both.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Bill – Eric Clapton with Cream (but not after). Alvin Lee. John McLaughlin with The Mahavishnu Orchestra. These guys influenced & inspired me the most, especially in the beginning.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Bill – I think it's silly. My guitars don't have names & I don't refer to them as "she" or "her" either. That makes me crazy. It's just a thing. An "it."

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Bill – The finish on my '68 SG is all but worn away to nothing. I did it by playing the shit out of it for 45+ years.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Bill – I generally just sit down & play music. Whatever strikes me. Sometimes I will work on scales or difficult fingerings to warm up for a particularly challenging task or gig. The past few years I've been playing with a Mahavishnu Orchestra tribute band called Treasures of the Spirit & that requires some warming up & practicing scales to be able to pull that stuff off. I play along with the TV or the radio... I just like to play all the time!

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Bill – I generally get in at least 3 or 4 hours of playing every day. Sometimes more, sometimes less.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Bill – Fender heavy picks. I like the way they feel & have used them my whole life.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Bill – D'Addario regular XL nickel wound .10 thru .46 gauge.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Bill – I used to change them all the time, before every gig... but that was when I only owned one guitar. Now I keep them on a bit longer, a month or two perhaps. I change them when they start to feel dead, lose intonation, or get fret notches in them.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Bill – Almost never. In the past 10 years I can only recall breaking a string on stage twice. If they are going to break, they generally break right when I put them on. That has happened more times than I care to think about. I even complained to D'Addario

about it & they sent me a bunch of strings, free, which was nice of them.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Bill – I tend to work more on picking than fingering, from a strictly technical perspective. Picking every note cleanly at high velocity can be quite challenging & still frustrates me at times.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Bill – I do it all myself, always have. Why? Because it's easy to do & a lot cheaper! Plus I generally don't like other people handling my instruments, getting their greasy DNA on them. Yuck.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Bill – Regular standard tuning. Why? Because that's how a guitar is tuned. I've spent my whole life with those pitches in those places & don't have any desire or need to change. I owned a 7-string for a little while to experiment with some lower tunings & I mastered it pretty well -- you can hear it on the Mastermind *Insomnia* album -- but it wasn't me & I sold it. Plus it was an Ibanez... yuck.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Bill – I usually record ideas when I get them. I started off life sight-reading, but had such little use for it over the years that it is a skill that has been sadly neglected. At this point in life I wish I had kept up with it. If I am looking at some guitar magazine or something, I look at the tablature because that tells you where to play the notes. Unlike some instruments, you can play the same note in several different places on a guitar, so ordinary sheet music isn't really adequate for guitar, I don't think.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Bill – Somewhere around mid-belly. I think holding a guitar down around your crotch looks both retarded (orangutan arms) & is really difficult to play. It puts undue amount of strain on your wrist. Damn you, Jimmy Page!

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Bill – Not getting paid enough to perform.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s guitar playing?

Bill – Piano. The keyboard is the heart of western music & is a great way to learn how music theory works.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Bill – Be-bop jazz.

QRD – What’s a guitar goal you’ve never accomplished?

Bill – Becoming a millionaire.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Bill – Can’t think of any. Not really into tricks or “stunt guitar”, as Frank Zappa called it. I just play.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Bill – I like those new Dunlop Ergo Lok-Strap things. A strap lock you can use without changing the strap pins on the guitar is a great idea, & they’re

much more inexpensive than other systems. So far I'm very pleased with them.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Bill – Making big money.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Bill – I took guitar lessons for a few months when I was a kid. Since the teacher played accordion & not guitar, I mostly learned sight-reading. I figured out the guitar on my own! I took some jazz-improv courses in college too. I also studied synthesizers at Princeton University, way back when they were something new.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Bill – How to make one single note sound good & the importance of actually having something to say on your instrument.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Bill – Buy a Gibson guitar & Marshall amp & listen to old Cream & Mahavishnu records.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Bill – I don't use one & think most people who do, over use them. I wouldn't mind having one guitar with a Bigsby, but have no interest in the dive bomb stuff & adjusting little screws, springs & clamps. What a nightmare.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Bill – Constantly.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Bill – A good guitarist should learn to be a good rhythm guitarist first.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Bill – No, of course not! I don't generally listen to music exclusively for the guitar, although the guitarist better be good when there is one. At least interesting.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Bill – Whomever’s I could sell for the most amount of cash! Pretty self-explanatory. I don’t really care about famous memorabilia.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Bill – Don’t know. I really don’t care about innovation as much as I care about being moved on an emotional level. There are tons of guys out there now who are mind-boggling technicians that just leave me cold.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Bill – On my albums & at my shows!! I just released a new solo album called *In My Dreams I Can Fly* (2012) that has some nice rock playing on it. Listen to the Mastermind catalog for more fusiony & progressive stuff.

QRD – Anything else?

Bill – Buy my albums & come to the shows! LOL... thanks!!

Todd Hawthorne of Greensect

May 2013

Name: Todd Hawthorne

Bands: Greensect, The Bureaucracy, Unacceptable
Celebrity Figure, Bunker, The New Rock N Roll
Dynasty, Garcias You're Welcome

Websites: None at the moment, Greensect FB page
forthcoming soon (retro page)

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened
to it?

Todd – Aria acoustic, el cheapo. Don't know what
happened, I might have traded it for my first hollow
body Vox.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to
effects to amplifier?

Todd – Mesa Boogie 40W head > Marshall 4-12"
cabinet Roland Space Echo > Wah Wah peddle >
volume peddle > Flower digital echo/reverb pedal >
Boss tremelo pedal. Also sometimes use Sans Amp
pre-amp pedal.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig -
guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Todd – Guitars & Space Echo.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Todd – Mesa Boogie. Power, workmanship, tube quality for the price. Much less than the high-end hand wired, but on par quality wise.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Todd – Vox Bossman, sunburst hollow body, single cut away. Built in distortion & tuner tone. So cool looking, sounding, & features like no other. An unusual guitar, not many made & very retro with that Gretsch/Johnny Marr sound!

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Todd – A hybrid between a Danelectro, a Gibson hollow body, a Gretsch, & a Guild. It would have pre-amp built in like my Vox & sound like the most heavenly dreamy 50s-60s classic tones that you ever hear Johnny Marr of the Smiths crank out, but with incredible feedback ready sustain!

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Todd – A real space echo in a mini pedal!

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Todd – Five & one pink Strat that belongs to my daughter, but is technically mine too!

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Todd – Two of them I keep out on display stands & ready to play. My others are in cases in closets in house & my daughter's is in her room on stand.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Todd – Areas to store notes/sheet music, storage for basic cords & maybe one pedal. More rugged & replaceable parts for sustainable lifecycle.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Todd – Sound/tones, workmanship, accuracy of neck & fretboard, quality of bridge/nut, quality of tuners, quality of pickup, overall aesthetics must be very pleasing.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Todd – New less than \$1000, used less than \$500.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Todd – Usually stick with what I get; but I keep fret dressing, neck, & strings in good condition.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Todd – Moderately.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Todd – Sometimes, depends. With Greensect I needed a lot of sound variety & power. With Bureaucracy I am very fixed with a folky dreamy clean sound.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Todd – See above, depends on artists I'm playing with or sound I am trying to convey & sometimes on the particular song.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Todd – Guitars: Gretsch Country Gentleman, Danelectro, Silvertone, Rickenbacher, Gibson ES series, Gretsch White Falcon, Fender Jazzmaster, Fender Jaguar, Fender Stratocaster, Taylor custom hybrid hollow body, Taylor 12 string acoustic, Rickenbacher 12 string electric, Taylor classical.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Todd – Low action fretboard, adjustable neck truss, lighter strings, built in pickup or output jack.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Todd – Aria acoustic, Dean Markley amp.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Todd – I like Boss pedals, I also like Moog pedals. Don't like the cheap distortion pedals. Also not a big fan of many generic chorus & flanger pedals. They are often cheesy sounding.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Todd – One of my original songs. I know few covers so usually default to those.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Todd – 18.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Todd – 44.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Todd – My first instrument & it has as certain amount of retro-machismo that I related to in earlier years.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Todd – No, probably keyboards or drums. Once you learn good rhythm it's easy to apply to most other instruments. Keyboards teach music theory very easily.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Todd – Both, depending on mood or attitude or outcome. But mostly ally!

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Todd – Johnny Marr, Chet Atkins, Neil Young, Kevin Shields, Robyn Guthrie, George Harrison, John Lennon, Bob Dylan, Bob Mould, Django Reinhardt, Buddy Holly, Robert Smith.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Todd – No, it's a very personal connection. Who am I to question B.B. King & his homosapien to instrument love?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Todd – In a Garcias You're Welcome show I destroyed a very cheap Strat rip-off by using it like a pickax & hammering its shreds on the ground. It was part of the show, performance art man!

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Todd – I am working with a finger strengthener & have sought out friends that are more accomplished to teach me new licks. My take on lessons.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Todd – A handful lately, but that can vary. I'd like to make sure I play about an hour a day outside of band rehearsals.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Todd – I make my own with a pick punch. Usually out of old credit cards or other plastic I find. Other than that I like light to medium picks. I strum more than pick... been learning to pick & finger pick in the last few years.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Todd – Mediums, 12s. Because I'm more of a rhythm player, but if I go light I'll break them... I strum with hard attack.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Todd – Depends on the guitar & how often I use it. Also if they look worn, sound dead or are dirty. But for the guitars I play the most, when not playing often about 3 times a year.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Todd – Not as much as I used to! Maybe 2-3 a year.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Todd – Strumming. I'm getting better at things like hand fretting. It's limited me in the past & it took me a long time to realize that. Tones are very much tied to technique for vibrating the strings solo or in harmony.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Todd – I usually set it up myself, but have been lucky enough to have techs help at times in my music career.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Todd – Standard concert C with capo. But I have experimented with G & D key. It's just easier & I'm a bit lazy. Also I don't have enough guitars when playing live to have alternates set up & ready... this is the future for me as I evolve.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Todd – I write down in non-tablature, english. I can't read sheet music... I've been taught, but haven't internalized it.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Todd – Between waist & stomach.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Todd – Bending my thumb over the top of the neck & grabbing instead of properly pressing it against the back of the neck. Also sloppy strumming overall & with too much attack.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Todd – Keyboard/piano & drums/percussion.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Todd – Leads, slides, sweep picking, & muting. I also want to grow my finger picking & use my thumb more.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Todd – Playing an intricate solo to a classical piece or some jazz, maybe one of Chet Atkins's more complex tunes.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Todd – Capoing & transposing across tunings.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Todd – Probably tie between a capo & an Ebow.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Todd – See above... more lead/picking styles.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Todd – Yes, from Scott Olin, a local guitar wizard/teacher in Raleigh, NC.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Todd – Not to let the “rules” limit you. I know many players that are more accomplished than myself, but that have a hard time writing songs. They are limited by the proper music theory chord progressions & arrangement rules.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Todd – Be sloppy, like walls of noise, & write in a way rebellious to music theory.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Todd – I love the old spring loaded versions that Fender & others built into amps. I also like the analog tremelos. Some of the new digital ones are getting very close to re-producing the old sound in a small pedal form factor. I use a tremolo pedal, but

it's limited compared to the spring loaded analogs of the past.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Todd – Quite a bit, that changes more than set up. I tend to like a very middle of the road tone, but for some songs & pieces I go very low or high.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Todd – How long do you have? In all seriousness, I appreciate both & value the player that can do both. But often they act like they come from different planets. The setup, guitar, & rig can have a lot to do with the differences. The most important differentiating distinction -- more precision with leads.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Todd – Sometimes, but not very often. I'm just not a fan of Yngwie Malmsteen, but appreciate where he's coming from & his talent. I'm more song oriented overall.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Todd – Johnny Marr’s Gretsch or Billy from Chet Atkins’s country gentleman. Because they are part of history & it would be like having them at my house in person!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Todd – Hmmm, how long do you have? That’s too difficult to answer. I’m a believer in Kevin Shields & Robyn Guthrie. They both turn the guitar into many different instruments.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Todd – Email me & I’ll send you some stuff till I start playing live again. Or on the Greensect/Common Thread split 12” - “Elem Tele 2”.

QRD – Anything else?

Todd – Nope, this was fun & an honor!

Michael Clamp of Lazarus Clamp

May 2013

Name: Michael L Clamp

Bands: Lazarus Clamp. I also played in Last Harbour & John Sims for short spells.

Websites: music.lazarusclamp.co.uk

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Michael – When I was growing up, there was an unplayed, ill-loved Spanish acoustic guitar with nylon strings on it in our house. I had no notion of how to play it -- or even how to tune it. I strummed it until all the strings were broken & the lacquer was all scraped off the front. I didn't even know that you could replace strings. No one else in the house seemed to know that either. It was considered broken at this point. I guess it ended up being given -- or thrown -- away by my mum. It must have sounded awful -- the couple of years where I relentlessly hacked at this guitar, usually while listening to recorded music. My mum must have been counting the breaking strings, month-by-month. (Prang! “Whew. Only two more strings to go: all over by Christmas!” etc.) But it had the effect of training my strumming hand to more or less keep time. Unfortunately, it was my left hand that I trained. I also didn't know that as a right-

handed person I should really have been playing it the other way round. That has worked out ok though. I have continued to play left-handed, on right-handed guitars, since that point. It feels correct.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Michael – Guitar – then tuner – [Then whatever tone/texture thing I am currently not bored with] – then an overdrive or distortion – then a clean boost or noise gate. I seem to have acquired a lot of effect pedals; they promise a lot & they are quite an affordable way to play around with different sounds. At rehearsals I take childish pleasure in lining up a long train of them. But I don’t tend to have a very complicated set up for live playing or recording – usually just as above. The tone/texture thing tends to be something I use quite sparingly – perhaps just on one or two sections of one or two songs. For a while it was phase, then tremolo; now reverb. For the most part, I just require the option of making the guitar louder (clean boost) or making the guitar dirtier & louder (overdrive or distortion).

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Michael – 1. Guitar: it’s good to have a guitar with

a comfortable neck I think; it sets you up with the right relationship to what you're doing. It's also good if it has a reliable set-up (so that you know what to expect from it) & for me it helps if it is a guitar that I can strap-on upside down. That usually means a strap button on the bottom edge, which means I don't usually get to borrow other people's guitars ...

2. Amplifier: I played – & recorded – for years with an amplifier that was a pragmatic solution to a logistical problem, but which never responded well to attack & emphasis on a clean instrument signal. I'm enjoying the guitar part of my role in Lazarus Clamp much more now that I have an amplifier which does that.

3. Effects: I'm quite happy to play without these. I tend to write on an unamplified guitar anyway, so effects come into my thinking quite late in the day, if at all. I've had a bad habit of over-elaborating in the past (who needs effects when there are so many notes to play?), but I'm getting better at doing less.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Michael – It's a Selmer Treble 'n' Bass. It stays clean & bright up to quite high volumes & then when pushed a bit further, it breaks up into a lovely fuzzy grey. I like it a lot. It has no gadgets or gimmicks, apart from that there is a channel for "Bass" which suits my baritone guitar very well, &

a channel for “Treble” which suits my Telecaster very well. Perfect. & it was an online auction bargain. It fizzes & crackles a bit, but hey ho. It’s such a pleasure to plug a guitar into it. Whenever it comes to life, I find myself grinning.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Michael – My “go to” guitar is just a “Partscaster” – another online auction bargain. The body is from a US-made Tele Deluxe I think (routed for humbuckers). The neck is maple & apparently came from a Fernandez – it’s a 7.5” with vintage style frets, so it’s relatively slender. I love it. It came with a couple of horrible pickups in it & a Jesus sticker on the headstock. The sticker fell off before I could remove it: I guess the atmosphere in my house was no longer supportive of its relationship to the guitar. I bought a single coil Boss pickup for the neck & a humbucking Mule pick up for the bridge & with those in place, it sounds great. They aren’t perfectly balanced, but they’re pleasingly responsive. Bareknuckle seem to have found a niche with admirers of really ugly guitars (everyday on their Facebook feed is a fresh horror show of nasty finishes). & they have an unappealing preference for describing guitars as “fully loaded” with their pickups, rather than simply “fitted.” But the quality of sound from the pickups is very pleasing.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Michael – I'd be happy with the Partscaster above. I'd be even happier if it were my favourite colour (duck egg blue).

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Michael – I'm not a particularly creative player with pedals. I play in a band with someone who is. So I guess the ideal pedal for me would be an incremental boost pedal; if each time you tapped it, your signal got a little bit louder ... I could maybe keep up with Andrew then.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Michael – Five.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Michael – They all used to live propped in corners; but after enough near-disasters, I caved in & bought stands.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Michael – I notice that plenty of other people have pointed out the need for a clasp that works & a degree of actual protection for the instrument inside. For me, on top of that, I'd like to see a bit more thought about the handle. I often find myself trying to carry two hard-cased guitars in one hand. It hurts. It's not the weight, it's the way that the handles are two short & two inflexible to allow one average-sized hand to curl adequately around two handles.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Michael – I know some players are perpetual guitar shoppers, always accumulating or trading up, but I'm not one of those. I suppose I'd say that I like simplicity of design (when you play upside down, you don't want lots of switches & sliders & toggles getting in the way), a good neck (as above), & an action & intonation that feels (& sounds) good *before* you plug anything in. & then a responsive pickup, when you do plug it in. I say singular, because one good pickup will do it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Michael – How long is a piece of string? Including the new pickups, the Partscaster cost me about

£350. That's not bargain basement/thrift-store price, but I think you can expect to get a reliable & responsive electric instrument on that sort of budget if you shop around. You can get something fun-but-flawed for a lot less. It's good to learn to work around flaws – it makes you resourceful & creative & less precious. But it's also nice, ultimately, not to have to.... I think you can get something which shows attention to detail & coherence of design for prices starting at double that, I guess - £700 is an expensive guitar in my universe. I don't know why anyone would pay £2-3K for a guitar. How would you dare play it? *Where* would you play it? I suppose I can see that one might spend more money on a vintage instrument, where the price indicated more than just veneration, but actually reflected a degree of craftsmanship or design which was worth paying for. But I'm not personally attracted to that.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Michael – I played the same guitar – a Tokai Tele – on most things for about 15 years. I picked up a baritone & an electro-acoustic along the way & used those as alternatives when I wanted something different. But the Tokai was a really playable instrument & I was happy with it. I did try a Godin, but I couldn't get on with it & sold it on. Then one of the Tokai's pickups failed (the only one I'd ever

used) & so I replaced the pair & although it sounded nice, it didn't sound the same. So I spent a couple of years trying out alternatives. I wouldn't usually be inclined to customize, but the Partscaster needed some help - & it was worth it. Not that *I* did it; I just made the decisions. I'm not to be trusted with a soldering iron.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Michael – I became a bit obsessive about what I wanted from a Tele when the Tokai's character changed & I was looking for a replacement. But if things are cheap enough to try (i.e. enough to just sell on, if they're no good), then I'm not so fussy.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Michael – No.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Michael – The former, I suppose. I like quite a bright, clean tone & I like to hear it just on the brink of breaking up.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Michael – I don't. I'm happy with the tools I have. But if the baritone ever needs replacing, I'd like to try an EGC.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Michael – As above. It shouldn't be perfect. A flawed instrument forces you to find the things it *can* do & to focus your energies & efforts on that. It makes you think about what you're playing & stops you trying to be imitative. I think it should stay in tune though. The problem with a lot of really cheap guitars is that they don't. It's hard to make progress & to learn, if the instrument won't hold its tuning. I struggled for years with my first "proper" guitar & it was a revelation switching to an instrument which mostly stayed in tune.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Michael – Best? I used to break *a lot* of strings on the Tokai. The strings invariably broke at the point where they came through the body, just beneath the

bridge saddles. The metal plating there just sliced through them. I tried filing it, but it didn't help. So I bought some electrician's insulation tubing, & cut it into short strips (maybe 2cm long). I fed the strings through the tubing, stopping short of where they rolled over the saddles. The tubing buffered the strings at the point where they passed through the plate, without deadening the tone between the saddle & the nut. This cut down on my string breakages tremendously, at a cost of pennies. (My colleagues in Lazarus Clamp are almost certainly laughing at this. I imagine that they are saying, "It was the Selmer, you chump!" They're probably right, but I was pleased with the insulation solution at the time). Worst? So many choices. Quite a few pedals I've never used, obviously. A guitar (Godin Radiator) I could never get on with. An electro-acoustic that feedback all the time. I think bandmates who watched me struggling with a previous tuner, which displayed output on a screen that couldn't be read in the dark, might have an opinion.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Michael – I can't get on with Marshall amps & never have. I can't be excited by Les Pauls, ditto.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Michael – A wrong note.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Michael – With intent? Maybe 19. I played drums for a couple of years before that.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Michael – Still working on it.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Michael – Drums definitely weren't for me. You should see the looks on the faces of my colleagues in Lazarus Clamp if I offer to sit at the drum stool in order to try to explain a point of timing. A guitar feels nice in my hands & I love playing them, but I don't really think of myself as a guitarist. Not a proper one. I'm entirely self-taught & I don't know how to do half the stuff you're supposed to know how to do.... For me, really it is a tool that I handle just well enough to do a job that I enjoy doing. It's hopeless trying to write a song via the drums or to communicate a song's structure to other people that way. A guitar is a really good tool for that & it

allows you to set out a palette of tones as well – to show both “how it goes” & “where it is going.” That’s what it’s for.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people’s first instrument as often as it is?

Michael – Probably not.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Michael – Interesting question. I probably did spend quite a bit of time treating it is an enemy & obstruction. Certainly, pre-Tokai, a lot of early Clamp shows were characterized by temper tantrums. When you have really shit equipment, it breaks & you’re entitled to be frustrated by that, I think. But I have a functional instrument, most of the time, & I am more or less able to make it do the main things that I need to do. So I think I’ve moved to the other position.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Michael – Oh no. It would be wrong to go on & on, wouldn’t it? So probably I’ll say Robert Forster from Go-Betweens, & Ed Crawford from Firehose. In terms of the clean tones & some aspects of the

earlier style of their playing (& they are obviously different from one another) & the sorts of things which come into my head when I pick up a guitar.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Michael – I've never thought about it. People give them names?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Michael – Just dinks & dents. I've been rough with them, but I've tended to own fairly robust guitars.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Michael – I have a family. I'm not sure how they did it, but somehow they alarmed the guitars. If I pick up a guitar when other people are in the house, then *immediately* a voice will call out for me, asking me to do something for someone *before I have played a single note*. So I am like those athletes who rehearse events mentally when they can't rehearse them physically. Only less effective.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Michael – See above.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Michael – A pink one. It's the right one, & it always has been.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Michael – 11-49s usually. They're pretty robust & I sometimes hit too hard. In the context of a bright sounding set-up, I like the upper-mids you get from the heavier gauge strings too.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Michael – I used to break a lot, so I used to change them a lot – before every show. My set up is better now, & my playing is more controlled. So now, just when they get dull.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Michael – Surprisingly rarely these days.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Michael – Strumming hand, I guess. Most of the stuff I'm sloppy at originates on the fretboard.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Michael – I do it myself. I learned how to do it & it wasn't hard, so I carried on doing it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Michael – The baritone is tuned to B. The Tele to standard E. I often drop one or both of the E strings to a D. There are a couple of Clamp songs with more complicated tunings than that, but not many.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Michael – I write down names of chords most of the time, if I know what they are, as a very crude reminder of what I was playing; sometimes adding some tab, with a few notes describing where on the neck I played a particular shape. It usually turns out to be wrong. There are proper musicians in Lazarus Clamp, but they tolerate my idiosyncratic terminology & translate it into actual music with creativity & good grace.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Michael – On the hip.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Michael – Playing when I could be quiet. When you can be quiet, I think you should be quiet; but it's hard to remember that, because it's the presences rather than the absences which are fun to make. It's only listening back that you realize you should do less.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Michael – I found drums very helpful, in terms of understanding how guitar parts work.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Michael – I've always loved Martin Carthy's guitar playing. I haven't got a clue what he's doing.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Michael – See above.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Michael – There are tricks?

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Michael – I use a capo quite a lot.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Michael – As above re: finger-picking.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Michael – No, self-taught.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Michael – I admire players who play the amplifier well. I rely almost exclusively on the guitar itself & just use the amp as a translator. But some people

use the amp very creatively & if I'd ever had a lesson, I'd have enjoyed learning that.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Michael – It would require quite a masochistic state of mind.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Michael – I don't like them.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Michael – They are all taped down.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Michael – I don't really listen to the kinds of music where this is a meaningful distinction, but my impression is that the lead guitar player has more extravagant hair & goes "widdla widdla" while the other one is usually a shorter & more compact person & goes "chunka chunka." That's how it works right?

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Michael – I'm more interested in the material than the performance. I can cope with a bit of shoddiness, if the songs are interesting.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Michael – Not interested.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Michael – I enjoy players whose work is so direct & expressive, so demanding of attention, that it just shapes your experience of the piece: in different ways here I'd think of Bill Orcutt, Martin Carthy, Doug Martsch, Geoff Farina, Andy Cohen, Richard Thompson, Steve Albini, & my friend George Gargan. These players are exciting & surprising. But I also like it when guitar players are economical & subtle & do their best work in the service of the song. They shape your experience, in a different way, without you noticing that they've done it. I think my friend in Lazarus Clamp, Andrew Kingston, is a really good at this – almost at his most effective when you are least “aware” of what he is doing. In fact, the people who are good at this are unsung heroes of guitar playing: Chris Brokaw, Nina Nastasia, Kristen Hersh, Tom Greenhalgh.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Michael – Well. The forthcoming Lazarus Clamp LP (*The Bird is Not the Metaphor*) is probably the best recording we have made together. So it would be that.

Eric Bessel of Lore City

May 2013

Name: Eric Bessel

Bands: Lore City

Websites: www.lorecitymusic.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Eric – A used Fender Squier Strat - it only survived a few years of guitar lessons.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Eric – Lap Steel & Guitar > Combiner Pedal/Tuner > Effects > Volume Pedal > Effects > Amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Eric – The instrument. I could have all the fancy effects & amps in the world, but the source sound has to be of good quality.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Eric – Peavey Special Chorus 212. It provides a really nice range of tone control, it can project the

sound well, & the cabinet is fairly lightweight compared to other amps of its size.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Eric – Joe Morrell Pro 6-String Lap Steel & Gibson Les Paul Studio. They're well made, durable instruments.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Eric – 2 lap steels, 2 guitars.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Eric – At my studio in gig bags.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Eric – Made in the USA.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Eric – I believe the cost of the instrument should be proportional to providing it's builder a living wage, first & foremost. Infrastructure, logistics, & marketing of the product should be secondary.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Eric – I've upgraded the pickup on one of my lap steels, by recommendation of my guitar tech.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Eric – Within reason.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Eric – Yes, all kinds of environment factors can affect sound!

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Eric – I try to keep tone as consistent to recordings as possible.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Eric – It would be great to have my pedalboard wired properly by a pro!

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Eric – Excellent quality tuners.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Eric – It's great when utility & effect pedals are compatible with each other. It's disappointing to flip a perfectly good pedal simply because it doesn't perform well with other sounds in the signal chain.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Eric – Sometime in elementary school.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Eric – 30.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Eric – Guitar is a highly accessible & widely available instrument in the west. Depending on

where you are in the world, a saz, oud, or hammered dulcimer may be more common. All of these instruments have the potential to be stimulating & challenging for the beginner.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Eric – Richard Bishop, James Blackshaw, Christoph Hahn, Loren Connors.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Eric – I listen to music constantly. New & old & in various formats.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Eric – E, G#.

Benjamin Løzninger of Løzninger

May 2013

Name: Benjamin Løzninger

Bands: Løzninger, Elektrisk Gønner, Epic Fling

Websites: lozninger.com, elektriskgonner.com,
epicfling.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Benjamin – Let's say there are two first guitars & two stories:

1. The very first one was a cheap spanish guitar that my mother got for herself when she was 13 years old with the money of a first summer job. I still have it & play it sometimes.

2. In my grandmother's attic there was also this big guitar that had been fascinating me for years, way before I could ever play it. It was one of my uncle's guitars. He could play perfectly any song by The Beatles, whom I was (am still) a huge fan. The guitar is a rare 60's Hopf 12-strings folk guitar with an archtop that he gave me a couple years later. It's been fixed a couple times, but it was still really hard to play. The neck & the strings made it really hard to play, but I used it to record & play all my first songs, for like 10 years.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Benjamin – Unfortunately I abandoned an army of pedals for a lone BOSS GT5 a long time ago. I’m using it a lot to record in my studio & when I’m playing solo & traveling on my own, it was way more convenient. I kinda regret the analogic sound though. If I could, I would just use a guitar directly plugged into a tube amp without effects. There’s no other sound than my old 12-string electro-acoustic plugged straight in a vintage Fender amp.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Benjamin – I have a RocPro Fender 70 at my house, but when I’m touring I often use a Fender Deluxe.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Benjamin – I mostly switch between my electro-acoustic guitar (12-string 70s Yamaha) & my electric guitar (Epiphone Sheraton II).

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Benjamin – It would look like a Fender ‘62

Jagmaster with an archtop. It would include 2 midi pads on the top to launch some sounds from my computer. Something fancy.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Benjamin – 8 = 3 electric guitars (Fender, Epiphone, Squier) & 5 acoustic (Hopf, Yamaha, Eko...).

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Benjamin – They are a bit everywhere in the house. I like to see them around, even for those I'm not really using anymore. They make me feel calmer I guess.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Benjamin – It's not a question of price for a great guitar though I couldn't afford the guitars of my dreams. Some people are into cars, I would rather spend the money on a couple guitars.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Benjamin – I let them live their own lives.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Benjamin – Not really!! Using the same rig for a decade now, just upgrading a bit sometimes, but my guitar set-up is quite the same. Mostly because I focus less & less on the guitar part.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Benjamin – I'm really into vintage guitars. Either acoustic or electric. It's first a question on design & I'm a sucker for old Eko & Hofner guitars. I also love vintage Jaguar & Jazzmaster of course.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Benjamin – I'm a bit disappointed by my Sheraton II on the distance. It's hard now to play a full show without tuning often. I guess she's getting her revenge on me as I treated her quite bad during some wild shows....

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Benjamin – I always used to play “Black Bird” by

the Beatles. Otherwise, I'm just playing one of my songs.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Benjamin – It's the first instrument I learned, it's like an extension of my own body as no other instrument. It's both organic, sexy, & electric. It can be quiet or wild. Firecamp or hurricane.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Benjamin – Always an ally, even when she's sometimes stubborn or lazy.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Benjamin – Mostly self-taught musicians exploring the limits of the guitar sound in a genuine way like Sonic Youth, Pixies, My Bloody Valentine, Nirvana, Swell, or Beck. But of course the Beatles are the original & primary influence.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Benjamin – Probably a bit silly to give your guitar a

name, nevertheless, I always talk or think of my guitars as “she”. Though the name “guitare” in french, is feminine anyway.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Benjamin – During my first years of touring, our shows were pretty wild & some poor guitars often fell on the stage or hit some obstacles....

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Benjamin – I don’t practice a lot anymore. I was away for a couple months without guitar & I could really feel how much I was missing it. Just to feel it between my hands.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Benjamin – Dunlop light grey or dark grey are my favorites.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Benjamin – Once a month when I’m playing a lot. Some of my other guitars have the same strings for a few years though....

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Benjamin – It depends, but as I'm playing more on my electro-acoustic guitar, it's quite rare.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Benjamin – I spent too much time hitting things as a kid & my right hand is a bit slow now, so my strumming is pretty limited without a pick. My left fretting hand is way faster, though I'm more of a rhythmic player than a solo player.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Benjamin – I used to invent a lot of different tunings a long time ago, but lately, I just use a regular tuning. It's too complicated on tour, when you just have one of two guitars & no time to untune-retune between two songs.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Benjamin – I improvise some kinda personal tablature made of little drawings, numbers, & notes.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Benjamin – Quite low, I learned to play guitar in the grunge period, when it was still cool to play very low!

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Benjamin – Maybe typing on a computer keyboard?... Actually I don't think it's really helpful to play another instrument, but as I play a bit of everything & spend a lot of time behind the computer producing the songs, it's always good to get back to a guitar & play random chords just to relax your fingers.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Benjamin – I use a capo all the time. Especially as I tend to record my voice lower in the studio, so I adapt the tune live a bit higher with a capo. I like to use a slide too to make weird noises & a bit of crunchy blues solo. I even used a small electric fan at some point, to slam the strings & make some little noises in my guitar microphones.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Benjamin – Never. In a way I don't regret it at all because I learned to build my own limited style.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Benjamin – Not sure I'd be a great teacher. I'm not patient enough.... But just "learn by yourself & develop your own style."

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Benjamin – Dis-learn?

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Benjamin – No! Actually I'm usually more focused on the drummer of the band. Some amazing drummers can really make me ignore the rest of the band, though the best drummers are usually in cool bands. But it's even more rare that I notice a good guitar player. I don't know why, but I'm thinking of Daniel Rossen of Grizzly Bear. His rhythmic way

of playing sounds amazing to my ear, his sense of melody is wonderful & he also has a great voice.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Benjamin – I'm not really interested in other musician's guitars, but I would probably like to own one or two of Thurston Moore's. Just to try the different & unique tunings!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Benjamin – I would say Kaki King, though I find it too based on technique sometimes.... I'm more touched by emotion than by technique.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Benjamin – Ah! Not sure I'm the best judge....

QRD – Anything else?

Benjamin – Thank you!

Benjamin Duvall of Ex-Easter Island Head
May 2013

Name: Benjamin D. Duvall

Bands: Ex-Easter Island Head

Websites: www.exeasterislandhead.com

Twitter: [@ExEIH](https://twitter.com/ExEIH)

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Benjamin – Falcon, cheap Stratocaster copy of indeterminate origin. Traded for an Argos brand acoustic guitar with a schoolmate. Despite being technically woeful, it is still being used as part of my current setup.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Benjamin – Guitar > Lead > Amplifier - I'm currently not interested in using any digital or analogue guitar effects & haven't been since starting Ex-Easter Island Head - it's all about mechanical/physical alterations to the guitar & strings to elicit unusual sounds & resonances.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Benjamin – Electric guitar & amplifier equally.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Benjamin – Fender Blues Junior because it's my only valve amp & most expensive one I own, thus justifying more frequent usage.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Benjamin – The nature of our music - treating electric guitars as percussion instruments/sound sources - means that I more or less have four guitars of equal importance for writing & performing, but the one I'm most fond of is a Squire Telecaster Custom, because it's the most expensive & comparatively sounds like it too & also because it holds its tuning the longest.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Benjamin – Behind the bridge pickup, baritone scale length, several outputs, no frets, & really good machine heads.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Benjamin – About seven six stringers & three basses, nearly all of them acquired for £50 or less (or nothing) & most of them very much sounding & looking like it too! It's a bit of an old cliché talking about how each guitar has its own quirks & positive idiosyncrasies, regardless of how good or bad it is, but it's most definitely true.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Benjamin – How the body sounds when struck, how well it holds its tuning & how solid it looks.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Benjamin – I find a noticeable improvement in quality from bad to good around the £150 mark - after that “good” becomes entirely subjective I feel - around the £150 mark they tend to last longer, have better intonation, tuning, pickups, etc.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Benjamin – Customization is a very large part of how I approach music making, but usually doesn't involve what you would normally think of as guitar

upgrades – I’ve changed the odd machine head or saddle, but never any pickups or anything like that. Primarily it’s about mechanical alterations to the guitar, which can run the gamut from marking the best place on the body to hit with a drum stick, or inserting objects underneath or on top of the strings to create a “third bridge” in the string field in the manner of a prepared piano. (More info: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_bridge)

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Benjamin – So much of the music I create is concerned with tone & texture that it’s constantly changing in service of the particular piece I’m playing - nearly always defined by being clean & very harmonically rich.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Benjamin – That it stays in tune & is particularly robust - it took me a long time to learn not to leave it propped up with an amp lead still plugged in, leading to lots of hilarious/tragic jack socket wrenchings.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Benjamin – Like: Fender & Vox amps because they have character & are also quite transparent for putting your own character onto them.

Dislike: Randall amps, because I have one & it's given me naught but trouble & sounds shite. Guitars are mostly aesthetic reasons - Flying Vs, Firebirds, Warlocks, & Les Pauls because they all look rubbish, frankly.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Benjamin – 14, but not a shred of originality until 18 or so - getting a terrible “200 FX in one box” budget pedal really opened my eyes to playing with texture, delay, distortion & started me on the path to developing my own sound.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Benjamin – In terms of actually playing the guitar as a fretted instrument with riffs & chords, 2007-2010 when I was playing in a fairly proggy/post-punk/weird band that demanded a lot of unusual time signatures & complicated melodies, but in

terms of playing with extended techniques as I do now, I'm learning how to best use those approaches & their strengths & limitations on a weekly basis. Certainly I think that my current playing feels like the most honest expression of how I'd like to play music for the foreseeable future.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Benjamin – The electric guitar is pretty democratic - you can move beyond the basic mechanics of getting a sound out of it & start realizing your creative intent very quickly, even if you're not particularly technically gifted - more people make a creative virtue out of their inability to play the electric guitar “properly” than on any other instrument I think.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Benjamin – Yes because of the reasons outlined above, but no because on a practical level you can get yourself into some unique opportunities by being able to play a less common instrument. You will probably get more interesting opportunities out of being a really, really average harpist than in being a merely good guitarist.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Benjamin – In all honesty, the biggest influences are my friends, peers, & countless small bands that I've seen over the years; just because you can relate more to each other, learn things first hand, observe closer.

Otherwise: Joey Santiago, Glenn Branca, Ian Williams, Efrim Menuck, Omar Rodriguez-Lopez (only up to first Mars Volta album though), & Robert Fripp (particularly the Fripp & Eno collaborations - the riff at the start of “Evening Star” is literally the sound of a guitar gently weeping).

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Benjamin – Severed one completely in half by leaving it propped at a stupid angle in a stupid place & not reacting fast enough when a very drunk person started to fall onto it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Benjamin – Listen to lots of other musicians talk about playing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Benjamin – 1-5 hours is the real answer, 10+ is what I would like it to be.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Benjamin – Completely different for everything we play - our pieces are based around each guitar being tuned to one chord the whole time & altered with additional bridges. We arrive at the chords through what sounds good & has the most potential for different preparations - a lot of the time the chord might only be two or three notes doubled an octave up or down.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Benjamin – For large ensemble/workshop pieces I've used graphic notation to teach some parts - which is simple, lots of fun, & means you can explain things in non-specialist terms. For sketching ideas a mixture of tab, graphic notation, & very occasionally some primitive stave notation.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Benjamin – Not playing often enough.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Benjamin – Coach bolt, allen key, percussion mallet.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Benjamin – Stop playing with a pick/frets/riffs, acquire several worthless guitars.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Benjamin – I think the best guitar players make it impossible to distinguish between the two.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Benjamin – Yuri Landman - he's not really a traditional guitar player but he designs instruments that are descendants of the electric guitar. His ideas

& designs suggest ways for how guitar playing might evolve, with third bridges, microtones, & non-western scales.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Benjamin – Over on our Soundcloud - <https://soundcloud.com/ex-easter-island-head> - & on the two records we have coming out later this year on Low Point Records (www.low-point.com); *Mallet Guitars Three & Large Electric Ensemble*. Thanks!

Tom Lugo of Stellarscope & Panophonic
May 2013

Name: Tom Lugo

Bands: Stellarscope, Drowning Dreams, ShiShi,
Panophonic, Under the Wire, SUPER TOYS,
Adrian Lugo

Websites: ShiShi -

facebook.com/pages/ShiShi/257449944356585

Under the Wire –

facebook.com/pages/Under-The-Wire/188387867971618

Panophonic -

facebook.com/pages/Panophonic/33458859528

Stellarscope -

facebook.com/pages/Stellarscope/42638364841

Super Toys –

facebook.com/pages/Super-Toys/138690299508626

Drowning Dreams –

facebook.com/pages/Drowning-Dreams/148280328625653

Adrian Lugo - facebook.com/adrianlugomusic

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Tom – My first guitar was a Gibson All American SG, I sold it back in the late 90s because I was broke. I got a deal out of it, but I always regret selling it. C'est la vie!

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Tom – Digitech XP 100, Custom made modulation/wah/whammy pedal, Danelectro modified Fab Tone, Danelectro modified Daddy O, Ibanez modified distortion, Ibanez modified Death Metal distortion, Death by Audio Sonic Annihilator, Death By Audio Tom Lugo signature Sound of God Fuzz, Yamaha Magic Stomp, Boss DD3, Ibanez DE7, Boss Giga Delay, Digitech PDS 1002.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Tom – The most important part is the effect set up, I can use any guitar or amp & get similar sounds.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Tom – A Rocktron Velocity 2 x 10 amp because it has a great clean sound & it is small so it is easy to transport.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Tom – Live I use a Martinez Playmate with modified pickups. For recording purposes I use a

variety of them, like an 80s Jazz Master, Epiphone DOT, Epiphone Del Rey, Gibson SG, & more.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Tom – Well, I have a signature Death by Audio pedal made by Oliver Ackerman called the Sound of God, it is a destructive sounding extreme fuzz.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Tom – 15 guitars & counting.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Tom – My guitars are all on stands in my home studio & the Patetico Recordings' studio.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Tom – Look & sound of the guitar.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Tom – \$100-\$400 everything else you would be paying for the brand.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Tom – I tend to play around with the pickups & wiring, so I modify them for the most part.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Tom – I tend to try things before I purchase them, especially since guitar gear is not cheap... LOL.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Tom – I only change my rig when necessary or when something is no longer functional.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Tom – After many years of experimenting, I think I have my own sound down, so I don't tend to mess around with it too much.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Tom – To be completely honest, not much anymore.

I have so many toys & don't have a chance to really play with them all.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Tom – A sitar pedal... not because of the pedal itself, but because it had to be used with a slide at all times & I suck at playing the slide.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Tom – Death by Audio pedals are my favorite. & Boss pedals, though I mess around with those as well.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Tom – I have never really played any covers, my first song was one that I wrote for my girlfriend at the time.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Tom – I was in my mid 20s, so I started late.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Tom – I am still working on it, so I'll let you know when I get there... ha-ha-ha.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Tom – I have the ability to texture sound a lot better than any of the other instruments I play.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Tom – Nah, I think learning the piano helps people understand music composition better. Once you have an understanding of it you can pretty much pick up any instrument. Not that I follow that path or anything.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Tom – An ally, a good friend that is always there for you.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Tom – My mentor Gardy Perez (from the Puerto Rican shoegaze band Un.Real) was my first influence in psychedelic sounds, then Jimi Hendrix, David Gilmore, Steve Howe, Kevin Shields, Neil Halstead, Nick McCabe, Mark Gardener, & the list goes on.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Tom – My Epiphone Del Rey has a ton of nicks on it after I slammed the guitar against the walls of the House of Blues in Boston after some issues with the soundman.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Tom – 4-5 hours a week.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Tom – Dunlop Nylon medium nylons picks, they are smooth.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Tom – .09s are my preference.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Tom – When they break. 😊

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Tom – Every couple of weeks.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Tom – My strumming hand is better. I have broken my fingers several times, so some of them don't function correctly.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Tom – I set it up myself, why pay someone else if I know how to do it?

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Tom – It hangs low, it's the punk influence on me.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Tom – Progressive playing. I have always admired virtuoso guitar players, but I hate them because I can't get my fingers to move that way.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Tom – Learning to play progressively.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Tom – The Ebow, it is so sweet.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Tom – Deconstruct the concepts of basic music structure & tons of pedals.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Tom – I have a 60s Ampeg Rocket with built in tremolo, that's about the only tremolo system I own.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Tom – Between every song.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Tom – I don't think so, a band makes the sound whole.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Tom – Joey Levenson of SPC Eco is to me one of the most innovative guitar players when it comes to sound manipulation, the man is a genius. Joshua Hayward (The Horrors) has been creating some exciting noise over the past couple of years. Oliver Ackerman is the king of fuzz if you ask me.

QRD – Anything else?

Tom – I would like to thank Brian for the Q&A & all of my fans out there. It is great to be doing this for so long & still have people out there interested in hearing what I do. It is truly a blessing! I invite everybody to visit my record label's page, we release interesting indie rock from all around the globe in addition to the Popnoise Festival shows, festivals, & events. patetico-recordings.com

Peter Bingham of Sendelica

May 2013

Name: Peter Bingham

Bands: Sendelica

Websites: sendelica.bandcamp.com

facebook.com/pages/sendelica/191174294239796

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Pete – An unbranded Telecaster copy that I painted bright orange!!

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Pete – Live: Les Paul or Tokai Strat into tone pedal/multi fx/Roland Space Echo into Epiphone So Cal 50w valve amp into Marshall JCM 900 speaker cab.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Pete – My fingers.... Without them.... Nothing!!

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Pete – Currently using two main amps.... Epiphone

So Cal 50 which I like as it has a good high volume clean headroom.... & a Marshall JCM 900, although it is very hard to get a “clean” sound with this amp, it does have this amazing heavy sweet spot where solos just sing....

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Pete – Gibson Les Paul 25th Anniversary.... Amazing sustain & has coil taps.... Very versatile guitar. Live I also use a custom Adam Black & a 1980s Japanese Tokai Strat....

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Pete – LOL.... A Gibson Les Paul 25th Anniversary with a Floyd Rose Tremolo.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Pete – Something that makes me sound like Dave Gilmore in 1971.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Pete – Five.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Pete – Racks & cases in a secure environment.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Pete – Built in amplifiers like the 60s budget guitars had.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Pete – In the studio I chop & change a bit, but live I basically use a similar rig.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Pete – Again in the studio I do tend to experiment a lot with sounds, but live I stick to a few pedals & one or two guitars.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Pete – I love Gibsons & Tokais, my favourite delay is Space Echo.... Love Gibson & Epiphone valve amps, but occasionally like to delve into Fender

amps for something a little different tonal wise....
Different sounds make you play differently....

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Pete – “Spaceman Bubblegum” or “Standing on the Edge.”

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Pete – Thirteen.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Pete – Always improving.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Pete – It’s a love/hate kind of thing.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Pete – I get worried when people take them to bed with them!!

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Pete – Listen to lots of different types of music... & look after your hands... always moisturize!! LOL....

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Pete – I play for a few hours every day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Pete – Med gauge... I like to feel it working against the strings.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Pete – Super slinky.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Pete – Quite often.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Pete – Very rarely.... Once in the last year I think....

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Pete – I have some good friends to do that....

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Pete – Tablature, but I tend to record any ideas I have on a little recorder... in case I forget them....

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Pete – Medium height.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Pete – You are always learning.... Every recording session, every practice, every gig.... It is all adding to your experience & technique....

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Pete – I had lessons from a friend at school....

Chords, few basic riffs.... Then I learnt a lot from just being in bands from a young age....

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Pete – Improvising from your heart, not your head.... Feel it... don't analyze it.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Pete – Have fat fingers!!

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Pete – Don't use them a great deal.... Just a couple of songs.... I know a lot of people like them.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Pete – Never on my Gibson or Adam Black, but I do fiddle a lot with the Tokai's controls.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Pete – No, off course not.... A band is the sum of its parts....

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Pete – Paul Kossof’s Les Paul, Mick Ronson’s Les Paul, Dave Gilmour’s Strat, & Roy Buchanan’s Telecaster.... Yep, that will do me!! LOL....

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Pete – Acid Mothers Temple’s Kawabata. I just love his “attitude.”

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Pete – With Sendelica & Doctor Locust.

QRD – Anything else?

Pete – New Sendelica album *The Kaleidoscopic Kat & His Autosopic Ego* is out mid July on FRG Records.

Paul Gregory of Lanterns on the Lake
June 2013

Name: Paul Gregory
Band: Lanterns on the Lake
Website: lotl.tumblr.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Paul – My first guitar was a right-handed Encore Strat, which I got of my mate. I swapped my computer for it (a Commodore 64 I'd had since I was 6 or something!). I restrung it left-handed (I'm left-handed). It was white... so I painted it black & green... it was disgusting. Also it didn't really work restringing it left-handed so it had fret buzz all over the neck, poor thing, it only had four strings on for the first six months. It was probably a good guitar. I actually have no idea what happened to it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Paul – At the minute it this: Guitar - Cornell 1st Fuzz, Dunlop volume pedal (with Boss TU2), Fulltone 69mkii, Earthquaker Devices Dispatch Master, Maxon OD9, Pro Co Rat. Electro-Harmonix Micro POG, Line 6 DL4, Digitech

Digidelay, Digitech Digiverb - Vox AC30 + Fender Blues Junior..... but I change set ups a lot.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Paul – All of it really, I’d probably say the guitar though mainly.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Paul – I use a Vox AC30 mainly, it’s an easy amp to use, has a beautiful clean tone & it takes pedals really well, I love the way it handles fuzz pedals. I also use a Blues Junior for recording, it’s just a great sounding amp. I don’t really like other amps to be honest. Recently I’ve been playing using both the Vox & the Fender together & it sounds ace.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Paul – I have two main guitars, one is a cherry red Epiphone Dot, which I got in a January sale about 2 years ago for £150. I’ve upgraded it quite a bit, it got new pickups (Seymour Duncan 59s), it’s got Grover locking tuners, a tusk nut, & I put a Duesenberg tremolo on. The other is a blue Fender Telecaster with Kinman Broadcaster pickups in. I

also have another black Telecaster, which I'm slowly falling in love with. Both Teles are Mexican.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Paul – Hmmm... it would be a semi-hollow thinline with a Duesenberg trem, locking tuners, coil tapped humbuckers, probably something which looked like a cross between an old Gretsch & a 1966 Guild Starfire V, white neck binding, block inlays, strap locks....

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Paul – It would definitely be an analogue/tape sim delay/looper pedal... the main feature would be simplicity.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Paul – Four.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Paul – Two in the bands rehearsal room, two at home.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Paul – I only have flight cases for mine.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Paul – Being left handed, I basically look for anything! It's really difficult finding a good left-handed guitar I find, the choices are somewhat limited.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Paul – I've got a decent one for £150 so I guess it could cost anything....

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Paul – I customize them quite a bit. I've got relatively cheap guitars, so I always upgrade the pickups, although my black Tele is totally stock & the pickups on that guitar sound pretty good.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Paul – For years, literally years. I've been meaning to replace my DL4 & my Digidelay for the last 3 years with something else & I still haven't finished the research....

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Paul – I change the order of the pedals a lot, but it's mainly the fuzzes & overdrives I change around.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Paul – Tone changes depending on the song really, no two tunes use the same sound.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Paul – Pedal wise I'm after a Strymon El Capistan & a Bluesky. Amps I'm more than happy with. Guitar wise... I just wish there was more choice for left handed folk, one day I know I'm going to walk into a guitar store & there will be an old cherry red semi-hollow hanging on the wall saying, "Let's be friends! Buy me!"

QRD – What do you think are some important

features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Paul – In my case it was strings....

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Paul – The worst was an amplifier which shall remain nameless... it electrocuted me in a rehearsal, it hurt... I took that back. The best purchase was definitely my Epiphone.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Paul – I like Fender guitars, Epiphones are okay, I've never played any others to know to be honest. I've played through lots of amps & I only like the Vox AC30 & the Blues Junior, they just seem to like me. Effects... I think they all make something I'd use, I think Dunlop are really making some good stuff right now, the way huge stuff looks really good, & Strymon seem to be making unbelievable pedals. Fulltone have the best build quality I've come across, my 69MKII looks like it was built by aliens.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Paul – An A, every time, no idea why!

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Paul – Fourteen.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Paul – Erm... not sure I've reached that point yet.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Paul – It's just lots & lots of fun to do.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Paul – No not really.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Paul – Ally definitely.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Paul – Johnny Greenwood, Ed O’Brien, Nick McCabe, Kurt Cobain to name but a few...

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Paul – I think it’s funny, I do own an Epiphone Les Paul, which is called Daisy. My Epiphone Dot has become known as “The Big Red Thing”, so I think it’s probably quite natural.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Paul – I use a cello bow & all my guitars have big friction marks on the top of the body from where I’ve bowed the paint off when playing.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Paul – I sometimes do some crazy stretches, but that’s about it.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Paul – Not sure how many hours I actually play. If I was to be truly honest, I’d like to play every hour

from the morning I wake up until the moment I go to bed.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Paul – I use Dunlop nylon 88 gauge, they sound good.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Paul – D'Addario 11s, they don't break. I did use 10s for a while, but I broke a string every gig & can't be having that.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Paul – Once every three gigs is my usual rule.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Paul – After switching to 11s never, when I used 10s it was a constant.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Paul – I set my guitars up myself most of the time, but before touring I do get them set up by a guitar tech, just to be safe really.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Paul – Mostly just standard, I do use Drop D for some songs.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Paul – Don't use any of that, all the ideas are either in my head or recorded on an iPhone very quickly.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Paul – Not too high, not too low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Paul – I tense up my shoulders a lot, no idea why I do that, I really am trying to stop doing that.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Paul – Piano I guess? I play the drums too, which really doesn't help towards guitar!

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Paul – Cello bow, capo & slide.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Paul – Sweep picked arpeggios, I have tried for years & I simply cannot do it.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Paul – Only ever tried the Duesenberg system & it's great!

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Paul – Quite a bit on the Telecasters, not so much on the Epiphone.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Paul – Not really! I tend to listen to the band as a whole, if they're pants I can't listen to it, even if the guitar player is amazing.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Paul – Either one of Hendrix's or Kurt Cobain's... because I could play them being a cackhander.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Paul – On our new record which will be released in September 2013. It's called *Until The Colours Run* & it's the best guitar work I've ever recorded... so far anyway.

QRD – Anything else?

Paul – Could all the guitar manufacturers in the world please make more left-handed models, or even just more colours!?! Duesenberg especially, I mean you can have black... or black... oh wait there is also one guitar which comes in orange... so black & orange... no other colours. Makes no sense?? Just put the left-handed ones in with the right-handed ones when you apply the colour?? & Gibson, no 335s...? Unless you put a custom order in? Honestly... that's really shoddy.

Gavin MacArthur of Schlong
December 2013

Name: Gavin MacArthur

Bands: Schlong, Gasa Gasa Orchestra, Max & her
Trail Mix, Nick Nevis

Websites: facebook.com/pages/Schlong/124852720896547,
gimmesomethingbetter.com/excerpts/victims-family-Schlong,
facebook.com/gasagasaonfreret,
reverbNation.com/maxthetrailmix

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Gavin – My cousin gave me one of those flower pickguard Teiscos in the early 80s. I still have a few pieces of it, but unfortunately not the pickup. A couple years later I got a Squier Strat & I played it for years. That poor thing has been butchered every which way, the latest being the prototype for my first Outcaster, a guitar-bass hybrid.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Gavin – I like to just plug it in & play. I use a tuner pedal & a Tech 21 American Woman distortion pedal, I love that filthy thing.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Gavin – My hands! I’ll play on anything, anytime & love it. For The Gasa Gasa Orchestra & Nick Nevis, I play a homemade guitar-bass hybrid thing I call The Outcaster, I built it from a dumpster dived piece of swamp ash. It’s got 2 separate circuits in it, bass pickups for the low E & A strings - which are actual bass strings - & guitar pickups for the D, G, B, & E strings. I guess that would be the next most important part for those 2 projects.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Gavin – I have been using a Mesa 50 Caliber + from the 80s for the past 10 years, I adopted it when my buddy moved out of the country. A couple weeks ago Max bought me a Peavey Classic 30 to play with the trail mix, that amp is keeping the Mesa under the dust cover, I am very happy with the sounds that are coming out of it. When playing The Outcaster I send the bass strings through a 1x15 SWR la combo. When doing Schlong gigs, I use my friend Robby’s Peavey Deuce. That amp is amazing; it’s hard to find a combo that can keep up with Dave Mello’s drumming!

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Gavin – Depends on what I’m doing. For The Gasa Gasa Orchestra & Nick Nevis, I use The Outcaster. When playing live with Schlong, I use Dave Mello’s modified Peavey T-26. I used a Godin Artisan for the old Schlong studio shit. I wish I had discovered the Peavey years ago, that would have been my main axe. When playing with Max & The Trail Mix I have a no-name lap steel & Mexican Telecaster (a dear friend left her in my care when he fled after Katrina).

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Gavin – I do, I built it! The Outcaster. More noise, less people.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Gavin – It would have just one button that had beer delivered to the top of the amp.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Gavin – Let’s see, 2 Outcasters (one was the

previously mentioned Squier Strat), 2 electrics, 2 big & 1 small steel string acoustics, a nylon string acoustic & a Fender resonator. & a bass. & a lap steel. & probably enough junk parts to build a couple more electrics. What's that, 11?

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Gavin – They used to just lay all over the floor, but my wife made me build a pair of large cabinets to house all of it. I still have to leave at least one laying around, otherwise I forget to play.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Gavin – A GPS device to find the guitar player.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Gavin – The last guitar was because of pretty wood. I think I liked the sound too.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Gavin – Tricky. It takes so much time to build one by hand. I see customs at 5k+ & feel like whoever built that absolutely deserves it. I don't think it's

silly if someone pays out the nose for a piece of art, that said, I personally have never paid close to 5k for a guitar. I like to buy cheap crap & fuck with it. A couple of my guitars might have been worth something on the vintage circuit if I hadn't hacked them up.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Gavin – I butcher the hell out of the poor things. Not quite sure if they would be considered upgrades by anyone, but definitely customized. I haven't done anything to the Telecaster yet, I was thinking of swapping out the stock pickups someday just to stay true to form.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Gavin – Obsessively. Then I usually wind up buying something else spur of the moment I know nothing about. My wife calls this phenomenon S.E.M., a “sudden entropic maneuver”.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Gavin – I usually just play with what I have, but I do like playing around with different stuff if available, especially in the studio. I'm actually a

big fan of engineers tweaking my tone to what they think sounds good.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Gavin – I like being versatile. I actually love it when other people fuck with the knobs on the amp. I would have never allowed that 20 years ago, but I've come to realize that I probably don't know best.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Gavin – A double neck pedal steel. A Vox AC30. Next on the pedal list is one of those green Line 6 delays. One of those midi controller pickups, maybe I'll put it on the old Teisco.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Gavin – A switch that automatically shuts the sound off when they play "Smoke on the Water".

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Gavin – Best - my 76 Guild acoustic. My dad convinced me to buy it rather than the trendy round plastic thing when I was a teenager, for this I am eternally grateful. Worst - several cheap effect pedals back in the 80s, a “loop”, a “compressor”, a “chorus”, they don’t do a damn thing except suck up tone & enhance single coil pickup buzz.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Gavin – I love Peavey gear. I’ve never played on anything made by Peavey, guitars & amps, & not been super excited about what I was hearing. Maybe someday they will sponsor me. I think they had a rep for a while for being cheap crap, but it’s not true. Peavey stuff rules, it lasts forever. I also love the Tech 21 American Woman distortion pedal, that pedal sent all my other distortion pedals straight to the drawer. I don’t think I sound like Randy Bachman at all playing through it though. I don’t like guitars that are too easy to play, I learned to play on guitars you had to fight with a little bit, things that are too touchy make me feel a little lost.

QRD – What’s the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Gavin – Mmm... good question & a very important

one. Maybe the first few bars of Chet Atkins' "Trambone"? I think I will start playing "The Top Gun Anthem" or "The Theme to Benny Hill".

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Gavin – I started playing seriously at 12 maybe? My dad plays, so I have been abusing guitars since I could crawl -- I wouldn't have called that playing. I had to wait until my hands would fit around the neck, there were no special baby's-first-guitar purchases in my house.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Gavin – I feel like I keep getting better even now. Although when I was around 19 or 20 I started listening to too much Victim's Family & jamming with Dave & Pat Mello & my playing went from Journey & Ozzy Osbourne covers in the garage to Steely Dan & Sesame Street on meth. After a few years of heavy touring I started to feel very comfortable playing weird stuff. Of course I still love punking out the odd Journey or Ozzy cover.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Gavin – It's versatile. It's what was laying around my house growing up. There was a piano too, which is a brilliant instrument & maybe the best one to learn music on. But the guitar is easier to tune & more portable.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Gavin – Sure. It's cheaper than a piano. My first instrument was saxophone, but I kinda wished I had learned to play violin or cello. It's just not as charming making horrible screeching noises trying to bow as an adult. I just didn't think the violin was as... sexy as a saxophone. Whatever my idea of sexy was when I was 9.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Gavin – It's as much of an ally as I have, but I tend to beat it like a captured spy.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Gavin – I could go forever here! First is my dad, Nowell. He plays old time country finger picking, he's great. I love playing that style now. He is a

huge influence & pretty much the reason I play. I grew up listening to Chet Atkins, the grooviest finger picker ever. My first “guitar hero” was probably Randy Rhoades, I first heard about him reading a news article right after he died. Of course the article made a big deal about drugs & Ozzy biting bats heads off & thought, “Wow, I gotta hear this guy!” So I went right out... well, a couple of years later after I bought my first Stratocaster, I went out & bought The Blizzard of Oz LP & learned every damn song. I was completely blown away by the guitar work; at first I thought Randy was playing an electric violin because he was so damn smooth. Then I heard “Dee” & my jaw hit the floor. My dad told me he had been a classically trained musician. Hearing that was super inspiring, it made me want to get really good at music. Of course I never formally educated myself, but I bought the issue of guitar player with the sheet music for “Dee”. It took a while, but I learned it. Broke my heart I didn’t get to see him live, but I was only 12 when he died so I gave myself a break. I love James Honeyman Scott & his twangy melodies. His guitar work was like a song inside of a song. I think his solo in “Kid” off the first Pretenders album is the most brilliant & beautiful thing in rock & roll. Whenever a song calls for a melody line, I just try to think of something that will move the song like that solo. I don’t think I’ve come close... yet. Seeing Ralph Spight from The

Victim's Family play was a real eye opener. I was always into all kinds of music, but I LOVED punk energy, playing punk & metal is what it was all about. I saw Ralph play & was all "Huh? You mean you can play metal & punk & jazz AT THE SAME TIME??? YES! Fuck my world up, why don't you?" Michael Hedges was another dude who gave me all kinds of crazy ideas about what you could do with one instrument, he made the most creative noise I've ever heard coming from just a guitar. Aside from Adrian Belew maybe, who is way more effects-oriented but still an amazingly creative fellow. He makes all kinds of bizarre noises, yet still stays so tuneful, great musician. Why have half these guys died an untimely death?

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Gavin – Depends on the name I guess, I felt like I had to name The Outcaster. But if I built another, it would be called AN Outcaster. So that's different, it's just the model name. If you're not B.B. King, maybe you should just call your guitar by the model name. Naming a touring vehicle is fine though.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Gavin – Aside from chopping up the instruments &

making mutant things? I bought a new Godin Artisan about 20 years ago. It was a lovely sparkly curly maple thing with gold hardware. A good friend of mine saw it & laughed - "In 2 weeks that thing is gonna be all fucked up & covered in beer & dumb stickers!" I looked at it & agreed that it looked a bit precious, so I took the strap off & dropped it on the floor. Took a big ol' chunk of wood off the bottom. It felt good to get the first ding out of the way. That was incredibly stupid of me; it still looks great except for that ding.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Gavin – I riff out in my head all day long. I always have, can't help it. It turns the voices into lyrics. It annoys other people though, they think I am ignoring them. They are correct.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Gavin – It varies. I've played several hours a day for weeks on end, sometimes I've gone months without touching it. If I have a music project deadline I will play every chance I get. It always feels good to play so I do like to pick it up often.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Gavin – I use those light grey thin Dunlop ones. I break too many strings if I go heavier. I also use my fingers a lot.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Gavin – Usually 11s. I break too many strings if I go lighter. Except for The Trail Mix, for that I've been stringing the telecaster with 9s or 10s as the music is mellow & it's easier to do full step twangy bends.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Gavin – When they break or turn my fingers black or I can't tell the notes apart, whichever comes first. Translation: not often enough.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Gavin – I break the D & G strings pretty often. The B & A not quite as often. I guess I don't pay much attention to the Es, as I have a huge surplus. Maybe I will build an instrument that only uses the low & high E strings.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Gavin – They are both best at what they are supposed to do. I do a lot of fingerpicking & left hand muting, so sometimes I feel as if my fretting hand is just an assistant to my strumming hand; but fretter is a great assistant, he's not in any danger of losing his job to a younger faster left hand.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Gavin – I do it all myself. I have had a tech set up my guitar before & was the best thing ever, they were so much better at it. I should probably bring a couple of the beasties in for a checkup. Did I just name my guitars?

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Gavin – Mostly standard 440 tuning, for some of the fingerstyle stuff I use a Drop D, a Drop D with a flat G, an open C, or an Open D with an A on top. I like C6 on the lap steel & the resonator is set up for slide & usually tuned to an open G or C. I love playing around with funky tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Gavin – Most shit I just keep in my head. If I need to write ideas down, I just use crude standard music notation. I'm a slow music reader, but I can read sheet music faster than tabs. I also just write the chord down if that's enough to remember whatever needs to be remembered.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Gavin – Crotch cover height.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Gavin – Maybe turning the treble knob too high? Maybe hitting the strings too hard, being able to lay off a little at times. I'm getting better at that. I have a bum ankle so I wish I could stop tapping that foot, bad.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Gavin – I know a couple people who played violin who turned out to be brilliant multi string instrumentalists. But playing any music at all will help.

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Gavin – Pedal steel guitar. That is the most amazing sounding instrument. Someday I’ll get one of those.

QRD – What’s a guitar goal you’ve never accomplished?

Gavin – Doing an interview with a guitar magazine. Thanks!

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Gavin – I learned to use a volume pedal with a lap steel to make it sound like someone not very good playing a pedal steel.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Gavin – Strap locks!

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Gavin – I want to get better at everything! Slide, chicken pickin’. I’ve been playing a lot of twangy

bendy stuff lately, but I want to get better at it. Maybe get a hipshot & try one of those out.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Gavin – I took a few when I was a young teenager. The dude taught me the pentatonic scales. It was good, I could play in any key anywhere on the neck after that. At some point I stopped taking lessons & started playing nonsense.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Gavin – How to turn deplorable mistakes into a fuckin' rose garden.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Gavin – Write new guitar lines to all the songs on my iTunes on shuffle.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Gavin – Love the way they sound on certain things. I used to use them all the time, but I'm pretty rough on my gear so it never stayed in tune. Locking

tremolos have too many parts to lose, so I just play without tremolos now.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Gavin – Never. My Outcaster has no tone knobs, only one volume per circuit. I met a guy once who used his tone knob, he was awesome. Too many things to remember for me though.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Gavin – Lack of ambition. Play both!

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Gavin – Probably not. A shitty song is usually exactly that.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Gavin – Michael Hedges' harp guitar, that crazy guitar with the horn looking thing & bass strings attached to it. That would keep me out of mischief for a long time.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Gavin – Does a bass player count? Mike Silverman, That 1 Guy. What an incredible thing he's got going on. His Magic Pipe was definitely an inspiration for building my own (tame) instrument. So much crazy shit comes out of that contraption. He hits some of the coolest grooves, it really does sound like Dr. Seuss meets Nine Inch Nails. His shows are quite an experience, everyone should catch it at least once.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Gavin – Maybe Schlong's *Fish Booty*. We did so much crazy shit on that record, I played some banjo & beat on the acoustic guitar as well. Schlong's *Punk Side Story* might be a close second, the entire *West Side Story* score arranged for guitar, bass, & drums. I think I played some banjo & ukelele on that too.

QRD – Anything else?

Gavin – If you are still reading here, you are awesome. I want to hear your music.

Gary Murray of Gary Murray & LN
January 2014

Name: Gary Murray

Bands: Gary Murray & LN, (eighteen twelve)

Websites: GMandLN.com, garymurray.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Gary – My first guitar was an Alvarez Classic Custom. I still have it & play it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Gary – Usually an Alvarez Classic Custom into 2 Alesis Nanoverbs into an Ampeg Reverberocket.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Gary – Certainly the guitar.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Gary – Ampeg Reverberockets meet most of my needs.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Gary – Alvarez Classic Customs are my favorite guitars. They made a certain model for a year or so back in the 90s. It’s a Dana design, but not a “scoop”. I love everything about them, the weight, the tone, neck & scale length. They are workhorses, nearly unbreakable, inexpensive. They hold alternate tuning extremely well & have a great all around sound. On the acoustic side, I play my custom made Kopp Paloma Hybrid. It was designed exclusively around my playing style & just feels “right” in every sense of the word.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Gary – Most would say the Alvarez’s I own are my signature guitar. I play them almost exclusively.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Gary – I rarely use pedals, but I guess my Malekko analog delay would be my pedal of choice.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Gary – I have 9 right now. 5 identical Alvarez Classic Customs, a Martin D-1, Kopp Betty Swing Archtop & a Kopp Paloma Hybrid acoustic/electric.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Gary – Right now, the ones that aren't being used are cased & stacked in a corner of my studio.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Gary – Built in ashtrays.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Gary – \$200.00 I usually refuse to pay more for one.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Gary – I usually block off a tremolo if it has one. I use so many different tunings that tremolos are useless for me.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Gary – I'll play around with something. I don't do much research though. If I like it & think I'll actually use it, then I'll buy it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Gary – Not very often. Depending on venue size or who I'm playing with, there are slight changes.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Gary – I have a fairly consistent tone with most guitars.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Gary – Nothing at the moment.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Gary – I think people usually go for cheap beginner guitars & that's a mistake. You can find great guitars that will stay with you for a lifetime for the same price as these "throwaway" starter guitars. I

always suggest that people buy something real & solid.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Gary – I'm picky about what I buy, so there hasn't been any "worst" purchases. The best purchase has been my Nanoverbs I think.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Gary – That depends on which tuning I'm in.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Gary – I started late in life. I didn't buy my first guitar until I was 19.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Gary – I think I played my best at the beginning. Everything was new & fresh & exciting then. The more you learn the better you get, but the exploration & excitement fades a bit it seems.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Gary – The range of sounds that are possible.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Gary – I guess that really depends on the individual.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Gary – Definitely an ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Gary – I'm sure there are influences that come through, but I've never tried to emulate anyone with my playing or sound.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Gary – All my guitars have names. I do find it silly, but I like silliness.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Gary – I broke a tuning peg off my first Alvarez by throwing it & jumping on it. That was back in my punk rock days. Goes to show how solid those guitars are.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Gary – If I'm playing live for other projects, then I listen a lot to their recordings. Other than that, I simply play when I want to play.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Gary – Time varies. Sometimes I go days without touching a guitar.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Gary – I primarily fingerpick, but when I do use a pick its usually a .60 MM Dunlop nylon. I like the way they sound on the strings.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Gary – On the electrics I use 12s in flat-wounds. I slide around a lot & I'm not a fan of string noise. The acoustics are usually strung up with Martin XP 12s.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Gary – It depends.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Gary – Rarely.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Gary – I think my strumming/picking hand effects my style more.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Gary – I have a guitar tech.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Gary – I use several different tunings. For me it just

adds excitement when writing & playing. I'll often write something in one tuning & learn it in others.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Gary – I have my own secret code when first writing something or learning other artist's songs that I will play live.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Gary – I usually hold mine rather low.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Gary – Nothing I can think of.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Gary – Anything.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Gary – Air guitar. I just look really stupid doing that.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Gary – Nothing I can think of as far as goals.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Gary – Capo cutting.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Gary – I use a capo a lot, so that's my choice.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Gary – I'm pretty happy with most techniques I've tried.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Gary – Never in a real lesson setting. I've learned things from many of the guitarists I've played with over the years.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Gary – Not to be so strict & formulaic. Experiment & explore & find your own style.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Gary – Forget how to play 😊

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Gary – I don't like them for the reasons listed above.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Gary – Quite a bit.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Gary – No difference for me.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Gary – No. Everything has to work as a whole... & the most important part is the song itself.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Gary – None that I can think of.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Gary – I love Mick Turner's guitar work. There are a lot of musicians out there that I admire, but again the songs or compositions matter more than the playing to me.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Gary – I guess my best work lies in the ear of the listener.

QRD – Anything else?

Gary – I think that sums it up.

Joe O'Sullivan of Bilge Pump & Polaris
December 2013

Name: Joe O'Sullivan

Bands: Bilge Pump, Polaris

Websites: bilgepump.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Joe – A Kay Stratocaster copy that cost £55 brand new in 1985. Used it for many years until I got my current guitar in about 1999 when I finally realised it wasn't very good. Over the years it went through many paint jobs, pick ups etc., what it really needed was a new neck. I lent it to someone a few years ago & it got lost. Slightly annoyed.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Joe – Guitar to a Rat distortion, 1971 Guild Foxy Lady (Mk1 Big Muff rebranded for Guild), homemade Rangemaster clone, Boss Tremolo pedal, early 80s Pearl analog delay, Boss tuner, amp. I occasionally use other pedals depending on stuff; 70s Coloursound Wah Supremo for recording, but too unreliable to use live -- I'll fix it one day. Sometimes I use a modded volume pedal to control the speed of the delay, but not always. In Polaris I

use no pedals, just straight into the amp. Nice & simple for setting up, never anything to go wrong. Except for our last gig when my amp caught fire. Oh dear.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Joe – They each play their own part, but probably amplifier. I don't like playing a gig through a borrowed amp, as it's generally very disappointing; you can have the best gear in the world but through a shit badly looked after amp it's going to sound shit whatever. We recently had a gig in Preston & I managed to leave all my pedals at home, it wasn't too bad as I borrowed some to get a rough approximation of what I wanted. Not ideal, but workable. Likewise with guitars, if I had to borrow one I would, but generally other people's guitars are horrible. Like their amps.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Joe – A 1972 Hiwatt PA head that I rebuilt the preamp of to DR103 specs with a few changes (different cathode cap & resistor values I think). I couldn't afford a decent amp & back in the day you could get Hiwatt PA heads for less than £100. Sound City ones for even less. Carlsbro ones you would be paid to take away. It seemed the obvious

thing to buy one of these & convert them into a decent amp. I've also got a 1968 200 watt one, stupidly loud though. I also use two 2x12 guitar cabs loaded with Fane Hiwatt speakers, which I built myself. Mainly so I can easily carry all my own gear if needed rather than a 4x12. Also if I want I can just use one of them.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Joe – A Squier Protone Telecaster with two humbuckers. When I finally realised my old guitar would never be good no matter what pick ups I put in, I decided to find another. I looked around second hand shops & this was the one that had the nicest feeling neck. It originally only had one humbucker & a tortoiseshell scratch plate; unfortunately all the screws became rusted due to sweaty gigs so I had to drill them out to get the guard off for fixing. The remains of the screws are still in there so I can't put it back on. I put the other humbuckers in as the single coil was too harsh, I also have a five way selector switch, which as well as regular settings allows for both pick ups in series as well as parallel (like Brian May). A few years ago I realised that the spare guitar I was using (an Encore Start I found in Paul Rauschens bin) was shit (probably why it was in a bin) so I decided to put one together out of parts myself to build a

replica of mine. Surprisingly it turned out very nice & I often use it instead for gigs, especially if my back is playing up as its lighter.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Joe – It would be exactly like the guitar described above.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Joe – Because I don't use anything out of the ordinary, any signature pedal would already exist. A bit boring I'm afraid. I wouldn't like the idea of a pedal that does loads of stuff, generally anything that has tons of features sacrifices the quality that focusing on one aspect gives, such as your Swiss Army multi-channel amps that make everything sound the same rather than focusing on one good channel.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Joe – Four, the two mentioned above, a 335 copy for mucking about on at home & a Westbury Les Paul that I keep meaning to do up as it's in need of attention. & a Kay bass that I've had for nearly 30 years that I use for recording.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Joe – One at our practice room in its case, one in my living room ready to play, one in the kitchen in its case, & the Westbury in the attic. The bass is upstairs somewhere.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Joe – An airtight section full of silica gel to keep the sweaty guitar strap in to stop the strings rusting, that way I wouldn't have to store it separately. Took me years to realise why my strings went manky so quick. I often wonder if these bands that gaff tape their straps to their guitars realise their strings would last much longer if they removed them after gigs. I guess strap locks just don't look as rock as gaff tape.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Joe – Whether it plays nicely, sounds good through an amp. It probably has to look nice too.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Joe – Unfortunately I don't really know as I don't often buy them. If you look around you can always find bargains though.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Joe – I've kind of talked about this already. I'm quite an idiot for constantly trying new pickups & wiring layouts. & trying different pots & tone cap values. & general hardware. I think the only original bits on my guitar are the body, neck & tuning heads. I'm thinking of getting some new tuning heads.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Joe – Not that much as I generally know what I want, but if I saw something interesting I would probably look it up on the net to check it's not totally crap. But even then it's just people's opinions.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Joe – I constantly change small things around, try the occasional different pedal for a few gigs, a different one of my amps sometimes. Go through

phases of which guitar I use. Nothing major, slow evolution. I don't have any of the same set up as when I started Bilge Pump, but I've never made any drastic changes.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Joe – I've kept the same basic amp tone like an empty canvas, but use the pedals to colour it like some kind of artist. That will either make me sound very profound or a total dick.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Joe – I'm not much of an obsessive, but there is one pedal I've been after for years but you never see them anywhere. I would name it, but I don't want anyone else having it as a saved Ebay search. I'd also like a Gretsch White Falcon. I'm generally a fan of any vintage British valve amp, you can't beat the tone of a 70s Marshall cranked to stupid volume levels, it would be great to be in a blues rock band, unfortunately anyone witnessing it would be bored to tears.

QRD – What do you think are some important

features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Joe – Good intonation. Nothing worse than not knowing why your guitar can be in tune in one place, but not another.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Joe – A good buy were my Hiwatt heads for peanuts. A disappointing purchase would be a FAL combo I bought in 1990, it was shit. Really shit.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Joe – I'm afraid I'm not a fan of Fender amps. Nothing personal, but for some reason they don't agree with my pedals; they always break up really badly with two distortion pedals rather than singing like something that sings nicely. They do sound nice for clean type stuff though. & very nice tremolo circuit, I keep meaning to make a copy of a Fender trem & reverb unit.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Joe – Generally an E chord to check it's in tune,

followed by some wild noodling to embarrass myself.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Joe – I think 12 or 13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Joe – 14.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Joe – Much easier than the piano, I could never get the hands to work separately. Which is why the guitar suits me as both hands are clubbing together to make one note. Very lazy.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Joe – I don't see why not.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Joe – Ally, I can't make up any tunes in my head, I

have absolutely no musical ability & so I use the guitar to randomly come up with crap until something sounds good. I can however play in time, which is what I bring to the equation.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Joe – The first before I started playing was Brian May for obvious reasons. Next was Steve Jones when I was about 12 for the pure wall of sound. That in turn soon led to Keith Levene who made me realise you could do whatever you wanted, which suited me nicely as I wasn't any good at doing what other people wanted. My next major influence was probably seeing The Butthole Surfers, The Pixies, & Fugazi all within a few months of each other in 1989. I would probably say a mixture of all of them is what I do. Which is why I sound so dated. I could definitely name bits I play in our songs that are directly influenced by each of them, some much more obvious than others.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Joe – It is a bit silly, but I can see why people would.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Joe – Many years ago I snapped the headstock off a bass while attempting to adjust the truss rod. Apart from that just the occasional scratch or dent.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Joe – Just playing, nothing crazy like those weird finger strengtheners.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Joe – Not that much, apart from band practice just a bit of noodling on the sofa. I'm too lazy to learn new techniques etc., everything thing I know is accidentally found while sitting on the sofa. Maybe when I retire I'll properly learn to play the guitar.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Joe – Dunlop 73mm; not too thick, not too thin.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Joe – Gauge 10, same reason as the plectrum.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Joe – Quite often, once they start going a bit dead. Which is quite quick when you're as sweaty as me. I always try to towel down the guitar after a gig before putting it in its case to prolong the strings. Fast fret after gigs helps as well, as it coats the strings in oil preventing corrosion.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Joe – Quite rarely. Although if I do it's generally when I don't have a spare guitar.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Joe – Neither, if I'm ever attempting to play something fast for some reason I find both hands let me down equally. Which means I'm never very flashy in my playing. Careful & considered I like to think.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Joe – I do it myself. Originally due to financial reasons & also as a youngster not knowing that

people can do it for you. As with anything it was very satisfying working out how to do it myself. If you have a working knowledge of something it gives you a greater understanding of what it can do.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Joe – In Bilge Pump mainly regular. Except for one song in open G as that's how Emlyn wrote it. & another with a capo as Emlyn wrote it on a fucking ukulele. I might write a song with the bass on a trombone just to piss him off. In Polaris we used a Drop D tuning. Don't know why, I never asked.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Joe – Tablature. I'm shit at reading music, it takes me ages to figure anything out. Even on tab I have trouble with quavers, I can never work out whether the gap is shorter before or after the note. I'm not coming across as very good at music in this. Maybe it will make people buy our records to hear how bad my playing can possibly be.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Joe – I think it's a very average height, although

whenever Neil (drums) plays my guitar he has to raise the strap as he says it's too low. Which is weird as he's about two foot taller than me. Maybe I have it stupidly low, I'll have to look at a photo. Be terrible if I realised I look like Peter Hook or something.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Joe – Hooking my thumb over the top of the neck, especially to play G due to being too lazy to learn properly. Although Jimi had the same trait & it did him ok. I still never bother with barre chords, when I got to that page in the book I decided to go my own way.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Joe – Having a rudimentary knowledge of the piano definitely helps, especially with the theory such as modes are easier visualising on a keyboard.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Joe – I'd like to be much better at finger picking. But again laziness rears its ugly head.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Joe – Being in Mojo magazine.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Joe – I learned quite a lot when I had to master a load of Sabbath songs for a covers band last year. One being that to get a good Iommi sound you turn the distortion right down & let the amp do the talking.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Joe – I use a capo, but I don't like it. I do like a slide however, but generally don't use one apart from at home.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Joe – Finger picking as mentioned earlier.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Joe – No, I had to figure it out myself. I only ended

up playing guitar as when I formed a band with my brother, Dave already had a bass & there was no way I was allowed to be the singer. So my brother told me to learn to play his guitar. “Bela Lugosi’s Dead” was the first song we learned.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Joe – I would say that playing in time with the drummer & having commitment to the notes is more important than the actual notes.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Joe – Avoid barre chords & fast finger work & play in time. Loudly.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Joe – Always fun to play, but I would be constantly worrying about the tuning. I’m a bit OCD about tuning so it could drive me mental. Often think of putting together another guitar with a Bigsby on it, a thin line Tele body would probably suit it.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Joe – In some songs when I do stupid long feedback stuff I adjust the tone knob down to find a sweet spot for controlling the feedback.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Joe – I don't really know as I've never been in that situation. I guess David versus Mark Knopfler.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Joe – I would probably feel very sorry for them, get a bit depressed, & spend the next day convincing myself that one day they'll find the right band.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Joe – Many years ago in the 90s I was on tour & this guy we stayed with in Houston had a Musicmaster that used to belong to Sterling Morrison which played very nicely, he offered to sell it to me for a stupidly low price but unfortunately being the 90s & on tour I had absolutely no money. I've often thought since that I should have borrowed some tour money for it. Oh well.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Joe – Out of people I encounter I would probably say Steve Malley from Unit AMA & Horseloom. I'd also probably have to say Chris Sumerlin from Lords & Kogumaza as he'd be upset if I didn't. Out of famous guitar people I don't really know who's current.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Joe – For noisy type stuff the last Bilge Pump album (*Rupert The Sky*). For stuff where I'm pretending to be clever, the last Polaris album (I don't think it had a name, weird).

QRD – Anything else?

Joe – Probably not, I think those questions covered everything ever.

Tony Whitlock of The Secret Keepers
December 2013

Name: Tony Whitlock

Current bands: Matthew & The Arrogant Sea,
Secret Keepers, Tony Whitlock

Former bands: Brando

Websites: matthewandthearrogantsea.com,
audiosculpture.com, tonywhitlock.bandcamp.com,
secretkeepers.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Tony – My first real guitar was a Memphis Les Paul copy. Before it was bought for me for my 12th birthday, it had belonged to a next-door neighbor, who sold it to my neighbor on the other side, who sold it to a kid two houses down, from whom I got it. I believe I traded it in to a store a couple of years later & finally got it out of my neighborhood. Before the Memphis, I got a Gene Autry toy guitar for Christmas when I was 5 or 6, it came with a flexi LP on how to play, but I don't think I ever tried to learn on it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Tony – It can change dramatically & frequently. To

a gig, I'll usually take a couple of guitars, a DIY pedal board, & an amp. My pedal board fits into an old suitcase & also has room to take a guitar stand, which is nice. I play with a variety of pedals, sometimes with a bunch, sometimes with very few or none. Many that I currently use are pedals I built. In fact, I'm just launching my own pedal company; you can check it out at audiosculpture.com. Currently, my pedal board has a tuner, compressor, boost, overdrive, octave fuzz, EHX Ring Thing, EHX Superego, a couple of delays, an adjustable momentary kill switch, & sometimes a volume pedal makes it into the case. In general, I prefer small, low gain, vintage-style amps.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Tony – I would like to think that I can get by on any semi-working piece of gear, depending on the gig. If I have to pick one, I'll say amp, because if it ain't working, neither am I. Although which guitar I am playing will affect how I'm playing, as will pedals (though not as much as the guitar in most situations).

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Tony – For the last 15 years or so, my main amp

has been a 65 Fender Deluxe Reverb that used to belong to my grandmother. I just recently decided that I don't want to take it around to gigs anymore due to its increasing value. With that in mind, I recently purchased a used (but current production model) Vox AC15. I've wanted one for a long time, & this was as good a reason as any to finally get one.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Tony – My main guitar is a Kirn Telecaster copy made from reclaimed pine (from an NYC warehouse that was built in 1883). Other guitars I frequently use are a 75 Telecaster Custom (formerly my main guitar), 70 or 71 Mustang, 65 Guild Starfire III (which was used on the Silber *Six Feet Under The Snow* compilation), late 70s or early 80s Memphis 12 string electric, 93 Mexican made Strat, 40s or 50s Gibson BR-9 lap steel, early 90s Guild DV-52 acoustic, & a 68 Martin D12-20 acoustic 12 string.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Tony – Probably either a Tele or Jazzmaster style body. I really like the idea of guitars made from reclaimed lumber. It's good to reuse, it's great to

have a chunk of wood with some history inside of it, & I think they sound lovely.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Tony – Well, in a sense, I am making them already. I got started in pedal building as a fun way to get my hands on hard to find &/or expensive pedals, as well as pedals that I dreamt up. After being asked about them by a few people, I started building with the intention to sell some of them. Right now I'm just getting ramped up & don't actually have anything for sale yet, but hope to have a couple of things ready before the end of 2013. I'll be starting out with a few basic things & getting into different models over the next year. Check out audiosculpture.com to see what I've done so far (shameless plug).

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Tony – Around 10 total, some nice, some very cheap.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Tony – A couple hang on my wall (what is on these hooks usually rotates), sometimes I have another

out on a stand in my bedroom, & the rest are kept in cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Tony – Guitars from the 50s in them. Other than that, I can't really think of something lacking.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Tony – I'm usually not looking for specific features, I just want it to feel right when I hold it & play it, it's nice if it sounds good, but that can always be addressed later.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Tony – Good guitars don't have to cost a lot & expensive guitars aren't necessarily better than cheap guitars.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Tony – More often than not, I play them as I get them. I think it goes back to when I sanded down the body of my Strat, which I now regret. It had

collected some stickers & some wear & tear from my early band days, now I wish it was still like that -- oh well, live & learn. I did rewire my Mustang, but that was fixing some poor repair work from a previous owner.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Tony – I tend to do a lot of research & a moderate amount of testing (if I'm able to). That being said, sometimes I'll buy a cool or unique used item on an impulse, these are usually inexpensive. I do enjoy buying the occasional, sight unseen, inexpensive accessory & see what I can do with it - weird picks, capos, etc.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Tony – Probably too often. For the indie-pop band I'm currently playing with (matthewandthearrogantsea.com), I'm getting settled on a regular setup for upcoming shows & tours. For other gigs it's constantly changing, sometimes I play acoustic singer-songwriter stuff, sometimes I play improvised solo guitar with live looping, sometimes I play drone-pop, etc.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone &

locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Tony – By now the answer is probably evident that I tend to change it a lot, sometimes through the course of one song I'll change tone a few times.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Tony – I've been hankering for a Creston guitar for several years. I've also been wanting to check out the Juke Amplification Warbler amp. That's probably it for new stuff; as far as vintage gear, about anything, but in particular it's really some of the usual gearhead stuff: pre-war Martins, early Fender, rare pedals, etc.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Tony – Probably a decent set up & a guitar that stays in tune. The easier it is to play & sound decent, the more inspiring it is. I guess that doesn't just go for beginners.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Tony – The one I regret the most was trading my Les Paul for two cheap guitars. While they were cool, they weren't totally usable. I don't have either of them anymore, but that LP should still be playable.

The best specifically guitar-related might be my Kirn guitar. Overall, the best piece of musical gear I ever bought was the Tascam cassette 4 track I bought in high school. I learned so much, had a ton of fun, & grew creatively so much from that one humble machine, I love you 424.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Tony – I'm not really brand-loyal, though it seems I prefer Fender-style guitars over others. There are some brands I dislike for different reasons, but I don't really want to go into it, to each their own.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Tony – It will most likely be a part I recently came up with, some new chord I'm learning, or the guitar solo from "The Race Is On" by George Jones.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Tony – I got an electric guitar & lessons for my 12th birthday.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Tony – I feel like I'm playing my best right now. I may have been a little better technically a few months ago, before I had a bout of tendonitis & bursitis, but during that down time, I tried to study more theory & harmony, which I feel has made me better overall.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Tony – I don't know, but there was never any doubt in mind that I HAD to play guitar.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Tony – Any possible introduction into the world of musical instruments is good. I do wish I had learned piano & some brass or woodwind instrument, but my elementary school didn't have a music program, so they weren't really on my radar as a child.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Tony – Although I do fight it sometimes, I think the instrument is always an ally. As one may have a disagreement with a loved one, such is the relationship with the guitar.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Tony – This could get long, but most recently, I would say Jim Campilongo, Ted Greene, & Bill Frissell. Some of the big players in my past have been Stephen Malkmus & Scott Kannberg from Pavement, the Built to Spill guys, Brian Eno, Lou Reed & Sterling Morrison, Kevin Shields, Wes Montgomery, & then guys like Reggie Young, Steve Cropper, & Teenie Hodges. Then there are non-guitar playing folks like Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, etc. Also Bedhead, I think the Kadane brothers style probably has influenced my playing. & Ira Kaplan, Thurston Moore, & Lee Ranaldo. & I can't forget Neil Young. Oh, then there's guys like Don Rich, Buck Owens, Merle Haggard, Roy Nichols, & Bill Kirchen (who plays a mean trombone also). Barney Kessel, Hank Garland. Peter Tosh. Tinariwen. Bossa Nova guys - Gilberto, Jobim, Luiz Bonfá,

etc. The Beatles & The Stones. A couple of players that made me want to play as a young kid (though I probably didn't realize it at the time) would be Billy Gibbons & Joe Walsh.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Tony – I don't really think about it. I've never done it, but I guess I can imagine a need to distinguish or to start calling a guitar something that fits its personality.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Tony – I took a power sander to a guitar. I wish I hadn't. I've been lucky, I've seen friends' guitars break in various ways.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Tony – For a long time, I didn't really practice, nothing other than playing. Then last year, I decided to try to actively get better, my practice routine isn't getting worked through much these days, since I'm playing with a band again, starting a company, & working a day job; but the ideal basics are these: playing a scale in 5 positions (usually just

major & the related major pentatonic); playing patterns through each position; practice arpeggios for Major 7th, Minor 7th, Augmented, & Diminished chords starting on the three lowest strings; play triads through a scale -- in three shapes on each adjacent string group; play 7th chords through scale for all forms I am working on. Then I would also work on some repertoire -- learning &/or writing songs. Like I said, this routine doesn't happen much these days.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Tony – I probably play an average of 10-15 hours a week, I'd love to be able to play much more, maybe 6 hours a day, & still have the other aspects of my life (except a day job).

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Tony – Around the same time I started practicing for real (see above), I started to evaluate other aspects of my playing, including picks. For the time being, I've settled on Dava Jazz Grips. For several years, I played standard shaped Dunlop Tortex picks (first yellow, then orange). Then I tried the Jazz III, after a few days, I got used to the shape & now I love them way more than standard shaped picks. Now, when I play a standard shaped

pick, it feels like running in shoes that are too big for me, I can get to where I'm going, but it will probably be a little clumsy & not the best I can do. I like the Dava Grips because the grip is really comfortable & I like flipping it around to use the rubber part for a different attack option.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Tony – I've been everywhere from 008 to 012. I'm currently back to 009s on most of my electrics, but I plan to bump it up to 010s on my main guitar for the next string change.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Tony – Probably not as often as I should. Maybe once a month.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Tony – Not too much anymore. There have been two gigs where I broke all six strings simultaneously, it can be dangerous to get all worked up playing a guitar with a Bigsby.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Tony – I feel like they both have a ways to go. Sometimes I have to remind myself to play within my limits, that a well-executed part that I might not like as much will usually sound better than a poorly-executed, mind-blowingly creative part.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Tony – I generally set them up myself, although I did recently have a pro set one up for the first time. I do it myself because I enjoy it & I like to tweak it then play awhile, adjust some more, etc. I took my 70s Fender to a tech recently (about a year ago) because there are a few more things to adjust that I'm not well versed in, like the three-bolt micro-tilt neck. It turns out he didn't do much more than I normally do, but I was glad I took it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Tony – Mostly standard & a few that I invented. I used to really enjoy coming up with odd open tunings to create different moods & sounds. Mostly standard now because I've learned a lot over the last couple of years & now I can make it do what I want more easily.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or

some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Tony – I've started to use chord block diagrams to remember specific fingerings, & sometimes to remember chords I'll just write out chords like this: x6878x, I don't know what people refer to that notation as, but it's kind of like tab shorthand for chords.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Tony – Around waist height, maybe a little higher. Guitars are like pants, the older you get, the higher you wear them.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Tony – Raising my right shoulder while playing when I sit, it ends up causing a lot of pain. I also tend to grip the neck much tighter than I need to, especially at shows. Also, players should take breaks during long stretches of playing.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Tony – I think any different instrument can make you look at your primary instrument in a new light.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Tony – Jazz, chicken pickin' truck-driving country, classical, chord melody, Chet Atkins style, & much more.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Tony – Making a living playing it.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Tony – It's not a trick, but working on different chord forms up & down the neck.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Tony – I guess the Ebow, though I don't use it a whole lot these days. String winders are also very useful.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Tony – Hybrid picking, but I'd settle for anything.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Tony – I took some in the mid-80s. I learned the names of the notes on the E & A strings, how to read tab, & “Smokin’ In The Boys Room.” I also recently took a few lessons & learned some techniques for practicing jazz improv.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Tony – Some music theory, how it applies to guitar, & WHY it's helpful to know.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Tony – Forget nearly everything they know in the heat of the moment.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Tony – I like them, sometimes too much (see above). I also enjoy playing a guitar without one, like my Kirn Tele.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Tony – More often than most players probably, sometimes more than once a song.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Tony – Rhythm guitar players only strum chords? I feel like those labels don't really apply to much of the music I listen to.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Tony – No, it has to all work together. I guess it might depend on how not good the band is & if the song works. If the song works, I'm all in, no matter the skill level. If I don't like the singer, forget about it.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Tony – Hmm... I haven't thought much about this, maybe something that was a favorite guitar of one of my favorite musicians. Perhaps Neil Young's black Les Paul, or one of John Lennon's guitars.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Tony – I have no idea, so many people are capable of so many creative & out-there ideas that it's really hard to say.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Tony – Well, Matthew & The Arrogant Sea is working on a new album right now, that should be out early 2014, & hopefully that will have some good guitar work. I hope to have some new solo guitar pieces up on tonywhitlock.bandcamp.com/ in the near future. I'm also very happy with the track I did on Silber's [Six Feet Under the Snow](#) compilation, it's a live to tape improv solo guitar & looper pedal piece.

QRD – Anything else?

Tony – Thanks to Brian for asking me to take part in this issue & for putting out some of my music & to anyone that checks out my music or my pedals.

Jason Williams of Animal Holograms

February 2014

Name: Jason Williams

Bands: Animal Holograms, Dance Moms, Sunny Shadows (live/touring guitar player), & Haunted Yacht (annual studio recording project)

Websites: soundcloud.com/animalholograms,
facebook.com/animalholograms,
twitter.com/AnimalHolograms,
tumblr.com/blog/animalholograms,
hauntedyacht.bandcamp.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jason – It was a black & white Fender Squire that my dad bought me for Christmas when I was eleven years old. I still have it collecting dust in my closet. One day while I was skateboarding back home after band practice with my first band, DropOut (yes, spelled just like that) I lost my balance, swerved uncontrollably for a few moments before losing my grip on it & down it went. I busted the headstock right in half. That was the end of that. But it was the event that led directly to my purchase of a sea foam green 1950s re-issue Fender Stratocaster, so it's not all bad.

QRD – What’s your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jason – Stratocaster through a Lexicon MX200 into a Marshal VS100 4x12” Marshall cab.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jason – Always my guitar. A reliable guitar through a shitty amp beats a shitty guitar through a great amp every time. You can’t polish a turd & amplifying a crackly, thin, cheap signal running through an AC30, no matter how many pretty tubes it has, is exactly that -- cheap turds. But plug a Les Paul into an old, shoddy off-brand practice amp & you have vintage mystique or analog radio or something of that nature. The guitar is the most important link in the chain. Always my guitar.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jason – It used to be an Ampeg SVT-350 I borrowed indefinitely from a good friend of mine when I played in a band called Rocket Miner. I used it to play bass naturally since I was the bassist in that band (August 2012 – April 2013), but I’ve always been drawn to the sound of a deep, guttural clean tone when it came to amps. When my friend

who played bass in my first band bought his first real amp, an Ampeg combo, for whatever reason, curiosity or boredom I guess, I plugged into it. I fell in love with that tone immediately. No guitar amp on earth can really replicate that deep, smooth, clean tone like a good bass amp does, at least no guitar amp I've ever played out of. However, now that he plays bass for another Chicago band, Shrug, I play out of my Marshall VS-100. Why? Because it's the best & only amp I own. It sounds great particularly out of a 1960A cab or the SVT 4x10. & the sound I get through my Marshall 4x12 certainly does the job, though an upgrade will surely happen in time when I'm not rationing Raman noodle packets to make sure I have money for bus fare.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jason – It used to be an alpine white Gibson Les Paul Studio with gold hardware. There was nothing customized or unique about it. If it isn't broken, don't fix it. No, actually I doubt I really live by that adage. If I had the extra coin to splurge I'd have done a couple of things to it. Like switching out the neck pickup with a Bare Knuckle Black Dog Humbucker. But now I'm using a Fender Stratocaster lent to me by a buddy of mine, a generous friend & incredible musician.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jason – It'd be a Fender Jaguar with strings made of panther whiskers, tuning knobs made of panther teeth & the thing would roar like no other. Kidding. Don't kill large cats for silly looking signature guitars. The idea of signature guitars in general is kind of absurd to me. I mean, if it's used by the person for whom it was designed, cool, he's got his or her own "signature" guitar. But why would I want it? In short, my answer is, I wouldn't have a signature guitar since it inherently implies that it's a customized version of some pre-existing model intended to be sold at Guitar Center to a bunch of salivating Cream fans all after the Eric Clapton Stratocaster. It's an extension of celebrity branding. I mean, would you wear his clothes? They probably wouldn't fit -- physically or stylistically. Just hand me a Strat & I'll be happy.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jason – Again, with the signature. But I'll take this to mean "custom" or "made for my use only". I like modulators & mild de-tuning/pitch shifting oscillating slowly sort of like the Waves Mercury Enigma plug-in setting "Mushroom Therapy". I

think I'd adapt those algorithms or whatever it is that manipulates the sound like that to a pedal. An example of what I'm talking about can be heard in an old Tundras song I wrote called "[Strange Futures](#)". The monophonic melody over the piano which starts pretty much right away had been run through that plug-in. Further in the song, when the drums come in you can hear the pitch modulation more distinctly. It's unlike pitch modulators I've heard as guitar pedals, which I've never liked. The Waves plug-in is much more subtle & haunting. I'd also add a reverb option with knobs for pre-delay, decay time & a low & high equalizer for the input, so that if I don't want the low end to reverberate I can scoop that out, or if there's too much high end dominating the quality of the reverb I can attenuate like on a graphic EQ at say, 6k & boost 900k, & have something like 9 or 10 bands.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jason – One classical guitar, two acoustics -- a Takemine & an old Fender my grandfather bought for my grandmother, which she gave to me -- & two electric guitars -- an Ibanez & my old broken Fender Squire. I use only the Takemine when writing, but for playing electric guitar, I use the Stratocaster lent to me by another Jason. I think that's why he let me use it. We share the same

name & we both have peculiar gaits. Can't think of any other reason.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jason – In my living room where my home studio is. They are on dual guitar stands & I have a few hung from the wall.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jason – A free guitar inside.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jason – Sound. Does it sound incredible? Yes? Well that's the number one feature I'm after. The number two feature would be number of guitars attached to the guitar. So, for instance, when I see a guitar, but it looks like two guitars stuck together, I say to myself, "Now this is a feature I'm staying clear of." So, number two feature: guitar must be singular. I play guitar. Not guitars.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jason – Cost? They should be giving me guitars for

nothing. In return I would compose them Swedish black metal songs of gratitude.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jason – I've never had the extra cash to invest into customizations. I suspect that if I did though, I wouldn't go too crazy. I prefer to spend my time crafting the song itself or technically refining the ideas I have for a song. I've never really been a gearhead when it came to guitars. Now, recording equipment... that's another story. Don't even get me started on microphones & compressors.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jason – Intensely. But it depends on what it is. A microphone, I'll research the hell out of it. Reading reviews, forums devoted specifically to that brand, asking other engineer friends who've used it what their experience was & how it sounded on such & such instruments & environments, etc. Same thing for guitar. More than reading up on it though, I just spend a lot of time playing it. No review can tell you if a guitar's going to be a good fit for you. It's good to know the specs & the quality of the electronics & craftsmanship & so on, but for that I usually just ask my guitar tech friends since I'll

never know all the information those guys have in their heads about tubes, pickups, variations of bridges, types of wood & all the electronic know-how. They're my sages for advice on guitars.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jason – No. I have a modest set up. I'm happy if I have a solid, smooth clean tone, a good sounding reverb & a functional delay.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jason – I think your tone should always be a reaction to whatever the song & the band is calling for. Sometimes you need to drop all the low end, EQ it out & boost the mids to get a tone that isn't wrestling with the bass or burying the singer. Sometimes you want a deep, bassy guitar tone to shake the room. It all depends on what kind of music you're playing, what other instruments are around you, & what sonic textures a given song is asking of you. It just so happens that the music I write for Animal Holograms spans a wide spectrum, so sticking with one single guitar sound just doesn't really happen.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jason – I'd like to own an Emperor cab someday soon. They sound & look really good & they're based here in Chicago. I've had a Telecaster on my list for a while also. Everyone seems to be into AC30s right now, which I'm into, but I've always wanted a Mesa Boogie Triple Rectifier. The pedal I most want right now is the Electro-Harmonix Voice Box. That thing is so amazing & incorporates some pretty interesting technology. When using the two-part harmonizer you plug your guitar into one of the inputs, which detects using, I imagine, a tuner of some sort, the chord being played & adjusts the intervals of the harmonies being produced by the voice also running through the pedal. So if I were singing a G note & playing a G major chord it might harmonize with a B & E. Still holding that note & then switching to a C major chord the harmonies would instantly adjust to C & E in order to keep you in key & allow your harmonies to follow the progressions instantaneously. Don't know how long that's been around for, I might've been in the dark about it, but that's amazing.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jason – Strings?

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jason – My Ibanez 160. I was going through a metal phase. It had a rip off of a Floyd Rose bridge, so staying, let alone just getting into tune was a nightmare. I think I'll light it on fire someday.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jason – Digitech makes a solid delay. Who doesn't have one? Marshall, Mesa Boogie, Orange & Ampeg are my top choices for amp brands. When I buy a guitar I rarely look at anything other than a Fender or Gibson. I've played other brands of guitars & they've usually resulted in disappointment & mild laughter.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jason – For a while I used to play “Angeles” by Elliott Smith on any guitar I picked up. I just love those chords & the picking pattern. It's a lot of fun to play. But if I think about it, I usually just run through all the modes in G Major up & down just to

get loose & then mess around with chord progressions.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jason – I was eleven years old, 1996. I idolized Billy Corgan. All I listened to was *Siamese Dream* & *Mellon Collie & the Infinite Sadness*. As soon as I heard those songs I knew right away what I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jason – Right around age twenty-three or twenty-four. I had gotten into 4-track recording with a Tascam a friend of mine lent me a while before, but when I got more involved in songwriting I was compelled to upgrade. I bought an old Roland VS-1680 16 track & I upgraded my microphone from a Shure SM58 to a large diaphragm condenser, an AKG Perception 200. Suddenly my guitar & amp sounded so much cleaner & crisper through the headphones & now I had twelve more tracks at my disposal. This really seemed to push my songwriting forward, which in turn propelled my technical ability. I wanted to hear certain things come out of my amp to serve a part in a song I'd be writing & so I'd sit there grueling over it for hours

& hours, late into the night. My girlfriend at the time hated it; I wouldn't come to bed until 4am or even well into the early afternoon the next day & I'd started working on the thing the afternoon prior, going on twenty-four hours straight. I improved a great deal during this time. I think I'm always getting better in some regard; it's a constant evolution. But this was sort of a time of accelerated & energized improvement.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jason – I'm not so sure that it does. I feel both perfectly at home holding a guitar as well as awkward & out of place. Maybe that's a good thing though. I can play the piano, not as well as I play guitar, but I can play things like the Moonlight Sonata, a couple Mozart pieces & Beatles songs, so I'm competent. I'm also able to play the drums fairly well. They fit me just as well as the guitar fits me. But it just so happens I've spent so many more hours on a guitar than I have on drums, that my level of competency is obviously biased towards the guitar. Just about any instrument seems to "fit" me, except the saxophone. Fuck saxophones. I'd rather breathe.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jason – Even though I started diddling around on the piano as a young kid before ever even knowing what a guitar looked like, the guitar was the first instrument I really learned how to play. As such, it was also my gateway into music theory. This is where people probably run into problems. If you're interested in trivializing the instrument, so to speak, in pursuit of the more universal order, the higher Truth as it were, that is, music theory, then yeah, I can see how working backwards from an initial exposure to music through the lens of the guitar could be a detriment to your more general goal of understanding theory. The guitar is in some ways an absurdly complicated instrument from the perspective of theory. Compared to the piano, which is a nice & neat, single row of notes with the naturals segregated by color from the flats/sharps, each pattern of twelve tones inside of the octave repeating precisely the same way visually, the guitar just seems haphazardly designed. Of course, I don't see it that way personally & maybe no one does. I'm just imagining what someone's argument could be. People should play whatever their heart desires.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jason – Both. It's one or the other today & the

opposite tomorrow. I navigate the relationship accordingly.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jason – Billy Corgan, Blake Schwarzenbach, Elliott Smith, Ben Weinman, Ted Stevens, Omar Alfredo Rodríguez-López, Jesse Lacey, George Harrison, Doug Martsch, Isaac Brock, Dustin Kensrue, Britt Daniel, Robby Krieger, Matt Bellamy, Justin Vernon, Adam Jones, I could go on forever.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jason – That's just how some people are with their stuff in general, I think. You're either someone who names inanimate objects or you're not. I happen to not be one of these types of people. It doesn't bother me one way or the other. Perhaps they live more colorful lives & all of us non-anthropomorphizing folk should be incredibly envious. Well, maybe it's a little creepy. To each their own.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jason – I cracked the headstock of my first guitar in half while skateboarding home from band practice.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jason – I like to run through the modes up & down. I usually just start at G Major (Ionian), run the scale up two octaves, back down, go up to A (Dorian) up two octaves, back down, up to B (Phrygian) up two octaves, back down & so on all the way up to G Major on the fifteenth fret of the low E string & then all the way back down, ending on G Major where I started. I also like to invent non-cyclical scales to keep my brain from getting too used to playing mechanically. What I mean is, the interval pattern doesn't repeat, doesn't end at the octave or even use it. So the whole thing weaves in & out of different keys. If I'm feeling particularly ambitious I'll run the modes, but they're endless & not very melodically useful. Though I have used some of these kinds of non-repeating scales in songs, one or two maybe.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jason – 10-30, depends on what I'm doing musically. In recent years I've gone weeks here &

there not touching my guitar at all, writing & playing everything on the piano instead. It's important for me to mix things up & throw off my expectations when it comes to songwriting. If I'm too confident on a given instrument, even if I have no reason to be that confident, it dulls my sense of exploration. Even though I don't, I think I know what's around every corner, which is just as bad. So, it's true at times, less is more.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jason – I don't use picks all the time, but when I do I use Dunlop medium thickness picks.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jason – 11-52. That just seems to be the gauge range that both sounds & feels best for me & the style of music I'm currently playing.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jason – More often than I'd like. Though Elixers have helped out with that a lot.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jason – Always. My hands sweat profusely & it rusts the strings. That paired with the intensity at

which I play the strings sometimes, both with my left & right hands, & the volume of play results in many a broken string at frequent intervals.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that affect your style?

Jason – I don't even know how to answer that. When I play, they're one hand. If one is slipping up & not keeping up with the other I figure out the issue & it's done. It's not like one hand is holding the other back from doing things I want to do that I can't do. They seem to keep pace with one another.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jason – Usually myself unless its something to do with intonation or electronics. I have a friend who is a tech wizard, thank Zoroaster.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jason – Standard. That's it. I used to mess around in Drop D, Open D & a few random tunings I stumbled upon, but I don't bother anymore. I consider it almost a hindrance to my learning process. When I write I'm constantly learning new things about subtle melodic & harmonic dynamics,

interesting little dissonances that the twelve-tone equal temperament system still surprises me with to this day. When I alter my tuning I find that often the motivation to do so seems to originate from this desire to stumble across one of these strange little dissonances you just don't find in the major or minor scales. & of course, that's fine, that's the whole point, except when I do come across a harmonic gem all I want to do is understand the melodic relationships between whatever pitches were used, which of course requires reverting, at least psychologically, to a known, reliable context, which is for most guitar-playing Westerners, the standard tuning. So I just stay there, which is overall, I find, more challenging.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jason – Depends on the idea. I'd never tab out a chord, unless it was a really atypical & exotic one I couldn't come up with a reasonable enough name for. & that's rare, even though I play mostly non-traditional voicings, modulated inversions, perversions of harmony. Usually by naming the chord I can recall the voicing by looking at it in context. For more melodic or "lead-type" one or two string ideas, I'll usually just record them instead of tabbing. I used to tab everything, but at

the rate I write now it'd just take up way too much time. Write, record, move on.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jason – Higher than I do low. I prefer to be able to play than to try & look cool. Even though low hanging guitars don't even look cool. What looks cool is a person who can play their instrument well on stage without straining to reach a note that an otherwise well-adjusted strap would have allowed for. So, not as high as Tom Morello, but I'm up there.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jason – Rocking too hard. It's hard to break.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jason – Drums. Rhythm seems to be an oddly overlooked, underrated & under appreciated element of guitar playing, especially for beginners. For many beginners it's all about obsessing over the left hand dancing around on the fret board at lightning speed at the expense of an underdeveloped picking hand. Either hand is a stick in the mud

without the other. Drums helped force me to focus on the piece by piece, note by note, elements of a rhythm. Right hand's tapping eighth notes on the high hat, left hand's hitting the snare on the two's & four's, & your right foot's creating a groove with sometimes-seemingly-random-though-not-at-all-random-if-you-know-what-you're-doing bass drum hits. This is what learning the drums was all about for me. The beat wasn't just some abstract thing you could bop your head along to while chaotically strumming over regardless of what was happening with it. The beat was a soulful yet mathematical thing; everything has to add up one way or another. & with drums, that beautiful rhythmic pulse undulating beneath the distorted frenzy of a guitar can't exist unless you have a firm understanding of it in that respect.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jason – There isn't really. Maybe classical? I can play classical. I used to teach it actually. But never became proficient enough. But that's because I didn't want to. I guess a part of me wishes I could sweep like the dudes from Dragon Force, but then I slap the shit out of that side of myself & snap back into the real world. As a skill, it's impressive, just like backflips are impressive. I'd like to learn how to backflip. But do I wish so badly to do a backflip

that I'm going to start using my time to train how to do it properly? No. I'm busy writing songs for Animal Holograms & I'm happy doing that. That isn't to say I'm closed minded & think there's nothing new to learn. I just think that "types" of guitar playing references "tradition". Traditions are strict, precise, ritualistic exercises that leave zero room for experimentation. I'll often evoke the essence of a playing style, but it's only a starting point, from which I bend & melt & change the idea until its nothing like the thing it began as. In the Animal Holograms song, "Lorca", I fingerpick the main guitar part. It's just basic Travis picking, but using "baroque" chords & non-traditional dissonances. I'm interested in classical music & southern styles of playing, but I'm not interested in mastering them. I use them launch pads or contextual devices for composing a song.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Jason – Making it levitate.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jason – Tuner.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Jason – Techniques are passé.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jason – I took guitar lessons for about three or four months when I first started. I remember, they were on Mondays, because my dad who lived about half an hour away would come pick me & my brother up on Sundays at noon to spend the day with us. The next day after school he'd come pick me up again, take me all the way to Elgin where he lives, drop me off at my lesson & take me all the way back home. I just remember thinking how miserable it must've been to have to drive back & forth the same half hour drive eight times in just a little over a day. That's like four hours of driving. My dad & I don't get along all that well, so this short time in my life, the three or four months I took lessons for, is one of the fonder memories I have of hanging out with my dad. As far as what I learned from them, I can't really recall. I learned a lot of Smashing Pumpkins, Nirvana, Green Day, Bush, all the 90s alternative stuff that was on Q101 at the time. My teacher's name was Cory. He had long bleached blonde hair & bangs & always wore ripped jeans & a black t-shirt. He was born to be a guitar teacher.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar

lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jason – Well, since I'm a guitar teacher I often have the opportunity to confront this. If a student of mine expresses interest in song writing I like to get into that. We'll start by coming up with a chord progression, tinkering around with different chord voicings to create something unique. Then I'll play those chords over & over, looping them while letting my student improvise over it. All the while we'll record these little improv sessions, listen back & pick out the best bits to edit together. We also talk a lot about how to create a chorus that compliments the chord progression written for the verse. For example, a student might write an Am, FMaj7, C, G7 progression for a verse. In this case, in the key of F major, it's a verse starting on the iii chord, a basic iii, I, V, II progression with a few tiny variations. So a decent chorus that you might expect to hear could be I-iii-II-V with a pre-chorus setup of vii-iii-vii-V-vii or something along those lines. It's a pretty traditional song structure & chord progression, but it allows us to work from there & to begin brainstorming ways of shattering the listener's expectations by shattering your own expectations. It really varies from student to student depending on their aesthetic & tastes in music, which makes the lessons exciting for both them & myself.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jason – You’d have to have a perfectly backwards take on music & guitar & spend years trying to make sense out of it by writing thousands of songs, many of which are just altogether terrible, but yield maybe a tiny idea here & a tiny idea there worth keeping. If you took all those tiny little ideas acquired over seventeen years of fumbling around with a guitar & other instruments & put them together in such a way that it resembled all the best things you loved about your favorite songs while also transforming itself into everything you wished a song could be that it hasn’t yet been for you, then maybe that’d approximate my playing style. I don’t really know. I’m probably giving myself way too much credit. I just play what I want to hear. It’s as simple as that.

QRD – What’s your take on tremolo systems?

Jason – I don’t get a cut. I never invested.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jason – Barely ever. If I have to take a little edge off the top I’ll adjust it slightly, but typically the

settings on the guitar -- two volumes & two tone knobs, one for each pickup -- stay the same.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jason – These two prescribed roles seem to be blending together more & more as time goes on. You still have a lot of bands where these roles still apply -- rhythm guitar player handles the chords, lead guitar player takes care of the solos, nuances, & everything else outside of the chords -- but it seems to me the “lead guitar player” archetype is an increasingly out of vogue concept. It goes back to “traditions”. The rhythm & lead guitar players, bass player, & drummer -- the major industry band model more or less. & that might have something to do with it, industry. Like a parts factory, each component in the machine or person on the assembly line has its task & does only that task, doing it very well as a consequence. We have this major label industry tradition to thank for people like Steve Vai & bands like Whitesnake. It produces virtuosos. But not once has a Whitesnake song saved my life & changed my view of the world. That could be due to the fact that I have never listened to Whitesnake, but I feel confident in my assumption.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jason – Absolutely not. No guitar player, in my opinion, could ever carry an entire band by his or herself. Good guitar players, just like good singers, are nothing without solid & creative drummers, bass players, keyboard players, & so on. The under appreciated nature of bass players & drummers frustrates me to no end. You might argue that great bass playing or great drumming should be like great editing or cinematography in a film -- if done well it should be invisible. Absolute hogwash! Maybe great bass playing & drumming does often go unnoticed just like great editing or cinematography, allowing the guitar work & vocals just like the action & drama in a film to shine. But if it does go unnoticed that's the listener's loss. Some of my favorite songs feature the bass as the leading role. "The Hate I Won't Commit" by Land of Talk off of *Cloak & Cipher* is a great example of a bass heavy song. Though actually their secret, as well as just about all of my favorite bands, seems to be balance. Too much of a good thing can be a pretty bad thing.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jason – Bill Hicks. He was relatively famous, more

so now that he's dead sadly, & he was a musician, but not a famous musician. He was known for his stand-up & political outspokenness & I absolutely respect everything he stood for. Or if I could get my hands on one of Elliott Smith's guitars....

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jason – Ben Weinman from the Dillinger Escape Plan I think has been doing some of the most interesting things with guitar in recent decades. He doesn't seem to pay any attention at all to traditional melodic concepts, opting instead for entirely unfamiliar & brand new sequences of notes at odd intervals played along to what seems to be absolutely stochastic rhythms that rarely repeat themselves in the same way twice. They've been putting out innovative albums since 1999 with *Calculating Infinity* & now, fourteen years later, they're still surprising me with the soundscapes they come up with. Nick Reinhart from Tera Melos is another more recent inspiration when it comes to innovative songwriting & guitar playing. The opening track from *X'ed Out*, "Weird Circles" is a good example. The whole song, I think, is written in 5/4 or 5/8, but in a way that feels totally natural. I love things like that.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jason – People can visit soundcloud.com/animalholograms to stream or download all of our tracks for free. We're also giving away handmade versions of the *i sólina* LP, which includes songs found on our Soundcloud, but includes an un-released track & a different version of “Lorca”. Email animalholograms@gmail.com if interested in receiving a free hand made “artisanal” CD & packaging.

QRD – Anything else?

Jason – Thanks for your interest in me & Animal Holograms! If you like what you hear, let us know. We want to hear from you. Animal Holograms is also currently writing for an EP, possibly a full-length depending on time, which is expected to be released in late spring or early summer 2014. Thanks, again!

Lucio Menegon of Rev. Screaming Fingers
September 2013

Name: Lucio Menegon

Bands: Reverend Screaming Fingers, microdecibel,
Fisted Lizard

Websites: www.kingtone.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Lucio – My very first guitar was a classical nylon job that I got for lessons in third grade or something in the 70s. I still have that one. My first electric was a Univox Les Paul copy in 9th grade. I sold it when I got a Gibson a few years later. Incredibly, a non-musician friend found the Univox after whatever adventure it went on after me. I got to see it & play it a few years ago -- so lo-fi! I didn't remember it had a bolt-on neck. He says he's keeping it for when I become famous. Ha.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Lucio – I'm usually happy with a single coil pickup, a bit of overdrive (or a nice tube amp cranked up), a fuzz pedal, & delay. Sometimes reverb & tremolo. For outside/improv/soundscape stuff I usually have a sampler involved as well.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Lucio – It has changed over the years. I fastidiously setup my guitars to play & sound well, so that is really important. Tone is ultimately about the playing & the fingers, but the instrument is next in line. I love my pedals & amps, but I’ve got those to a certain place over the years & the instrument provides the biggest difference now.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Lucio – I’m not as much of a vintage snob anymore & recently got a used Vox AC15C1 that totally rocks. For a touring rock gig, I could have two of those & be happy. It’s not setup like a vintage AC15, but has great tone for sure. The reverb isn’t so hot, so that stays off. For several years now I have often gigged with a ZT Lunchbox (they set me up with one, so I’m unofficially sponsored, I guess). I’ve used it on its own for smaller gigs, thru a 12” cab for bigger, & even into a bass amp with great results.

My favorite amp for recording has always been my 1965 Fender Princeton Reverb that I’ve had since 1995. I rarely bring it to gigs anymore. Incredible tone. When I used to gig with it more, I came up with a Neil Young type setup with that amp at the

core of my sound. My tech Lawrence Fellows Manion came up with a special output that taps the speaker signal, so I get the tone of the amp/speaker - not just the preamp - & can put that into the preamp of another amp. For years that used to go into an amazing mint 1971 Hiwatt 100 head - the most solidly constructed amp ever, hands down - then into a varying array of speaker setups, usually 2 12" Celestion V30s.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Lucio – A 1967 Fender Telecaster with a maple cap neck. It just totally rules. Everything I do I can do on that guitar. Plays great, sounds great, never fails me. The neck has a beautiful shallow V shape. I've had different pickups in there, but my fave are stock G&Ls. Dialed back just slightly they are vintage Tele & full up they have a litter more growl.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Lucio – I wouldn't want one unless it was my dream guitar. I guess it depends on the application, but for live work I'd love it to have the sound & feel of my Tele; but lighter, sort of like my Danelectro U2 & with an incredible trem bar that had the feel of my Gretsch archtop (they're too stiff on a solid

body) with bold Tele-ish bridge sound & a fatter P90 sound in the neck.

A guitar that came close was a Deusenberg Star Player that I owned for a red hot minute. Unfortunately, I couldn't get used to the long scale on the Les Paul style body. The headstock was also a bit long/cheezy, so I sold it. Great guitar otherwise & the best trem arm.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Lucio – I am very picky about delay, so without a doubt a small footprint digital delay that really does sound like a 1970s EP3 Echoplex. Some do a decent job, but I've tried them all & none sound like one (despite varying claims to) - at least not like mine. It'd be nice to have one footswitch for classic slap back (without regeneration) & one for long delay (with regen). & a big analog style time adjust knobs like an old Memory Man.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Lucio – Seven six-strings & one bass.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Lucio – In their cases wherever I am.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Lucio – A hardshell that is low profile & super-light. Like carbon fiber light.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Lucio – Good sound unplugged, quality materials & the ability to stay in tune (usually after a few mods like a new nut & bridge saddles). Even in cheap ones you can sometimes find this. I love my Korean Dano U2, though it's not as quality as a real Dano or Jerry Jones.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Lucio – Before or after the crash? Like many things they are generally too much. \$500-\$1000 for a solid body, \$1000-\$2000 for a semi-hollow electric or acoustic, \$2500 for a decent archtop.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Lucio – I upgrade & modify everything I play to suit my needs. Guitars, pedals, amps, implements,

everything. For guitars, the nut & saddles as mentioned before, sometimes better tuning machines. I sometimes remove the lacquer from the back of the neck. On my Gretsch Brian Setzer I totally modified the pickup selection by taking out the individual volume/tone pots (and those ridiculous dice). Now the pickup selector switch goes straight to the tone switch & then to the master volume pot. Bridge & neck are full volume & in the middle position (both pickups) the neck pickup is slightly to get that great “Gretsch chime” when you back off the neck pickup just a hair. My Dano has a Tele style master volume & tone setup, like the Jerry Jones, with speed knobs so I can do volume swells. I came up with a simple mod to fix the common bridge sagging problem without giving up the old style bridge by screwing an adjustable screw into the body under the middle part of the bridge plate, etc. etc.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Lucio – Very.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Lucio – It goes in spurts. I tend to be really happy with a setup once I’ve customized things.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Lucio – I make lots of small adjustments & then the occasional paradigm shift happens if I've had my mind blown by someone's sound.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Lucio – Other than that perfect digital delay, none at the moment.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Lucio – Without a doubt, playability. i.e. The condition of the neck - action/setup & frets.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Lucio – Best: Do trades count? I traded a Vox V-125 amplifier head that I found in the garbage in Boston for my '67 Tele in 1989. The Tele was a total wreck when I got it, though & back then they did not command the prices they do now.

Worst: I used to buy & sell gear in the 90s & got pretty good at it. Bought & sold some great stuff which takes more effort & luck now. However, back in high school I traded in my 70s Fender Twin for a really bad solid state Acoustic guitar amp - I wanted a Mesa Boogie/Marshall type high distortion tone which was impossible with that Twin. That amp sucked. The sales guy must have shook his head.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Lucio – So much boutique stuff out there! I love my Blackstone Overdrive. Last I checked it's all the guy makes, this one overdrive pedal. Love that. I dislike overpriced vintage pedals & cheap clones.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Lucio – These days I'm working on improving alt-bass fingerstyle guitar, so usually something I've written with that or a John Fahey tune I might be working on.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Lucio – 3rd grade, then a break, then solidly from 9th grade on, so 35 years or so.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Lucio – I think I got to a place in the mid 90s where I was what I consider professional. I am 50 now, so that would be in my mid 30s. I've been playing a lot of free improv music for the past 10 & am finally at a place I consider a high level.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Lucio – I can get the emotions & sounds in my head across with it. I have always loved drums (& play okay), but it gives me better access to some of that plus melody. I also play bass, which provides even more of a connection there.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Lucio – Whatever floats. Piano & guitar is a good combo.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Lucio – Ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Lucio – Early on: Pete Townsend, Andy Summers, Brian May, Chuck Berry/Billy Zoom, & early punk rock. Then raw blues stuff, Neil Young electric, Richard Thompson, & Sonic Youth. Later still I discovered the avant players like Marc Ribot (my all time favorite). That guy can do anything. Also Frith, Frisell, a few others, but nothing too academic. I discovered John Fahey in the early 2000s & am currently obsessed with him & 20s-40s Americana fingerstyle. I like to bring styles into the fold rather than be all retro.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Lucio – If it's real, fine by me. I tried this at some point & soon forgot names, so I guess it's not for me.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Lucio – I tend to be pretty rough with even my vintage instruments, jamming cymbals under

strings, implements, etc. I just don't care about that part. I used to play in a punk rock Who "Live at Leeds" era cover band. I did some frightening damage to my Les Paul Special at our last gig ever at Slim's in San Francisco by pounding the butt end into the stage. I think the straplock snapped off & took a bit out of the bottom.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Lucio – Recently, I have made a concerted effort to work on small parts until they are done right, then finish the whole song/piece in one sitting. In the past I've often approximated/assimilated riffs & then got good with them over time by just playing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Lucio – More than I do. When touring, sometimes it's just that hour onstage a day.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Lucio – I've dispensed with a pick on acoustic. When I use one on electric, it's the yellow Tortex.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Lucio – Custom gauges & makes for different guitars. All based around the .11 gauge/heavy bottom on electric & .12 gauge light on acoustic (.13 medium on low open tunings). My Tele has 10.5 & 13.5 on the top, the Dano & Les Paul regular .11s, Gretsch uses weird gauges specific to Thomastic strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Lucio – Not that often. On tour more often -- maybe once a week.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Lucio – Rarely. & I play hard. Proper nut & saddle setup & maintenance is key.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Lucio – About the same, but I've really upped the right hand finger style stuff & that has paid dividends.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Lucio – Usually myself with the nut cuts & more detailed work by a pro.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Lucio – On electric, mostly standard with some Drop D. On acoustic I'm mostly using Open D & sometimes D. I've got some variations of Open D with sympathetic As (the G up a whole step, B down a whole) & a cool C tuning with a 2nd on the top.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Lucio – If I write down anything, it is usually for others & in that case is a chord chart with some standard notation.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Lucio – Not practicing well. Or at all sometimes.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Lucio – Piano & drums. Bass if you approach it like a piano or drum section.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Lucio – Playing over jazz changes. Can't do that at all. I'd really like to play pedal steel. I could probably fake that better than traditional jazz though.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Lucio – The glass slide. Also an Ebow is very useful when not deployed in a hackneyed way. Various implements to change the tone of the instrument & produce new sounds like bullet casings, alligator clips, drumsticks, etc.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Lucio – Travis/Atkins/Gatton right hand technique.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Lucio – I am mostly self-taught, but have taken lessons for finger style (alt bass) & had a great

country lick lesson with Jim Campilongo once. Still tapping that one.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Lucio – Stressing the importance of playing & practicing in time so you can play with others. More important than the scale itself.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Lucio – Play & listen for a long time. I'm more finesse than pyro/riffs.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Lucio – Like whammy bars? Love them as long as they stay in tune. A well-tuned Bigsby/Duesenberg is fantastic.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Lucio – More for maximum effect than subtle. It's usually full on. I let the volume knob & pick/finger attack attenuate the tone.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Lucio – Great rhythm playing takes great skill & is more of an art than lead playing. I find lead playing better for expressing emotion though.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Lucio – I'd say NO, but there has been the rare exception. If the drummer's good, then I'm most likely going to like them. The reverse is rarely true.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Lucio – I'd be happy just to hold Robert Johnson's Gibson, Muddy Waters Tele, Neil Young's Old Black. One reason: Soul.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Lucio – Marc Ribot. He can do anything at anytime. From avant to proto blues & rock, to Django to Arsenio Rodriguez, he's the man.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Lucio – My *Music for Driving & Film* releases for restrained/melodic playing & *Prehistoric Horse* for the out there/improv. Singer-songwriters like Val Esway & Joe Rut for rootsy sideman work. My 90s punk rock work with Zebu was under recorded, but sits well.

Dan Bridgewood-Hill of dbh & The FTSE
December 2013

Name: Dan Bridgewood-Hill

Bands: dbh, NASDAQ, The FTSE 100, Burnst,
DAQ Sabbath & others using other instruments

Websites: dbhmusic.wordpress.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Dan – It's a cheap classical guitar from Argos, I think. I cut my teeth on it learning Oasis songs. It got covered in stickers. The intonation issues eventually forced me to buy something a little better, but it's still hanging around.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Dan – For acoustic guitar I play straight into a microphone. Acoustic pickups can sound horrible to me, unless they're very expensive, & I usually play gigs that are quiet enough for me to not worry about feedback issues. When I'm playing electric guitar I will throw a few effects in, but not much - distortion, reverb, delay, & wah. I might get a tremelo pedal one day.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Dan – It depends what sort of music I'm making & in what environment. Playing heavy rock music requires a great amp & acoustic music requires a guitar that feels comfortable to play.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Dan – I have a little Vox amp that is good for playing solo & busking as it has a battery option. I'm currently in the market for a hundred watt valve amplifier as I tried buying a dirt cheap one, but it keeps breaking...

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Dan – Again, that would depend what sort of music I'm making. I have a nice Spanish classical guitar for acoustic stuff & I'd like a good steel to add some different sounds to that batch of material. I tend to value intonation over tone when picking an acoustic. In The FTSE 100 I play a Gordon Smith Telecaster. It's a really great guitar, lovingly built near where I live in Manchester. The fretboard seems so easy to play & the pickups have a really nice clear sound to them. With NASDAQ I borrow

our drummer's black Gibson SG as it sounds so rich & heavy. Burnst don't play very often any more, but that was always a single-coil pickup band so I could do all the screeching & skronking I wanted to.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Dan – It would be brown & cheap & perfectly in tune.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Dan – I'd get them to make a time travel pedal. Features would just be date & time settings.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Dan – Five, but only three work.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Dan – Just around the house, in corners, on chairs, on the floor, sometimes badly balanced.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Dan – Food & alcohol.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Dan – I'm really bad at buying guitars. I don't feel at home in guitar shops. I don't know anything about guitars other than how to play them & I find people who work in guitar shops make me want to leave guitar shops. The first thing I do is check if the intonation is good. Then I buy it so I can get out as quickly as possible. Then I regret it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Dan – Probably quite a lot. There's a lot of skill & knowledge that goes into making a good guitar. But then again, with production lines & low wages I'm sure you could get that cost right down. I don't know enough about guitar making to give you a figure....

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Dan – I change the strings & bits break off, but that's about it.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Dan – I'm getting better at doing this in that I use the internet to have a good look at something. But the internet is full of useless information & uninformed opinion, so perhaps I need to find a new method.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Dan – Both, I think. I seem to have confronted my broad musical taste by playing in different bands to satisfy different parts of it. So each band will have a sound or vibe of some sort that doesn't really change & if I fancy playing something radically different, I'll find some different people, different instruments, or whatever & do something different.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Dan – I'd love a Marshall SuperBass 100. I had one & it was stolen. That incident has caused me an awful lot of sadness.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Dan – I wonder how many people are put off playing the guitar by their first guitar being unmanageably shit? Mine was & it didn't put me off, so I have some hope. Maybe terrible guitars are a good way of weeding out the people who don't really care enough. But I think I'd rather there was a well-stocked musical instrument library in every town so people have access to guitars that actually work as they should.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Dan – The best was a Marshall SuperBass 100 watt head & accompanying cab. That was in the days when I had a personal shopper. Or, to be precise, a band mate who knew lots & cared enough to get me something great. I think it was only £600 for the pair as well, which seems unfeasibly cheap in today's amp market. The worst was its replacement, a Bugera 1960 & a Hughes & Kettner cab. It was so so cheap, only £200, I should've smelled a rat. I've had about 8 hours playing out of it & it's broken twice.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Dan – I like Gordon Smith guitars. Well built,

made with love, made locally. Mine has been a dream to play for the last 6 years or so.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Dan – All the strings, to see what tuning it's in. I live in a house with other people who use weird tunings, as I do myself, never mind our guests, so it's a bit of a lottery as to what you'll find.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Dan – 15? I think?

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Dan – I think I hit a peak at around 23 where I could play all sorts of crazy stuff, but I think as I get older (I'm now 32) I'm not as good as I once was in terms of skill, because I don't have as much free time.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Dan – I play a few other instruments, but guitar does fit me better. I think this is simply because

I've spent more time playing it than the others. Not least because a guitar is an instrument that just lies around next to the sofa. It's always there, ready to be picked up & played when nothing's going on. Unlike the violin, which is kept in a case because it's so fragile & you even have to tighten the bow & apply rosin before playing. Furthermore, the guitar can be gently plucked in the middle of the night without disturbing anyone, piano & drums don't work in those situations.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Dan – It's a great first instrument, due to it's integral involvement in popular & youth culture & also because it's so easy to make a nice sound with just a one minute lesson. I dare say computers may be taking over in both those respects, so maybe that's a better first instrument these days? Or maybe those aren't the criteria for what a first instrument should be.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Dan – An ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Dan – Nick Drake & Dave Pajo both came to me at a crucial time in my musical development, so I think a lot of my playing stems from them. I also love all aspects of Neil Young & Jimi Hendrix’s playing & have listened to them all my life. Other people who have opened the instrument up for me are Victor Villareal (Owls, & his pals band American Football, although I can’t remember the name of their guitarist), Eddie Hazel & Michael Hampton (“Maggot Brain”, of course), the guys from Enablers (those chords they make), Slash (his soloing on the *Use Your Illusions* albums never gets old for me) & hundreds more, I guess....

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Dan – Silly. Although they do become much more than the wood & metal they’re made out of. Perhaps anthropomorphism is people’s way of coping with that.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Dan – The worst thing I’ve done is leave them, inadvertently, as traps for other people to knock over. Doing this has seriously damaged more than one guitar.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Dan – If I write something I can't play very well I will play it again & again at various speeds. I never do scales or anything like that. I found them useful to form a knowledge of how music works but beyond that it's pretty much the most tedious thing I think I could do with a musical instrument.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Dan – I have no idea. I play it every day. But that could be from ten minutes up to six hours or more. Every two or three weeks I might end up having a couple of days where I don't play it, for one reason or another, but I don't mind as it seems all the more fresh when I get back to it.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Dan – Nothing too floppy as I find I lose precision. Other than that I'm not too picky.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Dan – I've never worked out what I prefer. I usually leave them on till they break & that doesn't

happen a lot, so I rarely buy strings. When I visit the music shop I just look for something that says “medium” on it or something similar.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Dan – I can’t really separate them in my head when I think about playing something, so I don’t know.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Dan – I don’t really set it up much at all. I do the occasional bit of a botched job on it if there’s something that needs doing. But I have had fret-buzz on the high E of my electric guitar for at least a year now & not bothered to do anything about it other than use a capo more often!

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Dan – I really love retuning the guitar because it throws up so many different melodic options. & I enjoy geeky chats with other guitarists about tunings, so I’ll just answer this question in much more detail than is needed.

It’s not that you can’t play the same basic thing in standard tuning, it’s more that a lot of my musical

“ideas” are stumbled upon rather than thought-out & drastically altering the playing field means I stumble on a whole bunch of different things. Also, open strings ring out in a particularly lovely way & placing them in certain structures or sequences can have a really nice effect & even just make things easier to play.

In NASDAQ, all the tunings are based on a bottom C & built up to form various potentially nasty sounding things. I’ve used CGCEbBbC, that’s a really mournful one, CGDGAD, weird at first but has loads going on once you figure the basics out, CGCEAC, some nice A minor action to be had here, CGCGGD, CGCFAbC, CGCGBbEb, & more. I use a few of them playing acoustically too, but generally starting a bit higher on D rather than C. Open D is another acoustic favourite (DADF#AD), as is standard tuning, but I’ve never used DADGAD, strangely. Standard tuning is also more common when I play with The FTSE 100 because it’s funk music & has a lot more of a tight, clipped sound so string-ring is less crucial.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Dan – I rarely write them down, I either record them or play them so many times that I’m erroneously sure they’re unforgettable.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Dan – Medium-high.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Dan – Using the same riff/idea in more than one song.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Dan – Piano is a helpful thing to learn for any musician. I suppose any of the guitar-like instruments will help with picking & strumming & left hand stuff.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Dan – Something like “Maggot Brain” by Funkadelic. If I ever found a rhythm section who'd be willing to put up with me doing that for hours...

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Dan – Earn a living. I don't expect to accomplish this one, but it would be cool if I did just for a while.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Dan – It was a long while ago now, but I think it was probably getting heavily into alternate tunings. Actually, the other day I learned how to play a left-handed guitar (the same way round I'd play a right-handed one). But I suppose that's just an alternate tuning too, just a really fucked up one.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Dan – I always thought capos were rubbish & for guitarists who were just being soft. But now I love them. I even have one of those spider capos, which is a gadget I'd recommend to anyone who's interested in using weird tunings.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Dan – My uncle showed me how to bend strings & do harmonics but that's about it. I did have a good understanding of music theory though, from violin lessons at school.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Dan – I'd probably demand their silence, turn all the lights off, & put on "Spiderland" by Slint very loud.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Dan – I think I stopped using them because I didn't like my guitar going out of tune. Maybe if I played in a loud band with shorter songs I'd consider putting the bar back on. I recently found out about the hipshot string bender system, now that looks exciting.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Dan – Never ever.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Dan – Yes. In fact there's bands who I think I really liked, only for them to become unlistenable once I've stopped paying full attention to the guitar playing & realised what the singer's doing.

QRD – What famous musician’s guitar would you like to own & why?

Dan – Probably Elvis or whoever’s is most valuable so I could sell it & get better stuff. I’d love to play on someone like Nick Drake’s guitar, or just have a nice close look at it, but I wouldn’t want to own anything like that.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Dan – I dunno about claiming anyone’s the best this or the most that, but I saw a band called Cleft recently & their guitarist really impressed me. He had some great melodies up his sleeve, but also some innovative ways of delivering them, whilst still staying within the boundaries of the genre, in their case two-piece math-rock. The other guitarist I’ve really enjoyed recently is a guy called Kiran Leonard. He had all Jeff Buckley’s jazzy chords, but he was smashing them out like Neil Young or Jimi Hendrix & the sequences seemed to circle around for ages without repeating, culminating in some heavy, noisy, skronking, guitar abuse. It was quite something.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Dan – At a gig - dbhmusic.wordpress.com for details.

Igliashon Jones
December 2013

Name: Igliashon Jones
Bands: City of the Asleep

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Igliashon – Ah, the ol' Ibanez 3-stringer. Real P.O.S. plywood special, sold to me by a grinning idiot. It's in a better place now... I threw it off a cliff after a bad gig at the local senior center. Should have a raging crop of barnacles growing on it by now.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Igliashon – I play a custom-modified Squier with a double-length scale... 51 inches, you bet! I use the same gauge string for each string, a 10 (high-E from a pack of Ernie Ball Regular Slinky's), all tuned to about middle-C, plus or minus a quarter-tone for shimmer. I play this beast with a special right-handed glove that has a bunch of hair clips (bobby pins) attached to the fingertips, allowing me to strike the strings in chaotic flourishes. My left hand is missing a couple of fingers but I get by all right taping a couple slides to the stumps. Glass only,

though, steel is too heavy & falls off. For effects, I exclusively use ring modulators -- I've got about 12 of 'em, my pride & joy is the DOD Gonkulator (the only pedal that lets you turn down the "Suck"!) & I've got three of 'em at various settings. Amp-wise, I've been assembling what I like to call "the Hive" for about a decade now. Basically, I have 16 little 2-to-15-watt amps & a bunch of line-splitters to go into each one individually. It's louder than you'd expect & it allows me to either put out a big single-point blast or to literally SURROUND the audience with my sound.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Igliashon – Definitely the bug-zapper. I can't play worth a damn with all these skeeters buzzing in my ear!

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Igliashon – Oh man, I've always wanted one of those. I reckon the body would be shaped like a lightning bolt & it would have a built-in bug zapper. & of course the 51" scale is non-negotiable. I'd love to get one of those Fernandes Sustainer systems too, or figure out a way to build Ebow technology into the pickups or something.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Igliashon – It would be four ring modulators that you could adjust to run in series or parallel or some combo thereof. Independent LFOs with random-step waveforms modulating the carrier frequency & a switch to use the LFOs to modulate EACH OTHER. & it would have a Suck knob. Except it would just be a volume knob, cuz it's a joke.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Igliashon – Other than the main axe, I've got a PRS that someone just GAVE ME after a show one time (I haaaaate it, damn yuppie instrument, I'm fixin' to smash it, but I need to get poorer first to make it more of a statement). I've got a monstrosity of like 3 cheap acoustics I bought in Mexico from some drunk guy that I cut up & glued together in what I call "The Human Guitaripede" -- basically I cut the headstocks off two of 'em, cut a channel in two of the bodies, & then glued 'em to have one long continuous neck. It's sort of a REALLY LONG SCALE, but it's weird cuz of the intonation of the repeating fretboard pattern. Three necks laid end-to-end, with bodies surrounding the lower two necks to make the frets unreachable from a

traditional grip. I dunno, it's hard to describe. I play it by throwing things at it.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Igliashon – I sleep with them. In bed.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Igliashon – Bug zappers!!!

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Igliashon – Sadness. Defeat. Broken spirits, really.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Igliashon – Good guitars are for posers. Only a fuck-up would pay more than \$15 for a guitar. Get some damn tools, you yuppies!

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Igliashon – LOLROFLLMAO. “Research”? “TEST”? What am I, a rocket scientist? It's a guitar. If you can hit the strings it works.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Igliashon – I add to it. Like cells growing in a tumor. It will kill its host eventually.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Igliashon – I am after the terror of the gods. What does “tone” matter to the Great Sleep-Bringers of Yestergnoth?

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Igliashon – I’m faithful to my brides! How dare you insinuate I harbor impure thoughts for others?! I accept what Divine Providence supplies. It is not my place to harbor desires.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person’s first guitar that aren’t always there?

Igliashon – Everybody’s first guitar sucks. Because everybody sucks when they first play the guitar. The problem is in the mind, not the guitar. Every first guitar should come with a dunce cap that you

have to wear on your head until you finally realize the only way to win over your instrument is to hate it & destroy it... because you're too chickenshit to destroy yourself, so the best you can do is pretend to do it through "“MUSIC”“".

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Igliashon – The Human Guitaripede is pretty great. Best \$15 I ever spent. Worst purchase would be that PRS the guy gave me for free. Does it count as a purchase if it was free? I think so. It was terrible.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Igliashon – Two words: Radioshack. But really, if you can recognize the brand it ain't worth a damn. Any name brand guitar is just Uncle Sam fuckin' you in the wallet. Most expensive (& least-pleasant-smelling) kindling you'll ever find.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Igliashon – “Street Cleaners” by Doktors for “Bob”. Worst song never written.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Igliashon – Fifty-two.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Igliashon – Thirteen.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Igliashon – Because I can cut them.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Igliashon – No. Learn the goddamn flute, ya sissies.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Igliashon – I see it as the enemy I captured & then drilled holes in its skull & injected diluted bleach, like Jeffery Dahmer. It's my unwilling slave.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Igliashon – There's this guy in Santa Cruz, CA... never seen him sober, just walks around downtown at night with his broke-ass acoustic rockin' out like he's Eddie Van bloody Halen. But, like, EVH after a 30-year bender that he still hasn't come out of. I hate that fucker, but I think it's because he reminds me so much of myself. If I didn't have the Hive to take care of, I'd probably be doin' what he's doing.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Igliashon – Why don't you ask the guitars?

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Igliashon – Any idiot can smash a guitar. Me, I humiliate them... I make them feel fear. Guitars piss their pants when they see me coming, because I DON'T destroy them in the conventional sense. I pervert them. You can't make a guitar really SCREAM if it ain't afraid of a fate worse than death....

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Igliashon – Archery, mostly.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Igliashon – Play? This ain't a game, son. This is RELIGION. Church is in session 23 hours a minute.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Igliashon – About every 10 minutes.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Igliashon – About every 10 minutes.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Igliashon – It's all in the scrotum, actually.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Igliashon – Guitar techs will be the first people I line up & shoot after I finally get the guts to commit suicide.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Igliashon – No, I don't.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Igliashon – I generally lay the guitar on a table, or preferably a bed.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Igliashon – I never remember which end is up.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Igliashon – The lawnmower.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Igliashon – Adult contemporary.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Igliashon – Making a free-throw from the 50-yard line.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Igliashon – Chlorform = consent, as far as guitars are concerned.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Igliashon – The bonesaw.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Igliashon – Notes.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Igliashon – I learned how to rob kids of \$50 an hour, real easy.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Igliashon – Hurt the guitar before it hurts you.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Igliashon – Sequester the parietal lobe. & a pint of raw ether.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Igliashon – Get rid of 'em. Better off taping your strings to the guitar.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Igliashon – What's a "tone knob"?

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Igliashon – About three inches of dick length.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Igliashon – I'd rather listen to a gastric bypass surgery than any bands I can think of.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Igliashon – I'd like to own Jimmy Page's entire guitar collection. So that I could chop 'em all up together into a singular Lovecraftian horror.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Igliashon – Lou Reed. Because he's dead.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Igliashon – On a clear night, pointing their parabolic reflector dish toward $47^{\circ} 35' 45.26''$ N, $122^{\circ} 18' 7.32''$ W. Good luck.

QRD – Anything else?

Igliashon – Thank you for this opportunity!

Denny Kopp of Above Us The Waves

February 2014

Name: Denny Kopp

Bands: Played with LN (Gary Murray), Jessica Bailiff, & others. Solo project was Above Us The Waves

Websites: kopparchtops.com

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Denny – 1965 Hagstrom 1 & I still have it. Have a matching bass too.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Denny – My rock stuff would be my personal Kopp 419 Semi-Hollow, my Hagstrom, or my Duo Sonic. The first pedal is a Goodrich Volume from way back... into a DD-5 to get me stereo. The DD-5 then takes me to my main amp after going through the NeverEndingForeverPedal (RV-3) & a tremolo. The DD-5 also goes out to my satellite amp, but through PS-3 & PS-5 pitch shifters. These allow me to simulate distortion, add multi-tap delay, scratch sounds, etc. When I (try to) play jazz, it's a Kopp Betty Swing archtop straight into my main amp.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Denny – The guitar & a pocket full of ideas.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Denny – A '90s Custom Shop Fender Blues Deluxe. Some one told me it is a Bassman at heart & all I really know about it is that it stays clean when you crank it up & I absolutely love it.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Denny – Probably my Kopp 419 Semi Hollow. I love the tones it yields with independently wired Volume & Tone controls & the P-90 Stacked Humbuckers just seem easy to get the right sounds & dynamics from.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Denny – I don't believe I would have a signature guitar & chuckle at the idea. Thing is, I'm actually a guitar maker by trade now & my signature is inside over 100 guitars out there.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Denny – Not sure I would have one of these either, but a pedal that sweeps tone would be useful.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Denny – Nine. My Hagstroms & Fender Duo-Sonic. Then my 16” & 17” Betty Swings, 419 Semi-Hollow, Zigara & Runabout parlor acoustics, & a Koa 000 size that were all build by myself.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Denny – All over the house. Out of the case & ready to play! I have a humidifier on my furnace & it helps to keep them out in the winter.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Denny – Dual neck cradles on each side of the storage pocket. An alarm that tells the owner when to put water in the humidifier would be cool & save a lot of repair costs.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Denny – Quality of construction first & foremost. It'll get used & maybe abused & needs to hold up. After that, if it suits me & my playing.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Denny – I have a \$200 guitar as well as a \$4500 guitar, so that's a bit of a tricky question.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Denny – I'll do whatever I need to do to get it to “feel” right. Usually pickups & wiring will do that, but considering that I'm a guitar maker by trade, you could say that I took modifying to the extreme end of the spectrum.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Denny – Quite a bit. Cost, function, design, aesthetics... it all comes into play.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Denny – Nope. I could live without the effects if I had to, but not that custom Deluxe.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Denny – It's always been about the song & what it needs.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Denny – Really not any. Every piece of gear that I ever desired, I found the means to acquire. I found out that a lot of them were not at all what I really needed & a few are things that I'd never go without.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Denny – Tuning stability, action, & intonation. At that point, the player knows not what they "need" or "like". They've only begun a journey into music.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Denny – Those mid-90s reissue AC30s were bad. I bought one & it took three to get one that wouldn't die after only a week. Best one is my Creme Blues

Deluxe. All I know is that it is some custom shop thing & I just love it. Not sure of more about it, but I did score it at a great price.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Denny – As I am a guitar maker, I'm finding that I like hand made gear more & more. You get a lot better quality over production gear.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Denny – Whatever that melody is that is currently rolling around in my head... just to get it out. When checking out a new guitar, I play a couple of my old tunes that pick, strum, & use harmonics & such, just to hear how expressive the guitar can be.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Denny – 20-ish. A little earlier in life, but started to take it seriously in my 20s.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Denny – I may have been cool in the 90s, but I hope that I've yet to get to the top of the plateau.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Denny – It's limitless! Great for exploring & songsmithing by yourself.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Denny – I don't see why not.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Denny – Totally my ally.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Denny – Gary Murray & Torey Freeman. The only tunes that I know how to play were written by these guys & myself. Later on, I found Alan Sparhawk & Mick Turner & they kinda shattered my idea of what guitars could do, so I'd have to give them props for inspiration. All of these guys, save Alan, currently play guitars that I have made for them. &

that's a total honour for me to hear my influences using guitars that I have made.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Denny – Not at all. A couple of my guitars are Ladies & a couple of them are Dudes. In fact, my Zingara parlour size archtop is my little drinking buddy. We sit with a glass of malt & learn new chords & lines together all the time!

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Denny – I banged my Hagstrom I into the doorway & cracked the resoglass near the jack. Nothing a little epoxy couldn't fix, but I still feel bad. Back in my early punk rocker days, our band hard wired a guitar to an amp & threw it to the crowd to let them smash it up. It was really stupid to do as they killed it in about two fell swoops & we were hoping to have a bit more action out of it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Denny – Listening & imagining the guitar in my head. Back in the day, when I was doing shows as an opener in Above Us The Waves, I was too busy

to practice. I'd play a tape of my tunes in the car on the way to work & back & imagine playing in my head. That really helps to know your tunes inside & out.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Denny – I play about an hour or two a day. Consider that I'm a guitar maker & repairman now & I can say that I have a guitar in my hands about 10-12 hours a day though.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Denny – Those DAVA things. They have rubber on them & my fingers are often too smooth from sanding to hold a regular pick.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Denny – I prefer 12s with a wound G & Thomastik Flatwounds at that. Perfect tone & balance for me. On my electric guitar (my 419) I use SIT 11s with a plain G. Just something that I got used to from stringing it up for demo purposes & have grown to like.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Denny – Not very often. Only when they lose intonation. I don't have sweat/rust issues. I'm lucky in that department.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Denny – I have never broken a string in my life. As a guitar maker & repairman... if you break your string, there is a burr or something at your bridge or nut. Get a file & fix it.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Denny – Used to be my right hand (strumming & picking), but I'm so out of practice now from not playing live.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Denny – I've always done my own. & my friend's guitars too. That's how I started in my trade. Setting intonation & choosing string gauge for altered tunings was my specialty back in the day.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Denny – Standard. I never drop or alter. There's enough magic there that it'll take my whole life to find only a portion of it.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Denny – I used to think tab was cool, but now that I'm more learned on the instrument, I see it as inaccurate & lacking in conveying information. So now I prefer sheet music, but will not be afraid to scribble & draw on it too. Chord blocks are how I actually write down my own songs.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Denny – Not too low or too high. I don't want to cramp the wrist of my left hand.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Denny – I wish I would not try to play in position as much. I really need to loosen up & get around the neck more.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Denny – Drums. Bass. Zither. Organ. Anything that makes music. Listen to a sax player & then cop his lines. It's all about inspiration to me. Drums or percussion would be a good thing for most guitar players... get your rhythm in shape.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Denny – Wes Montgomery's thumb thing! I'm also trying to leave out the pick & use my fingers more.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Denny – Not really sure if there is one. I still hold tight to my punk rock DIY roots & just make things happen. I've opened for some of my favourite bands. Played in a few of them. I always wanted to make a guitar for Mick Turner... he now has three. I wanted to score Bobby Ferrazza (Oberlin Jazz Music Conservatory) as an endorser of my Jazz Guitars... he now has three & our relationship is about 8 years strong now. I've almost made 100 guitars now & look forward to the people & players that I'll meet in the next 100!

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Denny – How to play four note chords & actually stay in key?!?

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Denny – Probably my string winder, but that's more the maker & repairman in me.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Denny – Again, Wes Montgomery's thumb thing.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Denny – Yes. I'm learning to expand my box of Crayons from 8 to 16 & now looking for that 24 box. Ironically, it has taught me more colours for chord textures & yet I still write tunes with G, C, & D?

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Denny – That rhythm & melody are the two most important things in any song. Also, to practice unplugged. You'll get more expressive on the instrument.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Denny – Ha! Start out with a guitar that has frets so bad that you cannot play a clean note! That's where my chucka/chucka thing came from. I'd also have to say that emulating me would serve you to no good end. Go be yourself.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Denny – Love. Hate. Although the more I've learned, the less I reach for one?

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Denny – Constantly! I could do without a volume knob, but never be without a tone knob.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Denny – I thought we got passed all that in the 90s? I'll say that I've played for over 20 years & I've

never played a solo. Never & I plan to keep it that way. So I guess that I'm so one sided on this as to not be able to answer.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Denny – No. No way.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Denny – Robert Ferrazza's 17" Betty Swing archtop. Why? It's the one that I made for myself & he fell in love with it & took it from me, that's why. (This is only half in jest, btw.)

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Denny – I'm not really sure how to answer that? There are some flashy players out there that stretch what guitars can possibly do, but I'm more a song lover & jamming the hell out of a tune with virtuoso playing has never inspired me. I go more for heart & feeling.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Denny – In my garage, just as it began 20+ years ago. Ha! In a different way than your question is directed... Any album with Mick Turner of The Dirty Three on it. Any time you hear Robert Ferrazza or possibly 65+ other MidWester jazz guitarists play. My best guitar work is truly in the hands of others in the form of the instruments that I have made.

QRD – Anything else?

Denny – Yeah. My journey with guitar began as a kid who thought they were really cool & interesting. My real reason for learning to play them is that I always wanted to make them. I spent 10 years or so playing in bands & having fun, but by the age of 30, I left my job & playing behind to start building the things from scratch. My real love of the instrument now is satiated by helping others get the most out of their playing/art by providing them with the perfect brush for which to paint that picture. I'll always play guitar, but bringing one to life where there once was not... that's my true passion.

Drew Jacobs of Drew Jacobs & the Sauce
February 2014

Name: Drew Jacobs

Bands: current bands (as a guitarist) Drew Jacobs & the Sauce, Drewbear

Websites: [facebook.com/DrewJacobAndTheSauce](https://www.facebook.com/DrewJacobAndTheSauce)

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Drew – A black Hamer Slammer with white pickguard (Strat-style). I have no idea what happened to it. It's a shame, too. Pretty decent guitar.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Drew – Squire Telecaster, BOSS Tuner, MXR GT-OD overdrive, MXR Carbon Copy Delay, TC Electronic Flashback Delay (typically either the tape setting or analog), TC Electronic Hall of Fame Reverb, BOSS TR2 Tremolo, Boss CE-3 Chorus Ensemble, Danelectro Chicken Salad Vibrato, into a Fender Princeton Chorus (125 watt solid state).

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Drew – The real answer is, a good amp is the most important tool as far as having an acceptable guitar setup. But, assuming you have a decent amp, it's gonna be your guitar or your effects that most significantly shape your unique tone. For me, it's the effects. Also “touch”, which is your hands & your fingers & the subtle ways they interact with the instrument, is vital.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Drew – The Fender is the main guy right now, but I have a great Sunn amp which is on the disabled list. Tube amps sound great, but are fragile. Using the solid-state amp means I can rely on consistent sound.

QRD – What's your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Drew – Telecaster is the current hotness, because of its bite & bright tone. I like Les Paul style guitars for warmth, & all around great rhythm playability.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Drew – Probably something out of my comfort

zone, like a Jazzmaster or a Jaguar. Nothing crazy custom.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Drew – Too hard! I'd probably have to do a whole line. If I had to choose just one, I might try to do something weird like a synth effect, or an envelope filter or a sequencer. I like really intuitive design, simple yet wide in scope of control, good tracking, etc. Definitely needs to be rugged yet attractive, colorful, & true bypass.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Drew – Two electric guitars: the Squire Tele & an Aspen (apparently Japanese made copies of popular american guitars, mine is a Les Paul style). Two acoustic guitars: Schecter Diamond Series (low action, but really good tone) & another one that I don't really know much about, but write most of my songs on.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Drew – I keep them in their cases, but sometimes leave them in my van. ☹ I'm definitely an abuser or at least a neglecter.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Drew – An affordable price tag for a good quality product.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Drew – Good balance, good action, high output, warm tone.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Drew – Free & gift wrapped.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Drew – I usually stick with what I get. Just get someone to set it up.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Drew – I watch lots & lots of YouTube videos! & definitely like to try before I buy. In some cases I

have seen a piece of equipment in a friend's rig & asked to borrow it. If I like it, I will buy it.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Drew – I keep things pretty consistent. I've been slowly expanding my pedalboard over the past year. I'm happy with it. This year I'm going to build a B-rig.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Drew – I tend to stick with the bridge pickups a lot, no matter what guitar I use, but I like to ride the tone knob to brighten or darken my tone depending on the situation.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Drew – I want every pedal ever made. But immediately, I need a wah-wah, an Electro-Harmonix POG 2, MXR Phase 90, MXR Blue Box, Red Witch Synthotron, BOSS DD 3, PS-3, & Tera Echo, &: the entire line of quality, but budget priced pedals by Mooer. Any Fender amp would be great & I really like Telecasters & Gibson & Epiphone guitars.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Drew – Good hardware & electronics.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Drew – It's not very glamorous, but the best thing I ever did was buy a \$30 One-Spot 9-volt power supply to power my pedals. I haven't really made any truly bonehead purchases, though I've had to settle for low-end guitars & used amps thus far. I'd really like to upgrade without trading in (credit card debt, here I come!).

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Drew – Effects: I really favor MXR, TC Electronic, & Electro-Harmonix

Guitars: Fender & Gibson. Don't fuck with perfection.

Amps: Fender. Refer to above statement.

I don't really like Ibanez that much. & I don't like it when people use Marshall amps when they're not supposed to.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Drew – An A chord.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Drew – 15-16.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Drew – I haven't peaked yet, but I haven't played much in earnest until about 2 years ago (I'm really a bass player). Hopefully I'll never stop improving, although I'm not very dedicated.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Drew – It doesn't. I'm definitely a bass player & a songwriter, but I am really developing an affection for guitar. & having good equipment is a nice lubricant.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Drew – I don't think it's harmful, but I think piano is an ideal choice for anyone interested in being a well-rounded musician. I regret not taking lessons as a child.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Drew – I guess I'd say it's an ally, but for me I would say it's more of a tool.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Drew – David Gilmore, Prince, Ernie Isley, Pete Townsend, Steve Cropper, John Fogerty, Ike Turner, the Big Three at Motown (Eddie Willis, Joe Messina, Robert White), Chips Moman, Jimmy Johnson (Muscle Shoals) David Williams (session man, Michael Jackson ["Billie Jean"]), Tony Iommi, Mike Campbell, Mark Bolan, Chuck Berry, Gary Rossington, Allen Collins, The Edge, Neil Young, Curtis Mayfield.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing guitars is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Drew – I think it's sweet, but I have never been good at it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Drew – I smashed a guitar against a tree when I was eighteen & I never want to do it again.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Drew – Listen to music constantly, & try to figure out just by hearing

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Drew – I gig a lot (up to 12 stage hours a week); but presently, sadly, I don't practice much on my own. However, when I am writing I tend to play a lot offstage. Obviously I would like to practice more, but not excessively.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Drew – I'll use anything medium to heavy, but I tend to buy Tortex or Dunlop picks.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Drew – .10s D'Addario almost exclusively. They feel the best to my fingers.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Drew – About every other show.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Drew – It happens.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Drew – Well now, you see, that's interesting because I'm left-handed, but I play right-handed. So I have a very unusual rhythmic style. My fret hand, which is my more articulate hand, tends to do a lot of choppy palm muting & such.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Drew – I have typically had friends do it for me, but I think it is a valuable skill to learn. I should learn how to do it.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Drew – Standard tuning. At this point I only have two guitars, so live it's best to keep things simple.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Drew – I don't use an official system, but I do make copious notes & chord charts. Sometimes I draw shapes or write syllables (da, dat, do) to express rhythmic ideas.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Drew – Just above the belt.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Drew – Not practicing which equals no muscle memory. It would be nice to have a couple of licks that were automatic.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Drew – Anything really. But in particular playing drums is something everyone should try, in order to

grasp how all instruments work together to create texture.

QRD – What's a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Drew – Chicken pickin' & fingerstyle.

QRD – What's a guitar goal you've never accomplished?

Drew – The ability to learn & execute lengthy classic rock style solos.

QRD – What's the last guitar trick you learned?

Drew – Bending the tonic up to the 2nd degree sounds totally psychedelic.

QRD – What's your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Drew – Two unconventional slides: plastic lipstick tube & shot glass.

QRD – What's a guitar technique you'd like to master, but haven't?

Drew – Chordal soloing.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Drew – I've never taken lessons, but I am always watching people play & have definitely been shown some stuff. Also, recently I have discovered some really good videos on YouTube, namely Creative Guitar Studio.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Drew – Transposition & common chord progressions. Seeing similarities in seemingly disparate styles that aren't obvious to the average listener.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Drew – Soft hands, a lot of reverb & delay, & a real loose sense of rhythm. Know where the holes are & don't try to fill them all in.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Drew – I don't know much about the circuitry, but Tremolo effects are my favorite. I veer toward the softer "triangle wave" & a slow to medium speed &

a medium to high depth. However, you can get some really cool effects with the square wave & the sawtooth wave. Tremolo amps used to be very popular- it'd be cool to have one.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Drew – Pretty frequently, depending on the song. I do tend to stick with my bridge pickup though.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Drew – If you can't play rhythm guitar you shouldn't play guitar. It is a fundamental skill that should be respected & should form the basis of one's playing ability.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Drew – No. The rhythm section must be solid or else it's a big mess. Besides, drums & bass are what makes people dance.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Drew – One of Tom Petty's 12-string Rickenbacker

guitars because he has several & wouldn't miss one.



QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Drew – Wilco's Nels Cline because he infuses a jazz sensibility into a very un-jazz band & yet he is so complimentary.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Drew – Between midnight & a quarter to one.

QRD – Anything else?

Drew – Send me pedals! & amps! & pedals!

Jason Hendrix of An Unfortunate Woman
February 2014

Name: Jason Hendrix

Bands: An Unfortunate Woman, Big Science, The North Atlantic, solo.

Websites: anunfortunatewoman.bandcamp.com, bigscienceband.bandcamp.com, soundcloud.com/jasonchendrix

QRD – What was your first guitar & what happened to it?

Jason – My first guitar was a cheap Harmony electric that my parents bought at Sears for a Christmas gift when I was 6 or 7. It came with a tiny battery powered amp. I didn't end up "learning" how to play guitar until I was 14, so there were quite a few years of me banging away on this thing creating, what I am sure was, unbearable noise. In a way, I guess not a whole lot has changed, ha! I let a friend borrow it, a long time ago, & I am pretty sure he still has it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from guitar to effects to amplifier?

Jason – Guitar--->pedals---> 1 or more amps.

QRD – What’s the most important part of your rig - guitar, amplifier, or effects?

Jason – The guitar is the most important, otherwise you wouldn’t be playing guitar, beyond that, amplification. Without it there is no sound. Electric guitars have no voice without the amp. Every element is important, but the sheer power of a loud amplifier still gets my blood up.

QRD – What’s your main amplifier & why?

Jason – I have a bunch of different amps, but the one that always gets used is my Carvin X100B. It is extremely loud, versatile, resilient, affordable, & it can get that chimney-cut through anything-punchy-breaking glass-tone, I love. It is mean in a way that I have not found in any other amp & it takes my abuse like a champ.

QRD – What’s your main guitar & what are the features that make it such?

Jason – It changes quite frequently. Presently, I am playing a Jazzmaster that I have wired in series. I love the neck. Plus having the extra real estate between the tremolo & the bridge makes it perfect for overtone noise stuff.

QRD – If you had a signature guitar, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jason – Unbreakable.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jason – I have always wanted something that makes my guitar sound like a jet engine, I have gotten close with some pedals, but I just want something that gets that blistering intensity of volume & swirling noise.

QRD – How many guitars do you own?

Jason – 12-14.

QRD – How & where do you store your guitars?

Jason – In our recording studio. In their cases.

QRD – What do you wish guitar cases had that they usually don't?

Jason – I wish they were all truly universal. Obviously, you can't accommodate all of the weird metal guitar body types, but having a Jazzmaster shows how un-universal basic “universal” cases are:

come on people, we are talking about an extra inch here.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a guitar?

Jason – The main thing is I have to enjoy playing it. A good neck is the most important thing, because with an electric guitar, the rest is changeable. If you love the neck, but the pickups suck, you can always change them out. People get too precious about messing with their guitars. At the end of the day it is just a piece of wood & some electronics, don't be scared to fuck with it.

QRD – How much do you think a good guitar should cost?

Jason – FREE. If it was up to me, no one would have to pay for a musical instrument, ever. Remember that it is a tool. If buying super vintage, all original, shit is your vibe, go ahead, it's your money, but just know that no one ever wrote anything great by treating their guitar like some kind of rare mid-evil tapestry. You have to feel free to destroy something to really push it to where it pays off.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your guitars or just stick with what you get?

Jason – I upgrade & customize.

QRD – How thoroughly do you research or test a piece of equipment before buying it?

Jason – It all depends, but I will always try & play with it firsthand. I live in Chicago, so I am very fortunate to live in a city that has quite a few stores that carry pretty much any kind of pedal, amp, or guitar imaginable. So it is very easy for me to go somewhere in my town & A/B 8 different clean boosts.

QRD – Do you change your rig around often?

Jason – Fairly often, it depends on what I am working on. I am constantly trying out different pedals & I like to mess around with the different amps. I have several different amps & I like to experiment with different bi-amping configurations.

QRD – Are you after one particular guitar tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jason – I have been into the recording process since I started playing, so I am always interested in messing with my tone & experimenting with mic placement, DI-ing, etc. Nothing is sacred,

otherwise you get bored. That being said I also don't like to spend very long on it, at the end of the day set the knobs & get on with it.

QRD – What are some guitars, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jason – I am always looking at different pedals. There are so many people doing great things in the realm of effects: Earthquaker Devices, Walrus Audio, Z.Vex, etc. I am constantly watching YouTube demos for crazy effects. I would really like to get the Mini-Ark & Tracer City by Snazzy FX, but they are expensive little noise engines.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first guitar that aren't always there?

Jason – Cheap & hard to play. That way, when you finally learn to play & get a decent guitar, it will feel great. It's the Harrison Bergeron method. If you slog it out & learn through a shit guitar, then it shows you are committed & will make it easier down the road.

QRD – What have been the best & worst guitar related purchases you've made?

Jason – BEST: My first delay pedal, a Digitech

Echo Plus, it was the first pedal that introduced me to the concept of looping=Mind blown!

WORST: I once bought a Boss Acoustic Simulator pedal in high school. I don't think I really need to explain why a pedal that emulates the thin nasally tone of a piezo pickup is a shit idea.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & guitar brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jason – The DL4 is an amazingly useful pedal for the money. As many people have found, they break too easily, but it is testament to its usefulness that I always replace it. I just got a Dwarfcraft Pitch Grinder & I love it, just a bizarre little pedal: crazy blips & gurgles that make me happy. I love Seymour Duncan pickups because you can take a canoe paddle & make it sound good.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a guitar?

Jason – “Smoke on the Water”... just kidding. I usually play whatever little riff I have been working on.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing guitar?

Jason – 13-14ish.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best guitar playing?

Jason – I would like to think that I am getting better everyday, whether or not that is true.

QRD – Why do you think a guitar fits you more so than other instruments?

Jason – It is a never ending well of sonic possibilities. You can abuse the hell out of them & they will just reward you with new & amazing sounds. I also like how at home they are either being rhythmic or melodic.

QRD – Do you think guitar should be people's first instrument as often as it is?

Jason – Piano or drums should be the first instrument. I have seen so many guitarists that have a shit sense of rhythm. I took percussion in high school & it was one of the most valuable things I ever did for my development as a musician.

QRD – Do you see your guitar as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jason – I see it as an extension of myself.

QRD – Who are the guitarists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jason – Wow, that is a hard one to answer. I guess the first answer would be everyone I have ever played with. All of the brilliant people I have had the pleasure of being around over the years have had the most profound influence on my playing & my musical understanding. Everyone has their own personal musical language & it is really gratifying to see how each person “speaks”. You pick up little things & incorporate them into your own vernacular. In the broader world of music (excluding the basic givens i.e. The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Hendrix etc.): Archers of Loaf, HUM, Fugazi, Jesus Lizard, Drive Like Jehu/Hot Snakes (John Reis is AMAZING!), Failure, Mogwai, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Minor Threat, Rights of Spring, CAN, Gang of Four, Joy Division, Pavement, Cap’n Jazz, Sonic Youth, The Minutemen, Slint, Botch, Converge, Johnny Greenwood, Adrian Belew, Robert Fripp, Glenn Branca, Ian from Don Caballero & Battles, the list could go on forever. John Bonham is my favorite musician. Guitar players need to pay more attention to drummers. He played with such power & groove that it floors me every time I hear it.

QRD – Do you think anthropomorphizing a guitar is natural or silly (e.g. naming a guitar)?

Jason – I think it is fine. I don't do it, but I think it makes for cool little stories.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a guitar & how did you do it?

Jason – Oh hell! One time, when The North Atlantic was playing in Tucson, I threw my guitar across the stage. I have no idea why someone as poor as I was would do such a stupid thing. I wasn't even mad, we were drunk & playing amazing, the last night of a long tour, & I just got caught up in the fury of it & lost my shit. It wasn't some "cool" rockstar bullshit, it actually just looked ridiculous, but it was honest in the moment. It basically broke the body & the headstock in half. I, of course, immediately thought, "I am a dumb-ass."

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jason – Listen.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play guitar & how many hours would you like to?

Jason – 15-20 hours a week, when I am not touring. I would like to play as many hours as I could, but at a point, you aren't coming up with good ideas anymore.

QRD – What type of pick do you use & why?

Jason – It fluctuates, but the one that always seems to get the most use are Dunlop .60mm. I have a fairly heavy hand, so I would be breaking strings left & right if I played with heavy picks.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jason – 11s, sometimes 10s. I just like the way they feel. I don't do any crazy drop tuning so I don't need anything much heavier.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jason – When I am on the road, playing shows everyday, I like to change them after 3 shows, but it always has to do with the conditions & use. When they don't "sing" anymore is usually when I will change them.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jason – Very rarely. Only in practice when I have

been lazy & left a set of strings on for too long. The only time I break them live is when I am “freaking out” & I am trying to rip them off intentionally.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jason – Wow, that is a really hard question to answer. If I absolutely had to choose, I would have to go with my strumming hand, since so much of my style has to do with rhythmic noise & scraping.

QRD – Do you set-up your guitar yourself or send it to a guitar tech (or not set it up at all) & why?

Jason – I am a professional guitar tech for work. So I set my own up.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jason – It depends on what I am doing, In An Unfortunate Woman, we pretty much stay in standard. I think a brutal punchiness is lost when “heavy” bands tune down: I am more interested in a serrated blade than a sledgehammer. With improvisational stuff, I like to intentionally screw myself up by trying tunings I have never played in. It just helps you get out of your comfort zone.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jason – Recording. Always recording. Even if I was that good at reading music, I would still have to record it; so much of my style is texture & noise.

QRD – How high do you hold your guitar when playing (strap length)?

Jason – I use to have it set pretty high, but I felt I wasn't playing with all of my body in a way that balanced out my more noodly ideas. I play with it at about waste level now, but who knows, that could change next week.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jason – When I rely too much on things that I have done or have worked on before. Come on brain, stop being so lazy!

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's guitar playing?

Jason – DRUMS!

QRD – What’s a type of guitar playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Jason – Flamenco. At the very least for the technique.

QRD – What’s a guitar goal you’ve never accomplished?

Jason – Playing in one of Glenn Branca’s guitar orchestras. Improvising with Thurston Moore & Lee Ranaldo. I would like to record more on random peoples albums. Either in the studio or just getting sent tracks, I would love to put a patina of texture & noise on other peoples work, kind of a session noise musician.

QRD – What’s the last guitar trick you learned?

Jason – How to get paid for playing guitar, oh wait, not sure if I have figured that one out yet.

QRD – What’s your favorite guitar gadget (Ebow, capo, slide, string cutter, etc.)?

Jason – As I have said, I am also a guitar tech, so my list of “gadgets” is quite large. Tool wise: a string winder bit on an electric drill saves me tons of time & frustration. My Peterson strobe tuner is

invaluable. Playing wise: Not sure if a looping pedal counts as a gadget, but I love them.

QRD – What’s a guitar technique you’d like to master, but haven’t?

Jason – There are a lot guitar styles from parts of Africa, specifically Mali, that I find completely mesmerizing. I would hope to master the patience & headspace that Ali Farka Toure & the guys in Tinariwen play with.

QRD – Did you ever take guitar lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jason – When I was 7 I had a couple lessons. Personally, that was too young for me, I was a spazz. I hadn’t developed the focus or patience needed to learn guitar at that point. I basically just requested my teacher play Poison covers for me. Beyond that, I am pretty much self-taught.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a guitar lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a guitar teacher?

Jason – LISTEN, above all else. Your own voice comes from failing to emulate your influences, embrace the idiosyncrasies or “failures” of your playing & turn them into the strengths that define

it. Also, on a more pragmatic level: if you have more than one pedal, even just 2, PUT THEM ON A PEDALBOARD!!! Even if it is just a piece of wood, or a cutting board, or a roof shingle, just do it. Don't be that asshole plugging all his pedals in while everyone else is waiting for you to line check, just go ahead & be an adult about it. I am way over the whole slacker asshole scene that is so popular in independent music. DIY ethic, at its core, is about hard work, so stop being a lazy turd.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jason – LOVE pedals, noise, texture, & dynamics. Hate Steve Vai.

QRD – What's your take on tremolo systems?

Jason – Why not? It's a tool, but keep it simple. Floyd Rose shit is overkill.

QRD – How often do you adjust your tone knob?

Jason – Pretty much never, sometimes in quiet improv situations, but not for most live settings. It just comes from playing in bands where I also had to sing. I didn't have time to dick around with tone knobs while I was playing in The North Atlantic, so I just used my pedals for that. It was too fast

moving & relentless to get into that kind of myopic stuff. Besides, at the end of the day, it just does not translate to the front of house when you are that nuanced. You aren't recording *Darkside Of The Moon* in a million dollar studio, you are playing The Mutiny on a Wednesday night, get on with it.

QRD – What do you see as the difference between lead guitar & rhythm guitar players?

Jason – Both play in old white guy blues bands? But seriously, I think that the lead/rhythm dualism is a very antiquated way of looking at guitar playing. Who is the lead guitar player in Fugazi? It only applies to more “traditional” forms of music.

QRD – If a band has good guitar work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jason – No. I can appreciate the guitar work, but I can't ignore the rest of the band.

QRD – What famous musician's guitar would you like to own & why?

Jason – Whichever one is worth the most, so I could immediately sell it & spend it on stuff that makes for a good life, like travel & beer.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative guitar player & why?

Jason – I could never pin one down, but people that I think are doing a lot of amazing work on guitar are: Isaiah Mitchell (Earthless, Golden Void), Nick Reinhart (Tera Melos), Victor Villarreal (Cap'n Jazz, Owls), just to name a few.

QRD – Where can people hear your best guitar work?

Jason – It's impossible for me to judge that, you are just going to have to listen to all of it & let me know.

QRD – Anything else?

Jason – Make good things for the world, it needs it.

Thanks for reading this set of interviews, I hope you had fun & learned a few things. To continue reading in depth interviews with musicians & artists just head over to www.silbermedia.com/QRD

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